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Racial Formation in the Post-September 11 Era:

The Paradoxical Positioning of

Working Class South Asian American Youth

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Anthropology

by

Veena Hampapur

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Racial Formation in the Post-September 11 Era:
The Paradoxical Positioning of
Working Class South Asian American Youth

by

Veena Hampapur

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Jessica R. Cattelino, Chair

In this dissertation I aim to show that there has been a shift in racial formation in the United States since the terrorist attacks of September 11th. I chart this new racial formation through theorizing from the everyday realities of working class, predominantly Muslim, South Asian and Indo-Caribbean youth in New York City, some of whom were undocumented. By utilizing ethnographic methods, I dissect their seemingly contradictory lived experiences of 1) national belonging stemming from multicultural comfort in a city famous for its diversity and 2) exclusion from cultural citizenship dictated by struggles with modes of racialization, surveillance, and criminalization more commonly associated with Arabs, Blacks, and Latinos.

I map out the current racial formation, which explains South Asians' paradoxical positioning, through examining the intersection of state policies with intersubjective and emotional experiences of race and racism. I find that South Asians' seemingly contradictory

positioning is produced through three mechanisms of the current racial formation: the emphasis on diversity and pervasiveness of color blind ideology; shifting notions of race that criminalize widening domains of difference, especially religion and immigration status; and national security panics centered on youth, terrorism, and crime. I demonstrate how multicultural belonging, color blind ideology, and racial exclusion — despite their apparent contradictions — shape cultural citizenship and function together as a means of social control in the 21st century.

Analyzing the paradoxical position of South Asians, as the country moves toward becoming a majority minority nation, can lead to revelations about race and racism, their connections with cultural citizenship, and their relations to power beyond a single scale. Understanding racial formation after September 11th provides the possibility to learn about race more broadly — including its continued significance and its evolution during times of war, nativism, and coalition building.

This dissertation of Veena Hampapur is approved.

Akhil Gupta

Kyeyoung Park

Purnima Mankekar

Jessica R. Cattelino, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

In loving memory of my Aji,
Rathnammal Hampapur,
who was so proud
of the educational achievements
of her granddaughters.

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INTRODUCTION

SOUTH ASIANS' PARADOXICAL POSITIONING

Prominent race scholar Howard Winant identifies the need for a sound racial theory dissecting existing 21st century racial hierarchies that are overlooked in an era when many Americans deem it rude, unnecessary, or even racist to mention race (Winant 2000:180). Historically, modes of race and racism have morphed during times of war and heightened nativism, and in this dissertation I aim to show that there has been a shift in racial formation in the United States since the terrorist attacks of September 11th. Race scholars Michael Omi and Howard Winant define racial formation as the process through which “racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (Omi and Winant 1994:55).

I chart this new racial formation through theorizing from the everyday realities of working class, predominantly Muslim, South Asian and Indo-Caribbean youth in New York City, some of whom were undocumented.¹ Admittedly, this group may seem like an unexpected choice given South Asians' popular reputation in American society as a model minority and given the state's current racialization of Arabs, Latinos, and Blacks in regard to widespread concerns about terrorism, immigration, and crime. However, working class South Asian youth in New York City were apt research participants for several reasons.

¹ My research participants were pre-dominantly Bangladeshi, followed by Indian, Pakistani, and Guyanese, then Trinidadian, Nepali, Tibetan, and lastly Afghani. Several of my research participants were mixed race.

First, they were coming of age as part of the first post-9/11 generation in the majority minority city that was a target of the terrorist attacks of September 11th.² As such, they had grown up internalizing the imagination of the post-9/11 national enemy as well as orienting toward multiracial diversity in a city that prides itself for welcoming immigrants from all over the world. They were coming of age as one of many ethnic groups in New York. Second, though they did not face the highest levels of racialization, low income South Asian youth in New York City were uniquely situated at the intersection of the War on Terror, War on Immigrants, and War on Drugs. Because of this, they were useful in analyzing the connections between terrorism, xenophobia, and criminalization in the 21st century American racial formation.

By utilizing ethnographic methods, I dissect their seemingly contradictory lived experiences of 1) national belonging stemming from multicultural comfort in a city famous for its diversity and 2) exclusion from cultural citizenship dictated by struggles with modes of racialization, surveillance, and criminalization more commonly associated with Arabs, Blacks, and Latinos.³

Numerous Americans currently believe that the United States has truly entered a post-racial time period. They saw the 2008 election of a Black president as marking the beginning of an equitable era when race is irrelevant and multiculturalism, cultural diversity, and color blindness prevail as shining examples of American exceptionalism and victory over previous

² I would like to note here that despite my emphasis on September 11th, I do not mean to imply that it was a “dividing line of history” (Naber 2007:4). Arabs, Middle Easterners, South Asians, and Muslims, particularly those residing in low income, minority, and immigrant communities, have been surveilled by the state for decades.

³ By “cultural citizenship” I mean the cultural dimensions of citizenship beyond legal status. Cultural citizenship signifies that national belonging does not come simply through legal citizenship (Ong 2003; Benmayor and Flores 1998).

race issues (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011). The new color blind ideology denies the importance of race, instead emphasizing simply: “We are all Americans!” (Bonilla-Silva and Embrick 2006:37).

My research participants had a tendency to view their positive experiences with a cultural lens, but their optic switched to race when explaining their negative interactions. Through examining their lived experiences and the ways in which they categorized them, I demonstrate in Part I that privileging multiculturalism and diversity in New York City indeed creates opportunities for everyday cultural belonging. I subsequently illustrate in Part II and Part III, however, that these opportunities for belonging co-exist along with a contemporary racism that is “more indirect, covert, and implicit than the mechanisms of racial bias evident in the past” and precludes access to the right to feel safe (Bobo and Thompson 2006:447).

In the current racial formation, racism occupies multiple scales and intersecting locations: within individuals’ hearts, in everyday interpersonal interactions in the physical and virtual worlds, and systematically in social structures such as the law and civil society. However, it is cloaked by celebrations of cultural diversity as well as color blind rhetoric emphasizing national security risks that necessitate preventative and punitive measures, even at the expense of equality and civil liberties.

It is important to recognize that while contemporary racism might be harder to identify or prove than past modes of racism, this does not mean that its effects are less harmful. By using ethnographic methods, which are central to sociocultural anthropology, I was able to identify and analyze current abstract, indirect, and intuited forms of racism. Interviews and long term

participant observation, in particular, provided the best means to analyze everyday life occurrences to understand the contemporary racial formation and its effects.

In this dissertation I map out the current racial formation, which explains South Asians' paradoxical positioning, through examining the intersection of state policies with intersubjective and emotional experiences of race and racism. I find that South Asians' seemingly contradictory positioning is produced through three mechanisms of the current racial formation: the emphasis on diversity and pervasiveness of color blind ideology; shifting notions of race that criminalize widening domains of difference, especially religion and immigration status; and national security panics centered on youth, terrorism, and crime. I demonstrate how multicultural belonging, color blind ideology, and racial exclusion — despite their apparent contradictions — shape cultural citizenship and function together as a means of social control in the 21st century.

SOUTH ASIANS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Contemporary mainstream media representations of a diverse and inclusive society — which includes South Asians — have supported color blind ideology through repackaging race as a style or commodity to consume and concealing institutionalized racial disparities (Gallagher 2006:105). Some Americans cite the growing minority presence in politics, business, entertainment, and media as evidence that the United States is transforming into a post-racial society that no longer needs to prioritize racial issues (Iyer 2015:160). In line with this emphasis on diversity, there are now more South Asians,⁴ or Desis,⁵ in the public eye than ever before — a

⁴ By "South Asian" I am referencing people whose ancestors were originally from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. This includes members of the diaspora whose families migrated multiple times before arriving in the United States. For example, they have lived in Guyana, Trinidad, Canada, England, and Africa. Within the label "South Asian," I am also including Tibetan refugees whose families have lived for many years in Nepal and India.

reality that my young research participants took for granted. Let us consider key examples from contemporary popular media that reveal the contradictory positioning of South Asians in the United States.

Dr. Sanjay Gupta has won Emmys for his work as a CNN medical correspondent; Vice Admiral Vivek Murthy is the surgeon general of the United States; and Indra Nooyi is applauded for being the female CEO of PepsiCo. Bobby Jindal and Nikki Haley have run states as governors; Kamala Harris is California's attorney general; and Kal Penn ping pongs between the popular *Harold and Kumar* movie franchise and working in the White House. Even Desi YouTube personalities such as Superwoman boast billboards in Los Angeles. President Obama and the First Lady have hosted Diwali celebrations and Ramadan Iftar dinners at the White House, and at a fundraiser with South Asian immigrants, the president delighted the crowd by announcing that he was Desi too (Rajghatta 2008).

Actress/writer/comedian/fashionista Mindy Kaling is seen as so relatable and popular in mainstream American society that she is frequently touted in the media as the "best friend you've always wanted" (Mort 2015). "There's now enough Indian people where I don't need to like you just because you're Indian," New York based comedian Hari Kondabolu joked on the late-night television series *Totally Biased*. He continued, "Because growing up [in the 1990s] — I had no choice but to like this." He flashed a picture of Apu from *The Simpsons*. Kondabolu pointed out how far America has come since the racism of Indiana Jones and the questionable Apu voiced by the White actor Hank Azaria.

⁵ "Desi" is a term used by those of South Asian descent to refer to South Asians. Shalini Shankar notes that the usage of the term "Desi" transforms South Asians from immigrants longing for the "homeland" into public consumers and producers in the United States (Shankar 2008:4).

This notable expansion of South Asians in the public eye includes South Asian Muslims. For example, Huma Abedin is Hillary Clinton's right hand, and Aasif Mandvi and Hasan Minhaj have gained fame on the *The Daily Show*. Aziz Ansari has become a popular celebrity who has dominated as a Hollywood actor, comedian, and writer representing the lives of millennials. Most recently he won a Critics Choice Award for his television series *Master of None*, which has been widely praised for its groundbreaking commitment to cast and storyline diversity.

In a *New York Times* article Ansari wrote, "Even at a time when minorities account for almost 40 percent of the American population, when Hollywood wants an 'everyman,' what it really wants is a straight white guy. But a straight white guy is not every man. The 'everyman' is everybody" (Ansari 2015). In line with Ansari's assertions, some Americans have questioned and loudly denounced the growing presence of South Asians in the public eye when South Asians are seen as representing the country. This challenging has generally taken place on social media. Kaling, Ansari, and Superwoman can be Americans' hilarious Brown best friends, but inclusion may be questioned when South Asians move beyond their subordinate place as "different" in a multicultural rainbow to representing the "normal," the dominant society — the "everyman."

For instance, Indian youth are celebrated in the media for winning national spelling bee competitions but also criticized by those who would prefer to see "American" (White) children winning. Often, opposition to South Asians in the public eye is expressed as rhetoric centered on terrorism. Companies have been praised in the media for using Sikh males with beards and turbans as models in advertisements, but the response to the ads by the American public has also included notable Islamophobic slurs.

Bollywood actress and former Miss World Priyanka Chopra was denounced as an Arab terrorist by some Americans who took issue with her performing the theme song at Thursday Night Football because they viewed it exclusively as an “all-American” event. The mainstream media picked up on the stream of hatred, reporting on the angry statements directed at Chopra such as “You’re not white, why should you be on NFL?” (quoted in Jha 2014). A few years later, however, Chopra was also personally scouted by ABC to star in a whodunit primetime drama — applauded for its diverse cast — as an FBI agent falsely accused of masterminding the largest terrorist attack since September 11th.

Perhaps the most telling public example of the contradictory positioning of South Asians was the mixed reactions to Nina Davuluri being crowned Miss America in 2013. Davuluri became the first South Asian American to win the coveted title and was also unique in wearing ethnic clothes and performing a dance fusing Bollywood and classical Indian styles during the talent portion of the competition. Davuluri’s win was seen by the press and many Americans as evidence that America is uniquely multicultural, inclusive, and color blind. Some news articles underscored America’s “progressive” attitude by pointing out that due to her dark skin tone, Davuluri could not have won a beauty pageant in India — only in America was this possible.

While many Americans celebrated Davuluri’s victory, she also became the target of angry Americans who took to social media to express outrage that a woman of Indian descent could win the “all-American” pageant. Despite her American citizenship and upbringing, she faced accusations of being a Muslim terrorist based on stereotypes of her ethnicity and phenotype. It is remarkable that presently there can be an Indian American Miss America who wins with an “ethnic” act; however, it is also significant that she immediately faced accusations of being a suspect unAmerican Other. Davuluri symbolizes a larger puzzle: How is it that South

Asians are accepted, often as model citizens, in the American multicultural project — as evidenced by their visible growth in public sectors — but simultaneously rejected as suspect, anti-American Others in the “post-racial” era?⁶

THE FIRST AND SECOND WAVES OF POST-1965 IMMIGRATION

South Asians as a whole are often viewed as upwardly mobile “whites-in-waiting” (Das Gupta 2006:38), as evidenced by many current mainstream media portrayals. However, since September 11th they — especially more recent low income undocumented immigrants — have been particularly singled out along with Arabs by domestic laws and foreign policies in the name of homeland security, freedom, and democracy. In this section, I will touch upon the first wave of post-1965 South Asian immigrants before turning to the second wave.

Aziz Ansari’s *Master of None* episode “Parents” was broadly praised by fans and the press alike for its accurate representation of the experiences of the children of immigrants (Izadi 2015). While Ansari and his parents (who play his parents on the show) present a moving portrayal of the immigration experience and subsequent intergenerational relations, it is important to keep in mind that they are showcasing the experiences of a particular segment of the South Asian diaspora — the upwardly mobile Whites-in-waiting.

6 South Asians’ ambiguous social and racial positioning has been debated and manipulated since at least the early 1900s in the United States, as is evidenced by the U.S. Supreme Court case *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* (1923). The ruling determined that while Indians were technically Caucasian, they must be excluded from American citizenship on the grounds that they did not match the colloquial definition of White. As a result Thind and fifty other Indians had their American citizenship revoked.

In 1970, Indians were officially deemed biologically Caucasian and were for the first time classified as White on the United States Census (Das Gupta 2006: 29, 38). This put them in an impossible position because unlike Whites, they faced racism that eroded their rights, but unlike Blacks they could not access Civil Rights protections (Das Gupta 2006:32-33). Civil Rights protections, created in the context of Whites’ oppression of Blacks, did not transfer clearly to groups existing outside the American bipolar racial paradigm (Das Gupta 2006:38, 43). Due to campaigning by the Association of Indians in America, South Asians were given their own racial category, “Asian Indian,” on the 1980 Census (Das Gupta 2006:51-52).

Ansari's father plays a doctor from India and is representative of the upwardly mobile skilled professionals who immigrated to the United States legally after the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. This first wave of post-1965 South Asian immigrants settled in predominantly White middle to upper middle class suburbs when other preexisting minorities struggling with educational, occupational, and residential segregation could not (Maira 2009:7).⁷ Until recently, academic literature focused on this first wave of professional immigrants, specifically pre-9/11 middle class identity negotiations, including inter-generational conflicts and the struggle to find a niche in a multicultural society (Maira 2009; Purkayastha 2005; Shankar 2008).⁸

Because of their upward mobility, South Asians were hailed as a "model minority" -- integrated immigrants who achieved the "American Dream" through hard work and sound morals. The model minority stereotype places struggling native minorities in opposition to South Asians by implying that the former lack the values necessary for success and instead prefer handouts from the state (Prashad 2000:7). According to the 2000 census, 63.9% of Indians in the United States had bachelor's degrees -- compared to only 24.4% of White Americans -- and a third of them held advanced graduate degrees (Lal 2008:56). Policymakers, academics, and South Asian immigrants themselves fuel interethnic tensions when seizing such statistics to emphasize cultural superiority over social engineering to explain South Asian success (Das Gupta 2006:98).

⁷ The 1976 Health Professions Education Assistance Act and the 1977 Eilberg Act later served to stop the flow of professional immigrants (Das Gupta 2006:99-100).

⁸ In the past few years articles and books have emerged responding to the deficit in research on more recent working class South Asian immigrants and their families; for example, the notable scholarship of anthropologists Sunaina Maira and Shalini Shankar.

Despite South Asians' widespread reputation as a model minority, the reality is much more complex. Since the 1980s there has been a second, less visible wave of South Asian immigration (Shankar 2008:10). Many came from small towns or villages and settled in multi-ethnic, urban working class communities such as Queens (Khandelwal 2002:4). While some immigrants were highly educated in their home countries, they still perform low-wage work as their degrees are not valued in the United States (Das Gupta 2006:106). By the late 1980s, most South Asians entered through family reunification policies designed to simultaneously meet service sector labor needs and mask the importation of foreign labor (Das Gupta 2006:100-101). In the early 1990s, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis gained entry through a visa lottery system, and some overstayed their visas and became undocumented (Maira 2009:7). Currently, Bangladeshis are a “top-ten source for U.S. immigration” (Davidson 2010).

From the 1960s to the 1990s the majority of Indian immigrants to New York chose to settle in Queens, and Indians living in Manhattan also shifted to Queens. By the 1990s Queens had the “largest urban concentration of Indians” in the country as well as the broadest “range of Indian immigrant cultural activities and economic diversity” (Khandelwal 2002:12). In 1990 there were 56,601 Indians in Queens, and by 2000 that number had jumped up to 109,114. Brooklyn was the borough with the second highest concentration of Indians, but the population size was much smaller. There were 15,641 Indians in Brooklyn in 1990 and 25,404 in 2000 (Khandelwal 2002:13). Between 2000 and 2010, the Indian population grew 24.6% in New York City (“A Community of Contrasts. Asian Americans in the United States” 2011).

Because of the lack of official data on undocumented South Asians, it is difficult to determine exact poverty rates for South Asians. It is estimated that 20% of Bangladeshis and 15% of Pakistanis live in poverty, a rate greater than the national average. The per capita income

for Bangladeshis is less than that of African Americans. Within the Asian American population, Bangladeshi communities have the highest proportion of children and seniors living in poverty (“A Community of Contrasts. Asian Americans in the United States” 2011). Almost one third of South Asians living between 50-125% below the poverty line are children (SAALT 2012b).

As I demonstrate in Part II and Part III, second wave immigrants and their children became victims of hate crimes, racial profiling, police harassment, and systems of detention and deportation, particularly after September 11th. Media representations of the terrorist attacks and its alleged perpetrators, as anthropologist Purnima Mankekar notes, “intensified the circulation of fear and rage and, in the process, enabled the production of a space for violence in which institutional, physical, and psychic assaults on those deemed of South Asian and Middle Eastern ‘origin’ were engendered, condoned, and in many instances, rendered invisible” (Mankekar 2015:234). While Asians have long been seen as suspect foreigners, it is notable that post-9/11, South Asian profiling is government sanctioned and has endured as part of a new surveillance state racial formation, which I discuss in Chapter Four (Maira 2009).⁹

The Patriot Act, passed within six weeks of September 11th, granted the government more power than ever before to detain noncitizens (Fernandes 2007:76; Maira 2009:66). Any foreign-born person declared a potential terrorist could be detained without proof or a hearing (Fernandes 2007:16). It dramatically increased the government's authority to track people, including legal citizens and permanent residents, and withdrew due process rights from noncitizens detained for minor immigration violations (Maira 2009:66; Nguyen 2005:xviii, 33). Local police transformed into immigration agents without formal training. Immigrants were broadly criminalized, but this

⁹ In the 1970s the U.S. Justice Department had opposed preemptive arrests because of their ineffectiveness and civil rights issues (Mankekar 2015:233).

was especially intense with regard to perceived Muslims (Fernandes 2007; Maira 2009; Nguyen 2005). The climate of fear led to more than 2,000 people seeking asylum in Canada by early 2003 (Nguyen 2005:115). More than 15,000 undocumented Pakistanis from the United States went to Canada, Europe, and Pakistan by June 2003 (Maira 2009:266).

Post-9/11 the Department of Justice established the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, also known as Special Registration. Noncitizen males, originally from twenty-five specific countries, were required to register with the government and get photographed and fingerprinted. Aside from North Korea, the countries were Muslim majority nations, including Bangladesh and Pakistan. 290,526 males registered. 13,799 were deported and 2,870 were detained (Maira 2009:72). None were charged with terrorism. Refusing to register was an immigration violation in itself that could lead to deportation or criminal prosecution (Nguyen 2005).

Between 2000 and 2006, the years immediately before and after 9/11, Indians composed the fastest growing undocumented community in the United States. In 2009, with a population of 200,000, they formed the sixth largest undocumented group in the U.S. (SAALT 2012b). The number of Indians who tried to enter the United States without the proper paperwork through various points of entry has significantly increased in the last five years, “peaking at close to 13,000 in 2013, more than double the number in 2009” (Noriega 2016). In 2015, there were about 450,000 undocumented Indians in the United States, making them the fourth largest undocumented community (Iyer 2015:122).

While most undocumented South Asians overstayed their visas, the number of Indians attempting to cross into the United States through Mexico has recently increased. The number multiplied to 1,200 in 2010. In 2013, eighty-three percent of Indians facing deportation were

kept in jail by law enforcement, and this is a higher percentage than any other ethnic group including Mexicans who had the highest rates of detention between 2003 and 2014 (Noriega 2016).

In sum, South Asians occupy multiple and contradictory positions in the American class and racial scheme. Their “experiences merge” those of twentieth century European “ethnic” immigrants who eventually became accepted as White with those of traditionally racialized minorities such as Blacks and Latinos (Kurien 2005:439). While they are commonly touted by journalists, politicians, and educators as a model minority, many South Asians struggle to make ends meet. Since September 11th they have also been particularly singled out — along with Arabs, Middle Easterners, and Muslims from numerous racial and ethnic groups — by domestic laws and foreign policies in the name of homeland security, freedom, and democracy.

However, despite their increasing numbers and disenfranchisement,¹⁰ low income South Asians have traditionally been underrepresented in both academic and mainstream media portrayals. By studying children of the second wave of South Asians, it is possible to learn about race more broadly in the United States in the post-9/11 era. Their paradoxical social positioning makes them apt research subjects in an exploration of racial formation and cultural citizenship in the United States that goes beyond a binary Black-White racial model. Analyzing my research participants’ paradoxical position led to revelations about race, including its contradictions and

¹⁰ Between 2000 and 2010, the South Asian population in the United States grew 81%, making it the “fastest growing major ethnic group in the United States” (South Asian Americans Leading Together and Asian American Federation 2012). In this time, the Indo-Caribbean population grew 23%, Bangladeshis 212%, Pakistanis 137%, Nepalis 561%, and Indians 69%. Indians and Pakistanis are the third and seventh largest Asian American ethnic populations, while Bangladeshis and Nepalis are in the top twenty Asian American ethnic groups in terms of size (South Asian Americans Leading Together and Asian American Federation 2012).

relations to power beyond a single scale. Furthermore, using ethnographic methods allowed me to observe and learn about the organization of race and racism in real time.

FIELDSITE AND ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY

My research participants were part of this second major wave of South Asian immigration to the United States in the late 20th and early 21st century, mostly as members of the second or 1.5 generation.¹¹ Their ages ranged from twelve to twenty-eight, with the majority falling between fifteen and twenty-years-old. Theorizing directly from their daily lived realities as working class Desis offers a unique lens into how race is being reconfigured and experienced in novel ways in the 21st century. Their perceptions of their everyday experiences — such as wearing a headscarf in public or entering school through a metal detector — reveal how race is constituted out of the interconnected domains of criminal justice, education, and immigration and impacts youths' daily interactions. These spheres operate through ideologies of color blindness and risk management, which in turn justify and normalize minority surveillance, shape who is seen as an American, and foster inter-minority tensions. The types of race and racism evident in the current racial formation call out for ethnographic techniques, which can address questions of climate and forms of racism that are hidden or appear subtle but have a meaningful, lasting impact.

I carried out ethnographic fieldwork for sixteen months between 2009 and 2013 in New York City, which has the largest population of Bangladeshis, Indians, Nepalis, and Pakistanis in the United States, including a substantial number of undocumented immigrants (“A Community of Contrasts. Asian Americans in the United States” 2011). New York City has a majority

minority population, which is important to consider because the country is currently shifting into a majority minority demographic. This shift will necessitate new ways of looking at race and culture, which are already relevant to New York City. New York City consists of five boroughs, and the majority of my research participants lived in Queens (where I also resided), followed by Brooklyn, and then the Bronx. It is important, however, to keep in mind that many of their families moved around, and a number of youth had resided in two or more of these boroughs. I also got to know a few youth from Manhattan and Long Island.

Queens is the largest borough geographically and the second most populous after Brooklyn. 13% of Queens residents are living below the poverty line. 28% of adults age twenty-five and older have a high school diploma as their highest educational degree, 10% have a graduate degree, and 11% have less than a high school education (Eng 2012). With residents from over one hundred countries speaking 138 different languages, Queens has been touted as the most diverse NYC borough (with Brooklyn in close competition) and one of the most diverse urban areas anywhere (Davidson 2010; “Queens, New York” 2016). In 1970, 21% of Queens’ population was foreign-born, and by 2000 that number had shot up to more than 46%. Currently, 48% of Queens residents were born outside of the United States, and 56% speak a language besides English (Eng 2012).

A demographer at New York City’s Planning Department notes that Queens has “1 million immigrants and a mix that is perhaps unprecedented in this borough’s history” (quoted in Colangelo 2009). He points out that the Bronx has a large Hispanic population; Brooklyn has a large Black-Caribbean population; and Manhattan and Staten Island have large White populations. He notes that Queens, in contrast, has a racial demographic with “equal

11 I define the 1.5 generation as youth who immigrated to the United States by the age of twelve.

components of the major groups,” meaning White, Hispanic, Black, Asian, and multi-racial (quoted in Colangelo 2009). From 2000 to 2010 the White and Black population decreased in Queens, while the Asian and Latino populations grew.¹² Indians form one of the largest ethnic groups at 5% (Eng 2012).

Queens is also famous for its South Asian ethnic enclaves, most notably Jackson Heights. The first time I visited Jackson Heights, I was awestruck by how much it reminded me of visiting cities in India, in contrast to the “Little India” locations in Edison, New Jersey and Artesia, California that were full of Desi restaurants, grocery stores, and clothing shops but still very much looked to me like the United States. The everyday details of Jackson Heights, in contrast, reminded me of India¹³ — the large advertisements with Bollywood actors, the older men congregating outdoors drinking chai, the street vendors, the below street level stores, and even the paan stains by the Patel Brothers grocery store!

All in all I conducted and recorded mostly one-on-one semi-structured audio interviews, a few group interviews, and participant observation with approximately one hundred youth. Since then I have stayed in contact with many of my research participants as they have hit major life milestones like finishing high school, graduating college, and even getting married. The fact that I am a second generation Indian American helped me establish a connection with youth. They often stated explicitly that they felt I could relate to aspects of their backgrounds. And I sometimes had similar New York experiences as youth, given common public perceptions of our ethnic and religious backgrounds.

¹² Between 2000 and 2010, Whites decreased by about 116,000 and Blacks by 27,000. Asians grew by 119,000 and Latinos by 57,000 (Eng 2012).

¹³ Though Jackson Heights reminded me personally of India, it is important to note that the businesses and organizations reflected many different parts of South Asia.

Parents liked the fact that their children were spending time with a South Asian getting a higher education, and they welcomed me with incredible warmth when I visited their homes. They usually asked me about my Indian background and chatted about their children's schooling. Being Californian and South Indian also gave me some distance and neutrality among my research participants, since none shared those specifics of my background. Sometimes youth would ask me questions about living in Los Angeles, and when the Bollywood film *Chennai Express* was released I got several questions and compliments about South Indian fashion and languages.

Ethnographic research gave me the means to build long-term, in-depth relationships with working class South Asian youth, which allowed me to analyze the multiple and sometimes contradictory ways they engaged with race and racism. Long-term ethnographic work is uniquely suited to my research project for several reasons. First, race and racism can be uncomfortable and difficult topics to discuss, particularly in a time period when ideas of color blindness and political correctness are popular. My dissertation's focus on intersubjective and emotional experiences of race and racism necessitated building long-term relationships, involving both observation and interviews, in order to have access to and comprehension of youths' interactions and feelings.

Second, given the vulnerabilities faced by the community to which youth belonged — including the presence of South Asian informants and having an undocumented immigration status — it was important for me to spend an extensive period of time in New York City to build up my credibility. Third, some of my older research participants and their friends had been offended by previous interactions with journalists and academics whom they felt had looked

down upon them. Living in New York City over several years allowed me the opportunity to demonstrate my sincerity and commitment to the community I was researching.

DESI RISING UP & MOVING

In order to establish my legitimacy, it made sense to initially approach research participants through an established, trusted community organization. Initially I researched youth affiliated with Desis Rising Up & Moving (DRUM),¹⁴ a multi-generational, members-led non-profit in Queens that has campaigned since 2000 to empower South Asian low wage immigrant workers, youth, and families in New York City.^{15 16} DRUM was a prime research setting for several reasons.

First, DRUM provided me with the means to meet and form relationships with urban South Asian youth who might otherwise have been uncomfortable with an adult trying to recruit them as research participants. Second, DRUM strove to create a secure space and opportunities for youth marginalized by their race, religion, income, and immigration status to speak about their experiences during structured activities and informal social time.

Third, DRUM served as a tool of self-realization for youth. Through political education workshops and community organizing around current issues, it encouraged young people to see the relationship between local long-standing issues and global changes. It made visible the

14 DRUM's name is now "DRUM - South Asian Workers Center."

15 "Members-led" means that members identify the issues facing their community as well as develop a plan of action for political and social change.

16 DRUM was founded in 2000 by Monami Maulik. Maulik grew up in the 1980s in a working class Indian family in New York City. In her younger years, there were few other South Asians families in her neighborhood, but in the 1990s she noticed an influx of South Asian immigrants who became a part of the service sector. Recognizing the difficulties they faced in terms of immigration, employment, and policing, she founded DRUM as a space to build up the power and collective voice of marginalized South Asian workers and their children.

impacts of the domestic and international wars on terror and the connections between race, immigration, and war. In other words, it served as a space for youth to learn about and navigate the post-9/11 landscape.

I gathered data through utilizing ethnographic methods: participant observation and interviewing, in particular. While I was in New York, I attended DRUM youth meetings and events, which occurred weekly and later monthly, and served as spaces where youth could discuss the issues they faced, current world events, and how to strategically change both. For three summers, I was present at DRUM's annual youth internship, which consisted of workshops and fieldtrips. I also observed events such as member recruitment outreach, press conferences, testimonials at city hearings, and rallies. I arrived early to events and stayed afterward whenever possible because it gave me the opportunity to interact with youth informally. I also spent time with them when they hung out at the DRUM office and attended DRUM's social events.

At these occasions I took note of attendance, participation, and references to race and belonging. I also paid attention to the interactions between older and younger DRUM members, which revealed some of the similarities and differences in their experiences of growing up and living in New York City. This in turn helped me understand how New York had changed throughout time; for example, before and after September 11th. I wrote notes in real time in situations where I could be subtle. Otherwise, I audio recorded my notes and impressions immediately afterward, and later typed them up.

Since youth behaved more freely in informal settings without adult supervision, I also spent significant time with youth outside organizational settings where they could express

After September 11th, DRUM made a name for itself nationally through its swift response to Special Registration and the disappearances of local community members. It continues to mobilize its members to strive for economic and educational justice as well as civil and immigrant rights at local, national, and global levels.

themselves without needing to follow DRUM's rules of conduct. My time with youth outside of DRUM grew exponentially as I got to know them. I spent time with youth in groups and individually, in order to account for peer pressure and influence. For example, with them I rode on the subway, socialized with their friends, walked around the park and mall, browsed YouTube and Facebook, and attended cultural and religious celebrations. I also accepted invitations to meet youths' families in their homes and attended social events hosted by their parents. Oneka LaBennett notes that young people are often “most animated when talking about consumer culture,” and this can be revealing of their identifications, opinions, and positions (LaBennett 2011:11). As such, I paid attention to the ways in which youth drew upon popular culture, including material items and social media, to express themselves and actively create their social worlds.

Youth frequently interacted with one another through social media sites such as Facebook. Their activity on several social media sites such as Instagram was displayed on their Facebook. In this age of social media, it was necessary to have a presence online in order to form a connection with youth. Many youth did not use email regularly nor could they always afford or access cell phones. Thus, Facebook was essential to keep in touch with them. Youth understood I was a researcher, so I could presume that consent extended to social media. I “friended” them and accepted their “friend requests.” I did, however, limit what was visible on my profile, so that all my personal information was not accessible to youth.

Initially I carried out my interviews at the DRUM office given that it was a safe and private place. As youth became familiar with me and the office became more crowded, I generally met them at cafes, restaurants, and parks. In these interviews I began by gaining a broad overview of their lives. For example, I asked them about their family backgrounds, tastes

in movies and music, and social media usage. In regard to school, I asked them about resources, friend groups and fights, and racial stereotypes and jokes. I asked them questions about the racial groups with whom they interacted and about fitting into a multi-racial context in their neighborhoods. I talked to them about their experiences with police surveillance and discipline and asked their opinions of what they learned at DRUM. My questions were open-ended, so youth would elaborate on their answers. This format allowed me to analyze how they understood the questions being asked as well. I carried out informal follow-up interviews to ask about key events in their daily lives and their impact on their perceptions of race and belonging in New York City.

To further grasp South Asian history in New York City, I looked through DRUM's numerous archival materials. This included its various publications over the years, including flyers, pamphlets, community research reports, and documentaries. Seeing documents such as the logs of phone calls for help that the organization received immediately after September 11th added to my mental picture of the working class South Asian community post-9/11.

I also looked through DRUM's extensive collections of photographs, videos, and news articles referencing the organization and its members. Details such as the signs members carried in photographs were telling about what issues have been important to the community since 2000. I also video recorded and took photographs of DRUM activities and events, including rallies and press conferences. This process made me a familiar face, and gave me the opportunity to continually meet and directly interact with members.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Half-way through my fieldwork, I also began researching working class Desi youth uninvolved with DRUM. My interview questions followed the format of my interviews with

DRUM youth, minus the questions about DRUM, and I observed them in similar situations as DRUM youth, generally with their friends and family. I also connected with them through social media. I met youth mostly through youth referrals as well as through two other small non-profits focused on youth education and leadership.

During the summer of 2013, I interviewed and observed youth involved in a leadership program and girls' group at South Asian Youth Action! (SAYA!), a well-known South Asian youth organization in Queens. I observed the youth during their SAYA! workshops and fieldtrips, including a multi-day trip to Washington D.C., which allowed me to spend extensive informal time with them in transit and at the hotel. I also hung out with youth when they socialized and browsed online in SAYA!'s computer room, and I saw them at community events.

SAYA! youth came from both working and middle class backgrounds. Getting to know middle class youth allowed me to contextualize my fieldwork with my predominantly working class participants. Furthermore, the majority of SAYA! youth, along with most of my research participants uninvolved with DRUM, did not participate in political organizing activities like the youth at DRUM. Thus, interviewing and spending time with them gave me a sense of how youth who had not been exposed to community organizing or political education might view life in New York City.

ANALYSIS AND WRITING

Upon completion of my fieldwork, I conducted qualitative analysis of my interviews and in-depth observation notes. I transcribed relevant interviews, paying attention to references to diversity, race, and racism. In order to accurately assess youth in the post-9/11 generation, it was important to realize that sometimes their references to race were indirect since they had been socialized in school and through the media to adopt multicultural and color blind ideology and

rhetoric. I organized my interviews along with my notes according to emerging dissertation themes such as immigration issues, post-September 11th backlash, school policing, etc. I also arranged my materials according to the ages of my participants and the years during which I interacted with them, so I could temporally contextualize them.

I kept several broad questions in mind as I sorted through my interviews and notes:

- ⤴ How did youth who only knew the post-9/11 world experience and enact race and cultural citizenship? When, where, and how did youth see race and culture?
- ⤴ Where and at what times did youth feel like they belonged or feel excluded and/or scared, and how did diversity, racism, religion, and immigration status factor into this?
- ⤴ How did youth use social media and popular culture to enact and reflect upon multiculturalism, racial dynamics, and their feelings of belonging/exclusion?
- ⤴ Had youth ever had comments made to them about September 11th, terrorism, or immigration, and if so, by whom and in what context? How did they conceptualize and/or internalize these experiences? Did they bring up these topics themselves? When and with whom?
- ⤴ What were youths' experiences with law enforcement? What meaning did these encounters have in their lives?
- ⤴ What do the answers to these questions tell us about racial formation after September 11th?

I wanted to make youth perspectives central to my study of racial formation in the 21st century, and as such I include many direct quotes from youth. Protecting the privacy of my research participants was of the utmost importance to me, and in order to do so, I gave them all pseudonyms, though I picked names that made sense to their country of origin and religious

background.¹⁷ Furthermore, in order to make my research participants even harder to identify, some of the characters in my dissertation are composites of multiple people. I also changed the names of locations whenever possible. It is especially important to take such steps in the age of social media when youth make many details of their lives public.

MAPPING RACIAL FORMATION

In this dissertation, I am mapping out a new racial formation in the post-9/11 time period. The concept of racial formation emphasizes a process-oriented, historicized notion of race that accounts for its presence at micro- and macro-social levels, its relational and shifting nature, and its contestation politically (Omi and Winant 2009). There are three ways I lay out the 21st century racial formation and the state's current focus on preemptively identifying and diffusing racialized threats to public safety.

SOUTH ASIAN POSITIONING

Firstly, I recognize that my research participants present a unique vantage point due to their positioning, in the post-9/11 time period, at the nexus of the wars on terror, immigrants, crime, and youth. In order to analyze how national racial panics over terrorism, urban criminality, and unlawful immigration in fact overlap and feed one another, contributing to a widespread prioritization of security and order maintenance measures over civil liberties, I draw upon scholarship theorizing the intersections between the surveillance, criminalization, and racialization of Arab, Black, and Latino communities. More specifically, I bring together work by scholars such as anthropologist Junaid Rana and sociologist Victor Rios who examine

¹⁷ I did not try to pick names that took into account regional or state specifics.

processes of criminalization that are flexible in their potential to target a range of marginalized minority populations.

For example, Rana (2011) discusses how immigration and terrorism are tied together through the global racialization and criminalization of Muslims in the post-9/11 era. He contextualizes the current Islamic peril within a long American history of moral panics that have fostered fears of terror, illegality, and migration through constructing certain “foreign” groups as national security threats that warrant precautionary monitoring and containment by the state. Like Rana, anthropologist Nadine Naber identifies how conceptualizations of Muslims are “open-ended and arbitrary” in their ability to connect multiple figures to terrorism, particularly working class immigrants (Naber 2007:289). She also references how the War on Terror has led to an increase in police brutality and decrease in social services and school funding in marginalized communities of color.

Rios (2011), on the other hand, analyzes fears of allegedly dangerous low income Black and Latino boys. He conceptualizes the youth control complex, the ubiquitous criminalization of marginalized minority male youth, and I apply this theory to working class Desi youth caught up in the intersections of the wars on terror, immigrants, drugs, and crime. Rios asserts that everyday, even mundane, youth behaviors are surveilled and hypercriminalized in the multiple spheres of their lives — at school, at home, in the media, and in public — transforming at-risk youth into a threat to society. Relatedly, sociologist Emmeline Taylor (2013) and education scholar Pauline Lipman (2009) connect the normalization of the surveillance and preventative measures in the War on Terror to the penal management of students in schools. By examining Desi youth’s experiences with surveillance and criminalization post-9/11, I demonstrate how the

wars on terror, immigrants, crime, and youth feed one another, shaping racial positioning and mechanisms of social control in the 21st century.

INTERSECTING SCALES OF RACE

Secondly, I analyze the post-9/11 racial formation by considering scale and location. More specifically, I look at intersections between the roles of the state, laws, and policies in shaping racial formation and intersubjective and emotional productions of race. I do so through bringing together literatures that evaluate one or more of these scales.

Given popular perceptions of the 21st century as the post-racial era, the state utilizes color blind terminology, and individuals often keep their feelings and experiences of race and racism private. It is important to understand the nuances of color blindness in order to recognize and grasp indirect references to or avoidance of race in the contemporary United States. To this end, I draw upon conceptualizations of color blind ideology by sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003, 2006, 2011) who cites its increased popularity in the United States since the election of Barack Obama.

The scholarship mentioned in the previous section includes an examination of the role of the state in the current racial formation. Rios notes that hypercriminalization occurs, in part, because the state has inserted punitive and crime-control practices into traditionally nurturing institutions in civil society, expanding networks of social control. Urban education scholar Kathleen Nolan (2011) similarly notes the expanse of the criminal justice system into civil society, focusing on the growth of crime control and order maintenance measures in the public education system. It is especially critical to trace the extension of crime control practices into civil society at this point in time when scholars of neoliberalism are arguing that the state is in

retreat. An analysis of race shows otherwise, and therefore it is critical to contemporary theories of the state and subjectivity.

Rana argues for an “ethnographic study of the state” through examination of subject formation and constructions of legality (Rana 2011:20). His conceptualizations of the state are a vital component in his theorization of the global racial system. I also build upon the work of scholars such as Sunaina Maira (2009), Nicholas De Genova (2005, 2006, 2010), and Deepa Kumar (2012) who examine the roles of the state, legal system, and law enforcement in preemptively monitoring, criminalizing, and disciplining targeted populations during the War on Terror. I utilize sociologist Ulrich Beck’s (2008) concept of a “risk society” to analyze how the state emphasizes and defends precautionary tactics, which target certain racialized groups through constructing a state of emergency.

In order to examine how race configures in youths’ emotions and interpersonal interactions, including reading racist intentions, I build upon anthropologist John Jackson Jr.’s theorizations of sincerity and racial paranoia. Jackson is focused on feelings and identifications that people hold in their hearts and may not reveal outwardly. Sincerity is premised on the true intentions in people’s hearts, “the really real” (Jackson Jr. 2005:29). Relatedly, racial paranoia is a fear of people’s insincerity. More specifically, it is a fear of the racism that people may internally possess but conceal given current social emphases on political correctness and color blindness (Jackson Jr. 2008).

I also draw upon Rios’ theorizations of youths’ internalizations of criminality. Through accounting for their senses of stigmatization, embarrassment, and hopelessness as a result of their hypercriminalization, Rios strives to understand larger racialized punitive systems of social control. He questions how youths’ frequent punishments shape their feelings about themselves

and their futures. This is essential to consider because, as Rios demonstrates, feelings of disempowerment can actually lead youth into the criminal justice system (Rios 2011).

BELONGING

Lastly, by applying theories of cultural citizenship to a multi-racial, majority minority context, I can further evaluate how race and belonging are shifting in the 21st century when my research participants are excluded by national security rhetoric but included in American multiculturalism. I build upon theories of cultural citizenship put forth by anthropologists Renato Rosaldo (1994, 1998) and Aihwa Ong (2003) by shifting the focus away from Whiteness. My research participants challenge Rosaldo's ideas of belonging in relation to the White dominant society. To them, engaging with American society does not mean fitting into the White mainstream with which they have limited personal contact. My research participants also do not map easily onto the Black-White scale Ong identifies because they continuously undergo numerous, and at times conflicting, ideological Blackening and Whitening processes with contextually shifting values. I seek to complicate the relationship between cultural citizenship and race by looking beyond a Black-White binary to account for the nuances and contradictions of cultural citizenship and racial positioning.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

PART I: BELONGING IN A MAJORITY MINORITY CITY

Chapter One portrays how belonging in New York, a majority minority city, is premised on “multicultural cultural citizenship” — in the physical and virtual worlds — which bypasses orientation to the White mainstream and diasporic nostalgia for a motherland. Instead, multicultural cultural citizenship involves youth belonging through 1) celebrating and consuming

the city's diversity and 2) embodying cultural sincerity -- that is, staying true in their hearts to their heritage as South Asians and urban New Yorkers. I will highlight these processes through examining youth participation in local community events and social media websites, as well as their judging of their peers' cultural sincerity.

PART II: RISK SOCIETY

Chapters Two and Three, in contrast, present youths' concurrent lack of belonging in an allegedly color blind "risk society" (Beck 2008) where the government and mainstream media frame them as a potential national security threat. This leads to youth monitoring people's intentions in order to identify potential racism. Chapter Two illustrates how risk discourse disseminated in the 21st century constructs an alleged state of emergency and racializes seemingly non-racial categories: Muslims and immigrants. I examine this process through analyzing the patriotism that emerged post-September 11th and the parameters of everyday racial jokes. Chapter Three illustrates how living in a so-called risk society places targeted communities at risk of hate crimes and precludes their rights to safety. This in turn fosters youths' racial paranoia, fears of racism that might be hidden in the hearts of seemingly politically correct individuals.

PART III: YOUTH CONTROL COMPLEX

Chapters Four and Five analyze the "youth control complex" (Rios 2011), in which youth face a ubiquitous sense of criminalization. Youth are caught up in an expansive punitive system of social control that regulates marginalized, racialized youth by hypercriminalizing their everyday actions. More specifically, Chapter Four demonstrates that while South Asian youth do not face the highest levels of punitive treatment by the state, they exist at the nexus of social issues involving the surveillance and the racialization of marginalized groups of color post-

September 11th. Their experiences with the youth control complex illustrate how systems of criminalization associated respectively with Blacks, Latinos, and Arabs actually support one another. Lastly, Chapter Five demonstrates how crime-control methods are woven by the state into public schools in order to maintain social control and normalize surveillance and racialization starting in childhood. School accountability tactics stressing safety measures and standardized testing socialize youth to feel dehumanized as mere statistics and potential criminals in the eyes of the state.

Throughout history, South Asians in the United States have been ambiguously situated in multiple positions in terms of legal and cultural citizenship and the American racial model. Their continued ambiguity — stemming from their simultaneous positioning 1) in America’s multicultural model as a model minority and 2) at the nexus of safety and security issues as a racialized threat — makes them keen subjects for in-depth research on 21st century racial formation as the United States moves toward becoming a majority minority nation. By examining their paradoxical positioning, I illuminate how contemporary emphases on multiculturalism and diversity can contribute to a sense of belonging but also mask the existence of racial inequities in the so-called post-racial era. I also demonstrate that post-9/11 race and racism operate through “color blind” risk management, safety, and accountability practices, which cloak processes of racialization, criminalization, and social control – including in traditionally nurturing institutions.

PART I: BELONGING IN A MAJORITY MINORITY CITY

CHAPTER ONE: MULTICULTURAL CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

INTRODUCTION

One afternoon my cousin, who was originally from California, and had recently moved to New York from the mid-West, suggested we visit Central Park. As we walked along a street bordering the park, we noticed a roadside booth with prints from old movies. We were examining a print of *The Wizard of Oz* when the vendor, whose booth it was, struck up a conversation with us. His first question was “Where are you from?” My cousin immediately stiffened and defensively replied, “We’re from *here*,” meaning the United States. I jumped in saying, “India, our parents are from India.” The man smiled brightly and announced that he too was from India, though he was Tibetan. We made small talk for a few minutes about where in India he was from before making our purchase — with a discount for having Indian roots too.

As we continued our walk to the park entrance I explained to my cousin that in New York, in instances like these, the person asking where you are from is usually just trying to connect. “Really?” she asked, then stated what I already knew: in the past places we had lived those four words “Where are you from?” usually translated to “You are not really American because you are not White.” I replied, “Well we’re in New York now.” I held up my new *The Wizard of Oz* print and quipped, “We’re not in Kansas anymore.”

In contrast to my cousin and myself, being asked where you are from was generally not a loaded question for my research participants. Upon meeting me they would frequently ask about or try to guess my ethnic background. This inquiry seemed natural to them because they were coming of age as part of the most racially and ethnic diverse generation in American history, in a

city where it is typical to be from somewhere else or have close ties to immigrants (Kasinitz et al. 2004; Miller 2013).¹⁸

My research participants lived in a world populated by non-immigrant minorities as well as immigrants of color and their children — including, importantly, other South Asians. On a day-to-day basis my research participants had little contact with Whites, particularly members of the middle and upper classes. They had multiple opportunities to express their cultural backgrounds, in both the physical and virtual worlds,¹⁹ and as I demonstrate in this chapter, there was even an expectation to do so in order to fit into city life. Unlike youth in past studies, these youth did not face pressure to choose between static notions of White American culture and their ethnic background because they had limited exposure to mainstream Whites and because being a New Yorker meant being “*both* ethnic and American” (Kasinitz et al. 2004:397). Being a New Yorker involved actively embracing their South Asian heritage.

Between 1970 and 1990, NYC saw a “sharp increase in multi-ethnic census tracts and a decline in all-white tracts,” and the most common combination of people in mixed neighborhoods are Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians (Warikoo 2004:364). Native Whites with native parents no longer form the numerically dominant population in New York; instead, they are just one of many groups in a multicultural city, albeit with disproportionate power. Compared to other cities with large populations of immigrants, such as Los Angeles or Miami, the immigrant population is not predominantly Latino. The overlap of many communities in New York City leads to different populations shaping one another rather than solely living as

¹⁸ New York is different from other major American cities in that the “dominant racial group has been marked by ethnic variety and all ethnic groups have experienced ethnic diversity” (Kasinitz et al. 2006:398).

¹⁹ Though I have listed these separately for the sake of organization, the physical/real world and the virtual world do not exist in opposition to one another and in fact sometimes overlap in multiple ways.

“balkanized groups huddled within their own enclaves” (Kasinitz et al. 2004:16). Even neighborhoods popularly associated with one group often are, in reality, composed of diverse communities (example: Jackson Heights).

In this chapter I explore how Desi youth who lived in a multi-ethnic urban setting, with no numerical majority, organized their social worlds. I found that they did so, in part, through participating in South Asian and multicultural events and programs that occurred online, in their schools, and in their neighborhoods. Their involvement in these activities contributed to their sense of everyday cultural belonging in New York City.

Existing literature on multiculturalism and cultural citizenship could lead to predictions that youth would be oriented to Whiteness, with incorporation into the White mainstream as the ultimate end (Ong 2003; Prashad 2000; Rosaldo 1994). Previous South Asian diasporic studies could lead to an assumption that youth would have a nostalgic cultural attachment to an imagined “motherland” (Leonard 1997; Maira 2002; Purkayastha 2005). However, by theorizing from youth engagement with cultural festivals and social media, I illustrate that South Asian youth belonging was not premised on an orientation to Whiteness nor indicative of nostalgia for an idealized homeland.

Instead, I suggest that in the current time period, belonging in New York translates to “multicultural cultural citizenship,” which operates in the physical and virtual worlds through interrelated mechanisms that are mediated by gender: publicly performing one’s identity as an urban New Yorker of South Asian descent, and consuming cultural diversity through participation in community events and social media.

I then go on to explain that multicultural cultural citizenship is also premised on what anthropologist John Jackson Jr. calls “sincerity” — that is, showcasing who you are in your heart

of hearts. Performing cultural identity was not enough — it had to read as genuine, and youth evaluated each other’s expressions of sincerity. My research participants placed an emphasis on staying true to their Desi heritage as well as their background as New Yorkers who embraced both urban style and the cultural diversity for which their city is famous. Lastly, I illuminate the paradoxical impact of multicultural cultural citizenship. While multicultural cultural citizenship translates to youths' cultural belonging in New York City, it also diminishes the reality of youths’ simultaneous racial exclusion. It does so in part through contributing to popular notions of the United States as a color blind society.

MULTICULTURAL CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

National belonging does not come simply through legal citizenship with its “idiom of rights” (Ong 2003:xvii). Instead, belonging is also dependent, as noted in theorizations of cultural citizenship, on the “social realm” (Maira 2009:10). In Asian American studies scholar Lisa Sun-Hee Park’s (2005) discussion of second generation Korean and Chinese Americans, she states that consumption represents citizenship and identity. As such, proof of material wealth must be constantly and publicly displayed for other to see. While Park is talking about the consumption of material goods that stands for economic upward mobility and access to social citizenship, in the case of my research participants a connection can be made between consuming cultural diversity and publicly performing specific aspects of their cultural identities in order to access what I term “multicultural cultural citizenship.”

Multicultural cultural citizenship involved youth actively engaging 1) their South Asian heritage as one of many ethnic groups in NYC; 2) their positioning as New Yorkers through adjusting to the parameters of urban cool; and 3) local cultural diversity. While listed separately

here for the sake of clarity, these elements overlapped with one another in physical and virtual spaces, as will become evident throughout this section. For example, part of urban cool was employing one's cultural background and appreciating diversity.

I illustrate the elements of multicultural cultural citizenship by first considering youth interactions with *melas* (South Asian community festivals). Second, I examine youth's engagement with Desi life and urban cool in America through their online activities, including watching and sharing videos by charismatic South Asian YouTube personalities. Third, I demonstrate and analyze youths' active efforts to demonstrate their appreciation of diversity.

Through engaging multicultural cultural citizenship, youth were focused on creating a complex South Asian American social world and sense of belonging for themselves, as one of many groups within a majority minority city with a diverse cultural spectrum. I demonstrate that this world was not, however, premised on the basis of a nostalgia for a distant authentic subcontinental culture. Nor did it indicate that youth wanted to ultimately assimilate into the White mainstream through a multicultural pathway or orient themselves toward it to access cultural citizenship.

PERFORMING CULTURE

Each summer, during *mela* (South Asian community festival) season in Queens, a large South Asian service organization hosts its well-known mela. This mela was one of my favorite Desi events because each of the three years I was in attendance, I would invariably bump into a wide range of my research participants, as well as their friends and family, as I browsed the jewelry and binged on *chaat* (Desi street snacks). This mela differed from others in that it attracted a pan-South Asian crowd and a larger number of young people. Each year I attended, the event felt cozier as I grew to know more local youth, helped put finishing touches on their

costumes, and laughed with them at the well-meaning city official who always confused the name of the mela with a common South Asian breakfast item!

At the mela, there were many booths with information about local South Asian community organizations and with Desi food, jewelry, and clothes for sale. The main attraction, however, aside from socializing, was the cultural program. Performers put in a lot of energy to plan their acts, and occasionally would even ask me to share advertisements announcing tryouts for their dance troupes. The acts ranged from Tibetan folk dances to Hindi film song renditions, and the performers were mostly youth. The most popular youth act was an all-male Bollywood dance group that upped the ante each year by adding props and removing articles of clothing (without getting too scandalous!). These performers always drew the loudest cheers, hoots, and catcalls from the young people in the crowd.

In front of the stage was a large patch of artificial grass where youth and their families sat and took pictures of the performers they knew or admired. To the right of the stage, young people in costume excitedly greeted their friends and scanned the crowd as they waited to perform. And to the far left of the stage was a public park that sat at a higher elevation. There, local neighborhood children enjoyed themselves on the playground equipment, while co-ed groups of South Asian teenagers hung out. From this spot, boys in fitted pants and trendy sneakers and girls with winged eyeliner and red lipstick — all elements of urban style — could maintain some privacy by being further from the stage, while also having a clear view of the whole event.

By engaging in community events such as this mela — as consumers, performers, or both — youth and their families were creating a public diasporic South Asian social world in New York City where they could celebrate their cultural background through food, fashion, music,

and dance. Every year the almost exclusively Desi audience grew bigger, particularly the youth segment. It was precisely the accessibility of youth-inclusive South Asian community events,²⁰ of which melas were just one example, which led youth to frequently tell me that Queens was their favorite borough.

When describing the mela to Shabana, a Bengali woman in her mid-twenties, I mentioned meeting youth attendees and performers who traveled from other boroughs. She marveled at how a mela could become such a big social event for youth. This woman had grown up in a predominantly Polish community in Brooklyn at a time when there were no local South Asian festivals or social media posts advertising such events for youth. The people she knew also did not commonly travel to Queens to attend the Desi events there. In her childhood she had felt self-conscious of being different from her peers and was amazed by how the norms for what was cool for youth had shifted as the Desi population had grown.

Online Performances and Consumption

In contrast to Shabana's earlier life experiences, presently, as summer approached, Facebook was full of status updates about melas by my younger research participants. Youth would post online, for example, about who was going or even video teasers of upcoming performances. Sometimes young local South Asian YouTube celebrities posted about their plans to attend, which in turn attracted middle and high school girls to the events. Even when youth attended region/country-specific melas with a larger ratio of adults and less youth centered entertainment, they enjoyed posting selfies of themselves (sometimes with friends) "owning" and looking good in classic Desi attire with coiffed hair.

²⁰ Other examples of events include parties on Goldman, a street full of hookah bars, some of which allowed underage youth; Desi dances held on college campuses; and public religious celebrations for Eid and Holi.

Due to advancements in technology, my research participants were growing up in a media saturated world as part of a generation that has a higher capability to consume, produce, and share media content through the internet. New media indicates a switch to daily “active participation in a *networked*, highly heterogeneous and open cultural public sphere” (Burgess et al. 2006:5). Social media sites (for example: Tumblr, Ask.fm, Instagram, Vine, Snapchat, etc.), particularly Facebook and YouTube, were a fundamental part of my research participants’ daily realities, and it is not possible to understand how youth culturally categorized their worlds without considering the digital sphere.

A significant portion of my research participants’ Facebook posts referenced or explained what it meant to be a young “Brown”/Desi person growing up in the United States. These posts often referenced topics like consuming curry, Bollywood songs and celebrities, and South Asian soap operas their families streamed at home. Numerous posts were complaints or comedic commentary — sometimes a combination of both — about South Asian parents and their interactions with their children. Posting about being Brown allowed youth to normalize and process their experiences, and even transform moments of embarrassment or tension — often with the first generation — into opportunities for connecting and laughing with other Desi youth. Any South Asian youth could gain a foothold into this world by simply going online.

According to a 2010 Pew Research Center survey, over half of American youth use social networking sites and 2/3 use technology to connect to others (Miller 2013:78-79). My research participants were constantly online, usually on their smart phones, and also on tablets and laptops in their homes. Even youth who lived with their families in cramped apartments with limited furnishings and luxuries had access to computers. During downtime at community

organizations, youth would go to the computer room and browse online or pull out their phones to share something they had seen online.

When offline, youth would still reference internet memes and videos to each other and to me. For example, girls might joke to one another saying, “No one will marry you if your roti is not round,” in reference to a popular internet meme with that phrase and an image of the Indian mother from the movie *Bend it Like Beckham* looking angry. Thus, their online and physical worlds were clearly intermixed.

Aside from melas, youth would also post statuses on social media advertising, describing, and discussing other public South Asian events such as parades, country/region specific New Year celebrations, and religious occasions. Even if youth were disinterested in attending community events or annoyed by their presence in their neighborhoods, they discussed this on Facebook, still ultimately indicating publicly (to Desis and non-Desis alike) that South Asian festivals were a part of their social worlds. Sometimes youth would complain about drama at these events, particularly girls being catty and boys getting into fights. They might not have enjoyed this aspect of South Asian community life, but they were not rejecting or embarrassed by their association with the Desi population nor hinting at an assimilationist mindset.

#melas

Mela hashtags themselves evidenced youths’ excitement to engage with elements of their perceived Desi heritage. For example, Bengali girls would post pictures of themselves wearing formal saris at melas on social media, along with hashtags such as #traditional, #desicolors, #sari, #churi, and #bindi. The hashtags were a means for youth to “performatively frame” what the melas meant to them in order to “indicate a meaning that might not be otherwise apparent” (Bonilla and Rosa 2015:5). Using a hashtag like #traditional revealed a pride in actively

performing a unique Desi identity in the real and virtual worlds. It also indicated that the norm was to *not* be #traditional. Only during special events like melas did youth value publicly appropriating “traditional” elements of South Asian culture, such as the large red bindis that older Bengali women wore.

Girls, however, would sometimes dress up for fun in Desi attire at home and post pictures online. This was acceptable, though, because it was occasional and downplayed by the girls themselves who stated that they dressed up out of boredom. Boys also posted pictures of themselves in Desi attire, though less frequently and with fewer hashtags. Their pictures were usually at events, rather than indicative of playing dress up at home. Also, their hashtags — such as #handlebar — generally referenced their intricately planned facial hair, which in addition to being fashionable in NYC could be read as indexing their cultural and religious backgrounds.

Youth mela hashtags also directly or indirectly indicated their positioning as urban New Yorkers. For example, hashtags like #aintnobodylikeadesigirl and #pharohbeardswag indicated that youth felt special expressing their Desi-ness, while simultaneously and deliberately signaling their American-ness through using slang indicative of a comfort with urban style. Urban style and cool generally referenced “Black-identified American popular culture and fashion” (Maira 2002:64).²¹

In other instances, youth used non-hyphenated self-labels and hashtags such as #Punjabi, #Bengali, and #Pakistani (versus, for example, #Indian-American), but this did not indicate a disconnect from American society but rather an engagement with it. To these youth, belonging in the U.S. meant being a New Yorker who deliberately presented one’s self as an ethnic being

²¹ As noted by South Asian American studies scholar Natasha Warikoo, consumption of hip-hop music and/or style is not a critique of mainstream norms but instead a “global, media-driven phenomenon” with which youth interact in order to be considered “cool” and popular amongst their peers (Warikoo 2011:xiii).

and celebrated cultural diversity — these hashtags did both. Because everyone around them was marked by an ethnic culture, hyphenating their identities was unnecessary and redundant. This stands in contrast with my previous example of my cousin fearing that being marked by ethnicity would drown out her American identity. Even in my own answer to the Tibetan street vendor, I had announced that our parents were from India, rather than simply saying *we* were Indian or from India.

#YouTubestars

Social media allowed for Desi youth to move beyond mainstream media representations by “collectively constructing counternarratives and reimagining group identities” (Bonilla and Rose 2015:6). Sometimes my research participants wrote original statuses, and at other times they reposted comedic memes, images, and videos. The videos were often shared on Facebook from YouTube. Presently, YouTube users watch more than six billion hours of video each month, and consumers are watching more than nine times the amount of internet videos than they did in 2010 (Friend 2014). While YouTube once consisted of amateur videos, it now has many popular professional productions being created by young people in their teens or twenties who record themselves.

In a survey conducted by the Buzz Marketing Group, results revealed that 84 percent of youth would rather go on the internet than watch television (Wells 2011). Some of my research participants enjoyed watching South Asians on mainstream television shows, such as *The Mindy Project*, but overall they strongly preferred watching original comedic YouTube videos made by young South Asians familiar with Desi culture and urban American cool. I would have loved to see “Brown” videos while growing up in a suburb of Los Angeles in the nineties, but specifically

because I knew few South Asians and had seen none — at least none with whom I could identify — in the media. The enthusiasm of my research participants’ was different, however, because they were growing up in a multicultural urban context with many South Asians.

Youth form a major segment of YouTube’s viewership,²² and it was one of my research participants’ favored mediums for several reasons (Chau 2010:66). First, YouTube’s format allows for a “participatory culture” amongst its viewers and creators (Chau 2010:67). Viewers can communicate with the content creators who take their comments seriously. It is easy for youth, including my research participants, to engage at the level they wish — as anonymous viewers, commentators, content creators, people who share videos on social media, etc. — which in turn keeps them engaged (Chau 2010).²³

Second, the productions and their charismatic stars were much more relatable to my research participants’ everyday lives than South Asians on primetime television. In watching these videos, youth felt that somebody understood what it was like to specifically be young and Brown in America, and they could share these experiences through simply sharing videos with their friends. For example, for a period of time there was a flood of YouTube videos called Sh*t _____ Say. My research participants particularly relished the South Asian specific ones about parents (for example: Bengali moms, Pakistani parents, Punjabi dads, etc.).

Third, by publicly demonstrating on Facebook and in the real world that they consumed videos by Desi YouTube stars who plugged diversity, Desi culture, and urban style — the

²² 44 percent of adolescents prefer YouTube as a “source of video entertainment” (Chau 2010:66). Teenagers form 35% of the “avid viewership who watch a video at least once a day” (Chau 2010:67).

²³ Some of my research participants worked with one another to make YouTube videos about what it was like to be a South Asian youth living in New York City.

elements of multicultural cultural citizenship — my research participants in turn could engage with multicultural cultural citizenship themselves and feel like they belonged.

My research participants primarily watched two types of Brown original YouTube videos: those made by 1) youth (usually male) in New York City such as the “Dhoom Bros” who were minor local celebrities, and 2) twenty-something South Asian American/Canadian artists such as Superwoman, Jus Reign, and Zaid Ali T whose videos have hundreds of thousands to millions of views. Here, I focus on the second category because youth shared these videos more frequently with me.

Normally, the videos lightheartedly, and at times satirically, illustrate aspects of growing up as a young South Asian in Canada and the United States. For example, they sometimes provide laughs by poking fun at ignorant but unthreatening comments and questions directed at Desis by non-Desis.²⁴ The artists are the main characters of their videos, and sometimes they play multiple roles (e.g. their own friend, mother, etc.). Occasionally the videos humorously address social issues like racism. And perhaps most interestingly, some of the videos have nothing specifically South Asian about them except the YouTube personality. For example, Superwoman posted a video about her insomnia that has hundreds of thousands of views. The fact that these YouTube artists are able to maintain such a viewership, even with videos that are not South Asian specific, is a testament to the broad popularity of their personalities. When scrolling through the comments to their videos, it is clear that they even have appeal beyond a

²⁴ This is something youth did with one another too. For example, one afternoon while waiting for our pick-up lunch order two youth and I noticed several men praying outside of the restaurant. This led to the girls talking about people who had tried to convert them, making ignorant comments in the process. One youth, Fariha, recalled a girl who had annoyed her by trying to convert her and guessing Fariha’s religion was “Indian.” Fariha was disgusted the girl thought Indian was a religion. When she pointed out to the girl that she was “wearing a big Muslim necklace,” the girl responded, “Oh you must be Middle Eastern then.” Fariha was disgusted again that the girl could not tell apart religion and ethnicity/race. Her friend shook her head sympathetically and brought up incidents where non-Desi people would ask her if she spoke “Hindu.”

South Asian audience. Some have become so popular that they now do multi-country tours and collaborate with established celebrities.

Much of their popularity stems from being South Asian and talking about common Desi youth experiences, but equally important is the manner in which they present themselves — specifically their fluency with urban style. Like other successful YouTube personas, they have outgoing, charismatic personalities. They are attractive and dress, speak, and gesture in a trendy, urban inspired fashion, unless playing a specific character who would not.

Jus Reign wears a turban, which is distinctly Sikh, but it is immaculately matched with his stylish, somewhat metrosexual, fashion. Superwoman wears a signature backwards baseball cap in most of her videos and often broadcasts from her bedroom, standing in front of a collage of posters that reference American pop culture — 1950s advertisements, a Rosie the Riveter picture, a Superman symbol, various peace signs, a coexist sticker, a picture of a monkey wearing head phones, and so on.

YouTube personalities may imitate certain mannerisms of someone from South Asia, but they distinguish themselves as members of the second generation. For example, they adopt what anthropologist Shalini Shankar, in her study of Desi youth in Silicon Valley, terms “Desi Accented English,” a manner of speaking that caricatures their parents’ generation (Shankar 2008:273). These accents, however, are performed genuinely and with affection, in contrast to the (in)famous kwik-e-mart accent. In a collaborative video with YouTube personality Ryan Higa, who is of Japanese descent, it is telling that Superwoman is offended when Higa talks to her in a mock Indian/kwik-e-mart accent. Desi YouTube personalities also utilize Punjabi or Hindi phrases for portions of their videos, but it is clear when they do that they are imitating the first generation — the way my research participants commonly did in their everyday lives.

The YouTube personas abilities to imitate Desi accents and use words from South Asian languages indicates that they see themselves as secure enough, cool enough, and distanced enough from immigrant stereotypes to utilize them to make insider jokes to other members of the second generation like my research participants (Shankar 2008:273). When the artists poke fun of elements of the South Asian community, this serves to solidify the bond between South Asian youth by bringing out shared experiences; demonstrate to the larger society that the artists and their viewers are cool and do not take South Asian culture too seriously; and allow South Asian youth to reclaim the stereotypical jokes they frequently hear about their community.

These YouTube personalities were considered cool by my research participants who viewed them as being true to their South Asian background, but also, as evidenced by their personalities and appearances, fluent with urban youth style and American popular culture. These various elements can be seen in a signature line by YouTube persona Zaid Ali T, which my research participants would jokingly quote: “Hey baby, will you be my *jelabi* (Middle Eastern and South Asian dessert)? Don’t say maybe. ;).” The use of the emoticon signifies youth; “hey baby” indexes American cool; and saying “jelabi” makes this a Desi joke.

On one level, while the subject matter of these videos often relies on common South Asian tropes, on another level, by even being YouTube personalities, these artists are introducing to the world the dynamism of being a member of the South Asian diaspora, which extends beyond the model minority and terrorist stereotypes. By doing what they do, they are demonstrating to a massive audience that South Asians in North America are not always doctors, engineers, or taxi drivers, nor are they always socially awkward, lacking fluency in English, or threatening. By posting these videos, my research participants could make these points about themselves too. In doing so, they publicly demonstrated their fluency with urban cool and

comfort with their ethnic background and were thus able to access multicultural cultural citizenship.

CONSUMING DIVERSITY

Appreciation for cultural diversity is often presented by the government and media as precisely what “makes the United States a coherent nation” (Rudrappa 2004:150). Many New Yorkers prize having multicultural knowhow and wit. Cultural capital in this context translates to knowing a little bit about and expressing some appreciation for multiple ethnic groups. With middle to upper class adult New Yorkers, this may translate into buying ethnic inspired clothing and decorative items or trying different cuisines.

My research participants did not partake in these activities but instead displayed multicultural knowhow through participating in programs that commonly had the words “multicultural,” “international,” or “global” in them. Youth demonstrated knowledge of diverse cultures during interpersonal and online peer interactions. On an everyday basis, they connected with a broader array of people (both Desi and non-Desi) than members of the upper class who boast about living in a cosmopolitan world but have limited experiences with people of color (Malkin 2004:129).²⁵

In part youth learned their appreciation for diversity in elementary and middle school through official multicultural programs and frequent socialization with various groups — racial cliques were less common at that young age. Youth generally developed an interest in the cultural backgrounds of their friends and were eager to participate in their cultural practices. For

²⁵ Youths’ parents were often less keen on their children socializing with non-Desis and partaking with cultural practices they saw at odds with South Asian values.

example, youth who had had East Asian friends in middle school developed an interest in their friends' family traditions as well as popular culture forms such as anime or K-pop.

Youth also connected with other ethnicities for which they could pass.²⁶ For instance, some young women talked about passing for Latina in middle school (before some of them started wearing hijab) and developing an interest in "Spanish" culture through their friends, which generally meant listening to Spanish music and expanding their culinary tastes through eating at their friends' houses.²⁷ Youth would also go on Facebook and "like" the posts they saw that were related to the groups in which they were interested. For example, one Indian girl commented that her sister, who was sometimes mistaken for Italian, liked everything Italian on social media.

Multicultural Festivals

Despite the fact that youth danced in South Asian cultural events, they also relished dancing in the multicultural showcases at their schools and community organizations. Youth showed me pictures and videos of past performances on their cell phones and invited me to see them perform. One youth commented:

We had one of the best multicultural shows every year [at my high school]. And 50% of it was Desi performances. *Bhangra*, and all of that. They're still trying to keep that alive, the multicultural show. There was a year they weren't going to do the multicultural show because of budget cuts and stuff, but we still managed to do it. And students who have already graduated come to join the multicultural show. There are videos on YouTube of our multicultural show...diversity is a very important part of the school.

²⁶ When youth played the icebreaker game, "Two Truths and a Lie," I noticed that one of the most frequent lies was pretending to be a member of a different race. Youth thought it was cool when they were able to pass for another race or ethnicity and liked to test out the possibility through this game.

²⁷ Youth generally ate American fast food when they did not eat home cooked food. If they wanted something nicer, they would go to chain restaurants like Applebee's or Olive Garden. Often the only "ethnic" food they regularly ate outside of home cooked meals were Middle Eastern fare from street vendors and Desi and Desi-Chinese cuisine at restaurants. As such, they generally associated other ethnic foods specifically with their friends' cultural traditions.

On one occasion, three female high school students and I hustled to William High School to watch their friends perform at the annual Multicultural Festival that was taking place Friday and Saturday evening at 7:30pm. When I asked my companions if there was usually a Desi act in such shows, they laughed and explained that there were always multiple South Asian acts, and that I was about to see the whole world. We walked into the school and passed multilingual “Welcome” signs and security guards watching multiple monitors before entering a massive auditorium filled with the friends and families of the performers.

The program had a painting with a large tree in the foreground and the city skyline in the background. The names of the acts were listed around the tree (Africa, Ecuador, Brazil, Bollywood, Nepal, Cultural Fusion, Mexico, Greece, Tibet, Aztec, NYC Urban Steppers, Middle East, Finale).²⁸ I got the impression that the tree with all its branches, superimposed over the city, represented the different groups within New York coming together as one. The show started with the pledge of allegiance and national anthem and was followed by a speech by a teacher about the importance of diversity and multiculturalism. At the very end of the show, all the performers came onto the stage for the finale, presenting a diverse multicultural rainbow. Afterward the audience members rushed to the stage to congratulate and take pictures with their performers before they headed out for a celebratory meal.

I was impressed that students would come to school on a Saturday night and pay to watch the show. It was clear how popular the Multicultural Festival was. Youth were willing to spend hours in the evenings practicing, and some of the Desi girls were excited to partake even though

²⁸ It is notable that African students had an act that was associated with a region like most of the other acts, whereas African American students were associated specifically with the United States in the “NYC Urban Steppers” group. I have discussed New Yorkers, including Whites, being expected to have an ethnicity, but for African American youth this was associated not with country of origin but with American urban culture.

they could not invite their parents who would disapprove of them dancing with boys. The Bollywood dance was preceded by a speech about the film industry in Mumbai and the beauty of women in India. While the youth danced, I could hear audience members singing along with the Hindi music. Audience members cheered loudly and enthusiastically for their friends and relatives as well as when their country of origin was mentioned. Not only was the social norm for youth to embrace and actively share their own cultural background, they also gained cultural capital for publicly celebrating other cultures as well.

While the majority of the acts represented one country or tradition, most of the youth I had come to watch were performing a “Cultural Fusion” number they had been practicing for months, which translated to “Desi-Spanish fusion.” They had advertised and hyped their performance on social media, complete with descriptive hashtags such as #culturalfusion, #multicultural, #desi, #hispanic, and my personal favorite: #dontstopgetitgetitgetyourculturalfusioninitandshit. They were especially proud to be a part of a unique fusion act that demonstrated their commitment to diversity. I was curious to see how they would perform the fusion. For example, would they use one of the many popular Bollywood songs that sampled Latin beats or Spanish lyrics?

The music and the movements for the “Spanish” and Desi portions were kept distinct, though Latino and Desi youth participated in both. The youth took turns dancing to Hindi and Spanish songs, alternating dance moves that conventionally matched the music. “Spanish” and Desi culture were thus brought together but also remained distinct. This choice fell in line with conventional multiculturalism and its notions of discrete, fixed cultures.

However, it was also meaningful in the context of multicultural cultural citizenship, in which belonging comes from sharing your ethnic heritage and celebrating diversity. Because

youth considered it cool to be true to their ethnic heritage there was no need to exoticize it or tone it down through strongly fusing it with another cultural tradition. And by performing with Latino students at their high school, Desi youth were able to express their commitment to diversity in New York City.

Diverse Friends and Traditions

Commitment to multicultural ideals sometimes took precedence over lived realities. The need to express an appreciation for cultural diversity to access multicultural cultural citizenship colored the ways in which youth viewed themselves and their largely South Asian social circles. Many youth reported groupings in their schools based on ethnicity, as is common in American high schools (Maira 2009:170; Shankar 2008:65). One youth explained, “There's some cliques...the nerds...people who just don't care...but they're all divided into their own ethnicities. There's cliques in cliques you could say.” Another girl agreed stating, “Each ethnic group has its own Barbie doll.”

Because of the sizable numbers of various ethnic groups, youth were able find a place to fit with “their own.” “The Guyanese hang out with the Guyanese, the South Asians with the South Asians, the African Americans within themselves,” one youth stated simply. Having South Asian friends seemed natural in part due to perceived cultural commonalities as well as an unstated norm that people divide by ethnicity when they reach their teens (Shankar 2008:64-65). “I guess it’s because we’re Brown...in high school you start seeing White people are with the White people, Black people are with the Black people, Brown people are with the Brown people. It’s like that. When I saw Naazneen, she was in my class, but there were other people from my classes too, but I just went to her. I straight went to her and started talking,” one young woman commented.

Despite the fact that youth usually had predominantly South Asian friends, and sometimes admitted to such, often they tried to present themselves to me and sometimes to each other as evolved multiculturalists through asserting that they had a diverse group of friends. They claimed to be different from their peers whom they recognized as grouping themselves ethnically. “I basically go from clique to clique. My friends don't hang out solely based on skin color and race,” one youth commented. “I'm different, like I hang out with everybody,” another youth stated. Some even insisted on having few South Asian friends, though this was clearly not true from my observations.

Others considered their friend circles to be diverse because they had South Asian friends of multiple nationalities. One youth stated, “I went to high school predominantly with a lot of West Indian students...I had Indian friends, Pakistani friends...I'm introduced to all kinds of diaspora of South Asian countries, so my friends are a mix.” These -- at times defensive -- insinuations on a diverse social group were consistent with the multiculturalism promoted in schools as an essential American value (Maira 2009; Shankar 2008) and with multicultural cultural citizenship's emphasis on embracing diversity.

When youth socialized with friends from a different cultural background, they would often ask each other questions on the reasons each did certain things or compare their customs. They might also let the friend partake in their cultural customs by, for example, dressing them up in Desi clothes. This demonstrated their interest in learning about various cultural traditions. On a visit to the home of some of my Bengali research participants, one of them had a Dominican friend named Ana over to hang out. As the sisters and Ana took turns painting each other's nails, the conversation jumped to commending Ana's modest attire. One of the sisters humorously

recounted awkward incidences when her friends had come over wearing revealing clothing, and she had had to ask them to borrow her pants, so her parents would not be uncomfortable.

At another point, one sister began an animated conversation with Ana about Dominican cuisine, asking her questions about different dishes. It turned out she had been introduced to these foods by her Dominican ex-boyfriend. When she was explaining to me why they were no longer seeing each other, Ana interrupted to ask questions about why the boyfriend had to be kept secret from older relatives and the covert nature of romantic relationships in the South Asian community.

Ana also asked why the sisters had so many different names. As they tried to explain the cultural reasoning, she shook her head and exclaimed, “Y’all have too many names!” and the girls all laughed. The evening ended with more laughter when one sister had Ana recite common Muslim phrases to their mother who tried to respond politely but was clearly confused about whether her daughter’s friend was actually Muslim. Asking one another questions and making jokes about each other’s backgrounds were ways for the girls to simultaneously index a cool vibe while demonstrating their acceptance of, comfort with, and interest in diverse traditions.

Youth also made a point of explicitly demonstrating knowledge and appreciation of the traditions of their South Asian friends who belonged to different religious, national, and linguistic groups. While they tended to interact mostly with those of the same national origin and religion, they also participated in celebrating the well-known traditions of other Desis. I myself was invited each Eid to celebrate at the house of Bengali Muslim research participants who went through the extra trouble to accommodate me as a Hindu, South Indian vegetarian.

One youth commented, “It’s a sense of relief and pride and hope when you see your Muslim friends celebrating Durga Puja with yourself along with Hindus celebrating Eid. World

peace...the generation's changing." Sometimes Hindu youth took their non-Hindu Desi friends to the temple, and I saw South Asians youth of various religious and national backgrounds at Phagwah, which was considered fun for everyone though it was a Hindu celebration occurring in the Indo-Caribbean community. One of my Muslim research subjects, Aeshna, used to joke with her close Hindu friends and me that she wished she was Hindu because she saw Hindus as having more fun celebrations and fewer rules.

When hanging out in a park one evening with several Bengali Muslim youth and their siblings, youth suggested we play Taboo, a game where a person describes a word to their teammates who try to guess what it is as quickly as possible. The word I had to describe was "angel." I asked my teammates, "What happens to you after you die?" to which they all began yelling in unison: "reincarnation!" Surprised that they had not impulsively guessed something more generically Judeo-Christian like heaven, I asked the youth how it was possible that they all happened to come up with reincarnation. One youth responded, "Well..." and waved her arm at me. We all burst out laughing. Their inclination had been to shout out the answer they thought would be the most obvious, sensible, and even specifically respectful to me, the only Hindu in the group.

Youth thought it was cool to know about various cultural traditions, and they actively developed and demonstrated this interest through the internet. For example, one youth enjoyed watching the Hollywood film, *The Prince of Persia*, online. Afterward, she began looking up Persians on YouTube and became a fan of Maz Jobrani, an Iranian American comic, and eventually that interest expanded to Arab, Muslim, and Desi comics, particularly those who had been a part of the "Axis of Evil" comedy tour (the tour name was based on a speech by President George W. Bush).

Online, youth posted pictures of themselves partaking in South Asian cultural or religious traditions different from their own and allowing others to participate in theirs. In addition to utilizing urban slang, youth used the vocabulary of other Desi groups to demonstrate their multicultural fluency. For example, Hindu youth sometimes used the phrase *haram*, which they picked up from their Muslim friends. Youth were quick to share their best wishes on Facebook with their Desi friends of different backgrounds whenever there was a major religious holiday and “like” pages and events devoted to these holidays. For example, it was not unusual to see a Muslim youth “like” Diwali or Holi celebrations online. Sharing these wishes and interests publicly on Facebook served as a demonstration of multicultural competency. I noted that I knew of more Hindu and Indian special occasions during fieldwork than I did before because research participants would share their best wishes on Facebook with me!

SHIFTING NOTIONS OF MULTICULTURALISM AND CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

LACK OF NOSTALGIA

When I visited the homes of my research participants, particularly their apartments, I frequently was reminded of visiting my relatives’ flats in India.²⁹ The NYC apartments were generally one bedroom, one bathroom. Shoes were removed at the entrance. Bathrooms included South Asian brand soaps and lotions, a little plastic pitcher by the toilet or the tub, and wet clothes hanging from clothespins.

Florescent tube lights illuminated the living rooms, which were furnished with several carpets, couches, and day beds where children or fathers slept, depending on the number and gender breakdown of family members as well as their school and work schedules. In the living

rooms there was also usually a large television, a Jadoo box to stream South Asian television programs, and several laptops and tablets. On the walls were cloth pictures of Hindu gods, portraits of elders and children, and/or papers and stickers with religious phrases and passages in Arabic, Sanskrit, or Hindi.

My research participants' parents were recent immigrants generally in their thirties, forties, or fifties. They had access to communication technologies, media, goods, and communities that were unavailable to earlier immigrants that had arrived as part of the initial post-1965 wave. As such, they were able to maintain regular and frequent contact with family "back home" as well as continue to use many of the same products they utilized before coming to the United States.

In her analysis of Indian grocery stores in the San Francisco Bay Area, Purnima Mankekar notes, "the affective regimes congealing around objects were clearly shaped by the contexts in which their consumption occurred" (Mankekar 2015:86). The South Asian goods to which my research participants had access held different meanings for them, their parents, and myself given our differing backgrounds.

The products may have held meaning for their parents in terms of their country of origin and lives before immigration, and they may have also seemed easy, cheap, and trustworthy to buy in an expensive city with countless options. As a member of the second generation who had been raised in a predominantly White suburb of Los Angeles in the 1990s, a time and place where neither these goods nor other South Asians were usually present, the products in my research participants' homes certainly held nostalgic value to me — they reminded me of India. I enjoyed visiting my research participants' apartments and feeling like I was at a relative's home

29 Other research participants lived in houses and occasionally basements. Many families that lived in houses still

in India the same way I enjoyed visiting Jackson Heights because it reminded me of urban life in India.

In contrast, to my research participants their apartments were simply their New York homes. If they lived in one bedroom apartments with family sleeping in the living room, it was because that is what they could afford. Furthermore, my young research participants had never lived outside their parents' homes. They had grown up utilizing various Desi goods and took their access for granted. They were just a part of everyday life in NYC much like shopping in Jackson Heights. As such, their apartment structures and Desi goods did not evoke a sense of nostalgia among youth, in the sense of longing for a far, distant homeland.

All of this is not to suggest that my research participants and their families did not miss their home countries. Youth and their families certainly had a desire to visit South Asia or the Caribbean, primarily to see their relatives, and this was especially true if they were undocumented and could not leave the country. Youth also cared about the plight of people in their home countries, especially after tragic events such as the devastating 2013 Rana factory collapse in Bangladesh.

Even if their parents were nostalgic for their country of origin, it is important to note that youth did not solely turn to their parents to develop their relationship with their Desi heritage. My research participants were coming of age with many opportunities in the physical realm and on the World Wide Web to interact with other members of the South Asian diaspora and to access South Asian goods ranging from food to clothes to media. Almost all youth spoke their parents' native language as well as some Hindi learned from Bollywood films, and they utilized

only took up minimal space and rented out the remaining rooms to Desi tenants.

both with community members and friends.³⁰ They were usually shocked that I was not fluent in any South Asian languages, and were also surprised that the Desi population where I was grew up was not as big or diverse as to what they were accustomed.

My research participants' active engagement with Desi products and a diverse South Asian population, with whom they had frequent, taken-for-granted contact, was key to their sense of belonging in American society. Because of these factors, youth did not go on the "tortured searches for identity undertaken by students on elite college campuses" or feel the need to downplay their ethnic background (Kasinitz et al. 2004:397). Being Desi was not in tension with being American or something to balance with being American. Instead, it was an expression of being American, in accordance with multicultural cultural citizenship.

Their multifaceted exposure to a South Asian community their whole lives stood in contrast to middle class youth whose parents came to the United States as part of the first wave of immigration post-1965 and settled in predominantly White suburbs. The middle class children of the first wave often did not meet many South Asians until college and were preoccupied by nostalgia for an imagined homeland (Leonard 1997; Maira 2002; Purkayastha 2005; Sharma 2010).

Sunaina Maira, who studied Indian American middle class college students in New York City in the 1990s, describes their youth culture as a "site where the vibes of 'cool' [were] mixed with the strains of collective nostalgia" (Maira 2002:16). These youths' nostalgic longing for an authentic Indian cultural identity and connection with the "real" India was maintained by the

³⁰ Here, I am referencing youth whose parents migrated from the subcontinent. The parents of Indo-Caribbean youth generally spoke English and very limited or no Hindi.

impossibility of that desire. These youth created and participated in Desi spaces in an attempt to address their feelings of loss.

While my research participants were also invested in a type of urban cool as well as Desi events, their motivation was different.³¹ They were not trying to “capture' the homeland” (Naficy 1991:316). Instead, they were trying to belong in New York City through engaging with multicultural cultural citizenship. As youth growing up in a majority minority context, they were interested in engaging with national belonging through performing a specifically diasporic Desi-ness with all the right elements of American cool. As such they were not trying to connect to an idealized South Asia, and they did not have a “collective yearning for an authentic tradition or pure place of origin” (Maira 2002:194).

If youth had been motivated by nostalgia for an “authentic” Desi culture from the motherland, classical dances or folk acts at the mela might have received more attention, given the former’s reputation for representing ancient traditions and the latter’s evocation of rural villages. Instead, the all-male Bollywood dance was the favorite, and nobody watching it expected authenticity. If so, an all-boys group itself, with somewhat risqué dance moves, might have been considered inauthentic, since my research participants generally watched popular dance sequences in Bollywood films that were centered on beautiful women or a heterosexual couple.

Because the boys were not fulfilling a nostalgia for South Asia, the Desi audience did not care if the dancers were ethnically Indian or performing well-known moves from Bollywood films. Bollywood was not associated with a distant, idealized homeland because youth had daily

³¹ Urban cool was qualified somewhat differently too because unlike the middle class South Asian youth, my research participants had regular contact with Black people at school and in their neighborhoods.

access to it through the internet, Jadoo boxes that streamed South Asian media, and even advertisements in Jackson Heights featuring Bollywood superstars (including the signature Shahrukh Khan billboard that greeted people as they exited the subway).

LACK OF ORIENTATION TO WHITENESS

My research participants contrasted with South Asian children of the first wave in their lack of nostalgia for an idealized homeland and also in their lack of orientation to the White mainstream. Multiple scholars of the South Asian diaspora have described how suburban, middle class children often associated with Whiteness in some way while growing up, and how that shaped their connection with their South Asian heritage. For instance, Karen Leonard states that middle class South Asian youth in the United States “locate themselves as ‘white’” (Leonard 1997:154). She describes a pattern in which they identify with “American” and later “South Asian” culture, which are seen as distinct from one another, in contrast to multicultural cultural citizenship (Leonard 1997).

Similarly, in Bandana Purkayastha’s work on second generation South Asian youth, she describes how her research subjects grew up in predominantly White suburbs with few other minorities. Upon coming to college they have the opportunity to separate themselves from their “marginalized position within the all-encompassing white middle-class framework,” in part by developing relationships with Desis and other people of color (Purkayastha 2005:54). Sunaina Maira terms this as a “second migration” to their heritage (quoted in Leonard 1997:155). Vijay Prashad associates the need to connect with ethnic authenticity with a desire to not be seen as lesser than Whites who view themselves as superior (Prashad 2000:157).

For this group of youth, unlike my research participants, the hope of multiculturalism might be presenting a positive cultural self-image in order to be deemed worthy of incorporation

into the hegemonic multicultural model and subsequently into the American mainstream (Das Gupta 2006:60; Prashad 2000:112; Purkayastha 2005:145). An example of such is Desis celebrating those “among them who succeed in white terms” (Prashad 2000:157). Being deemed a member of a model minority is tied to a hope for acceptance by the White mainstream.³²

It is vital to note that while positive images, like the model minority trope, are applauded in American society, they do not lead minorities to access full citizenship rights. Instead, society only confers a certain degree of cultural citizenship to those “minorities who 'behave' and stay in their designated social space” (Park 2005:7).

This means that despite their celebration in the media as a model minority, South Asians can never gain the level of cultural citizenship that is open only to White middle and upper class residents who would not be expected to produce one static image of themselves in order to access full citizenship rights and belonging in the U.S. Needing to participate in the multicultural model itself indicates the impossibility of full cultural citizenship for ethnic minorities and their perpetual inferiority to the dominant White group.

It is important to understand that my research participants’ engagement with South Asian social worlds, in contrast, was not a defensive reaction to the White mainstream majority nor a pathway into it. My research participants looked down upon middle class Desi suburban youth from outside of New York City when they viewed them as wanting to be White. For instance, youth often derogatorily described Desi youth in New Jersey as “White washed” as opposed to Queens youth.

³² In the 1990s, upwardly mobile South Asian immigrants and their children were racialized and celebrated as a model minority and proof of the possibility of achieving the American Dream. The model minority myth complements American multiculturalism by equating each ethnic group with a static cultural essence conducive to success or failure (Prashad 2000; Rana 2011)

My research participants notably occupied an urban setting where there was no White majority and having an ethnic identity — even if you were White — was considered normal. On a daily basis, they generally had little to no interaction with Whites, excepting teachers and some students, and instead interacted primarily with a diverse range of people of color. Thanks to access to YouTube and media broadcasts from South Asia, youth could choose their media sources and did not solely consume media created by and for the White mainstream.

In addition to their limited contact with the White mainstream, youth were also disinterested in it because they associated it with a level of wealth accumulation and privilege that was completely disconnected from their existence as the children of struggling working class immigrants. One youth commented to me half-jokingly, “White people fascinate me because they seem so different. I feel so ghetto around them in Manhattan because everyone is dressed so bougie. I always want to ask them questions. Do they really wear shoes on their bed like on TV? What do they eat? Casserole?” Many youth talked about experiencing culture shock when they began attending colleges with substantial White populations because they had never before interacted with so many White people on a day-to-day basis.

My research participants’ orientation to a South Asian social world was not a means to run to or away from the White mainstream. Though they consumed mainstream popular culture, (for example: television shows with predominantly White casts such as *The Vampire Diaries*, *Prison Break*, *Pretty Little Liars*, and *The Walking Dead*), youth largely sidestepped the White mainstream. Aside from entertainment value, it was largely irrelevant to their everyday lives, though they also occasionally used it as a point of reference to emphasize aspects of the South Asian community. This can be seen in the YouTube videos they consumed. For example, Superwoman made a video on White girls versus Desi girls, in which the central focus is to

highlight what it means to be a Desi girl. The White character in the video (Superwoman herself in a blonde wig) is just a tool to do so. In another video, Jus Reign discusses the difference between White and Brown Christmas. Again, the White characters are used as a foil to play up the Brownness to which youth could relate.

My research participants also sometimes questioned and made fun of the presence of White people in Bollywood films. When watching Bollywood clips with youth on YouTube, they would often criticize the White backup dancers to each other and to me. In one particular instance, a young woman tapped the computer screen, disapprovingly counting the number of Indians she saw versus Whites. Her friend asked pointedly what it meant that the Indian backup dancers were behind the Whites ones. Another youth commented, “There are a billion people in India, so they should be finding talent within India. Why do Indians think Americans [Whites] are better?”

The irrelevance of the White mainstream stands in contrast to prominent cultural citizenship and multiculturalism theories that refer to desires for inclusion in the dominant White society (Purkayastha 2005:145; Smith 2005). For example, William Flores and Renato Rosaldo define cultural citizenship as the “right to be different” in relation to the dominant community while still being allowed to take part in the “nation-state's democratic processes” (Flores and Rosaldo 1998:57). They assert that cultural citizenship is fully available only to White middle class residents. One questionable premise of this view is its presumption that minorities evaluate their sense of belonging in regard to the dominant White society and their ability to seek inclusion within it (Smith 2005:10).

It is important to note that to some minorities, including my research participants, cultural citizenship does not translate to belonging in the mainstream American society. My research

participants' engagement with South Asian and multicultural activities online and in the physical world demonstrate that they were growing up in a majority minority city where the norm was to be ethnic, to have a cultural background, and to publicly celebrate that. Furthermore, some youth even questioned Whites composing the mainstream. They pointed out that they, meaning themselves, were in fact not even minorities because they lived in a majority minority city in a country that will soon become a majority minority population. They rejected the term "minority" all together.

CULTURAL SINCERITY

EVALUATING CULTURAL PERFORMANCES

The components of multicultural cultural citizenship described in the previous sections were not based on nostalgia for an idealized South Asia nor an orientation to the White mainstream. Instead, they were premised on performance and "sincerity," related concepts which are examined by anthropologist John L. Jackson Jr. in regard to race. In Jackson's ethnographic research on Black Americans in Harlem, he presents and examines the performative qualities of race on a day-to-day basis. He states, "Race, like class, makes sense in people's daily lives in terms of performances, practices, and perceptions" (Jackson Jr. 2001:161).

In addition to considering race as performance, Jackson also analyzes the way people evaluate one another's routine, everyday performances in order to categorize individuals by race and class. People are constantly trying to read whether these demonstrations are genuine and heartfelt — in other words, sincere. This preoccupation about what is in people's heart of hearts,

the appetite for “the really real,”³³ is what leads to, for example, the contemporary popularity of reality television and tabloids (Jackson Jr. 2005:29).

Racial sincerity is focused on people’s “interiorized intent,” what truly exists in people’s insides, which itself is a cultural construct (Jackson Jr. 2005:18). People’s insides cannot be simply read by another, or even necessarily by themselves because they may not have enough self-awareness to do so. People can never know for sure whether another’s external performances are genuine because people have the capability to lie and misrepresent. Sincerity is a means to dissect and discuss these doubts about racial performances. While Jackson is focused on racial performance, the way “people think and feel their identifications into palpable everyday existence,” I borrow his conceptualizations to evaluate how youth enact and judge one another’s performances of cultural sincerity (Jackson Jr. 2005:11).

Sincerity privileges people’s agency, recognizing that they are not simply “objects” to be taken at face value (Jackson Jr. 2005:18). It is valuable to consider youths’ sincerity because this lens acknowledges their agency and complexity in performing cultural identities. Scholars of multiculturalism make a valid point that the White dominant group sets limitations on what types of public activities are feasible for marginalized peoples. For example, South Asian cultural parades may be welcomed by city officials, but South Asian street vendors conducting business may be treated as nuisances, even criminals. While it is necessary to consider the power of the White mainstream, to consider its boundary-making only would be one-sided. It is important to

³³ This obsession with the real is extremely relevant in an era in which discourses of political correctness and color blindness can help mask intentions, and I will expand upon these concepts further in Chapter Three’s discussion of racial paranoia (Jackson Jr. 2008). It is necessary to dissect the importance placed on reading racial performances and intentions in a time period when the state emphasizes racialized preemptive measures against potential criminals. Preventative tactics are meant to address supposed risks *before* they become a material danger, and thus reading of risk is not based on people’s actual performances (though we may say they are). Instead it is based on a racialized understanding of what allegedly exists in the interiors of people, whether it be lurking criminality or radical Islam (Jackson Jr. 2005).

also consider the intentions and desires of youth who participate in multicultural activities. They are not simply tokens of diversity, but people with feelings, thoughts, and intentions — which are accounted for by cultural sincerity.

For instance, dance may be considered a safe, socially acceptable element of culture to publicly display, but that is not to say that the youth performers have no cultural agency or are not getting something out of dancing beyond following the rules of mainstream multiculturalism. My research participants were growing up consuming Bollywood films, American music videos, and Hollywood teen movies centered on dance competitions. Given this context, dancing could be their way of indexing their sincerity as urban South Asian Americans.

Sincerity indicates a connection between reality and representation, which are often thought of as separate from one another. It is embodied in the vernacular expression “keeping it real,” whereby to be “‘real’ is to ‘represent’ for a place where one is from and for others who live there with you” (Jackson Jr. 2005:28). By keeping it real, youth attempt to represent their South Asian heritage, New York upbringing, and even their specific borough, and the important place their background holds in their hearts. Cultural sincerity is not about fitting into the White mainstream but about youth, as cultural subjects with “agency and interiority,” showcasing what is on the inside through public cultural performances on social media and at community events (Jackson Jr. 2005:24). What youth value in their peers is staying true to their heritage in their heart of hearts, and that is how they access multicultural cultural citizenship.

Let us consider again the all-boys dance group at the mela. They were the most loved act because they were seen as culturally sincere in regard to their ethnic and urban heritage. For instance, the boys drew heavily from Hindi films, but also brought in elements of hip-hop music, fashion, and dance. One of their signature moves was wearing *kurtas* (Desi shirts), but pairing

them with hipster glasses, trendy sneakers, and hip-hop music. After a minute, they pulled off their kurtas to showcase their urban fashion underneath, while they danced to a Hindi film song.

Furthermore, the fact that these boys even chose to form an all-male dance troupe and actively perform around the city, at multicultural and South Asian events, indicated to their audiences a true connection with Desi culture and diversity. Most youth dance groups were composed of girls or were co-ed. When youth would ask me to help advertise dance tryouts, it was usually because they could not find enough boys to dance. While the boys in the all-male dance troupe were considered popular and attractive amongst their peers, ultimately their broader appeal stemmed from the heart they showed in choosing to perform and their genuineness, their dedication to keeping it real, during their performances.

Similarly, youth preferred YouTube stars over mainstream South Asian celebrities like Aziz Ansari or Mindy Kaling in part due to their perceived cultural sincerity. One young woman succinctly summed up the appeal of YouTube personalities as her friends nodded in agreement: “They speak honest, straight out.” What she was describing was precisely an appreciation of their sincerity. The youth could identify with them because they specifically represent the experiences of South Asian diasporic youth in Canada and the United States in a manner of humor, style, and speech that indexes urban cool and a genuine connection with Desi culture. In contrast, the objective of more mainstream celebrities like Ansari and Kaling is to appeal to a broader audience, including the White mainstream. By sharing these YouTube videos with their peers, youth were trying to convey their own cultural sincerity, including their “legit” comfort with both elements of South Asian culture and urban style.

SINCERITY VERSUS AUTHENTICITY

Meraa juuta hai Japaanii, yeh patluun Englishtaanii

[My shoes are Japanese, these pants are British]
Sar pe laal topii Ruusi, phir bhi dil hai Hindustanii
[On my head is a red Russian hat, nonetheless my heart is Indian]
~Lyrics from “Mera Joota Hai Japani” from the movie *Shree 420* (1955)

Jackson also analyzes sincerity’s messy, conflicted relation to authenticity. Authenticity is premised on materialist factors or performative activities that can be directly and absolutely read to understand racial identity (Jackson Jr. 2005:21). While sincerity and authenticity are similar in that they are both methods of understanding the real in people, they are different because sincerity emphasizes agency and intersubjectivity while authenticity is focused on an “unbalanced relationship between the powerful seer and the impotently seen, the latter being a mere object of the seer’s racial gaze and discourse” (Jackson Jr. 2005:17). Sincerity involves a subject to subject relationship, while authenticity is focused on a subject to object relationship that allows a thinking, feeling person to dehumanize another as a mere object (Jackson Jr. 2005:14). Despite this difference, however, people still try to read sincerity based on external factors.

The complicated relationship and differences between sincerity and authenticity become clearer when considering real life examples. For example, in 2015 Rachel Dolezal, the Spokane, Washington N.A.A.C.P. Chapter president, made headlines when her parents publicly revealed that their daughter is biologically White. Dolezal had “passed” as a Black woman, in part by darkening her skin through tanning and adopting hairstyles normally associated with Black women. Dolezal defended her actions, stating in a *Vanity Fair* interview, “It’s not a costume...from my earliest memories I have awareness and connection with the black experience, and that’s never left me...I just feel like I didn’t mislead anybody; I didn’t deceive anybody. If people feel misled or deceived, then sorry that they feel that way, but I believe that’s

more due to their definition and construct of race in their own minds than it is to my integrity or honesty, because I wouldn't say I'm African American, but I *would* say I'm black” (quoted in Samuels 2015).

Dolezal exemplifies the differences between sincerity and authenticity. While she is not Black on the basis of ancestry, she insists that she has always felt Black in her heart. She does not consider herself dishonest or deceitful because she feels Black and shuns others' biological notions of authenticity (though she also ascribes to biological ideas of race by differentiating between “African American” and “black”). Dolezal insists on her agency in deciding and performing who she is on the inside and continues to claim she is sincerely Black – in spite of the fact that people reading her may not agree.

The complexities of authenticity and sincerity also become clear when considering billionaire and presidential candidate Donald's Trump campaign in 2011 to force President Obama to release his birth certificate. His campaign fueled the conspiracy theory that Obama was actually born in Kenya, and if he possessed a birth certificate it might label him Muslim. Ultimately Obama released his birth certificate to the press, proving that he was born in the United States.

While Trump's accusations can be read as a mere question of authenticity — whether or not Obama is an American birthright citizen — he is using markers of authenticity to cast doubt about both Obama's authenticity and sincerity as an American. His intention to attack Obama's sincerity becomes more apparent when considering incidents such as a 2015 candidate forum when Trump responded to a question about Obama by saying, “I don't know if he loves America” (quoted in Moody and Holmes 2015). Obama proved he was a birthright citizen, but Trump ignored the proof, continuing to insist that Obama was not a true American on the basis

of both authenticity and sincerity. We can also understand the nuances of authenticity and sincerity in regards to culture through my research participants.

One rainy afternoon, I met two high school girls at the Jackson Heights subway station, and from there we took the train to the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in Manhattan. As we wandered around, observing the art pieces and casually talking, one girl, Nina, sadly announced that Zayn Malik, from the British boy band One Direction, was going to marry and would be officially off the market. She also announced that he was going to marry a blonde, White girl named Perrie. This prompted her friend to point out that Zayn is half White, and thus maybe it was unsurprising he was going to marry a White girl because he identified with being White.

Nina responded by defending Zayn being Pakistani, not by making a biological argument about being half Pakistani but by insisting on his genuine connection to his heritage. As evidence, she stated that she had seen pictures he posted online of himself celebrating Eid and him and his relatives wearing Desi clothes. Perrie, she conceded charitably, even wore a *bindi* on Eid.

In the end, the girls concluded that Zayn was an earnest Pakistani. What convinced them was his willingness to share his participation in Pakistani and Muslim traditions with millions of people on social media when he did not have to and when it could potentially hurt his reputation as a member of an otherwise all-White boy band. This act conveyed to them a sincere connection to his cultural and religious background that they could see for themselves. Sincerity centers on an internal intent, whereas “authenticity lauds content” (Jackson Jr. 2005:18). The girls did not judge Zayn simply based on authenticity, meaning his biology or Desi wardrobe. Instead, they saw his posts on social media as a means to reveal his true nature — in this case, being a sincere Desi.

This focus on sincerity is what led some youth to disapprove of cultural appropriation. Some youth, for instance, took issue with White people getting tattoos in Arabic and Hindi, and celebrities wearing bindis. For example, during my afternoon at MOMA, the girls criticized actress/singer Selena Gomez for wearing a bindi and assuming that it was an Arab custom. They took her lack of knowledge as an indication of insincerity. Their response stands in contrast to praising Malik's White fiancée Perrie for wearing a bindi. They viewed Perrie as earnestly trying to connect with her soon-to-be Desi family through a learned — but sincere — love for Desi culture. When later passing an exhibit of figurines that were supposed to represent the diversity of New Yorkers, the girls jokes that the Indian one wearing a bindi must be an Arab, in light of our earlier conversation about Gomez.

On an everyday basis, amongst youth, sincerity included “keeping it real” in terms of their ethnic and religious background as well as their status as youth from a diverse metropolis.³⁴ The balance between these factors was in turn mediated differently based on gender. When youth participated in cultural festivals and engaged with Brown life online, they were not trying to recreate an imagined homeland or judge their peers' authenticity — instead they were displaying their true feelings about who they were and evaluating the same in others. They were “repping” their cultural sincerity.

34 Youth privileged keeping it real in other ways too, which are not my focus here. For example, when I was waiting for the train with several youth after they had participated in a May Day march, one young woman noticed a “hipster activist” wearing a Che shirt standing nearby. Mentioning his shirt, she disdainfully commented that he was just acting trendy. She walked up to the young man and asked him if he knew who was on the shirt. When he responded, “Uhhhh...I don't know,” my research participant put on a Bengali accent and told him off for being a “phony.”

In this case, my research participant was annoyed by the “hipster activist” for being what she read as insincerely political. She took his lack of knowledge about who was on his shirt as an indication that he did not genuinely care about social issues and instead only cared about fashion. Here we can see the different weights placed on sincerity and authenticity. My research participant insulted the young man for being a “phony,” but she saw it as acceptable for her to adopt a non-authentic Bengali accent to chastise him.

Youth associated sincerity with age and maturity, particularly keeping it real in terms of their ethnic background.³⁵ One youth explained, “Being Bengali is everything I am. Before, when I was younger, you would always want to fit in with what the cool thing was...at one point, in middle school, everyone goes through that ghetto phase or White phase. But now I realize that it's important to just be yourself. And I find myself enjoying being who I am, being South Asian. And that's what defines me.”

Another youth described her peers' engagement with acting White or ghetto. She commented:

They talk differently. I remember in middle school I used to go with a lot of Hispanics, some Brown...Black people, some White people...They would all try to be Black. They'd all try to be ghetto, wear like big hoop earrings. The guys would put gel and sag their pants and wear huge polos. And the girls would wear like Rocawear or all that stuff. And wear sneakers, everyone would wear sneakers like the Jordans. If you were a guy or girl you wore Nike's Jordans. I went through that phase. It's like you're trying to change who you are, but you don't really need to. Just be yourself. Now I realize that. In the end, everyone just wants to be accepted. But you'll only be accepted for who you are. I finally found that. I understand who I am now. Like I'm Brown, and that's not going to change. And I'm proud of who I am. And that's not going to hold me back from making friends with White people and other races, but I have an identity, and people will accept me for that if I accept it myself.

A young Guyanese woman, Radha, who came to terms with her heritage in her teens commented:

We are in America, and I am a U.S. citizen, but it's like I *feel* like I am from Guyana; that's always where I'm from. That's who I am, I can't just erase that. Like no one can just erase...Even if I like say pretend, like yo, I'm going to just change my life and be White -- [adopts valley girl accent] all my White friends, dress White [end valley girl accent] – but then at the end of the day you're still Guyanese. You still know that Indian movie you saw the other day or the music — I'll always be Guyanese.

³⁵ One youth occasionally called herself Shaniqua and spoke in African American Vernacular English — she jokingly called this her being her “ghetto self.” Youth let her get away with it in part because they understood that this was a gag, and they saw this youth as cool and secure enough to pull off such a jest. They did not read it as an attempt to be something she was not.

Radha left Guyana as a child because she tragically lost her parents to AIDS. She was very conflicted about her family's history there. She was hesitant about socializing with other Guyanese American people, choosing to spend her time instead smoking marijuana mostly with Black men in their twenties. Many assumed when they met her, based on her appearance and speech (she spoke African American Vernacular English), that she was completely disconnected from her cultural background and was inauthentically and insincerely Guyanese.

Radha, on the other hand, insisted that it was impossible to step away from being Guyanese or Indian because of her ancestral history and love for elements of Guyanese and Desi culture like music. On top of that, she was legitimate because she *felt* Guyanese — she defended her sincerity. Thus she asserted her identity through citing both markers of authenticity as well as her true intentions.

Like the YouTube personalities, she referenced Whiteness because it was the most foreign background she could utilize to demonstrate how sincerely Guyanese she was. She asserted that she could try to pose inauthentically as a White girl, but in the end, despite her conflicted history or the way she presented, in her heart of hearts she was legitimately Guyanese. Radha's sense of being read incorrectly points to the complexities of understanding authenticity and sincerity.

MONITORING SINCERITY

Youth looked for evidence of sincerity in one another and were disdainful if they found it lacking. As was seen with the Zayn Malik example, they made the assumption that people could share their true intentions outwardly. These youth regularly tried to share their emotions and their true selves through getting “real” on Facebook posts. They also participated in sites like

Ask.fm where their peers could anonymously ask them questions, and youth could reveal what they really thought or felt. They often shared the questions and answers on Facebook, so their responses were not private. Even if youth did not want to verbally explain their intentions or feelings, they could use emojis in texting and on social media. For instance, Facebook's status bar asks "What's on your mind?" and offered the opportunity for youth to share their feelings through a drop down menu of emoticons that are paired with written expressions of what they mean.

Jackson asserts that racial performances and their classifications are relational processes. He notes this through pointing out the way that Harlemites use Whiteness in order to talk about Blackness. He asserts that Black residents of Harlem utilize "white people as a foil for discussion about black cultural difference" (Jackson Jr. 2001:170). On the other hand, he points out that Whiteness is also performed and sometimes in "relation to symbolic designations of blackness" (Hartigan Jr. 2015:144). Similarly, Desi youth judged one another's cultural performances as Desi New Yorkers in relation to Blackness and Americanness and occasionally Whiteness. One youth commented, "At work we act White. With friends we act 'hood' or Black because that's what's cool. With family we act Brown."

Their standards for multicultural cultural citizenship and surveillance of cultural sincerity were noticeably gendered. For boys, it was particularly important to demonstrate an earnest grasp of urban cool to their peers without teetering into "acting Black" territory, while for girls demonstrating a genuine connection with their Desi heritage, which was viewed in opposition to becoming too Americanized, was especially valued.

For boys, the focus was on monitoring their sense of urban cool, which involved balancing their adoption of Black American popular youth culture and expressing an affinity

with Desi cultural elements. Appropriating the former, to a certain degree, was not considered “acting Black” and thus insincerely Desi but rather simply the norm for urban youth. In fact, several of the major neighborhoods in which my youth lived were composed primarily of Blacks and South Asians. When I first began fieldwork, I was struck by the ability of youth to seamlessly combine elements of African American Vernacular English, including the word “nigga,” with Desi expressions and accents. However, they were expected by their peers to only adopt urban culture to a certain degree. If they went beyond that then they were looked down upon for attempting to be someone else instead of getting the benefit of the doubt that their expressions of cultural sincerity might look different from their peers.

In one instance, a Guyanese girl claimed that she did not want to date Guyanese young men because they were all insincere. She exclaimed, “I feel like the Guyanese guys, the Indian, the Trini, the Brown people -- they try the most to fit in. And it gets me so mad...They will all try to dress like these Black guys or Spanish guys and get what they're wearing, and like wear the \$5000 belt and then the \$2000 pants and the \$8000 pants and I'm like, ‘What the fuckkk. Like give me some of that money!’” Here sincerity and authenticity overlapped because boys’ internal processes were judged by examining external style. While this young woman herself adopted aspects of urban youth culture and had Black friends, she was disdainful of Guyanese boys for taking it too far by spending large sums of money to copy their peers when they could never really be Spanish or Black. She dismissed them for trying to imitate other youth versus being true to who they were. This young woman, like other youth, did not consider the possibility that perhaps the young men genuinely saw themselves as Black.

Youth saw it as a pathetic attempt to “act hard” when boys took “acting Black” too far through their dress, language, and behavior.³⁶ They commented that in New York being a South Asian or Indo-Caribbean boy did not translate to toughness. Some South Asian youth, whose parents had migrated from the subcontinent to the United States, viewed being Indo-Caribbean as closer to Blackness given the racial demographics in the Caribbean and their perceptions of Indo-Caribbean people as more Westernized than South Asians from the subcontinent. As such, they criticized their South Asian peers, whose parents had also migrated from the subcontinent, for trying to pass as Indo-Caribbean in an attempt to access urban cool.³⁷ One youth explained:

A lot of Desis I know try to act like something they're not...They talk to me and say I did this and that, and I'm like, 'No, I know you went home, you prayed, and then you came here. You went to temple, or you went to the mosque. Don't say you went here and there'...They try to act like they're Black...you know how Black and Guyanese go together? They act like they're Guyanese or Trinidadian...I'm like don't even...If you try to fit in with the Caribbeans, the Guyanese, it makes you look odd. Don't even. It's like me trying to act Hispanic or Black – don't even, just stop.

Youth also negatively judged their South Asian peers who would try to pass for Latino or only date Blacks or Latinos. The all-boys dance troupe at the mela was an example of a group that struck the right balance of masculinity through its adoption of Black American and South Asian styles. Though participating in an all-boys Bollywood dance group could be read as effeminate, in the way boy bands sometimes are, the boys indexed the right ratio of urban style

³⁶ Boys occasionally were accused of trying to act White, though this was rare. One young man became interested in fashion and traded up his tee-shirts and jeans for dressy hipster outfits. We were chatting during a party when a friend of his came up and teased him for looking like he belonged on a yacht. His friend laughed even harder when she realized that he and I had been discussing the television show “Mad Men,” which centers on rich, White, male advertising professionals in 1960s New York. She found this fitting with her accusation of him trying to dress like a wealthy, White man. In this situation, notably, there was no hostility, just playful disdain.

³⁷ I heard this criticism usually applied to boys, though occasionally girls would direct it at other girls. For example, one youth stated, “There's this Punjabi girl I know...she tries to act like she's Caribbean...you know the Caribbeans, the Guyanese, they hip roll, go to clubs. You know those people that say, ‘Oh you're not about that life.’ They say that here. That's really her.”

in order to not have their masculinity challenged nor be written off as “acting Black.” In the end, they were celebrated for their cultural sincerity.

The surveillance of cultural sincerity is also dependent on generation and borough. Those factors impacted to what degree boys could adopt elements of Black youth culture while still seeming genuine. One youth vented his frustrations about recent immigrants trying too hard to act Black:

I see a lot of [immigrant] Desi boys trying to act Black...I see them sagging their pants, and I'm like, 'What are you *doing* bro?' The most funniest thing is when they have a \$200 pair of shoes and the pants sagging and shirts too big for them and everything, what's funny to me is that they are talking in their native language, and it just cracks me up. I see a guy who's wearing gangsta stuff, and he just talks in his language, and I'm like, 'No, you can't do that.' They try to fit in with American society, and think that's the way of getting girls...They just want to fit in basically. It's stupid, be yourself. Why you gotta – I'm not going to lie, I used to sag my pants but not like to a limit where you go *super* down. I'm not going to lie. I put my pants a bit down, just to get the fit of comfort, not so you see my boxers. I don't do that. You're trying way too hard. I collect shoes. I know a lot of – I don't want to be racist – but I know a lot of Black people. The people I know, they collect shoes too, but they collect brand new shoes. Me, I collect shoes that I like. People are like, 'Oh you're Black because you have so many shoes,' and I'm like, 'Where did you get that from?'...I'd rather just be someone who I am and not be fake...It's kids who have immigrated here recently. If you were born here...you can't just say they're sagging their pants to fit in. It's the style of the borough that they come from...There are different styles, different fashions [in different parts of NYC].

This young man felt it was insincere when immigrant youth adopted a “gangsta” style. Because they grew up outside the U.S., he saw their decision as a shortcut to fit in with their peers rather than a sincere connection with urban culture or attempt to be their true immigrant selves. These immigrant youth were caught in a tough spot because they would face peer ridicule too if they did not adopt American conventions to a degree, since they now lived in New York and needed to represent that.

While this youth acknowledged that he himself adopted elements of Black popular style, like sagging his pants and collecting sneakers, he defended his cultural sincerity through pointing out that he grew up in New York, actually knew Black people, and collected shoes based on his tastes and not just as a status symbol. He was defensive of selling shoes because he did not want to be seen as selling them simply to “gain cred over his style.” He viewed youth who did so as less sincere and trying too hard to imitate the tastes of cool Black youth.

One of my research participants who grew up in projects in the Bronx commented that he was fine with dressing like a “pretty boy” when he came to Queens on the weekend, but during the week he liked to dress as his “hood” self (both looks were common urban styles). While he acknowledged that he got stopped by the police more often when he dressed “hood,” it was important for him to remain true to who he was — a kid from the Bronx. Because he was from the projects, his peers did not doubt his sincerity nor push him to change his everyday style to a more conventional Queens look. Simultaneously, it was acceptable for him to adopt the “pretty boy” style — unlike the immigrants in the previous example adopting an urban look — because it was in line with how South Asian American youth commonly dressed.

The youth – both girls and boys – spoke about the gendered double standard in the South Asian community. Overall, males were allowed more freedom to go out, stay out later, and be less in touch with their parents even when they were younger than their sisters. Though being in a relationship was frowned upon for both boys and girls, some boys were able to get away with having a girlfriend or eventually smooth things over with their parents.

Young women’s cultural sincerity was judged on their connection to Desi culture and their religion, whereas for boys their sincerity as South Asians was usually not on the line. Girls faced more intense scrutiny, and their intentions were judged based largely on socializing and

modesty, including sexual promiscuity. In the most extreme cases, girls were hit by family members or sent to South Asia to reform themselves. Young women had concerns that elder relatives and community members would assume they were promiscuous because of the clothes they wore or because of what they saw in the mainstream American media. Sometimes girls would talk to me about whether or not some of their behaviors constituted a sin. A group of girl friends had a conversation one afternoon over bubble tea, questioning the way adults read their intentions based on their clothing:

Girl 1: Automatically they [adults] start to assume things, are you on drugs, are you drinking, are you this, are you that. Do you have a boyfriend, a girlfriend, pregnant, all that kind of stuff.

Girl 2: My mom asked me if I was pregnant once! I threw up in the morning because I had a stomach flu and my mom was like, 'Are you pregnant?'

Girl 3: My mom took my urine once – she checked if I was pregnant! First thing they assume clothing wise, like if you see a girl wearing a short skirt with a V-neck, they say, 'Look at what she's wearing!' She might be the sweetest girl. And you see a girl with a hijab, wearing burqa, and she's walking down the street, and they're like, 'Oh look at her. She should be more like her' when that girl is a slut and a whore and having sex and stuff. So clothes-wise, a lot of people judge.

Some young women kept their social media accounts private because their parents feared them gaining a negative reputation or becoming the object of vicious gossip. One young woman explained how her older sister ended up making her Facebook account private when her in-laws began posting comments about fake Muslims who are Muslim in name only after her sister had posted a picture of herself in a strapless dress. Her sister did not appreciate her sincerity being passive-aggressively challenged by her in-laws.

Another youth explained that her mother feared other Desis misreading party pictures on Facebook and starting rumors that could ruin her daughter's future. She commented:

Mom does not approve of me having Facebook. Just because of the reputation it has gained in the Desi community...Mom doesn't like you putting pictures up for everyone else to see...She's like, 'Oh you ask me to let you go to these parties...You're standing there talking to a guy, and someone comes up to take a picture, and you just take a picture with him.' She's like, 'It's not a big deal to you...I'll know he's just a friend.' But she's like, 'God forbid you get married, something happens, and someone sends those pictures to your husband. You know how Desis are...the only reason I limit Facebook is because I think of your future. Right now you're just having fun. You're going to a friend's party...but you never know what could happen in the future.' Because Desis are really fucked up.

Another girl who always wore the latest fashions stated that her mother, unlike other Bengali Muslim parents, did not care what she wore on a daily basis. Her mother, however, became concerned about her daughter's appearance if she would be around Bengali parents whom she feared would judge her child as an insincere Bengali, particularly since she and her husband were separated, which was socially taboo. Her daughter explained, "She gets scared when I go around Brown, like Bengali parents, like, 'Oh they're going to say something bad about you, especially from what background you're coming from.' She went on to explain that her mother's fears were not unfounded and that she did feel disliked by more conservative Bengali Muslims whom she felt judged her more strongly than non-Muslim South Asians.

She said, "They don't understand like just because a girl wears shorts, she's not bad...the Bengali girls, when they want to wear it themselves, they'll look at me and be like, 'What is she wearing, she's such a slut.' They'll be like, 'Oh what's wrong with her, don't talk to her, she's horrible, she doesn't act Muslim' when they don't even know me, and I don't even go out with guys or do anything bad, but they just assume that I'm like horrible." When youth talked about being "good" or "bad," this was often a reference to sincerity. In this case, this young woman felt judged by both the first and second generation as being an insincere Bengali Muslim because of her clothes and her parents' separation.

One Guyanese girl who lived in a community with a large Indo-Caribbean population feared being grouped with girls who went to local nightclubs. She said:

I would not want to be seen there [at local nightclubs]. People would like automatically think, 'Oh yo, she's probably going to [a club]. Yo she's probably getting drunk every night, and she's probably like f'ing this one, f'ing that one.' And I feel like that's how they look at all of us, and I don't like that crap because I am not in that category -- [subtly points at girl who walks in]. I bet that girl goes. See I'm doing what all these people are doing!...Mostly younger people go... obviously none of them are old enough to drink, but they got hook-ups, and who knows what they be doing to these bartenders to get these hook-ups.

This youth interrupted herself mid-comment to point at a girl who had walked into Dunkin' Donuts and "looked" like she would go to night clubs. Though this young woman was frustrated with the way she was watched and judged by other Guyanese people, she openly participated in this behavior as well. She admitted with embarrassment that she too made assumptions about other Desi girls. She explained, "That's just how this community is, and that's what everyone do. I'm not saying I have to do what everyone do, but I don't know. It just happens. And sometimes I would realize it and be like, 'What are you doing to yourself? Stop that shit.' And then like five minutes later I'd go back to doing the same thing. It's just like how *everyone* is. Remember I told you girls would just look at Indian girls and be like, 'Oh she goes there, and she does this.' That's how it is. That's what growing up here makes you."

Other girls had similar comments about girls who hung out on Goldman Street in Queens and smoked hookah. Even girls who spent time on Goldman separated themselves from other girls whom they saw as drinking too much or behaving loosely with boys. One afternoon, I met with a group of high school girl friends on Goldman, near the hookah bars at which they liked to spend their time. They commented:

If they're talking about a word that describes people that come to Goldman, for the girls, it'll be like sluts and whores and all that type of stuff. And then the guys

– players, cheaters...Basically on Goldman half the girls are not virgins; they get peer pressured and everything. [My guy friend] says it's the girls fault, always going to parties, they drink, they fall all over the place, and they need to control themselves. And I agree they need to control themselves, but half the time it's the guys' fault because when they dance, they try to get too close, and they try to peer pressure you. And even they're drunk and don't know what they're doing. There you go. We don't drink too much, one shot...A lot of girls, they're like dying all over the place at parties. They're throwing up, one's falling, one's laughing on the floor...I know a few girls that got pregnant...couldn't control themselves. I know a girl from Goldman that got raped, and she never reported it. Her parents are really religious, and she was too and now you see her and she's all open, wearing short skirts. Now she doesn't give a shit...She's been through stuff and knows these guys are like assholes.

While these adolescent girls criticized South Asian males (who were sometime older teenagers or in their twenties) for pressuring or forcing girls to drink and participate in physical relationships, they also judged other girls and held them accountable for what they saw as drinking irresponsibly and behaving promiscuously. And this was even though they themselves socialized in the same space and took part in the drinking. They saw themselves, however, as retaining control of themselves and thus staying true to their cultural roots.

Youth's opinions were not set in stone, however. One summer afternoon one young woman insisted on taking me to try Red Mango frozen yogurt, which I had never had before. Another girl tagged along because she was craving Red Mango too. It was the first time the girls had engaged in substantive conversation with one another. As we scraped our spoons in our cups for a last delicious bite, one girl commented to the other: "This was fun. I thought you looked so sneaky and slutty at first, but you're cool."

For Muslim girls, wearing hijab was a point of contention in regards to sincerity. Desi youth did not insist that girls wear hijab in order to be sincere or authentic South Asian Muslims. Some girls talked about wanting to someday wear hijab but choosing not to currently because they were not ready to commit to its deeper meaning. They admired girls whom they saw as

wearing hijab sincerely, often commenting that they were “beautiful from within.”

Muslim youth were extremely critical, however, of girls who wore hijab selectively or wore it but behaved promiscuously. They saw their wearing hijab as insincere and took extreme objection to that. Young women wearing hijab felt that they experienced higher levels of judgment than Muslim friends who did not wear hijab if their peers viewed them as wearing clothing that was too tight or revealing. Sometimes young women expressed irritation or anger with girls who wore hijab but were sexually active. They felt that those girls gave all hijabis a reputation for being sexually promiscuous, especially in the South Asian community. Girls who wore hijab sometimes even questioned their own sincerity and motivations if they felt they were doing something they should not be doing such as letting male friends hug them platonically.

While boys were criticized for trying too hard to act Black and thus masculine, girls were sometimes chastised by non-Desi peers for not being feminine or American enough if they wore hijab. Multicultural cultural citizenship was a more complicated balance for these young women. It entailed youth being true to their cultural heritage and their identity as New Yorkers. However, wearing a hijab sometimes was read in opposition to being an urban youth who valued diversity. The scarf was often seen by non-Muslim and even Muslim youth as an indicator that the woman wearing it must be very religious and thus unable to connect to “normal” Americans or even appreciate diversity. One youth commented, “Everyone used to touch my hair because it's really curly...They'd touch my hair, boys played with me. This year [wears a hijab this year] everyone's taking permission to shake my hand. They're like, 'Don't touch her; she's a girl'...Usually the first impression is like, 'Oh she's really serious, she's probably really quiet' because I wear hijab...Later on people are just like, 'Whoa, you're so outgoing. You're so happy!’”

Another girl stated, “Friends tell me you have such nice hair, you're so pretty, why do you wear it [a hijab]? [shows me a picture of herself without her hijab on her tablet]...People don't think they can relate to me [because of the scarf]...underneath the scarf I'm a normal girl...If you are going to start judging me by my scarf, then you'll never get to know the real person that I am.” While these girls wearing head scarves may have been seen as sincere South Asian Muslims by their peers, this identity was sometimes seen as clashing with American femininity. At other times, however, youth sometimes received respect from their peers for making such a sincere commitment to their religion. Occasionally Muslim girls who did not cover their heads received somewhat accusatory inquiries about why they did not wear a headscarf. These comments, which even came from non-Muslims, were a questioning of their sincerity via a material symbol of authenticity.

In sum, youths’ performances of their cultural identifications did not exist in and of themselves, but instead were frequently monitored and judged by peers in a myriad of ways on the grounds of cultural sincerity. Youth surveilled one another’s engagement with the elements of multicultural cultural citizenship and criticized youth who did not meet their expectations. It is important to understand underlying youth motivations in displaying expressions of their Desi and urban identities because, as I will demonstrate in later chapters, these gender mediated performances also led to the routine, unjust racialization and criminalization of youth and their communities by state actors and fellow New Yorkers.

PROBLEMATIZING MULTICULTURAL CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

The fact that youth could feel a sense of belonging in the United States by being culturally true to their ethnic heritage and New York upbringing seems like a testament to

American individualism and progress in terms of multiculturalism and diversity. My research participants had notions of culture and ethnicity that differed from those of their immigrant parents and also departed from traditional narratives of assimilation to the White mainstream. Youth were not motivated by nostalgia and did not need to ascribe to 1990s multiculturalism by choosing hyphenated identities or orienting themselves to the White mainstream in order to feel a sense of belonging. South Asian American studies scholar Sharmila Rudrappa states that in the early 20th century, the American hero was an ambitious abstract individual. However, currently, the “maintenance of difference” itself is celebrated by politicians and mainstream journalists alike as a defining aspect of the United States (Rudrappa 2004:149).

When taking these changes into account in the larger context of the country’s shift toward a majority minority demographic, the state can appear increasingly color blind and race subsequently less important. The current time period has been problematically referenced by mainstream Whites as the “post-racial era,” a time when race is irrelevant and multiculturalism, diversity, and color blindness prevail (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011). Rudrappa notes that with the assent of multicultural politics in the United States, equal rights came to mean not just economic benefits but also cultural rights, including people’s “rights to be recognized for their difference” (Rudrappa 2004:12).

As such, cultural traditions that were once rejected by the mainstream became accepted (Rudrappa 2004:8). As the country moves toward a majority minority demographic in the 21st century, this process has continued to cycle. Multicultural cultural citizenship emphasizes youths’ active, sincere engagements with their South Asian ethnic backgrounds *and* their local lived experiences as urban New Yorkers. However, the widening parameters of multiculturalism

and diversity merely indicate the evolution, not revolution, of multiculturalism. The limitations of conventional multiculturalism are still relevant.

LIMITATIONS OF MULTICULTURAL CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

Multicultural cultural citizenship, like conventional American multiculturalism, does not challenge dominant institutions that promote racial inequities and fail to serve the material needs of minority groups (Ameeriar 2012:511; Rudrappa 2004:183). Prashad problematizes multiculturalism by stating that it poses as the answer to “chauvinism rather than the means for a struggle against white supremacy,” and this critique applies to multicultural cultural citizenship as well (Prashad 2000:111).

While it is deeply meaningful that youth could experience a sense of belonging through multicultural cultural citizenship, it is necessary to remember that celebrations of depoliticized cultural belonging can function as a “technology of concealment” that masks the racial exclusion youth also faced on a regular basis via the state, media, and fellow New Yorkers (Ahmed & Swan 2006:97). Through its focus on cultural representation, pluralism, and diversity, multicultural cultural citizenship, like other models of American multiculturalism, can operate as a “politics of containment” by distracting from exploitation, preventing antiracism movements, and contributing to the foundation on which exclusion becomes possible (Rudrappa 2004:7).

Its stress on “belonging in 'diversity'” can prevent meaningful discussions of race and power (Maira 2009:171). For example, numerous youth described Blacks as the “most American” after Whites, and as part of their evidence they cited the widespread popularity of Black entertainers, sports figures, styles, and art forms, as well as the election of the current president Barack Obama. They correlated Black public visibility with belonging in America, and sometimes overlooked the disenfranchisement of Blacks in the United States. (Admittedly,

more politically aware youth also acknowledged or more strongly emphasized the marginalized position of Blacks in American society.)

Events such as melas and school multicultural festivals include people of color in benign ways but “overshadow historically produced systems of advantage and disadvantage among particular racial groups and obscure socioeconomic cleavages that exist within them” (Shankar 2008:14). They emphasize diversity without accounting for power differentials and inequities. The “fun,” apolitical aspects of cultural traditions are promoted through American consumerism, while “all that is deemed ‘fundamentalist’” is opposed — including social justice initiatives (Prashad 2000:112).

The stress on diversity and pluralism “[undercuts] the radicalism of antiracism” and supports the larger contemporary color blind framework (Prashad 2002:63). Color blindness superficially appears to promote fairness and equality, but by leading people to believe that racial discrimination is no longer a major issue, it actually works as a “formidable political tool” that justifies and reproduces the current inequitable racial order (Bonilla-Silva 2003:3). As we will see in the upcoming chapters, contemporary racism is embedded systematically in social structures, but in the color blind era its appearance is more subtle than historical modes of racism. South Asian historian Vijay Prashad calls color blindness the “genteel racism” of the 21st century that combats social justice movements through “[privatizing] inequality and racism” and obscuring their institutionalization (Prashad 2002:38).

In her study of Desi teenagers in Silicon Valley, Shalini Shankar suggests that post-September 11th, “discourses of multiculturalism” have been supplanted by racialized suspicions and xenophobia targeting South Asians (Shankar 2008:197). My research participants’ feelings of fitting in and belonging through multicultural cultural citizenship suggest otherwise. While

admittedly Shankar's assertion may have been truer immediately after September 11th, I propose instead that in the 21st century multiculturalism and diversity are increasingly embraced in the worlds of my research participants along with ideologies of color blindness and a post-racial era. However, they operate, in part, to deflect attention away from the simultaneous increasing surveillance and criminalization of racialized groups, in this case working class South Asians. Diversity and multiculturalism serve alongside notions of fear and risk — all of which are promoted by the government, mainstream media, and schools — in order to bypass equality and disguise, even deepen, racialized inequalities (Ahmed & Swan 2006:97). Benign cultural belonging, therefore, indirectly contributes to a larger model of racialized social control, which I analyze in the following chapters.

POLYCULTURALISM

Despite the limitations of multicultural cultural citizenship, it is important to take note that some youth who participated in mainstream multicultural and diversity activities also got involved in political actions that challenged the dominant society. In New York City, there were many types of events and organizations with which youth could choose to be active. For example, youth participated in culture based non-profits, while simultaneously getting involved in South Asian political organizations such as DRUM. Sometimes they went back and forth. Attending the South Asian mela and seeing that the youth from the “cultural” organizations and the “political” groups knew one another led me to realize how much these worlds overlapped.

Despite the fact that organizations were generally referenced by youth and even their staffs as cultural or political, the reality was more complicated. Fundraisers and showcases at youth community organizations often involved both political speeches and cultural acts like Bollywood dancing. Organizations like DRUM, furthermore, worked to revolutionize the

concept of Desi culture itself through referencing political radicalism in South Asia and promoting a polycultural framework. DRUM actively questioned “who claims culture and to what effect,” merging culture with power relations and politics (Das Gupta 2006:81). It acknowledged the impacts of migration, colonization, and globalization on “South Asian culture,” challenging the conception of a static, pure culture. One DRUM youth organizer commented:

The thing about [South Asian] community organizing [in the United States]...it's very, very new. It's surprising -- back home it's not new. There are lots of groups that have hundreds, thousands of members, and they are changing the union. There are strikes that happen that shut down the country. But once [people] come here it becomes difficult because of the fear and the laws...My mom's older brother, he actually was a freedom fighter back home...fighting for revolution and independence for Bangladesh...I feel like that has [*sic*] instilled in me.

Political radicalism is often denounced by middle and upper class South Asians as “antidesi” (Prashad 2000:131). By denying the existence of issues in the South Asian population, they attempt to create a positive reputation for themselves in American society and sidestep the racism commonly directed toward immigrants and ethnic minorities (Das Gupta 2006:58).

After September 11th, government actors and nonprofits attempted to connect with Muslims through liberal multicultural diversity initiatives that promoted tolerance instead of challenging institutionalized racism (Naber 2007:2). Polyculturalists, in contrast, stress active antiracism as opposed to simply tolerating diversity or striving to be color blind. They oppose the notion of discrete, fixed, apolitical cultures and simplifying societal tensions to culture clashes. Instead, polyculturalists engage with the “political world of culture,” considering power relations and structural forces when analyzing group differences (Prashad 2002:xii). They comprehend the state's role in manipulating relationships and creating panics and divides in order to support elite political and economic interests. Polyculturalism looks beyond an apolitical view

of culture, acknowledging that “identification across group borders is embedded in the negotiations of power and relative privilege” and thus not easily achieved (Maira 2009:182).

CONCLUSION

New York based Indian American comedian Hari Kondabolu titled his debut comedic album “Waiting for 2042” in reference to the year the United States is projected to become a majority minority country.³⁸ On the cover, Kondabolu is wearing a crown and pointing forward, while he is driven in a bicycle rickshaw by a White man. The title and image play on fears of mainstream Whites that they are losing control of the nation to people of color. New York, however, is already a majority minority city, where allegedly “no one 'American' or 'ethnic' way of being predominates over others” (Warikoo 2004:364). It is important to examine the city’s dynamics because, as Kondabolu’s album cover reveals, the country is transforming into a majority minority demographic, and not everybody is happy about it. This change to a majority minority nation has serious cultural and political implications, which require new analytics that account for the shifting forms of multiculturalism and diversity already evident in New York City, as well as expressions of racialization and criminalization I explore in the following chapters.

In this chapter, I introduced how South Asian American youth organize their worlds by culture and premise their belonging on the notion of multicultural cultural citizenship. It consists of Desi youth embracing and performing their South Asian cultural heritage, as one culture among many in NYC, while staying within the parameters of urban style and multicultural convention in a majority minority city that prides itself on diversity. Multicultural cultural

citizenship is mediated by gender and intention and departs from earlier notions of cultural citizenship and multiculturalism in that it is not oriented to nostalgia for an idealized homeland nor the White mainstream.

There are several differences between 1990s multiculturalism and multicultural cultural citizenship, which include the latter's majority minority context and stronger emphasis on individual agency through cultural sincerity. Multicultural cultural citizenship, however, still reinforces some of the limitations apparent in the 1990s model of American multiculturalism. The focus on a depoliticized version of culture and representation can distract from the racialized exclusion of working class Desi youth by contributing to contemporary models of color blindness that assert that race and racism are no longer relevant as the country becomes increasingly diverse. In the next chapter, I will continue to explore diversity further, specifically its connection with color blind ideology and evolving relationship with racialization post-September 11th. I will examine how youth shift the optic from culture to race when they find themselves in certain uncomfortable or angering scenarios.

38 Some say the year the United States will become a majority minority country is 2043 (Iyer 2015).

PART II: RISK SOCIETY

CHAPTER TWO: RACIALIZATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

INTRODUCTION

Despite the opportunities for privileging multicultural expression and cultural sincerity in their day-to-day lives, my research participants' senses of cultural belonging did not preclude them from feeling simultaneously excluded to varying degrees in American society — on the basis of racialization. Regardless of the popularity of color blind and diversity rhetoric, youth recognized that race and racism continue to be relevant concepts in the 21st century even though they do not always conform to a traditional binary Black-White model. More specifically, I found that youth viewed race and racism as configured in their everyday lives around notions of Islam and immigration, and this importantly speaks to the larger post-9/11 racial formation. Although most youth felt like they belonged in NYC through multicultural cultural citizenship, they also had daily experiences with racialization that reflected and reproduced the post-September 11th wars on terror, immigrants, and youth.

The contemporary racialization of Muslims and immigrants was captured in a poem written by nineteen-year-old Aazim. In high school he penned a poem about the “racial storm” he saw brewing in America, which affected his life path as well as those of his friends and family. Inspired by his personal experiences, the poem challenged notions of America as a color blind, post-racial society and complicated the idea of America embodying a Black-White racial model. Aazim explained to me that he set the scene in his poem by describing American society as progressing in the right direction by becoming more racially mixed, meaning that people from diverse racial groups are increasingly interacting with one another. He wrote:

in some regards society is developing
Races are more mixed, more mixed than they've ever been
White black Asian European Latin American

However, after affirming this increased racial mixing, he zoomed in on his larger goal: critiquing the racism he saw being dictated by wealthy Whites who racially profiled working class people of color. In doing so, Aazim recognized that increased diversity, which was positive in his opinion, did not prevent racialization, which he saw as negative. He stated:

It seems like "looks" are what we're dwelling in
as if someone's life can be determined by [their] melanin...
[You're] a rich white folk [who's] downsizing commoners
[You're] thinking with the same mind set as Hitler's followers

In his poem Aazim noted historical instances of bloodshed, referencing the violence of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis committing genocide. Historical anti-Black violence and the Holocaust are realities that are widely recognized in American society and addressed in youths' public school educations. However, Aazim went beyond classical conceptions of racism to also criticize the current racialization and criminalization of Muslims, immigrants, and youth. He wrote:

but still there's some with a intellect of a terrapin
who thinks that someone's skin color indicates [they're] a felon and
they need to be locked up ['cause they're] addicted to heroin
or if they're Muslim they're bin laden who needs a grave to peril in
stop your arrogance, [you're] walking with a narrow mind like corridors
just keep in mind that [you're] bad minding foreigners
...
tryna judge people by their appearance and ages
tryna predict their life by what you see in their faces
[it's] like stripping a frame of art work to its basics

What Aazim was hitting upon in his poetic exploration of America's "racial storm" was the impact of racialized moral panics. Moral panics are "techniques of racial formation" that create narratives of risk and foster fear that the United States is being overrun by a criminal element capable of crimes against humanity (Rana 2011:56). They are constructed in association with White supremacy and have traditionally scapegoated immigrants of color and native marginalized minorities in order to maintain the social order (Rana 2011; Rudrappa 2004). American history is full of racialized moral panics, such as "yellow peril," that call for surveillance and control of suspicious racial beings who supposedly pose a potential threat to the nation and White mainstream (Ngai 2004; Rana 2011).

It is important to understand that moral panics do not always translate directly as racial panics. As Aazim recognizes, in addition to classical phenotypic constructs of race like skin color, moral panics racialize through casting suspicion around seemingly "non-racial" factors such as drug usage. After the Cold War and particularly in the post-9/11 era, White nationalism has come to center around discourses of terrorism, immigration, culture, and religion, which have been utilized as a substitute for race, in order to exclude allegedly undeserving groups of color (Fujiwara 2008:xxii; Gallagher 2006:106; Rana 2011; Suad Joseph et al. 2007:232). As a result, physical appearance, clothing, accents, names, and English language skills are racialized and criminalized on a daily basis. Race becomes all the more interesting and ambiguous in the "color blind" 21st century when it attaches to categories that are not phenotypic.

While racializing non-racial elements like clothing and speech has been a longstanding reality with multiple racial groups, in this chapter I discuss how these processes are fostered in the 21st century through state of emergency rhetoric that justifies sacrificing civil liberties. It fans racial panic through emphasizing the alleged risk of terrorism and unauthorized immigration

to the United States. In contemporary society, the government and mainstream media's emphasis on risk has rewritten people who appear to be Muslim and/or immigrants as "racial subjects" who potentially endanger American national security (Rana 2011:54). Ironically, being racialized as a risk actually places the accused at risk of being victimized by the state, media, and day-to-day acquaintances — they lose the right to feel safe. This holds especially true in the case of members of the working class like Aazim.

I analyze how these processes of racializing non-racial elements impacted youths' everyday relationships with their peers at school. I examine how youth connected their racialization as a national security risk directly to the terrorist attacks of September 11th and their aftermath, and how their racialization played out on a day-to-day basis through racial humor and stereotyping. In doing so, I make apparent how cultural racism and the racialization of Muslims and immigrants coexist with emphases on diversity that actually support the former. I end this chapter by demonstrating that youth did not solely have racial identities projected onto them. Some youth actively chose to reject an American identity and even embrace a racialized one, in order to signal an affiliation and sense of community with those identified as a national security risk in the post-September 11th racial panic.

TERRORIST WORLD RISK SOCIETY

“Now, this generation faces a great test in the specter of terrorism...
Right now, in distant training camps and in crowded cities,
there are people plotting to take American lives.”
~President Barack Obama (quoted in De Genova 2010:618)

SECURITY VERSUS CIVIL LIBERTIES

In the post-9/11 time period the potential for danger is projected as high by the government and mainstream media, and this anticipation of disaster is reconstituting the meaning of society, cultural citizenship, and national belonging. The events of September 11th led to a global realization of the United States' potential susceptibility to future acts of terrorism (Beck 2008:14). Perceptions of citizenship, race, religion, and nationalism, while always significant, have taken on “new, urgent meanings” to American residents (Maira 2009:4). Racial panics and spectacles centered on Islam, immigration, and urban youth feed the notion that the nation is at exceptional risk morally, culturally, and politically from undesirable, possibly homegrown elements, and needs to be protected at any cost.

The government and dominant media have normalized a state of emergency in the “terrorist world risk society” in which my research participants were coming of age (Beck 2008:40). A “state of emergency” indicates that something threatening and unusual has happened, could potentially occur again, and thus requires special attention — in this case, protection for the American people against the racialized terrorist Other. However, emergencies do not exist in a timeless bubble or indicate a total rupture from an otherwise safe, static norm. In her scholarship on racial violence post-September 11th, Purnima Mankekar notes:

The concept of emergencies often obscures their mediation by prior histories and by technologies of power and control that exist in the realm of the everyday and the ‘normal.’ As such emergencies invoke the temporality of interruption, specifically, the interruption of the normal and the everyday, the safe, and orderly, eliding the obvious question of how (and at whose expense) conceptions of normalcy, the everyday, safety, and order are constructed in the first place (Mankekar 2015:231).

Before further discussing the development of the racialized risk society, it is important to note that risk scholar Ulrich Beck asserts, in contrast to government and media state of emergency rhetoric, that the world is currently more secure than ever before and that the

significance of risk stems from “particular cultural perceptions” rather than objective fact (Beck 2008:13). Risk is defined by interpretations of catastrophic potential, rather than the actual manifestation of disastrous incidences. By constructing and disseminating moral panic rhetoric, the government and mainstream media have created alarm over the supposedly increased possibility of risk in American society (Matthew 2009:132). Post-9/11 restrictions on rights and liberties are not simply automatic consequences of September 11th — instead they are directed toward future potential terrorism (Beck 2008:10).

The post-September 11th moral peril is developed in relation to other moral perils, and hence the United States is *not* currently in what the government and mainstream media deem an “exceptional state of crisis” (Alsultany 2007:207). Historically, ostracizing and scapegoating certain groups has contributed to maintenance of the social order (Rudrappa 2004:180). Current anti-terrorist laws are similar to previous anti-communist legislation (Cainkar & Maira 2005:5; Maira 2009:228). The War on Terror parallels the War on Crime and War on Drugs and is an extension of the War on Immigrants (Cainkar & Maira 2005:2; Nguyen 2005:141-142).

Societal wars are supposedly guarding an at-risk country from existing and potential menaces, but in doing so, they create and scapegoat allegedly dangerous others who are not White, Christian, or American citizens (Lipman 2009:170; Oliviero 2013:10). One youth organizer aptly noted, “Through the eras of U.S. history you see there's always a scapegoat in every decade whether it's the War on Drugs that targeted Latino and African American communities and the War on Terror targeting South Asian communities.”

Creating fear of potential catastrophes is a political strategy used to maintain societal inequalities (Maira 2009:273). Mankekar states that post-September 11th the “national community was galvanized by the production of affective regimes of fear and hate, as evident in

the speeches and enunciations of national leaders, and the policies and actions of governmental agencies” (Mankekar 2015:231-232). Importantly, the government and media presented the current risk factor as so exceptionally intense in the post-9/11 era that people must sacrifice their civil liberties and privacy — at the expense of equality — for the sake of national security (Beck 2008:9). Claiming exception and utilizing rhetoric focused on safety and risk are a “form of governmentality” that allows the use of unilateral power to exercise greater public control and surveillance of racialized groups (Alsultany 2007:228).

In the United States the anticipation of catastrophe leads to preventative actions by the state because “guaranteeing the security of its citizens is one of its pre-eminent tasks” (Beck 2008:11). Importantly, in these processes, the safety and security of members of the targeted groups themselves — including youth such as Aazim — are deemed irrelevant in the larger societal wars against terror, immigration, and drugs. The emphasis on safety has dethroned “freedom and equality from the highest position on the scale of values” (Beck 2008:8). Preventative actions exclude targeted groups from cultural citizenship, reducing them into stigmatized “nonpersons whose basic rights are threatened,” including the right to feel safe and protected (Beck 2008:16). In being constituted a national security risk, targeted communities become placed at risk themselves.

IMMIGRANT STATE OF EMERGENCY

Anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies have been instrumental in creating a sense of risk and establishing the racialized state of emergency. Since the country’s founding there have been “thinly veiled racialized and gendered concerns” that migrants may be dangerous to the nation-state (Oliviero 2013:2). The enduringness of anti-immigrant laws demonstrates how state of emergency rhetoric constructs certain racial groups as perpetually foreign regardless of legal

status (Oliviero 2013:6). Citizenship and culture have been utilized as a substitute for race, leading to the ostracism of “so-called undesirable (poor) immigrants of color” (Fujiwara 2008:xxii).

Asian immigrants, for instance, have been racialized as perpetual foreigners who exist in cultural and racial opposition to “real” American citizens and threaten the country’s wellbeing. Regardless of legal status, they have been portrayed by politicians and the media as a horde threatening America's finite resources, especially in times of military and economic crisis. Current nativism particularly targets immigrant women and children and stereotypes them as welfare cheats and criminals (Fujiwara 2008).³⁹

Throughout history and in current times, racialized immigrants have been exploited for their labor, while also accused of posing a threat to the nation, American way of life, institution of citizenship, and government resources. Therefore, an “immigration state of emergency” has perpetually existed — it is not exceptional (Oliviero 2013). For example, even before September 11th street vendors and taxi drivers were being harassed by police, but they often remained quiet out of fear of retaliation or deportation. In an immigrant state of emergency, it is in fact the immigrants who are at risk.

My older undocumented research participants reported feeling at-risk in their childhoods well before September 11th, and this contributed to ubiquitous feelings of being in danger after September 11th. For example, the Ahmed family constantly shifted residences due to problems with landlords who capitalized on their undocumented status to neglect and abuse them. The siblings recalled multiple landlords who would steal from them and even physically hurt them. The youngest in the family almost died of pneumonia after their landlord refused to provide heat

³⁹ This racialization exists of course along with model minority contradictions.

in the winter. One sibling recalled leaving their previous residence. She stated, “We used to cry to our parents we don't want to live here anymore, but our parents couldn't afford to move...When we moved out, we packed in silence. It was really scary because...we were undocumented...the landlord could have called INS...she took a pan that was left in the kitchen, and she hit my mom with it as we left.” The members of the Ahmed family feared retaliation on the landlord's part and ultimately tried to sneak out of the house when they left.

The cultural and nation-based racism that has been used historically to criminalize and exclude immigrants and their children as threats to American citizens once again reared its head with an increased force post-9/11 (Naber 2007:291). The “spectacle of terrorism” has been critical in creating a specific racialized enemy — the Muslim — against whom the government must mobilize in the name of security (Kumar 2012:140). This was a reality understood by Abdul, the father of one my research participants. Abdul's daughter was disturbed that her father, a taxi driver, refused to file a police report after a man cursed, spit, and lastly shot at him for being Muslim. Though he had lived in the United States legally for forty years and spoke good English, Abdul feared signing any paperwork at the precinct. He suspected the police would somehow use his words against him to trap him, given his heightened vulnerability as a working class Pakistani Muslim immigrant post-September 11th. He knew that despite being the victim, he could be at risk of being reconstituted as a threat.

The government's biggest weapon in anti-terrorism efforts during this supposed state of emergency is immigration law, and more specifically the threat of deportation (Iyer 2015:36). The need for safety in the face of the alleged threat of terrorism has justified increased surveillance and a “highly racialized and vicious crackdown on immigrants and immigrants rights” in the U.S. as the Department of Homeland Security has routinized deportations

(Daulatzai 2007:136). Systems of detention and deportation in place since the 1980s have multiplied since the terrorist attacks of September 11th (Fernandes 2007:22).

Post-9/11 the Department of Homeland Security absorbed several immigration agencies including Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and Customs and Border Protection (Iyer 2015:36). Bringing together national security and immigration policies has led to a record number of detentions and deportations of South Asian, Muslim, and Arab immigrants since September 11th. The current security model legitimizes these actions by emphasizing national vulnerability rhetoric (Oliviero 2013:1). Citing national security concerns, between September 11th and August 2002 the government arrested and detained 738 noncitizens and held more than six hundred secret immigration hearings (Iyer 2015:36).

Since September 11th South Asian, Arab, and Muslim immigrants — particularly those residing in low income minority communities that have been monitored for decades — have been doubly profiled and persecuted in the “new racial project of antiterrorism” that requires “‘culprits’ in its amorphous and borderless war” to legitimize the suggested risk to national security (De Genova 2010:627). Deepa Iyer, renowned activist and the former director of South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), notes that some politicians have claimed that Islam should not be viewed as a religion but a corrupt political system embraced by “ungrateful immigrants who seek to corrupt the ‘American’ way of life” (Iyer 2015:80). Research indicates that anti-immigrant and Islamophobia groups often collaborate to promote restrictive legislation at the state level. Anti-immigrant groups target Muslims, hoping to foster anti-Muslim sentiment into a broader anti-immigrant hatred (Iyer 2015:83).

Since Obama, the president with whom youth are most familiar, took office, his administration has normalized the “state of emergency” initiated by Bush, in part through fearmongering rhetoric that bolsters moral and racial panic and has ironically targeted Obama himself (De Genova 2010:615).⁴⁰ Mankekar notes that the “affects of fear produced by terrorist acts on September 11, 2001, were exacerbated a thousandfold by some political leaders” who preached remaining calm and strong alongside warnings about dangerous, potentially homegrown threats (Mankekar 2015:233). Obama has continued Bush’s War on Terror through a complex program of securitization in the U.S. and abroad.

Youth were generally shocked when they learned about Obama’s deportation record at a DRUM meeting. Obama's administration has deported almost two million immigrants – more people than any previous administration – leading immigration activists to refer to Obama as “deporter-in-chief” (Corones 2015). The government defends its actions by stating that it targets violent criminals like terrorists and gang members, but many who are detained and deported have only committed minor or nonviolent crimes (Iyer 2015:13).⁴¹ Youth assumed Obama would be more of an advocate for immigrants “because he seemed cool” and “because of the color of his skin.”

When they heard that Obama would soon be making a big immigration announcement, some youth started sarcastically joking that the announcement would be “deportation for all.” Despite presenting humorously, the youth had an underlying understanding that immigrant communities such as theirs were at risk. One youth who had been laughing shared with her peers that she had recently become terrified and started sobbing when she received an email about a

⁴⁰ For example, Obama has been accused time and again by the Right Wing of being a Muslim out to destroy America.

potential bill deporting recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. She had read “effective immediately” in the email and panicked, assuming that the deportations would start right way.

In 2009, years after the attacks of September 11th, the government and media increasingly began to emphasize the “enemy at home” and the risk of domestic terrorism (Kumar 2012:140). Obama spoke about living in a new era post-9/11, in which the government needs novel methods to protect the United States from future terrorist attacks (De Genova 2010:619). Antiterrorism is the “idiom of a new species of security state formation” (De Genova 2010:613). One youth spoke about fearing for her undocumented father given the hostile climate against undocumented immigrants and Muslims. She worried about his public visibility as a street vendor and was also fearful of him attending his mosque because she was aware of the existence of informants and the damage they could cause. She summed up her family’s fears:

You don't even know who to trust nowadays. And I don't even like my father going to the mosque five times a day because he's praying there, but my father talks a lot. He talks a lot about personal things, and he tells people he's undocumented. I tell him just because we're all documented [his wife and children] does not mean they have to keep you here. They can deport you whenever they want. I tell him, ‘Listen there are informants in Jamaica mosque. What makes you think they can't make a trip right here around the corner?’ South Asian people have to deal with that in Queens because there are a lot of informants, which is our own people who speak our language but are just wooed by some dumb cop who's like, 'Oh I'll give you a million dollars if you find me ten guys.' And then they'll have to talk you into these conversations and force you to be a prospective terrorist or someone who's up to something that's going to hurt the U.S., that's a threat to the U.S. I feel like they just can't find the person who's in charge of all the activity that goes on everywhere and just abuse and interrogate people purposely to just make themselves – 'Oh we found that person because we're so good. We have such a good team of people.' But it's like you're targeting the innocent people, wrong people for the wrong reasons.

41 The Immigration Policy Center reported that only one-fifth of the 368,644 immigrants who were deported in 2013 were violent criminals (Iyer 2015:130).

By framing the national security conversation in terms of safety, risk, and other color blind terms, the government and mainstream media mask racialization. For example, the Absconder Apprehension Initiative, which sought to locate more than three hundred people whose deportations had already been ordered, appeared to be a “race-neutral enforcement measure” (Iyer 2015:39). In reality it targeted people from Middle Eastern, Arab, and South Asian countries (Iyer 2015:39).

When the government's post-9/11 racial profiling became apparent to the American people, the government and media presented an “ugly paradox” that premised the safety of the larger society at the expense of targeted groups that are put at-risk by being viewed as a societal risk (Walsh 2014:18). Islamophobia and national security fears are utilized by the state to enable White supremacy, including the ability of the United States to go to war, deny rights, militarize police, and target (immigrant) communities of color (Iyer 2015:103).

In Evelyn Alsultany's (2007) study of post-9/11 Muslim television characters, she demonstrates how racial profiling has been justified by the government in the 21st century as temporarily essential due to the so-called national security crisis, though admittedly morally wrong — in other words, a necessary evil. Racism toward Muslims has become legitimized for national security reasons, justifying individual hate crimes, employment discrimination, and government detention without due process. Though surveillance based on racial profiling was widely accepted as wrong by Americans and highly criticized before September 11th, it is deemed necessary for a time because the country is in an alleged exceptional state of risk (Alsultany 2007).⁴² In the next section I will turn to exploring how the larger risk society, which

⁴² Before September 11th, 80% of surveyed Americans thought racial profiling was wrong, but post-9/11 60% favored racial profiling of Arabs and Muslims. In 2006 39% of surveyed Americans preferred that Muslims, regardless of legal status, carry special identification (Maira 2009:67). This scapegoating is reminiscent of Japanese

targets Muslims and immigrants as national security threats, shapes students' racialization by their peers in school.

PEER STEREOTYPING AND RACIALIZATION

POST-SEPTEMBER 11TH DIVERSITY PATRIOTISM

I mean why bother to use your brain
its like trynna ride a bike when you could just use a train
no worries you can just skip right through the main.. Work
of figuring out [who's] different and [who's] the same
just put everyone in a same book of who looks similar
then fill that book of what you see in the cinema
TV radio no need to envisage a world past that,
keep viewing life through a cylinder (cylinda)
~ Excerpt from Aazim's poem

Sheila, who had been in high school during the terrorist attacks of September 11th, felt that "South Asian Muslim" was transformed from an ethnic, cultural, and religious identification to a racialized one immediately after 9/11, especially for immigrants. She explained, "Back in the nineties, before 9/11, the world was such a different place...It's not like how it is now where if you're a Muslim you're pretty much feared...You have no idea how Muslims were respected. I remember people coming and asking us, 'Oh my gosh, it's like such a beautiful thing, your religion is something that requires so much discipline. You pray five times a day.' Now it's just like, 'Oh you're an A-rab, oh you're a Muslim, oh who's your GOD Mohammed?'" Her voice broke and tears came to her eyes as she repeated multiple times "the world just completely changed about us."

Americans being treated as national security threats after the attack on Pearl Harbor (Kang 2001/2002:45; Maira 2009:65).

In Sheila's perception, the meaning of Muslim shifted in multiple ways after September 11th. Before then Islam was seen as just one religion amongst many in a multicultural metropolis. In opposition to fearing fundamentalism, she felt that people saw Muslim religiosity as respectable due to the commitment and dedication it required. After 9/11, she felt Islam became racialized, degraded, and conflated with Arabs. Being mockingly called Arab, Muslim, or a religious Muslim name became an insult in and of itself. Neutral cultural and religious labels became racialized as objectifying slurs.

Importantly, Sheila acknowledged that stereotypes of South Asians did indeed exist before 9/11; however, due to drastic differences in scope and impact, they did not reflect or contribute to a racialized moral panic that constituted Desis as a threat. She noticed that previously South Asians were widely homogenized as Indians and a model minority on the basis of ethnicity and culture rather than racialized notions of religion. Her peers had little desire to distinguish between South Asians from different countries and religions. Sheila recalled, "Arsenio used to call us [Desis] 'Gandhi'... That's what we got called in school... Was the teasing the same scale as growing up as a Muslim after 9/11? Of course not."

Thus, while stereotyping and name calling did exist before 9/11, they did not concern religion or terrorism or hint at criminality and national security risks.⁴³ In fact, Gandhi is synonymous with peace and nonviolence, the very opposite of current Muslim tropes. Sheila saw Desis being called "Gandhi" ridiculous but harmless because it did not carry the threat of serious or violent bullying — it did not place the safety of Desi youth at risk. Given the changes she witnessed, including the development of a larger climate of fear, it is unsurprising that Sheila

⁴³ Note, those previous stereotypes did not disappear entirely. They continue to exist alongside stereotypes regarding terrorism and criminality.

saw culture in opposition to race where the latter was imbued with negative meaning, including the risk of danger for those seen as a national security threat.

Sheila recalled going to school the day after September 11th and feeling sickened watching Islamophobia immediately rear its ugly head. She stated, “I remember guys going after the Pakistani kids in my school, and just twenty Black guys on one kid and just beating the heck out of him...I remember my Black and Latino friends chasing after this kid and just stomping on him. He was bleeding and couldn't get up. The paramedics pretty much had to come and take him away.” Whenever Sheila tried to explain to her friends that the terrorist attacks were not reflective of Islam, and dissuade them from subscribing to the views of the mainstream media, they would silence her.

The actions of Sheila’s peers were based on a cultural racism that framed Islam as a dangerous anti-American religious culture and that became normalized during the post-9/11 state of emergency.⁴⁴ Cultural racism is a method of Othering that appears to classify people in an objective manner. It operates through construing cultural, religious, ethnic and civilizational differences as natural and unable to be bridged or worked out (Hall 2002:118; Naber 2007:279). The Other is seen as “inherently connected” to a barbaric, dangerous culture, religion, and/or civilization (Naber 2007:280). As such, the Other cannot fit into the American model of multiculturalism because its cultural traits are seen in opposition to “moral American-ness” (Rudrappa 2004:150).

⁴⁴ In addition to cultural racism post-9/11, immigrants also faced nation based racism that emphasizes a “binary opposition between patriot and enemy” (Naber 2007:292). Nation based racism normally deems certain immigrants of color as “inferior to whites” due to their foreignness and potential criminality (Naber 2007:280). While nation based racism normally references an inferiority to Whites, immediately after September 11th immigrants were seen as inferior to non-Muslim, multicultural Americans.

For instance, President Bush framed the post-9/11 War on Terror as a moral battle between good and evil — in other words, the clash between the liberal West and radical, Muslim fundamentalists (Maira 2009). The former was characterized by freedom, democracy, and multiculturalism, while the latter was defined by religious extremists “ruled by [their] culture,” which existed in opposition to American liberal and secular ideals (Brown 2006:20). Government officials and policy makers emphasized a “clash of civilizations” between the West and East to mask “historical and political realities such as the United States' imperial ambitions in the Middle East” and add credence to the simplistic idea of America as good and the Middle East as bad (Naber 2007:38).⁴⁵

The criminalization of Muslims was an extension of an Orientalist view in which people from the “East” were seen as morally inferior, irrational, barbaric masculine foreigners and submissive women who would never embrace democracy or individual choice (Cainkar & Maira 2005:3). In regard to the racialized framing of Muslims, Mankekar writes, “These men and women embodied a place as well as a time of barbarism and irrational violence, a disjuncture and an anachronism in the supposedly rational space of modernity; their very presence effected a temporal, and threatening, disjuncture” (Mankekar 2015:237). Government officials and journalists who distinguished the “Muslim world” as culturally and morally deficient fostered a hostile and intolerant environment domestically and justified the racialization of Muslims. Clash of civilizations rhetoric utilized by the government also rationalized the American war abroad in Muslim majority countries (Naber 2007:38).

⁴⁵ Samuel Huntington formulated the clash of civilizations theory in which tensions after the Cold War were based on essential cultural differences between “civilizations” rather than ideological or economic variations (Ong 1999:186).

Because Sheila was light skinned and did not wear ethnic or religious clothing, she was racially ambiguous and often mistaken for Latina. Not realizing she was Muslim, her Black and Latino friends shared their anti-Muslim hatred with her. She stated, “After 9/11 I remember my friends saying they were going to go beat up the Arab and Pakistani kids, and I'd say, ‘Dude I'm Muslim.’ And they'd say, ‘No, not you — you're one of the cool ones.’” When Sheila tried to talk her friends out of attacking Muslims, she attempted to humanize and normalize potential victims by pointing out that she too was Muslim. In response, her friends would brush her off by using her popularity to deracialize and excuse her. They were distinguishing her as an exceptional “good” Muslim — someone who was not controlled by her religion and followed the conventions of urban cool — from one of the “bad” ones (Mamdani 2004).

Mankekar writes, “In the hours following the terrorist attacks, patriotism shaded into xenophobic nationalism” which was “buttressed by the production of the affects of fear” (Mankekar 2015:232). Sheila's friends did not consider their actions racist but rather a brave and patriotic response to the terrorist attacks in a time of fear. Because they remained committed to their friendship, and distinguished between Sheila and those whom they attacked, they claimed they recognized diversity and individuals within the Muslim community and as such, were not blindly racializing an entire population.

In addition to her fluency in urban cool, the fact that Sheila did not match the visual stereotype of a Muslim may have contributed to the ease with which her friends were able to discount her religion. Despite the fact that Islamophobia is based on cultural racism, multiculturalism's “politics of recognition” leads to grouping together people that are perceived to share a physical resemblance (Kurien 2003:277). Post-9/11 Islamophobia often references a particular phenotype, which added to youths' perception of South Asians and/or Muslims as a

racialized group (Cainkar & Maira 2005:18; John 2009:25; Kibria 2008:245; Maira 2009:240). Since the aftermath of September 11th, the mass media has escalated suspicions of anyone who “looked” Muslim with the “state's tacit endorsement,” a reality Aazim recognized in the verse above (Rudrappa 2004:5).⁴⁶

Because South Asians are Muslim or often mistaken for Muslim, they became the victims of racial profiling and numerous hate crimes that continue to occur presently (John 2009:25; Maira 2009:59-60; Ngo 2006:55). Popular phenotypic perceptions of terrorists led especially to attacks on turbaned Sikhs and women in hijab, though it is important to note that abuse was also directed toward those who did not wear religious or ethnic attire (Maira 2009:59-60). The government and media framed conflicts between people as individualized and naturalized in relation to cultural differences or feelings of patriotism, rather than as part of the larger War on Terror (Brown 2006:15). Sheila commented, “They [my friends] didn't really understand the dynamics of it, what's actually going on, what they're actually being fed into... *This is a whole race thing*. It doesn't matter if you're Muslim, if you're Sikh, if you're Hindu. Everyone's judging us based on how we look because of one event that happened.”

Sheila felt frustrated that her high school friends, despite belonging to racially marginalized groups themselves, could not see as she could that the War on Terror was part of a larger institutionalized system of racism that impacted all of them. In the post-September 11th era, “hegemonic whiteness” was momentarily replaced by “diversity patriotism,” a multicultural model that absorbed traditionally racialized groups into the American citizenry (Alsultany 2012:137). With diversity patriotism, the “imagined American community” was reformulated as “diverse and united” in the fight against terrorism (Alsultany 2012:134). On September 20,

⁴⁶ Furthermore, the United States and its allies attacked Iraq on the basis of spurious and racist linkages.

2001, Bush made the binary clear when he stated: “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” (“Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People” 2001).

For example, while Blacks were not deracialized or empowered, they were “temporarily recast” as allies in the anti-terrorist efforts that marginalized Muslims (Jacobs-Huey 2006:61). Notably, the government and media did not include Muslims in this multiculturalism unless they enacted the norms of mainstream American conservatives, and immigrants became especially suspect (Alsultany 2012:148).⁴⁷ Even if traditionally racialized minorities such as African Americans and Latinos sympathized with Arab, South Asian, and Muslim communities targeted post-9/11, they also may have been relieved to experience a sliver of national belonging (Maira 2009:241). Diversity has different meanings and impacts depending on “who gets to define the term, and for whom” (Ahmed 2007:240). Post-September 11th diversity patriotism, which was promoted by the government to the American people, obscured but also produced the racialization of Muslims and Muslim-looking people through emphasizing the unity of a multicultural American citizenry against a terrorist, anti-American Other — in the process, strengthening the notion of a racialized state of emergency,

STEREOTYPE-BASED HUMOR

One summer day I watched *Bend it Like Beckham* with a large group of Desi youth at the SAYA! office. I was the only person in attendance who had previously seen the film. I noticed that the youth paid careful attention to the movie, unlike during the screening of *The Breakfast Club* when most had pulled out their cell phones or began whispering to one another. I observed the youth laugh heartily at the Indian mother’s dramatics as well as the portions of the movie where White people were introduced to elements of Desi culture and acted foolishly. When anti-

Muslims comments were made in the movie, however, youth had a more mixed reaction. Some laughed at those moments, while others looked shocked, exchanging glances with their friends as if to say, “Whoa. Is this okay to laugh at?” Their reactions to the movie in many ways aligned with youths’ broader engagement with stereotype-based humor in their day-to-day lives.

While the threat of physical racial violence based on September 11th, such as that described by Sheila, has largely died down, youth still regularly engaged with sorting out the relationship between diversity and racialization in more subtle interactions. For example, youth commonly engaged with humor based on popular cultural/racial stereotypes and debated when it crossed the boundary between funny and offensive. It was socially acceptable for South Asians to make jokes about other South Asians, and I frequently heard these. One youth commented, “In Florida people don’t make a lot of racial jokes, but in New York it’s a thing, especially against your own group. We makes jokes about rice and curry and smelling like curry when leaving home. It’s a fun way for people to connect and reach out to each other and feel good. Like Bengali memes on Facebook.” Youth made jokes, for example, about Patels being stingy, Punjabis drinking too much, and Sylhetis being snooty.

In one instance, a young Pakistani woman chuckled as she related to me a humorous story about the Bengali child whom she tutored. He had confessed to her his mixed feelings about President Obama. When she asked him why he explained that overall he liked Obama but was concerned that he ate pork because that was haram. But he also heard that Obama liked to eat fish and rice, and the child liked that. My research participant thought it was hilarious that a Bengali kid had innocently told a joke invoking Bengali stereotypes to a Pakistani person (given

47 Sunaina Maira suggests that during the War on Terror, race is no longer Black versus White but Muslim versus

the larger rivalry/tension between Pakistanis and Bengalis) who was now, in turn, relating it to an Indian.

While it was largely considered acceptable to make fun of one's own group, the lines became significantly murkier when making jokes about another group and even when defining the boundary between insider and outsider. One afternoon when several Desi youth and I stopped at a rice pudding business called "Rice to Riches," one Bengali youth pointed out a sign of an Asian lady saying "Me love you long time," and stated that it was racist. Later that afternoon that same youth enacted a mock Chinese accent. When I looked her way she explained that it was okay for her to do so because she was Asian too. One of the other youth shook her head and seemed to disagree, but did not challenge her friend.

When being made fun of by non-Desis, youth usually tried to distinguish between comments that were acceptable and racially offensive as had Sheila who had differentiated between being teased for being a "Gandhi" and harassed for being a "Mohammed." The line, however, between multicultural humor and racial bullying was not always clear to them because the jokes existed in a zone of ambiguity where multicultural cultural citizenship met the American racial hierarchy.

When one young woman explained the jokes her friends made to one another, she neutralized their potential sting by stating, "We all have our little Russell Peters inside." Youth, and even some adults, loved watching comedy by an older, now well-known celebrity, Russell Peters, because they could relate to his jokes about Desis and various ethnic groups. While some saw that Peters' jokes might be considered offensive because they relied on stereotypes, they were quick to point out that they were just jokes that should not be taken seriously; the

stereotypes were based on reality; and most importantly Peters, who was Desi himself, made fun of every culture. The subjects of his jokes were diverse and thus okay because he represented everyone — therefore his comedy was not just excusable but hilarious.

Similarly, youth largely felt that they could make stereotypical jokes because they were people of color themselves and apt multiculturalists comfortable with the vast diversity of New York City. For example, one Bengali youth joked, “Son, I work like a Mexican, spend like a Indian and save like the Chinese.” A joke such as this could be considered a part of multicultural cultural citizenship — specifically, embracing diversity through engaging with various groups through lighthearted humor (as we saw in the previous chapter with Ana and the Bengali sisters). Making jokes based on cultural stereotypes could be a way to demonstrate an acknowledgment of, interest in, and/or awareness of peers’ cultural backgrounds.

Youth normalized common stereotypical memes and jokes and deracialized vocabulary such as “chinky” that might be considered offensive or racist in another context. They claimed all these practices were a natural part of urban culture in a diverse city where people were constantly interacting. Youth often ascribed the same logic to these jokes as they did to neutralize Peters: all ethnic groups were teased and because of the diversity it was generally acceptable. “For every single person they think of something,” youth frequently commented.

Table A: Examples of youth stereotypes (quoted phrases)

Black	selling weed; doing drugs; going to murder people; you’re a slave; ghetto; go fix your weave; go get food stamps; bad students; ratchet
White	I don’t know if there’s a diss for White people; rich; oppressor; best ones; the master race; superior; snobby; no culture; douche bags; culturally insensitive; clueless; exotic; smell like dogs
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish	will get pregnant in high school; manual labor; border hopper; border crosser; immigrant; taco; illegal; low class; gunpowder everywhere; tobacco

	in your bag; will slit a girl's throat
Asian/Chinese	Chinese are smart. If they don't go to Stuyvesant there's something wrong with them; eggroll; good at math; low class; chinky; Chinese are genetically smarter than Bengalis; even poor people in China are smart
South Asian/Desi/Brown	stink like curry; curry fingers, curry this, curry that; terrorist; related to Osama Bin Laden or Saddam Hussain; bombs; bald under hijab; immigrant; illegal; bindi; weird dance moves with hands; low class; good at math; nerd; model student; ruled by parents; no freedom; stink like fish; smart; poor (Bangladesh is a poor country); goody two shoes; exotic; naïve; innocent

Similar to Sheila, often youth were quick to dismiss non-Desis' comments about South Asian culture — usually curry references — as annoying but harmless jokes with no serious repercussions. They had grown up hearing these types of jokes and stereotypes from South Asians and non-South Asians alike and took them for granted. Even their close non-South Asian friends and people they dated made jokes about Bengalis, for example, smelling like fish. Sometimes they saw their ability to take these comments as jokes, rather than racism or bullying, as a sign of their own individual maturation.

Occasionally they utilized these jokes as opportunities to showcase their own self-confidence. I could not help but smile when one high school youth told me he did not see the frequent comments he got about curry as insults because he was confident enough to recognize: “Curry is swag.” Youth often felt secure enough to not take the jokes seriously because they had constant contact with large numbers of South Asians. Thus they did not always feel the sting of objectification and could laugh off the jokes as kids in a multicultural city just being kids. Also, grouping themselves with people of the same background provided them with support and back up in receiving and responding to such jokes.

Overall, youth were hesitant to call these jokes racist. Instead, they were more likely to label them as immature or rude if they disliked them. This appeared to be a part of a larger trend of youth dismissing ethnicity-based insults as irritating and rude but not racist. For example, one young man told me the following story of an incident at Subway, his workplace: “One time a White guy came into Subway and was unhappy with the way his sandwich was being made and started cussing me out. ‘Oh you fucking dumb Indians don't know how to do anything right’ and kept going on and on about it. Finally I couldn't stand it anymore. I took the sandwich and smashed it in the guy's face.” When the police came the youth complained to them that the customer was “disrespectful,” and when telling me the story he described the customer as “rude.” Despite the fact that the customer directly referenced what he perceived as the youth’s ethnic background in a negative manner, and the young man noted that the man was White and entitled, he did not present this story as a racist incident.

In general youth were uncomfortable with calling someone racist directly because they had been socialized to value color blind and politically correct rhetoric, which translated to not even using the terms “race” or “racism.” While waiting for a workshop at a community organization to begin, one Desi high school girl made a joke about Mexicans and border crossing to the other Desi youth. The youth did not challenge the joke, but laughed very briefly to be polite, replying “Oh okay...” and changing the subject. Youth also sometimes argued with one another on whether calling someone racist was even socially acceptable in the post-racial era. While riding the subway near Columbia University, my research participant looked disdainfully at a handful of preppy White college males who entered our car. After cracking a joke about Republicans inspired by our fellow passengers, she recalled a recent instance in school when her classmates “freaked out” in response to her stating that Republicans are racist. She exclaimed,

“You know they said, ‘Oh you can’t call someone racist like that,’ and I said I *could* because they *are*.”

However, on the other hand, sometimes youth acknowledged that the jokes and stereotypes could be derogatory. This generally occurred in a safe, structured neighborhood setting as opposed to school where youth did not want to appear too uptight to handle a joke and where there was no one to mediate such conversations. For example, at a racial solidarity workshop run by DRUM, South Asian, Latino, and Black youth were asked to write down the stereotypes that came to mind for different ethnic groups and then read them aloud. The ones they listed were the same ones they commonly used to crack jokes.

However, in this context, youth were anxious about presenting as racist when they read the stereotypes out loud to a multiracial group.⁴⁸ It was only coupled with profuse apologetic disclaimers -- “no offense,” “not to be racist” -- that they shared the stereotypes. After doing so, one youth uncomfortably commented that they were all racists for thinking these things and others embarrassedly murmured in agreement.

In day-to-day life, it was clearer to youth that the jokes being made were racial when the parties involved were Black and White. In these cases they were more comfortable labeling these situations racist because they had been taught about the history of Black oppression by Whites in the United States. A fifteen-year-old girl commented:

One thing I know for a lot of people in [my high school] is that the Black people in my school and the White people, they really do not get along. There’s this group of people – they’re Black – but they stay in the corner, and they’ll be like, ‘that White girl did this’ or ‘that cracker’...White people will say they’re fake and they’re ratchet and use ghetto terms against them...behind their back and to their faces...People just classify people just by their race, it just happens...One time a White person made fun of my friend – she was Black -- and they said like she’s a

⁴⁸ Note: each racial group did not know one other previous to this workshop, and there were no plans for them to meet again. Thus, youth were not worried about potentially awkward future encounters.

slave, and she got really offended, and she said, 'Well we wouldn't be slaves if none of you White people came up to my country and took all my people and acted like it was your own home.' She said it with attitude and everyone was like, 'Ohhhhhhh.'

Youth were confused about the nature of the jokes when the groups involved were not Black and White because there was no prevalent racial system to which they could turn that accounted for multi-racial contexts. They were socialized simply to consider diverse contexts in terms of culture and not race, in line with multicultural cultural citizenship.

One youth summed up the complexity of the jokes with the following statement: "They will call a Hispanic person an immigrant...a taco, and the guy plays around, but I'm pretty sure he doesn't like it...And for South Asian people, they'll call you a terrorist or immigrant and say it in a bad way. They have something for everyone. Everyone just plays along with it. They'll be like, 'Oh okay that's funny.' No one looks into it like oh this is bad. It *does* bother people. It used to bother me. There's no reason why it wouldn't. I don't think anyone considers it a joke." This young woman starts by citing diversity and urban humor, explaining that everyone gets made fun of and publicly goes along with the joke. However, she transitions directly into saying that the jokes actually are offensive because they hurt people.

Her choice of examples zoned in on my own observations about the boundary between jokes that were acceptable (if not funny) and racialized humor. I read the ways in which youth responded to jokes as an indication of where they saw the boundaries between culture and race. Youth did not seem to be terribly upset by jokes naming culture or ethnicity — such as being objectified as a food item (a classic scenario) — but their perception shifted when the insult connected to larger models of racial injustice with tangible consequences. Similar to the way they framed slavery jokes as racist against Blacks, South Asian youth were comfortable pointing

out the racism in jokes about immigration and terrorism given the larger context of a terrorist world risk society that framed immigrants and Muslims as national security threats, placing them at risk. In these situations, youth understood that the terms being used “jokingly” were racialized categories fueling unequal power dynamics in the present War on Terror and state of emergency.

Immigrant Jokes

Second and 1.5 generation South Asian youth made jokes about Desi immigrant students, “FOBs,” but they usually did not consider them racialized expressions when they did so. This was because there was no hatred in their hearts or desire to make life difficult for the first generation youth. Their humor consisted of private inside jokes that they made discreetly. The intention of the jokes was not to ostracize immigrant youth but rather to strengthen their bond with other Desi peers based on a shared cultural understanding of what was funny about immigrants that belonged to their racial group.

Sometimes their jokes even extended to labeling themselves or parts of their lives as “fobby.” For instance, one young woman posted on social media asking how she could remove a curry stain from her shirt. She humorously hashtagged her post #FOBproblems despite not being an immigrant. These youths’ inside jokes could be primarily read as an expression of multicultural cultural citizenship because they served as a negotiation of South Asian identity through popular urban humor. They were acknowledging their South Asian background while tempering it with a joke in order to remain within the parameters of coolness.

The second and 1.5 generation youth did, however, take offense when youth of other racial groups harassed new South Asian immigrants. These immigrants were generally considered the most mistreated because their physical demeanor reflected their ethnic and

religious heritage in a way that indicated an unfamiliarity with urban cool. A group of high school girls explained:

Certain people treat new immigrants bad. People of their own religion will treat them good, but other people, like the racist people will be like, 'Oh no get out of here! Go back to where you came from,' blah, blah, blah, and all that stuff. It's even worse if you can't speak English. People are racist. You're a social pariah. The people will say bad stuff right in front of them, and that kid won't understand what they're saying. Suppose I just came from Bangladesh. My Bengali friends will talk in our language, show us around school, and try to help. While other people will laugh and say, 'Oh look, another FOB is in the school.' And then they just make fun of you.

Second and 1.5 generation youth did not frame the non-Desi youths' comments as innocent jokes but rather saw them as racialized expressions because they came from an external group calling for hurtful actions such as social exclusion. They felt that the non-Desis were unfairly mocking first generation youth who did not have the capabilities to defend themselves.

In contrast, if second and 1.5 generation youth got a racial joke, they would be more likely able to dish it back — with support from their Desi friends — because they were well versed in urban humor and more easily heard by their peers as individuals. Ultimately these Desis claimed a racial solidarity with new immigrants, despite making fun of their cultural differences. One high school girl commented, "I'm not even going to lie right now – my crew, Brown crew, we make fun of the FOBs at our school that don't know how to speak English that well, but it's like all fun and games. When it really comes down to it, we'll actually help them. We don't hate them. If someone tells them 'Oh why are you wearing that turban, is it because you're a terrorist?' or 'Why are you wearing that hijab?', we're going to back them up! Because we are all the same. They're our people. But yeah we do make fun of them."

Youth who felt similarly were irked by South Asian youth who made jokes about new immigrants to their faces, while publicly surrounded by non-Desi youth. The former saw it as a

pathetic, elitist attempt by their Desi peers to “be cool,” “higher class,” and “be accepted to White people.” They viewed the Desi youth making the remarks as sellouts trying to show that they were closer to the White mainstream and thus superior. Their actions were seen in opposition to multicultural cultural citizenship, with its emphasis on being true to who you are ethnically and appreciating diversity. In these instances youth did label the jokes racist because they felt that the youth making them had negative intentions despite their shared racial background.

South Asian immigrant youth were ridiculed for their lack of urban cool and also for being potentially undocumented. Youth stated explicitly that being called an “immigrant,” documented or not, by peers was a racialized insult in and of itself.⁴⁹ They concluded this based on the tone of their peers delivering the “insult” and the current larger context of the War on Immigrants. One youth commented. “I don’t think anyone will be okay with being called an ‘immigrant.’ ‘Oh you don’t belong here,’ ‘you’re an alien’ – that’s just rude. A lot of students say it.” This is an indication of how the term, which out-of-context is race and value neutral, has been racialized in a city that ironically prides itself on its diversity and reputation for welcoming immigrants. Citizenship status and culture are utilized as a substitute for race, leading to the ostracism of South Asian immigrants (Fujiwara 2008:xxii).

Youth’s anger at immigrant racialization was shaped by the larger risk society that emphasized an immigrant state of emergency. Despite that it had been a decade since September 11th, the alleged threat of terrorism and scapegoating immigrants had not faded. In 2005, for the first time, Governor Richardson and Governor Napolitano “declared immigration states of

⁴⁹ Vijay Prashad contemplates that “‘immigrant’ itself is a racial category” (Rana 2011:49).

emergency” in New Mexico and Arizona, which in turn prompted immigration restrictions, racial profiling, and surveillance legislation.

And more locally, in 2009 DRUM youth protested against councilwoman Helen Sears who proposed a bill to remove street vendors from Jackson Heights in Queens. That year the Jackson Heights Beautification Group had published an article in their summer newsletter called “The Food Cart Invasion” that proposed eliminating street vendors (Trapasso 2009). The group found support with councilwoman Helen Sears. Though Sears used color blind rhetoric emphasizing public safety risks, the groups who protested recognized that the bill targeted vulnerable immigrants of color. One DRUM youth who participated in a protest against Sears explained, “I grew up with the street vendors, and people go to them for food all the time. They are not a danger to society like Sears says! They are not bringing rats and cockroaches to ruin our community.”

Despite the diversity of New York, an attribute youth appreciated, there was still an expectation — in line with one of the oldest debates in the United States — that immigrants should assimilate to a certain degree to “American culture” in order to fit in. Multicultural cultural citizenship calls for a balance that involves both youth’s ethnic backgrounds and urban locale. Not meeting this expectation in a “sincere” manner could contribute to the racialization of immigrant youth. One youth explained: “Some people are nice, but others think that they're 'immigrants,' that they're dirty, that they're filthy... Hispanics or Blacks make fun of them saying they smell, their hair. In my school I'm a South Asian, but it's okay because I'm pretty popular...But the people that are on the side, in the corner, the shy girl -- they're mostly making fun of them.”

Interestingly, this young woman was a fairly recent immigrant, but her popularity neutralized her “immigrant” status with her peers and allowed her to be seen as an individual. As with Sheila, her treatment could be used as evidence of recognizing diversity within immigrant populations, which counters the notion that South Asian immigrants as a group have been racialized. She was also an example of how teasing and racializing could decrease when immigrants made major efforts to assimilate to mainstream urban style, though this process often took years.

Another immigrant youth explained, “They talk about the way you dress up, their accent. If you're [South] Asian they call you names. All those are my experience. As time passed by my accent got better, and I started making friends that know stuff better, so they stopped.” This youth experienced less teasing as he developed a competency with urban style. His more “Americanized” friends assisted in this process and also had the capability to back him up if he was harassed.

One youth noted, “If you put a South Asian immigrant in a group of different people, you're putting a goldfish in a shark tank basically. He's going to get torn up. That's what I've seen happen...South Asians who know what's the trend don't get bullied.” In line with this thought, some immigrant girls chose not to wear hijab or to stop wearing it because they were afraid that they would not be accepted. At the same time, because of expectations of cultural sincerity, youth criticized and mocked first generation youth they felt assimilated too much to urban culture (as seen in Chapter One).

Some youth made an effort to stand up for immigrant youth being bullied, but many also admitted with embarrassment that they kept quiet. For example, the popular immigrant youth quoted above stated, “I don't go along, but I don't say anything either.” In an attempt to avoid

harassment, some South Asians with social status tried to separate themselves from those being hassled, particularly immigrants with non-mainstream clothing and thick accents (Ngo 2006; Shankar 2008:69). “I don't say anything because I don't want them to pick on me,” one young woman stated bluntly. Despite not being an immigrant from South Asia and normally feeling like she belonged, she understood that the immigrant and FOB jokes and insults could be easily aimed at her because ultimately they were about belonging to a group that was sometimes racialized and de-Americanized, regardless of generation or legal citizenship status.

Supporting this fear was the fact that sometimes youth were targeted by association with new immigrants. One young woman in college described her high school experience, her anger rising at the end:

If immigrants are from South Asia, students are actually meaner to them [compared to other new immigrants] because they say, 'Oh you have an odor; you smell.' I was never like that...I'd tutor girls who were from Bangladesh. Yeah they smelled a little different, so what? Uh that's what my house smelled like. I don't say anything to them. I understand Bangla. I used to teach them how to do math. And they would hug me, and they would buy me little chocolates because I helped them. And in the hallways I would say hi to them, and people in my class would be like, 'Why are you saying hi to her? How do you know her? Is that your sister? Oh is that your cousin from Bangladesh? Did they just come here?' People don't even know what Bangladesh is. People are fucking ignorant. Like, 'Oh is that India, is that in India?'

As can be inferred from the previous quotes, South Asians, like many other immigrant and marginalized groups throughout history, are ridiculed and excluded for supposedly smelling bad or being dirty (Ameeriar 2012:510). As anthropologist Lalaie Ameeriar aptly points out, the true “concern is not with...smelling of garbage or body odor but, rather, of ‘foreignness’” (Ameeriar 2012:516). In contrast, the smells of Desi food are celebrated as “cultural commodities rather than liabilities” during sanctioned multicultural events (Ameeriar

2012:514).⁵⁰ For example, during school multicultural dinners youth felt, as one student put it, that “all foods and cultures and clothes were very accepted.” By focusing on the commitment to diversity celebrations and consumption of Desi culture, it is easy to overlook that these special occasions co-existed with the “marginalization (or exclusion) of actual bodies” of immigrant youth in day-to-day life (Ameeriar 2012:511).

One youth remarked, “In school one day there was this girl. People said, 'Oh she stinks,' but it wasn't her; it was the garbage. I felt bad. I'm like, 'Oh my god you guys it's the frickin' garbage'...They think the Muslims since 9/11 are out to get America. They think Muslims and see the clothing and think you must be nasty.” The youth quoted was Guyanese Muslim, but she did not outwardly appear to be an immigrant or Muslim. She was spared from the remarks due to her urban style. The girl who was being bullied was an easier target because of her attire, which indicated her status as an immigrant and Muslim.

Here we see that the racialization of immigrant youth overlaps with the racialization of Muslims in the post-9/11 era. Nativist racism is significant in the post-9/11 time period when the government has extended the racialized meaning of “'immigrant' beyond 'illegal criminal' to 'evil terrorist enemy within,'” a point to be discussed further in Chapter Four (Naber 2002:219). The racialization of immigrants brings together the “notion of foreigner with the idea of the enemy of the nation” (Rana 2011:43).

Muslim Jokes

“You know how people say, ‘What’s your weapon?’ And my friend one time was like, 'Oh what's your weapon' because one of the other kids was Native American. He was like, 'Oh

⁵⁰ This parallels Jane Hill’s (1998) observations of Whites monitoring Latinos’ speech for linguistic disorder. This is dictated, in actuality, not by speech but the racialization of Latinos in White public space. Similarly, here the youth may be perceived as smelling bad primarily because of their racialized identity.

mine is a bow and arrow.' And then the other guy was like, 'Oh mine's the machete because I'm Latino.' And they're like, 'Oh Madiha, what's yours? You're Muslim, so yours is the bomb.' I'm like, 'No, that's not my weapon. My weapon is my fist.'" In this quote by Madiha, it is notable that both her classmates referenced themselves by traditional racial categories, but Madiha was not classified as Bangladeshi or South Asian. Instead she was labeled as Muslim in line with the larger racialization of Islam in the current risk society.

Her peers saw themselves as owning the stereotypes of their racial groups in a humorous — maybe even empowering — way. Though she frequently made and laughed in response to jokes involving cultural stereotypes, Madiha was irritated that her peers associated her being Muslim with a bomb. Madiha insisted on choosing for herself and picked her fist as her weapon, challenging racial and gender assumptions. Her choice may have been a reference to keeping her fist in the air when she marched in political rallies and protests.

In present times, it has become commonplace amongst youth to make jokes about Islam and terrorism, particularly when there has been an incident in the news. This made Muslim youth feel that the racialization that they identified as beginning with September 11th had no end. One youth commented, "Recently during the Boston [bombing] incident, I've been called a terrorist in my English class. If you tell them that like, 'Oh Friday we have Jumu'ah...I'm going to Jumu'ah after this. I'm going to pray', they're like, 'Oh you're a terrorist, why are you praying? You're here to shoot guns.'" Her friend chimed in adding, "Actually they do it all the time, not just because of Boston. In my shop class, they're like, 'Oh you have a shoe bomb,' and I'm like, 'Yeah you want me to throw it at your face?'"

Even Muslim youth who were generally apolitical became incensed when they felt that their religion was being demeaned. They were well aware of the racialized perceptions of

anyone who appeared Muslim post-9/11, thanks to the mainstream media, social media, and their personal experiences. For example, one young woman stated:

Everyone's Desi and Black here. They just make fun of each other. 'Oh Bengalis eat fish.' 'Indians eat curry'... You know how Blacks make fun of each other – 'Oh your mom came in shackles' and stuff. They make fun of each other. So I was laughing at one of the jokes, and then they come at me. I could take a joke, but I just lost it when they said. 'Oh is that why Obama killed your father Osama?' I couldn't control it. I was like, 'How dare you speak about my father like that and my culture?' I got really mad, I picked up a table and threw it, walked out of class. It took a couple people to calm me down... Then they started coming at me like, 'Oh I'm so sorry. I didn't know you'd take it personally.' I'm like, 'That's really racist. How could you come at me like that?' If it was a Desi joke, then I'd take it. Like, 'Ohhh you spit curry' or something, I'll take that. But if it's something about my religion, how dare you say that. The student that made the comment was Black. I said, 'Don't you dare ever say that again; I'll break your neck on the spot.' Honestly, I never make jokes that are racial or anything like that. I just can't. I just don't want to. I'm like it's nothing to joke about.

Since 2010 “xenophobic and bigoted rhetoric” has increased in the media and also been utilized more by political figures — for example, when opposing institutions associated with Islam or religions lumped together with Islam (SAALT 2014:6-7). Discriminatory government policies imply to the larger public that South Asian and Middle Eastern populations are potentially dangerous (SAALT 2014:6). Gender studies scholar Inderpal Grewal notes that the figure of the terrorist has been developed as a risk that must be eliminated in the name of national security, a person “beyond redemption” (Bonet 2011:48). This in turn makes targeted communities susceptible to hate violence. One youth commented:

After 9/11, everybody – Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian – if you had brown skin you were a terrorist in everyone's eyes. Everyone's eyes. That definitely hurt me every time I heard 'you're a terrorist.' But I wouldn't really say nothing about it, but just being classified as a terrorist was like a lot on its own, and I can only imagine what my mom and dad would have to go through after September 11th. Other kids in class said this to me. And I used to play outside a lot too. I'd go to the park around the block, and a lot of people from there used to say it as well. I remember that happening. I was fairly young then, but then it stuck on. It stuck onto the Brown community, the Desi community. It's like a normal thing for

everyone to be calling anyone that's Desi a terrorist. It was a regular thing. It definitely stayed on.

Youth felt that Muslims were mistreated and disenfranchised on local, national, and global scales, and incensed that their entire religious group was generalized as terrorists since September 11th. They perceived Muslims as the scapegoats of the world, comparing their current position to Japanese Americans and European Jews during World War II. One youth exclaimed, "Just because you're Muslim, supposedly you're a terrorist now. There are so many hate groups. Like on Facebook, there's this group called 'Insult Allah.' I thought racism was over, like the Holocaust, and now it's all coming back, and I never expected it to target me or my group of people." This youth was confused by the concept of Muslims being racialized in a time period that was allegedly post-racial.

There was a gendered slant to the jokes. Both girls and boys were the butt of jokes about terrorism, though with girls, they were usually directed toward those who wore hijab. One boy explained, "If I have a beard then they either think two things: One, they could be the racist type. So they might be like 'look it's Osama Bin Laden's kid' or something like that. Or two, they might think I'm just one of those nerdy kids that's too lazy to shave and just study in school. They got a lot of different impressions. Depends on like the outfit you wear, the shoes, your facial hair." Note, this youth labeled their jokes "racist" only in the situation referencing Islam. Being seen as a nerd was considered a common and annoying Desi/Asian stereotype but not a racialized one. The difference between a stereotype that was simply annoying or negative, versus being racist, was based on the larger social context. Because of the ongoing War on Terror, youth saw stereotypes and jokes referencing Islam as racist. The nerd stereotypes, in contrast, did not have a broader meaning that placed Desi youth at risk.

While boys received jokes about being terrorists, girls generally got comments about being repressed and related to terrorists, which “transformed [them] into the property, the harmonious extension of the enemy of the nation within” (Naber 2007:295). Youth felt that most of the jokes were made by boys followed by snobby girls — including South Asians — who bullied girls who dressed modestly or wore a hijab or burqa. One youth exclaimed, “The comments they make about hijab is ‘Why do you wear that? Are you forced to wear that? Do you have scars underneath that? Are you burnt or something? Are you deformed? Are you a sin to your parents, and that’s why they make you wear that?’...I can wear a long sleeved shirt if I want to! They’re doing that to respect the religion. They want to wear it. It’s their decision.”

The jokes about terrorism had become so normalized that youth did not always respond to them. South Asian youth themselves sometimes made jokes to each other about terrorism. At times non-Muslim South Asians made Muslim jokes to distance themselves from Muslims and avoid being the target of such comments themselves. One Bangladeshi young woman stated that her Indian, Hindu coworkers told her that the only reason she was hired — despite her Muslim religious background — was because she was beautiful and could attract customers. This, however, did not prevent them from making terrorism jokes. She commented, “My co-worker made a joke with me that he’ll give me \$10,000 if at the airport I would wear a burqa and stand on a seat and just go into my pocket and say ‘Allah hu Akbar.’ And yeah, it was just a joke. I understand that it was just a joke, but it’s just like you don’t understand that this the mentality of the masses. You know what I mean? This is exactly what the mentality is – that Muslims are suicide bombers, Muslims are terrorists – even from within our own communities.”

Sometimes Muslim youth even made the jokes themselves to lighten their sting. One youth commented, “We probably joke around with it too, but we all knew deep inside behind all

those words it's something serious...it's just a way for them to relieve and laugh at the reality. If they say it within themselves, they can brush it off from non-South Asians.” Sometimes these jokes were aimed at a particular person, but at other times they more generally referenced the terrorism stereotype.

For example, one youth told me that she one day wanted to own her own airline, which she would name after her mother. She joked that she would have to name it after her mother’s ambiguous first name, versus her clearly Muslim last name, or no one would give her business because they would think it was a terrorist airline. The evening I had been playing Taboo with youth, one youth fed her teammates the word “Pentagon.” When she gave them the hint “September 11th” one teammate yelled “Twin Towers!” Immediately afterward the youth joked that they should keep their voices down. Who knows what people might assume about Brown kids in a public space yelling Pentagon, September 11th, and Twin Towers?

Given the ubiquity of the Muslim terrorism jokes, youth tried to differentiate between situations where they should brush them off as stupid jokes versus read them as serious racial insults that could lead to bodily harm. A major factor in deciding this was where and how frequently the jokes took place. If the jokes occurred in school as one-time incidents, youth would try to shrug them off as tasteless jokes. However, if the jokes and comments continued or occurred outside of school in public spaces, they seemed more serious because the capacity for danger and protection were both unknown. I will explore this fear of being targeted for being Muslim in public spaces in Chapter Three’s discussion of racial paranoia. In this next section, I will transition from discussing how youth were racialized by their peers to their agency and purpose in embracing racialized identities.

RACIAL SOLIDARITY

In 2013, I attended a party celebrating an organizer who had won her immigration court case after a long legal battle and became officially documented. For the first time in many years, she would be able to see her son and for the first time ever, she would have the chance to meet her grandchild in Bangladesh, whom she had named after a Civil Rights Movement icon. The whole day she was excited as she prepped and planned for that night. She was in jovial spirits until she was called to the front of the room to make an informal speech to her friends, the working class immigrants with whom she organized. I sat perched on a couch's edge, camera ready, prepared to take a picture, when to my surprise the woman burst into tears.

My confusion deepened when it became clear that these were not tears of happiness. She explained that she feared that now that she “had papers” and was a legal resident of the United States, her friends would see her differently. She stated that while she was no longer technically undocumented, that was still who she was in her heart, and she hoped no one would feel they needed to question her commitment to social justice. She wanted people to see her in the same way — united with the oppressed — even though she received legal recognition by the state through citizenship. Despite becoming a legal immigrant, she actively chose to stress a sincere connection with illegality. Because “immigrant,” “illegal,” and “undocumented” are racialized categories, I suggest that she was claiming a racially — rather than culturally — sincere identity (Jackson Jr. 2005).

The moral panics concerning Islam and immigration created a “vocabulary of terror and conceptions of illegality in the U.S. racial formation” that had a direct impact on youths' lives (Rana 2011:19). When examining their experiences it becomes clear that youth, like the woman who won her immigration case, did not have racial identities simply projected onto them. It is

vital to note that they also actively claimed racialized identities for themselves — rather than solely identify in non-political multicultural terms — in reaction to contemporary moral panics about Islam and immigration. They deliberately chose to reject an American identity and instead associated themselves with their religious background and/or family’s country of origin. For some, these identifications led them to connect, in differing degrees, more broadly with those who were racialized and subordinated by the government and media.

The racialization of Muslims led some youth to identify ethnically and religiously (these were seen as one and the same for youth whose families came from Muslim majority countries such as Bangladesh or Pakistan). For example, Sheila and Aazim both chose to identify as Bengali and Muslim rather than American. In Sheila’s case, she began to actively do so when she saw her friends beating up Muslim students immediately after September 11th. She explained, “After 9/11, even though I wasn't religious, I felt like I had a personal responsibility to stand up for other Muslims...In that sense I identified more with being who I am, where I came from...I would be like, ‘I am one of them. I'm Muslim’ ...whereas before I was just like yeah, I'm just a regular kid.” She understood that her peers saw the world as an us (Americans) versus them (Muslims) and made a deliberate point to assert that she was one of “them.” Even though she could have easily continued to pass as a “regular kid” after 9/11 given her phenotypic racial ambiguity, Sheila made a conscious decision to publicly and repeatedly state that she was Muslim, specifically because it had become a racially marked category.

In response to his father’s deportation post-9/11, Aazim chose to identify himself as Bengali first, despite being born in the United States and raised around few South Asians. “I don’t consider myself American,” he stated bluntly. This is not to say that he had a strong Bengali cultural identification. Aazim did not. He grew up with many Latino peers and few

Desis and was more familiar with the cultural traditions of the former. His upbringing in the Bronx, urban style, connection to hip-hop, and experiences with police were all points of connection with his Latino and Black friends. Despite his handle on urban cool and disconnect from a Bengali community growing up, he still chose to identify specifically as Bengali and *not* as American because of his tie to post-September 11th backlash and family immigration issues. “After my dad left [was deported after 9/11], I had this hate. Due to the fact because they took away my dad. The hate kind of dissolved, but I like to consider myself Bengali before anything,” he explained.

Ultimately, Sheila and Aazim stressed their racialized Bengali Muslim identity first and rejected their status as Americans. These youth understood that American citizenship, in a cultural sense, was closed to them because they were Muslim, and this led to a stronger identification with oppressed Muslims. They witnessed and experienced the War on Terror locally, watched it unfold abroad through the media, and grasped that Muslims were racialized and criminalized in terms of illegality and terror. They understood that they might technically be authentic Americans but could be dismissed as allegedly insincere ones given the larger racialized state of emergency that painted their community as a threat.

Seeing the mistreatment of Muslims worldwide led to many youth developing defensive Muslim identities. They felt connected to the victims of Islamophobia even when they were not its target or directly at risk. This did not lead to a change in religiosity — Sheila and Aazim both identified as largely non-religious — but rather a stated racial and political identification that indicated their opposition to racial oppression. Their sense of being Muslim was tied to a notion of racial sincerity. This meant that claiming a Bengali Muslim identity allowed them to be true to who they felt they became in reaction to post-September 11th backlash (Jackson Jr. 2005).

Some youth downplayed or rejected their status as Americans because they were undocumented and racialized by their illegality. One young woman explained, “Being undocumented here you're already considered alien because you don't have any identity. I cannot do a lot of things even though I grew up here...There's always a fear working within you, so that's why I was pushed more towards identifying that I am Bangladeshi first besides saying that I'm an American even though I grew up here.” Her sense of perpetually being at risk led her to identify with her country of origin.

For some undocumented youth, their identification meant, in part, their active acceptance of reality in order to gear up to fight to improve their life chances. Some of these youth became involved in community organizing efforts for immigrants that involved publicly announcing that they were “undocumented and unafraid.” They were frustrated by parents who did not tell their children the truth about their legal status and what it signified beyond not being able to travel to their home country. One Desi community organizer explained to me that in order to find youth to participate in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, she often had to talk to parents and not directly to youth who many times did not know they were undocumented or what that meant.

One undocumented youth commented that she hated tutoring young children, but she felt that it was important to teach them to work hard because they would need to be the best to get anywhere in life given their undocumented status. She criticized the children’s parents for not emphasizing that to them.⁵¹ Another young woman was scolded for bluntly revealing to a young

⁵¹ Some youth were also upset when parents bought video games for their children that involved killing people in the Middle East. They feared that such games desensitized young children and glorified the military. They felt that they sent the wrong message to children about who the enemy was. Combined with what children learned about September 11th in schools, they feared that children would come to think of Middle Eastern Muslims as the “bad guys.” One young woman commented that she did not like how children saw themselves existing in opposition to

family friend that the family friend was undocumented. The young woman brushed off the criticism, insisting the child had a “right to know!” She had been frustrated no one ever talked to her about her legal status or how September 11th would impact her as an undocumented Pakistani Muslim. These older undocumented youth had faced the shock of discovering what it meant to not have legal papers, and they wanted their younger friends and relatives to understand that they could not be a part of the mainstream American society, and would need to learn to fight for opportunities and protect themselves.

On multiple occasions, I had Desi parents inquire about my legal status upon meeting me. When I would respond that I was born in the United States, I was always told how lucky I was. Until then I had seen my own legal status as unmarked. Youth like Aazim, in contrast, had an understanding of the larger racialized institution of citizenship from a young age. Witnessing their undocumented relatives’ rejection and criminalization by the United States led youth to sometimes disengage with an American identity, despite their legal status. They were sensitive to the struggles of undocumented immigrants because they too had been denied certain rights and luxuries, having been formerly undocumented and/or having undocumented family members.

For instance, due to their cohabitation with undocumented family members, some youth who were citizens, like the youngest Ahmed sibling who almost died of pneumonia, still underwent the trauma of living under landlords who persecuted them. Though Aazim was a legal citizen, he still had to find under-the-table jobs. Because he could not rely on his deported father for income, he had to perform off-the-books work, so his family was still eligible for the government aid they needed to survive.

the bad guy and was uncomfortable that the children did not realize that they belonged to the same religion as the “bad guys” they were killing in their games.

One youth explained that her family referred to her in Bangla as “the one who was born in America.” She was the first person in her family to legally reside in the United States and her family members considered her blessed. Despite her birthright, she shared an allegiance with undocumented immigrants and did not distinguish herself from her family members racialized by their legal status. In high school she personally got involved in creating workshops and scholarship opportunities for undocumented students. She felt a responsibility to stand up for undocumented people and educate those who were ignorant of their struggles and double racialization as “illegal” and immigrants. She explained, “I hate when people use the word ‘illegal,’ and I always fight with people at [my college]. I even correct professors. I’m like, ‘I would prefer that you use ‘undocumented’ because no one’s illegal. It’s not illegal to be a human.’ It pisses me off, oh my god. Illegal – it’s like saying the word ‘the.’ It’s like the first word in every sentence when it comes to immigration. They just always say ‘illegal.’”

One undocumented woman who had had similar experiences in class wanted to start a “Drop the I Word” campaign at her school and become a peer mentor to undocumented students. She explained, “I’ve had people instill confidence in me, but I still felt bad when that student said ‘illegal,’ so there’s probably so many other undocumented students who feel even worse and stay in the shadows. You start to feel like you have a disease after a while, like something’s wrong with you.” Other youth talked about both being thanked by teachers for taking a stance and critiqued by other students. In the latter situation students generally criticized my research participants for speaking too intensely or saw their statements as biased opinions (versus facts) that did not deserve consideration.

Another young woman, who was a birthright citizen, disengaged with her American identity when her undocumented father was arrested in 2012. He was detained for over a year,

leading to terrible financial and emotional hardship for his family. His being taken led his young daughter to notice, for the first time, police abuse of local young men of color. This realization further deteriorated her trust in law enforcement and American citizenship. She found that she could no longer identify with her White friends because they could not understand how the state could detain her father and violate his rights or why she was suddenly concerned about the police — it was out of their lived frame of reference. At this point she started becoming closer to other youth of color and South Asians who understood why she was in pain, began following immigration debates online, and chose to call herself Bengali in rejection of her American identity. While she was normally soft spoken, she told me in no uncertain terms, with fire in her eyes, that she could *not* identify as an American.

When considering the choices of youth who were legal citizens but elected to not identify with the U.S., it becomes clear that citizenship in the United States is more nuanced than legal 'citizen' versus 'noncitizen' or 'illegal alien.'⁵² The plight of their undocumented relatives and Muslims peers, including their lack of access to safety and security, led my research participants to feel excluded from and/or actively choose to reject cultural citizenship by distancing themselves from an American identification. Some youth understood that working

52 The institution of legal citizenship in and of itself has always had gray areas and is thus more nuanced than 'citizen' versus 'noncitizen.' Furthermore, legal citizenship is *not* a fixed condition. Due to changes in immigration law, it has evolved throughout American history, and continues to do so in present times. For instance, in 1924, the American government passed the country's first comprehensive immigration restriction law. The new restrictions on immigration and high levels of enforcement created the category of "illegal alien as a *new legal and political subject*" (Ngai 2004:4).

When situating people within their historical contexts it becomes clear that American policies have continually reshaped the boundary between citizen and noncitizen based on the current political climate, demonstrating the malleability of their border. For example, noncitizens have at times been able to adjust their legal status to become citizens, and there have also been occasions when legal citizens became illegal residents.

Historically this has usually meant remaking immigrants of color as illegal, while legalizing European immigrants. The constructed and flexible nature of the border between legal citizens and noncitizens becomes evident when examining trajectories of immigration policy concerning Mexican and Asian migrants. For further details on this history, see *Impossible Subjects* by Mae Ngai (2004).

class South Asians could never gain complete access to cultural citizenship — despite the increased mainstream emphasis on diversity — because they were not White nor middle class.

Possessing legal citizenship does not alone guarantee belonging in the national community – people also need cultural citizenship (Das Gupta 2006:14).⁵³ Cultural citizenship signifies that national belonging does not come simply through legal citizenship but is also dependent on “everyday understandings of belonging and exclusion” in the United States, which are continually reconstructed politically, socially, and economically (Maira 2009:10). National belonging is linked to “unofficial social meanings and criteria” which often limit minority and working class “prestige and power” (Ong 2003:70). The social distinction between legal and cultural citizenship has been subtly created by the government, media, and big businesses (Fernandes 2007:242).

It is important to note that cultural citizenship is more than a simple matter of possession. It is complex and constantly in flux -- people may gain and lose access to cultural citizenship depending on the shifting political climate (as seen with post-9/11 diversity patriotism) and may have cultural citizenship in some spheres of society but not in others. This becomes clear when considering that youth can feel cultural belonging through multicultural cultural citizenship and simultaneously identify with racialized exclusion. The research participants described in this section chose to reject the cultural benefits of legal American citizenship and instead chose to identify with the racial nature of illegality themselves — sometimes with anger and defiance, other times with sadness and fear. They chose to associate with illegality as an identity that exists in “*racialized* relation to the hegemonic 'national' identity of 'American'-ness” (De Genova 2006:62).

CONCLUSION

In 2009, I attended a “Brown & Black Unity” workshop sponsored by several New York City community organizations. During the workshop, several South Asian, Latino, and Black youth groups came together to discuss their thoughts on interracial relations. Youth were asked by workshop organizers to create the “Racial Ladder of America,” ranking groups in American society. Despite popular notions of a post-racial society, youth did not disagree with the idea of a racial hierarchy.

They immediately placed Whites at the top of the ladder, while conversing amongst themselves about Whites’ positive media representations and White youths’ unpoliced public drug usage. Some youth were convinced that White undocumented families had their immigration cases expedited because they were White and had better success at obtaining green cards. They were also irked that most of the literature they read in school was by and about Whites. One young woman commented that her class was reading a book set in Africa, but due to dominant social norms she still pictured the characters as White! Despite the fact that youth generally came into physical contact with few Whites on a daily basis, they were still keenly aware of their social positioning in American society.

Youth then debated at length about what the rest of the ladder should look like, particularly which group should be at the very bottom. While most youth asserted that Blacks should be placed at the bottom, some Desi youth suggested that Arabs and South Asians should be positioned there instead, citing their community’s post-9/11 surveillance, immigration issues, and low levels of income. One youth commented, “African Americans are looked down upon...

53 Cultural and legal citizenship overlap with one another. Possessing legal citizenship is meaningful both legally

But the way they look at [South Asians] -- we're really dirty, we don't speak English, we're poor and we're really uncivilized, low class people.” In making this statement, this youth hit upon the racialization of South Asians on the basis of culture, foreignness, and socioeconomic status.

Listening to the youth debate, it became clear to me that youth understood that race relations in the United States had shifted beyond Black versus White, but they were unsure how to definitively sort out the complexities of power and belonging in the American racial scheme, largely due to the racialization of Muslims and immigrants of color post-9/11. The Desi youth acknowledged the disenfranchisement of Blacks and Latinos, but debated whether they should be at the bottom because they viewed them as having stronger access to cultural belonging. They pointed out Blacks’ presence in sports and entertainment and Americans’ widespread familiarity with the Spanish language. After extensive discussion, youth ultimately decided based on power relations that Whites were at the top of the ladder, Blacks were at the bottom, and the middle could be a range of different possibilities based on different types of racialization.

In the intervening years, I would hear youth informally discuss who was at the “bottom of the ladder,” and the conclusion often came down to Blacks or South Asians on the basis of racism. However, their definitions of racism varied. If they saw Blacks at the bottom it was because of their historical and current disenfranchisement. If they thought it was South Asians, it was due to the issues with which they grappled post-9/11 — namely being racialized as a national security threat.

Additionally, they solidified South Asians’ place at the bottom by pointing out that as a group they seemed the most foreign in American society due to cultural racism regarding their language, diet, dress, and religion. For instance, youth pointed out that South Asians often were

and culturally, especially in times that are deemed an immigrant state of emergency by the government and media.

Hindu or Muslim, which was seen in opposition to the Christian mainstream and the large Jewish population in New York. Youth understood that race and racism have not disappeared in the so-called color blind, post-racial era and that being deemed foreign in the post-9/11 time period placed South Asians potentially at risk.

In this chapter, I initially presented how the government and mainstream media have fostered racial panic in regard to Muslims and immigrants to uphold and grow the larger War on Terror and the immigrant state of emergency that privileges national security concerns over civil liberties. I went on to analyze the ways by which youth sort out this racial panic and experience life accordingly. That, in turn, speaks to broader racial dynamics in the United States. In the terrorist world risk society, being framed as a potential threat by the mainstream media and government policies places working class South Asians at risk and impacted my research participants' interactions with their peers beginning the day after September 11th. I analyzed how youth sorted out diversity, cultural racism, and racialization, which pervaded the diversity patriotism of the September 11th aftermath and youths' current daily stereotype-based humor.

The racialization of immigrants and Muslims led some youth to actively claim a racialized identity for themselves in solidarity with Muslims and immigrants whose exclusion from cultural and/or legal belonging in the United States precluded their right to feel safe. Being racialized as a national security risk fostered youths' fears of potentially racist encounters in the public sphere, a trepidation I will analyze in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: RACIAL PARANOIA

INTRODUCTION

While in the field, I became close to an eighteen-year-old college student, Natasha, and her family, particularly her younger sisters. Her youngest sister Zara would run to their front door and greet me with her arms wide open, ready to shower me with hugs, stories about her friends, and updates on pop music sensation Taylor Swift. She was outgoing, affectionate, and easily made friends on her block. The afternoon after a blizzard, I trudged through the snow to the subway to spend the day with Natasha and her sisters. Before I could knock, the door swung open and there stood Zara in her One Direction pajamas. “Hi Zayn!” I exclaimed, knowing that Zara was a fan of One Direction singer Zayn Malik. “I wish my name was Zayn!” she responded laughing. She ushered me in while she and her sisters put on their winter gear. After hours of building snowmen, making snow angels, and laughing, I announced that it was getting late and I needed to go home.

All of a sudden, Zara became uncharacteristically anxious and asked if I was returning home on the subway. When I replied yes, she asked, “Aren't you scared?” Assuming she was worried about me walking in the dark to the subway station, I reassured her that the subway was close by and that I would be fine getting to it. Zara replied, “But aren't you scared of using the subway? Because that man who died there. That person pushed them because they hate Muslims.” Natasha jumped into our conversation, explaining that Zara was terrified of their family traveling on the subway and even suffered from nightmares about the Indian man, Sunando Sen, who had recently been pushed to his death on the subway tracks in Queens. He had been shoved by a woman Erika Menendez who later told the police, “I pushed a Muslim off

the train tracks because I hate Hindus and Muslims ever since 2001 when they put down the twin towers I've been beating them up” (quoted in Santora 2012).

Zara's nightmares were not only about Sen's death, however. They had started when her elementary school began practicing school shooting safety drills after the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Despite Natasha repeatedly telling her sister that the shooting had occurred in Connecticut, Zara still thought that Connecticut was somehow in New York and was terribly worried about being shot in school. A police officer had also recently yelled at Zara for getting in his way, and so she additionally feared the police. Her dread of school shootings combined with her jitters about police and anti-Muslim violence in subway stations subsumed her dreams each night and made her afraid of the world during the day. Natasha, who was generally up late studying in the living room where Zara and their other sibling slept, would comfort her sister and help her go back to sleep.

After I returned home and sent Natasha pictures of our snow creations, she messaged me saying that she had had to show Zara my messages to calm her and prove that I made it home safe. I was aghast that an eight-year-old girl, in addition to thinking about her teacher and friends and favorite YouTube celebrities, had heard about the local fatal subway incident and worried that her Pakistani family and the Indian anthropologist who visited her could be in danger. She was able to connect me to the victim despite our many differences in terms of gender, age, etc. because she understood that the incident had occurred because of how his racial and his religious background were perceived. As I had walked down the hallway to exit their apartment, Zara had called out suggestions to me. “Stand away from the edge,” she urged. “And hold onto something! I tell my dad these things too. Don't walk near the edge!” I was to come

to see that this was the first of many incidents of racialization and fear with which I would witness little Zara and her family grappling.

Zara's fears of potential danger would only grow in the following year after she began wearing hijab and was reconstituted as a threat by friends and neighbors. The youngest in her family, she had been excited to follow in the footsteps of her older sisters and wear a hijab. The first day she wore it to school, she returned home in tears. That day she had been introduced to bullying from peers who previously had been her friends — this became an everyday reality. Her neighborhood, where I had seen so many smile and wave to this outgoing young girl, also became the place where she was repeatedly called a terrorist, threatened, told to get out of the country where she was born, and stalked on her way to and within a Koran reading classes at a local mosque. When Natasha pointed out that there were surveillance cameras in the mosque, the sisters could not come to a consensus on whether they were there to protect or surveil them. Who was the risk, and who was at risk?

Zara clearly exhibited an “internment of the psyche,” a condition in which processes of racialization lead to the internalization of the fear that one may be surveilled or harassed at any given moment (Naber 2007:292). She was terrified of who might be watching her family members and people who looked like them in public — myself included — and was hyper aware of being South Asian and Muslim. In other words, she suffered from what anthropologist John Jackson Jr. has termed racial paranoia, the “distrustful conjecture about purposeful race-based maliciousness and the ‘benign neglect’ of racial indifference” (Jackson Jr. 2008:3).

Racial paranoia involves the fear of potential racial hatred that may exist in others' hearts, though these others do not outwardly exhibit racist sentiments. This is not simply a fear stemming from an individual; rather, it has been fostered by the larger terrorist world risk society

and its manifestations. As Jackson points out, racial paranoia has to be learned — it is not “fundamentally hardwired into us” (Jackson Jr. 2008:5). He asserts that contemporary racial paranoia was produced through structural transformations in the U.S. racial model (Jackson Jr. 2008:195).

It is essential to note that Jackson is playing, in a serious sense, with the term “paranoia.” In colloquial speech, paranoia has a negative connotation, and people do not want to be called paranoid because this accusation invalidates their views. For instance, people of color are often accused of having baseless claims or conspiracy theories about racism — they’re simply “paranoid,” and in an everyday sense this means that they are being irrational.

Jackson points out that what Whites might see as preposterous and paranoid (in the vernacular sense) might seem quite logical to Blacks. As an example, he notes that allegations that the government deliberately neglected the safety of Blacks during Hurricane Katrina might seem like a plausible idea to some and a ludicrous conspiracy theory to others. He states, “In such an atmosphere of stark racial differences of opinion, what looks like paranoia to one group can seem quite logical to another” (Jackson Jr. 2008:5).

In line with this reasoning, Zara’s cautiousness about the subway could have seemed irrational to others who might have pointed out that subway murders are rare occurrences. However to others, including some of my research participants and even my own concerned family members, Desis being wary while waiting for the train seemed like common sense. At a vigil for Sunando Sen in Jackson Heights, several attendees mentioned being more careful when waiting for the train, which included standing away from the platform edge and holding onto something (exactly what Zara had advised me). One man stated that he just “had that feeling now.” No one needed him to clarify. We knew what that feeling was — it was fear.

Jackson's concept of racial paranoia — as opposed to paranoia in the colloquial sense — does not dismiss people's intuition or suggest that they do not have legitimate concerns. In fact, it does just the opposite of rejecting people's hunches. Jackson emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the way people fear and read others' potential internal feelings of hatred. This does not mean focusing on whether or not they are accurate — that is beyond the scope of racial paranoia and its significance. It does not matter whether or not Zara's fears were “rational.”

Instead, Jackson emphasizes seriously considering expressions of racial paranoia as “organizing principles for how people make sense of their everyday lives and the forces potentially allied against them” (Jackson Jr. 2008:7). He insists that it is impossible to understand the nuances of race in the contemporary time period without considering expressions of racial paranoia. This is because in the current era government and media emphasizes on color blindness and political correctness keep people from outwardly expressing their true feelings about various racial groups. In fact, even mentioning race can lead to accusations of racism.

In this chapter, I examine how my research participants' racial paranoia shaped their day-to-day interactions with various strangers in the New York City public sphere. Being written as a risk post-September 11th by government policies, mainstream media portrayals, and political rhetoric led to youth feeling exposed and at risk themselves to racism and hate violence in public. In the larger context of a terrorist world risk society (which was introduced in Chapter Two) the concept of racial paranoia becomes all the more useful in understanding how people absorb, enact, and are impacted by the state's racialized state-of-emergency discourse on a day-to-day basis. Through this analysis of racial paranoia, I explore how belonging to a group that

has been racialized as a potential national security risk post-9/11 has precluded working class Desi youth from cultural citizenship by inhibiting their access to the right to feel safe.

CITIZEN DETECTIVES

In the current time period, the risk of criminal activity is treated as so high, by law enforcement, policymakers, and journalists, that the government has promoted preventative tactics that include encouraging ordinary citizens to keep an eye out for disorderly conduct. Anthropologist Jessica Cattelino notes that the state's expectation that citizens participate in community policing "shifts responsibility for public welfare from government agencies to the people" (Cattelino 2004:129). Neoliberal measures mandated by the state and the courts place risk, responsibility, and accountability with individuals, families, communities, and civic institutions. Volunteers and community organizations are to provide services the state cannot or will not provide and to maintain social order, and there are many different levels of vigilante policing (Venkatesh and Murphy 2000). Whole communities are expected by the state to assist the police in monitoring their communities and take responsibility for national security. This leads to the figure of the "citizen detective" — the "vigilant subject constantly on the lookout for threatening and risky others" (Walsh 2014:5).

One of my research participants chose to volunteer with the auxiliary NYPD program where he wore a uniform, carried a badge, and as he put it, "acted like a cop." On the auxiliary police website, the NYPD describes their volunteers as "civic-minded men and women who volunteer to assist...by performing uniformed patrol in their communities...Auxiliary Police prove extra 'eyes and ears' for the Police Department by performing uniformed foot, vehicle and bicycle patrols" ("Careers: Auxiliary Police" 2016). Though the police with whom he worked

sometimes made him uncomfortable by making racist comments, he brushed this off as part of the culture of police joking, and insisted that he wanted to someday become a full-time police officer, so he could continue to help his community by keeping it safe.⁵⁴

Ordinary citizens have become surveillors, keeping an eye out for “suspicious” Others disordering the public sphere. This monitoring determines who is seen as belonging in American society and who is seen as foreign and potentially a threat to national culture or security. This day-to-day surveillance and corresponding discrimination “constitute forms of de-Americanization” that remind certain groups — including my research participants — of their marginalized status in the United States (Walsh 2014:18). Ultimately, the public is encouraged by the state to racially determine who belongs in American society. Importantly, these processes “reinforce implicit correlations between Americanness and Whiteness” (Walsh 2014:17).

For example, the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force works with a national network of fusion centers that assess terrorism threats — including those “gleaned from ‘suspicious activity reporting’ by the public,” meaning the results of “See Something, Say Something” reports (Iyer 2015:63). “See Something, Say Something” is not just a catchphrase but is also a signal to the public to “articulate the specifics of race as a part of shared public policing of bodies marked as brown, or Arab, or Muslim” (Guterl 2013:21).

⁵⁴ In her study of civilian crime prevention in the late 1990s on the Lower East Side of NYC, Cattelino demonstrates that people have different agendas in choosing to participate in community policing. She found that White, middle class communities generally emphasized being good citizens who fulfilled their civic duties and judged “uninvolved residents as undeserving of state resources” (Cattelino 2004:117). Their viewpoints were similar to those of crime prevention organizations that encouraged residents to volunteer in community policing in order to be good citizens (Cattelino 2004:118). Low income groups of color, in contrast, tended to frame their participation as a necessity because the state had failed to meet their community’s safety needs and provide them full access to their citizenship rights. Some individuals in this latter group framed their participation in community policing efforts as a way of serving their specific community (Cattelino 2004:121). We see this viewpoint later with Aazim. Cattelino concluded that NYC agencies provided increased resources to crime-prevention units that had the “closest and most institutionalized ties” to the NYPD (Cattelino 2004:124).

NYC broken windows crime control measures, introduced in the 1980s, paved the way for the “See Something, Say Something” campaign. The broken windows model promotes fear around and aggressive policing of minor infractions, which leads to an emphasis on racial profiling. Its introduction to New Yorkers prepared them to embody vigilance and even vigilantism in order to address societal risks. Guillermo Gómez-Peña, a Chicano artist whose work centers on the U.S.-Mexico border, aptly remarks, “Compassion has been replaced by fear: a generalized fear of otherness and difference. Fear is now our national culture, our subconscious, and our zeitgeist” (Gómez-Peña 2008:199).

While community policing connects Americanness and Whiteness, it is necessary to note that citizen surveillance may involve marginalized groups of color also monitoring one another. Despite the fact that there is not always a White majority in public spaces, belonging is generally defined by elite members who maintain White mainstream norms (Young 1998). While traditional multiculturalism defines groups of color as different from the White mainstream, not belonging to the dominant group does not translate into being equal or the same or getting along. One youth commented, “Because there’s so much diversity there is more racism and more saying and doing things to each other.” Similarly, Hari Kondabolu, who grew up in Queens and currently resides in Brooklyn, aptly comments in his comedy routines that the multiculturalism and diversity of New York City do not simply translate into racial harmony — in actuality they mean that people find more ways to hurt one another. His observation challenges the conception that diversity is the answer to racism and recognizes, instead, the diversity of racism.

While the state has handed over some responsibilities, it is important to remember that during the current alleged state of emergency, it has increased power to surveil and punish (Tilton 2010). This is true not only in criminal contexts but in many areas of law. For example,

policies that criminalize the poor demonstrate the state's critical extension of reach. For instance, there has been recent media attention to parents being fined, losing custody, and even being jailed for their children's truancy. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 stated that schools must begin reporting truancy information to the federal government. In a particularly tragic case, Eileen DiNino, the 55-year-old mother of eight, was jailed for two days because she owed more than \$2,000 in truancy fines, which she was unable to pay as a widowed, unemployed mother. In jail, DiNino fell ill and passed away. The criminalization of truancy has been challenged by policymakers, politicians, and the public for criminalizing the working class and contributing to poverty (Goldstein 2015).

The criminalization of debt is another example of the state's increased power to punish. For example, Walter Scott was killed by the police when trying to run away from them. Scott had been previously jailed multiple times for falling behind on child support payments, which resulted in him losing his job and becoming increasingly financially unstable (Sausser 2015). After being pulled over for a broken taillight, Scott ran from the police because he did not want to risk being jailed once again for being unable to pay child support and lose another job. The police fatally shot him in the back. Sarah Geraghty, a lawyer with the Southern Center for Human Rights, stated to the press, "Parents who are truly destitute go to jail over and over again for child support debt simply because they're poor" (quoted in Robles and Dewan 2015). DeNino and Scott's deaths exemplify the state's continued power to punish even at a time when neoliberal citizens, not just the government, are expected to take control of the public sphere and blamed for social ills.

RACIAL PARANOIA

One afternoon over lunch at her parents' house, a young woman, Amara, asked me whether I had seen the Islamophobic advertisements the American Freedom Defense Initiative had placed all over the city in subway stations.⁵⁵ I immediately recognized the ad to which she was referring, having been shocked by its presence the first time it stared me in the face in a Harlem subway station. In the advertisement was the quote: "Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers (Quran 3:151)."

Amara's sister Nadine chimed in, pointing out that people did not even need to read the ads to understand their implication of Muslims as terrorists because next to the text was an image of the twin towers burning.⁵⁶ Signs such as these placed a spotlight on Muslims or anyone who could be mistaken for Muslim. This was especially the case when seen in association with the permanent "If you see something, say something" signs plastered all over subway stations, which were taken-for-granted daily reminders of potential risks.

Amara, who wore a hijab, described an incident when a man kept staring at her, "killing [her]" with his gaze. When she turned away she realized she had been standing directly next to one of the Islamophobic ads. For a moment her heart stood still with fear, anger, and sadness as she recalled the Indian man (Sunando Sen) who had recently been shoved to his death on the subway tracks. Nervously she moved away from the train track edge, frightened at how the man might be cumulatively reading the advertisement, her hijab, and the platform brink. "It was so

⁵⁵ Pamela Geller is the co-founder of the American Freedom Defense Initiative, which has been deemed a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Geller is a notable figure in the Islamophobia movement and defends her hateful rhetoric through citing the right to free speech (Iyer 2015:72).

⁵⁶ One youth shared with me a school paper she wrote condemning the advertisements. In the paper she stated, "This type of propaganda is persuading scapegoating of a religious group, and will further continue to create discrimination and racial profiling towards South Asian minorities...From my childhood, especially after 9/11, racism and discrimination have been things I have felt even being an innocent little girl. These posters are sending hatred and subliminal messages that not only adults will read, but children and youngsters whom will have a negative association of Islam."

scary,” she said. “It was so scary an Indian man was pushed in the tracks, and you have ads like this up?!” Amara remembered her simultaneous anger in the moment as well. “I wanted to ask him if the ads were the reason he was looking at me,” she recalled. I could empathize with her sense of vulnerability. The warning from Zara and several others had led me to change my behaviors when I waited for the train. Previously I, like many others, would stand at the edge of the platform and peer into the tunnel to see if the train was coming. I stopped doing so and started standing at a distance from the platform edge, suddenly conscious of how I may be viewed by others.

It is important to note that ultimately Amara feared potential racial hatred and not insanity. She did not view Sen’s death as the unfortunate result of one random crazy person’s actions. She pointed out that even if those who attacked South Asians were crazy, “this hatred had to have been instilled in them from somewhere. Something is educated in them for them to hate this person.” Nadine nodded in agreement and commented, “My first thought [when hearing about Sen’s death] was it could have been my dad. It could have been anybody. I used to work there myself in that area, and that could have been me that was pushed. It makes you feel like your life could be at risk. This is one of many incidents I’ve heard, and it’s scary...in the media they’re treated like individual incidents, and they’re not. They come from the same sort of origin, same reason.” Amara responded, “Sometimes I really hate people. It makes me sad people are like this and that people go through this.” Her sister sighed and replied, “People aren’t educated to think critically but to fit into the capital model and do what you’re told to do to be productive and not think critically about issues.”

Amara’s perception of the staring man was an example of racial paranoia, which was based on belonging to a vulnerable community targeted as a racialized terrorist risk post-

September 11th, a time period when political correctness and color blindness have also been emphasized.⁵⁷ Racial paranoia is centered on an intuitive distrust of potentially racist others that grows with any perceived trivialities — it “inhabits the gut, not the mind” (Jackson Jr. 2008:18). The man who appeared threatening to Amara did not say anything blatantly racist or make any physical advances. Racial paranoia is based on assumptions, and Amara sensed racialized loathing in this man’s eyes, which is why she described him as “killing [her]” with his stare. While racism involves tangible discriminatory acts, racial paranoia is the fear of being potentially abused by others who have a masked race-based animosity against them (Jackson Jr. 2008:4). And that fear can itself contribute to marginalization in a multitude of ways, particularly when it is disparaged by others as irrational. Given her appearance, the advertisement, Sunando Sen’s death, and the larger War on Terror, Amara became afraid of what could potentially happen with this man, even though subway murders are rare occurrences.

Jackson identifies racial paranoia at the crux of contemporary American life when race has become “more schizophrenic, more paradoxical” (Jackson Jr. 2008:11). By this Jackson is referencing how people engage in “racial doublethink” by which they give race significance in many ways, including insisting on equality, but simultaneously devalue it in other situations (Jackson Jr. 2008:11). Jackson identifies racial paranoia as being made up of “extremist thinking, general social distrust, the nonfalsifiable embrace of intuition, and an unflinching commitment to contradictory thinking” (Jackson Jr. 2008:7). It is essential to note that racism helps create that intuition (Jackson Jr. 2008:17).

For instance, one youth heard a rumor that Assata Shakur, who had just been placed on the FBI’s Most Wanted Terrorists List, was living in New Jersey and not in Cuba under political

⁵⁷ This is not to say that Amara did not feel targeted before September 11th. Her family did feel at-risk given their

asylum. He believed that the rumor was being purposefully spread by the government, as he put it, “as an excuse to harass Black and Brown people in Jersey.” Whether or not such a rumor was being spread by the government, this youth’s theory was a product of racial paranoia stemming from his understanding of racialized police brutality and state violence.

Racial distrust has evolved in American society along with institutionalized power differentials. After the Civil Rights Movement, which legally banished racial discrimination, racism became more subtle and difficult to identify, leaving room for plausible deniability. This holds especially true currently due to emphases on political correctness and color blindness that discourage explicit racist expression. Despite these shifts, Jackson notes that people continue to discuss race today using pre-civil rights ideas and fall behind in analyzing contemporary racial thinking.

By instead choosing to examine the logic of racial paranoia, we can learn how the state and mass media in the 21st century have conditioned Americans to think about race and react to social differences on an everyday basis. Racial paranoia is an analytical lens to reveal and understand racial animosity masked in an America that promotes political correctness. As Jackson states, it is a “rudimentary and imperfect recognition that spotting racism at all these days demands new ways of seeing altogether” (Jackson 2008:22).

It is essential to note that racial paranoia does not mean that racism or a racial threat is merely imagined. Focusing on whether or not racism exists is too simplistic and beside the point. Jackson’s theory accounts for how one feels and senses racism, versus whether a racist threat actually exists, and in this sense is reminiscent of his theorizations of sincerity that also focus on the unseeable interior. To clarify, racial paranoia is focused on insincerity, peoples’

undocumented status, but their fears deepened during the post-9/11 backlash.

“intrinsic ability to misrepresent inner beliefs” (Jackson Jr. 2008:96). This makes it an important analytical lens because, as Jackson notes, we live in a political time period in which political correctness encourages racial insincerity.

This focus on insincerity has an interesting historical relation to fears of Blacks dissembling and fears that Blacks secretly felt animus toward Whites. For example, Jackson discusses how slave owners went back and forth between trusting their slaves and fearing their uprising, especially after the successful slave rebellion in Haiti (Jackson Jr. 2008:31). He states, “Plantation owners couldn’t really know when seemingly ‘lovable ol’ darkies’ weren’t really plotting imminent escape or bloody revenge” (Jackson Jr. 2008:32). Slave owners were so paranoid that sometimes natural deaths were blamed on the secret actions of slaves (Jackson Jr. 2008).

Racial paranoia is a “distinct analytical lens” for comprehending and talking about race and racism in the 21st century when racial conflict has become more understated and clouded (Jackson Jr. 2008:21). Jackson points out that even conservative political commentator Pat Buchanan frames his racist opinions with color blind egalitarianism discourse. Jackson concludes, “This is a new racial order, indeed” (Jackson 2008:226).

Furthermore, with the election of Barack Obama, many Americans believe we have truly entered a color blind, post-racial era when racism is no longer a problem. They saw the election of a Black president as “marking the ostensible ‘end’ of an historical norm of exclusive white political domination and inaugurating a new purportedly ‘postracial’ era” (De Genova 2010:622). Obama’s election has been treated as the end of the Civil Rights era and proof of the “American exceptionalist racial narrative of resilient perfectibility” (De Genova 2010:625). However, numerical data reveals that if the 2008 election had been up to White voters, John

McCain would have won the presidency — this fact itself challenges notions of a post-racial America (Jackson Jr. 2008:218).

Obama himself ran a post-racial campaign and adopts an identity and politics that promote color blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich 2011; Jackson Jr. 2008:16). Some scholars claim that Obama's color blindness fuels troublesome proclamations that race is now insignificant socially, culturally, and politically in the United States. (Of course, on the other hand, conservatives insist that Obama directly references race too frequently.) One youth commented, "You can't say anything against Obama at school, or people will jump down your throat. People think everything must be great since Obama is president and that no one is racist."

To even mention race can be considered rude and even racist itself in the so-called post-racial era, and the person who cites racism has become the "new racial sinner, hypocritical and hypersensitive" (Jackson Jr. 2008:98). The legacy of White supremacy and racial oppression has been pushed to the past, now merely an exceptional blip in American history. When race is mentioned by the state or mainstream media, it is mentioned in terms of the past in order to "more thoroughly efface and erase it in the present" (De Genova 2010:624). Due to this emphasis on color blindness and political correctness in the contemporary era, people have become increasingly paranoid about potential "hidden racial motivations" that are no longer socially acceptable to blatantly display due to the increasing value placed on political correctness since the 1960s (Jackson Jr. 2008:50).

In earlier time periods when racism was blatant, people would not become paranoid because they understood where they stood with others who did not need to hide their racist opinions — there was no question of sincerity (Jackson Jr. 2008:9).⁵⁸ Jackson presents the 21st

⁵⁸ However, people still had to look for potential hidden violence in racism.

century as a time period of *de cardio* racism — “racism banned from the public sphere and reimagined as snug within the inaccessible hearts of other people” that necessitates novel means of analysis (Jackson Jr. 2008:86). People cannot feel completely safe because they cannot clearly read what is in others’ hearts. The media fans senses of everyday racial paranoia. *De cardio* racism cannot be easily challenged or deemed illegal because it involves racism that is shielded with the presentation of political correctness (Jackson Jr. 2008:87). It is what a person such as Amara or Zara feels and senses, not what is obvious or provable (Jackson Jr. 2008:202). The irony of political correctness is that it ends up shielding racism instead of the targets or victims of racism.

Whereas Jackson primarily discusses racial paranoia in regard to Blacks and Whites, the “same *de cardio* invisibilities,” as Jackson himself recognizes, apply to debates on immigration, terrorism, and societal risk in which culture and citizenship are often used as proxies for race (Jackson Jr. 2008:196). For example, the cultural racism that was referenced in the previous chapter, including the “clash of civilizations” theory, exemplifies *de cardio* racism (Jackson Jr. 2008:197). Color blindness paired with racialized structural and interpersonal injustices — including being treated like a national security risk — feeds racial paranoia (Jackson Jr. 2008:206). Zara and Amara belonged to communities whose members had been hypervisible in the media since September 11th as potential terrorists, while their abuse at the hands of the state and their victimization in hate crimes remained largely invisible to the American public (Maira 2009).

SCARS FROM POST-SEPTEMBER 11th BACKLASH

Shared stories and memories of interpersonal backlash and hate crimes immediately after September 11th shaped youths’ current experiences of racial paranoia. While South Asians have

been subject to hate crimes in the United States for over a century, “nothing could have prepared the community” for the tremendous post-September 11th backlash (Iyer 2015:13). Mankekar notes, “The triangulation of the affective economies of hate and fear, the circulation of media representations of racial Otherness as signs of danger, and the formation of the national community converged in the production of a space for violence” (Mankekar 2015:233).

Most anti-Muslim hate groups formed in response to September 11th. The first fatal September 11th related hate crime occurred just a few days after the terrorist attacks. On September 15, 2001, Balbir Singh Sodhi, a South Asian gas station owner, was murdered. The same day the so-called “9/11 revenge killer” killed Waqar Hasan and Vasudev Patel, both of South Asian descent, and a few days later he shot Rais Bhuiyan, a Bangladeshi immigrant (Iyer 2015:14).⁵⁹ The FBI Hate Crimes Report reveals that 27.2% of reported hate crimes in 2001 were against Muslims and Muslim-looking people (such as Sikhs and Hindus) — this was a 1,600% increase from the year before (Iyer 2015:17).

The first six years after September 11th the FBI investigated more than eight hundred incidents of violence and threats against South Asians, Arabs, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and people mistaken as members of these groups (Iyer 2015:18). It is important to keep in mind, furthermore, that vulnerable communities are likely to underreport hate crimes (Iyer 2015:21). Between September 11th and March 2012 the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission received 1,040 charges of workplace discrimination from South Asians, Arabs, Muslims, and Sikhs (Iyer 2015:16).

⁵⁹ Mankekar discusses how these hateful killings were excused in American society as patriotic “[crimes] of passion because [they] exemplified specifically masculinist expressions of grief and mourning” (Mankekar 2015:234).

Regardless of their ages during the September 11th attacks, youth regularly pinpointed them as the reason their communities were viewed with suspicion and were at risk. September 11th marked a new racial order in which incidents of hate violence against Muslims and Muslim looking people were no longer “extraordinary eruptions of disorder” in daily life but rather “quotidian, even normal” (Mankekar 2015:234). Those who were old enough to clearly remember the attacks recalled their uneasy sense of hypervisibility immediately after September 11th when Islamophobia reared its ugly head in their day-to-day lives in their neighborhoods and schools, and fear and hatred flourished.

One youth commented, “I remember boys in my neighborhood got jumped, and parents were afraid to send their kids out...A lot of people had very anti-Muslim sentiment, pictures, ‘kill all Muslims’ all over their cars. There was a lot of graffiti that said, ‘Kill Muslims.’ We were afraid to put anything that identified us as Muslim in our cars.” Another youth explained, “People would put up these stupid stickers of like, ‘Muslim people are bad,’ ‘Osama watch out’...After 9/11 I knew everything was going to change. It was given. When you see all the propaganda on TV with them showing people in Iran and Iraq and Afghanistan burning the American flag and screaming, of course they're going to think every Muslim person is like that.” Another youth sadly stated, “My friend got bullied so much she became suicidal for a while.”

Youth who were very young at the time or had not yet moved to the United States also named September 11th as the moment when their communities became targets because they had heard others’ recollections of post-9/11 backlash and felt that its impact continued into the present. When the 2013 Boston bombing and 2015 Paris terrorist attacks occurred, youth knew they had a reason to be afraid and expect backlash given the post-9/11 reactions about which they had heard, they had witnessed, or they had experienced.

Triggers of hate crimes youth identified in the stories and memories of post-9/11 backlash shaped their current racial paranoia. For instance, when they were rejected for jobs or someone paused after saying their names, Muslim youth wondered if they were being judged for their names. Some youth considered changing their names, and one young woman told me her cousin Osama legally changed his due to the harassment he faced.

Youth were also particularly sensitive to people's reactions to their ethnic and religious clothing. In order to navigate the climate of fear and stay safe, many South Asians and Muslims had changed their physical appearance after September 11th to hide their racial and religious identities. The community learned then that any aspect of their physical appearance that could be read as Islamic could make them a target. One young woman recalled the time period immediately after 9/11:

Our mosque was really scared to practice prayer and a lot of parents wouldn't sent their kids to Arabic class because if you wear the cultural clothes and you wear the hijab on your head it's a threat...my neighbors upstairs, they're Pakistani and they would wear burqa...the women in that household wouldn't go outside...People were cutting off their facial hair because they were so scared. They had a long beard, it shows that you are Muslim, and you might get jumped or attacked...A lot of girls took off their hijabs because they'd get their hijabs pulled off.

Youth's racial paranoia continued to spike in present times when they felt that they were being looked at the wrong way when wearing cultural or religious articles of clothing. They did not see them as looks of admiration or curiosity but rather suspicion and hatred. For example, one young man talked about feeling like his teachers treated him badly after they saw his mother pick him up from school wearing a hijab. "They used to just eye my mother," he mused. "The racism thing happened to me before I knew about it." His teachers never said anything derogatory to his mother or to him, but this youth sensed hatred from his teachers after they saw

his mother. One young woman commented, “A regular Muslim person who doesn't wear a scarf can go anywhere and be known as an Indian, as a Hindu. I know Pakistani people who don't like to say they're from Pakistan. So when you ask them they say, 'Oh yeah, I'm Indian.' They don't even take pride in who they are anymore because of this. I feel they just want to be accepted, and they don't want to be racially profiled.”

Despite New York's commitment to diversity, there are limitations to how and where cultural traditions can be expressed.⁶⁰ The division between public and private spheres is ethnocized (Ramos-Zayash 2006:281; Yuval-Davis 2000:183). Abstract, universal individuals have been at the heart of pluralism and liberal citizenship theory, which prohibit particularized identities in public and limit group affiliations, including those based on culture, to the private sphere (Feldman 2003:168; Kymlicka 1996:3). More recently, there has been some flexibility in this regard because as Sharmila Rudrappa notes, “*Today, being ethnic makes one a good American*” (Rudrappa 2004:169).

However, multiculturalism dictates that people may only celebrate certain palatable aspects of their cultural backgrounds in specific spaces. When they cross lines that “[challenge] the hegemonic codes...they cease to be model” Americans (Shankar 2008:14). Since September 11th, Muslim women with hijab and Sikh men with turbans in the public domain have been the primary victims of hate crimes because wearing their religious dress publicly has been read by attackers as an assault on American values (Cainkar 2011:6). It is important to note that my research participants who were non-Muslim young women also reported sensing looks of hatred in public when covering their hair with a scarf to shield themselves from cold weather or rain.

⁶⁰ It is also important to note that despite their troubles in New York, youth felt safest there because of its diversity. When youth, particularly girls who wore hijab, left the state they felt that everyone was staring at them and

When riding the train with a research participant, Nakul, he had pointed out how New Yorkers make a point of maintaining their separation in public spaces by taking actions like deliberately putting in their head phones and pointedly looking in another direction if someone glances their way. In contrast, youth often felt particularly visible when they wore Desi garb in public because of the blatant stares in their direction. One youth commented, “I guess on the subway everyone is just so subdued, and then you'll just be that pop.” There were times I rode the subway with youth and women wearing *salwar kameez* and/or hijab, and I was asked by another rider if my group was speaking Arabic. It always stood out that I, who generally wore Western clothes, was the one who was approached, and in these moments my own racial paranoia would flare.

One young woman directly connected the surveillance and danger she faced as a child immediately after September 11th with the sense of fear she felt in the present:

My sister even got jumped at a park once. Because we were swinging, and we went with another family friend, and the family friend was wearing *salwar kameez*. We were on the swings, and a bunch of kids came, and they were all calling us names. And so we knew something wrong was going to happen. We started walking away but because my sister has asthma, she can't run fast. I happened to be able to run faster, and so did the other girl. But they caught onto my sister. It was really, really messed up...my sister was like nine, ten.

She saw her family friend's ethnic clothing as the bullseye that attracted their attackers, continuing on to explain that the threat has not disappeared. “Even though it's been about twelve years since 9/11, it still hasn't stopped. It still happens you know, still happens to me sometimes. If I go to Manhattan or Long Island, and I'm in my scarf at the mall, everyone stares at me like I'm an alien. But why? Why does this still have to happen to me after so many years? I didn't do it. Why are you staring at me? Should I stare at you that same way because of what you guys

giving them unsettling looks. They often expressed a sense of relief and thankfulness at the diversity of New

are doing in other countries? I don't do that.” Ultimately, she felt that ethnic and religious garb marked her as Other, as a suspected terrorist, in her childhood and even now as a young woman years after September 11th.

It is important to note that youth even experienced Islamophobia from other South Asians when wearing ethnic dress. Kabira, who was generally even-tempered and easy going, shared with me an incident of getting riled up after a Sikh man on the subway insulted Muslims on Eid, an important holy day for Muslims. She felt that she and her friends garnered negative attention from a drunk Desi man specifically because they were publicly wearing saris, despite the fact that the sari is a common outfit worn across South Asia and is not limited to Muslims. She recalled:

On Eid, me and my friends, we were on the train, and we were dressed in saris. I know we shouldn't be on the train in saris, but.... Some drunk Punjabi guy – he had a beard...he had a big bottle with him and he was drunk. He was sitting in a corner, and he kept saying, 'Shahrukh Khan...is a Muslim and he sucks.' That's when I got upset...I don't like racial something like that – even if you're drunk... That got to me, and I got off my seat in the middle of the train and came up to the guy and said 'Shut the fuck up. Don't fucking talk about my religion. You don't know anything about it. I don't care if you're drunk.' And then I went and sat down, and he started going crazy...I had an anger boiling in me...Then he went into Bengalis and how Muslims are terrorists, and he started saying how 'India doesn't want you guys anymore. That's why we left you guys.' I really boiled up. I said a few things, but it was a lot of cursing. That kind of thing gets you angry. And I was really upset. Some of the other passengers, they were like, 'He's drunk, you should just be quiet. You shouldn't have even talked back. Just don't pay attention to him.' But how can you not sometimes? Usually I'm a very passive person, and I will not say anything. I'll try to ignore stuff like that. I don't let it get to me. But for me to hear this kind of thing on my religious holiday...you're just ruining it for me. It just hit me, and I blew up. Even my friends, they were kind of surprised. They were like, 'We never even hear you raise your voice, forget getting mad...it must have really hurt you.' I felt like I was insanely disgusting. It was only from Jackson Heights to Goldman, but it felt like a long hour. Listening to someone drone on about how bad Muslims are. And on my religious holiday. On Eid. I just felt like killing him, but you have to handle it maturely. I didn't handle it maturely...but it did upset me.

Youth's racial paranoia also increased when having uncomfortable interactions near places of worship. In the first week after September 11th, there were 645 incidents of discrimination and violence against South Asians, Arabs, and Muslims — often at places of worship (Iyer 2015:13). One youth stated:

Around 9/11, the masjid that I used to go to to read Koran, it was stoned. It was stoned. It was like everyone was living in fear after that, honestly it was in fear, everybody. Hush, quiet, don't say nothing, and just do what you gotta do. That's it. It was like that ever since that...Basically we're living in danger, and we're living in fear. And then plus you're undocumented. They could take you any time – you don't know your rights. No rights. When you're undocumented it felt like you had no rights.

Youth remembered the attacks around their mosques immediately after September 11th and continued to fear acts of violence when in proximity of Muslim places of worship. In 2011, the Department of Justice reported that hate violence toward people and property, mostly places of worship, had not decreased (Iyer 2015:17). It is important to remember that many hate crimes go unreported, especially when the victim is undocumented.

One youth recalled the post-9/11 backlash in her neighborhood: “I remember when our mosque was vandalized. Someone came and threw graffiti all over. They put graffiti on our walls. People would break into our mosques...At that time it was a scary, scary time. I remember initially there was some cop cars stationed outside of our mosques. *I don't recall if it was for our security or if it was because we were being watched.*” The dichotomy she presented — safety versus surveillance — ironically is the same choice that the government and media present to the American people. Her confusion about the presence of police at her mosque was a comment I heard frequently from youth, particularly those like Natasha and Zara who attended mosques where people or property had been attacked.

In the summer of 2013, Aazim became distressed when non-local Latino and Black gang members began showing up at his mosque during prayers. They would fight with young men about religion and throw things at the mosque. Eventually the violence escalated to the point where Aazim's friend was stabbed. Despite his distaste for police, these incidents stoked his racial paranoia and confirmed to Aazim that he wanted to become a police officer himself. He stopped studying business and psychology and began looking into criminal justice educational programs. He saw joining the NYPD as an opportunity to protect his community from what he perceived as inevitable Islamophobic hatred and violence. (Aazim also did not want to continue to be overworked at a minimum wage job. "I work twelve hour shifts with three five minute breaks!" he once exclaimed. He saw becoming a cop as a way to make money immediately to support his family and forge a path to a high paying law enforcement job in, for example, the FBI.)

Actual violence occurred at Aazim's mosque, and this was clearly a situation that went beyond racism hidden under an exterior of political correctness. This may appear to conflict with Jackson's notion that racial paranoia is fostered through the cloak of political correctness; however, I suggest that exposure to both political correctness and racial hatred actually strengthens racial paranoia by reminding youth of what to be potentially afraid. Aazim was afraid of the violence that occurred at his mosque, and he was scared that no one would notice, care, and help — that is why he thought he needed to become a police officer. He feared what could happen to his community if he did not try to protect it.

My research participants' racial paranoia originally stemmed from September 11th backlash and grew based on their personal experiences with verbal and physical abuse and

stories in the media. Their fear then infused other parts of their lives and came into play when they were trying to read through political correctness, racial euphemisms, and racial jokes.

For example, youths' fears grew and cemented with prominent media stories such as controversies over Islamic centers and violence and vandalism in places of worship. In 2010, a national debate emerged over Park51, a proposed community center that was drawing fire due to its Muslim prayer space and proximity to Ground Zero (Iyer 2015:55).⁶¹ Faiza Ali, who worked at the Council on Islamic Relations of New York, reported that though she had become "accustomed to stares, questions, and even harassment after 9/11...she had not directly experienced the level of vitriolic bigotry that emerged" due to the Park51 debate (Iyer 2015:57).

Youth were also disturbed by the Oak Creek shooting tragedy, which involved a male White supremacist fatally shooting six people and wounding four others in their place of worship. Many youth chose to participate in prayers and vigils for the Sikh victims. After the shooting, one youth commented:

Why are they troubling us? What did we ever do to them? Why can't they trouble other people? Why can't they just stop? You don't see that happening at a church...Oh my god, the feelings going through my head...The one time [Sikhs] came up in the media is when something horrible happened, when so many people died in a place of worship. And no other people in the community came to help. The people who were the victims of the place came in there to help clean; blood was splattered all over the walls...They don't respect the Muslim community, the Hindu community, the Sikh community. They don't respect us. The only people they respect are the Christians and the Catholics.

In her statement it becomes clear whom she sees as safe from racial hatred, and which communities she views as uncared for, in danger, and invisible.

One afternoon at a South Asian community picnic, I sat down to help a nine-year-old girl finish her chalk drawings of butterflies and flowers on the sidewalk. As we colored in her

designs, we casually talked about her interests, including her status as a Directioner, a passionate fan of the popular boy band, One Direction, and Zayn Malik in particular. I marveled at the fact that presently, in contrast to my nineties childhood, there could be a mainstream South Asian teenage heartthrob. After a few minutes of rattling off her Malik trivia, she lowered her voice to tell me about the “nasty” things she had seen on his social media accounts.

Malik had come under fire on multiple occasions for wishing people a happy Eid, mentioning Allah, and expressing support for Palestinians. This girl making the chalk drawings, like other “Directioners” including Zara, was exposed to anti-Muslim hatred in early childhood — regardless of personal experiences — through reading the hate speech directed at Malik when he so much as referenced his religion. She was forced to see that Islamophobia is often socially acceptable regardless of money and prestige.

SEARCHING FOR SAFETY

STICKING TO YOUR “OWN”

One afternoon while grabbing ice cream at Dunkin’ Donuts with Ashish, an older South Asian man came in and sat down at the table next to us. After realizing that Ashish was studying social science at a local college in Queens, the man lectured him to pick a more practical major before launching into sharing his own children’s difficulties with Chinese students who would only assist other Chinese students at the expense of youth like his children. At first Ashish engaged with the older man, pointing out that it was natural to help one’s own, especially in New York where things were competitive. He did not see this as a uniquely Chinese trait. He also pointed out to the older man that different races stuck to their own, comparing this to Buddha

61 In 2010, in Nashville, Muslims also noted that the proposed construction of an Islamic center led to anti-Muslim

being sheltered by his father. Upon growing tired of the man's stories and well-meaning but unasked for advice, Ashish suggested to me that we leave Jackson Heights and walk to Elmhurst to a Chinese grocery to buy a dragon fruit, his favorite snack.

After buying the fruit, we were faced with the dilemma of how to cut it. Ashish grinned as he announced that he had a question for me. He asked, "Who do you think is more likely to help us — a Desi person or a non-Desi person?" When I replied that I did not know, he responded, "Let's find out." He suggested we walk back toward Jackson Heights and ask various people to lend us a knife. I was skeptical that anyone would want to hand two strangers a knife, but curious to see what would happen, since Ashish seemed intent on proving a point.

We asked several Latino street vendors if we could borrow a knife while indicating with our hands at the fruit that was impossible to eat otherwise. We got some confused looks and then a solid no from each vendor. Ashish was confident that they had understood our request and had knives in their stands but simply did not want to help us. I suggested going to Patel Brothers, a popular Indian grocery store, to buy a dollar knife, but Ashish insisted we persist. We kept walking, and when he noticed a small convenience store with two South Asian women alone inside, he suggested we try our luck there. After showing the women the fruit, they pulled out a large knife and allowed us to cut the fruit in the store. Ashish amiably offered them a few pieces, and we stood together silently for a minute enjoying the dragon fruit.

Afterward, Ashish and I talked about what had transpired, and it became clear to me that he was trying to make the same point he had been trying to make to the older man in Dunkin' Donuts: in New York people helped "their own" and were distrustful of those outside their racial group. He explained, "Those women helped us because we are Desi too," though he conceded

and anti-immigrant backlash that surpassed the time period immediately after 9/11 (Iyer 2015:76).

us being young and my being a woman may have also made our request seem innocent. Despite the celebrations of diversity, Ashish viewed it as a natural reality that New Yorkers privileged those of the same racial background.

Other youth shared this view, which was sometimes worrisome when they needed something from someone of a different racial background. For example, one college student was worried about gaining admittance into a program because she perceived the Asian and Black women managing admissions as only letting in East Asian and Black students. When running errands in Jackson Heights, youth often pointed out that South Asians went to the stores owned by those of the same country of origin. This meant that when I was with Pakistani youth we went to Pakistani businesses, and when I was with Bengali youth we frequented Bengali establishments, and so on. Youth viewed it natural to privilege those of the same racial background and same ethnic or national background when possible.

While this may seem unsurprising, what stood out to me was that in Ashish's perspective gravitating toward other Desis was not solely a matter of shared culture, language, or exposure — it was also a matter of safety. Though he did not think it was an ideal reality, Ashish felt that it was generally safer to trust those from the same racial background and be careful with those outside one's racial group when navigating a densely populated city with cutthroat competition.

Other youth and their families frequently echoed Ashish's sentiments. One young woman commented, "Mom says if you need help, Desi people will be the first ones to come running for you." Youth trusted that Desis would assist them, and sometimes feared that other racial groups would cross them. For example, some youth chose to back away from verbal and physical confrontations with other non-Desi youth if they were outnumbered by people of another racial group. For instance, one Guyanese girl shared an incident where she was

humiliated by a Black student but chose to let it go. She had been in fights before but this time was afraid to challenge the student because she assumed that the other Black students present would immediately defend her bully and attack her, not on the basis of friendship but shared racial background.

When I questioned her racial paranoia, trying to get to the root of her assumption, she replied, “I never had a problem with Black people, but Black people have had a problem with me. I thought Black people would like me because I liked them!” She continued on to tentatively suggest that jealousy was the root of Desi-Black female conflict: “I think Black girls hate on us Indian girls because of our hair. I'm not going to be mean, but I feel like we're prettier than them. I guess because we're light skinned compared to them, and I feel like the hair has a lot to do with it.” In this young woman's statement, we can see the way racial paranoia and racism can sometimes intersect.

Some families chose to pay a higher rent for a small apartment in Jackson Heights instead of moving to a home in Jamaica partially because they felt more secure being surrounded by South Asians in Jackson Heights as opposed to living amongst a substantial Black population in Jamaica. This was due in part to racist assumptions about Black urban criminality, but it also involved fears of racism. One young man recalled, “My mom would get called names in the streets while taking me to school. My sisters would go through trouble in school. My dad would always be in fear of getting mugged...we moved to Jackson Heights...it's more of our people, so it's a safer environment to be in.”

He specifically stated that being in Jackson Heights amongst Desis was safer than their previous neighborhood, which seemed perpetually dangerous to everyone in his family because of the threat of racist or dangerous non-Desis. Despite the fact that whole neighborhoods such as

Jackson Heights were seen as a national threat post-9/11 and subject to increased policing and immigration raids, their South Asian residents still saw them as safer because on a day-to-day basis they were surrounded by many individuals from the same cultural and racial background.

One youth addressed his family members' alienation amongst other racial groups in their residential community: “[South Asians] don't feel welcome in the neighborhood. Some kind of hatred...a kind of a hostile environment. You step out your door. No one's happy to see you. They're like, 'Go back into the house.’” Note, the last statement is what the youth imagined his neighbors were thinking, not what they actually said out loud. Another youth commented, “When [you try] to move [to a non-Desi neighborhood]...people get angry and attack you...People pelt eggs at houses.” Though egging houses was not an uncommon youthful activity, this youth saw it as a deliberate racist action against Desis.

Safety and Belonging with South Asians

Grouping with other Desis was, in part, a product of racial paranoia and a means to navigate potential risk in public spaces ruled by mainstream White norms. Granted, on one level youth viewed their associations with other Desis as natural as they became older and became more comfortable with their “Brown” identity. Having South Asian friends seemed natural to youth due to perceived cultural commonalities including shared humor (Shankar 2008:64-65). Youth felt more comfortable with South Asians because they did not feel the need to explain themselves.

One youth remarked, “You know how all Desi parents have the same thinking, so it's easier to explain [parental situations] to them [other Desis]...my other friend, he's Hispanic right. If I'm trying to explain [them] to him he'll curse and say, 'Screw that,' but if I explain to my Desi friends they'll totally understand.” Another youth commented, “South Asians tend to listen to

their parents more...They take more responsibility in the family. Sometimes when they're like, 'I have to go home and do this' I seem to understand while other people are like, 'What do you have to do at home that you're busy all the time?'...Other ethnicities, they tend not to care as much. I think South Asians are more connected with their family.”

Kabira admitted (somewhat guiltily) that she, like many New Yorkers, loved to meet different people and sample different ethnic commodities, namely food, but really “it was just a little bit.” She felt that New Yorkers took pride in the diversity of their city and enjoyed exploring different cultures — but in small limited quantities. Overall Kabira felt that it was “natural” for people to “stick to their own kind,” especially because of the chaos and endless options for consumption, friendship, and adventure in New York City. She commented, “It's indescribable. If you're on train, you would choose to sit next to the Brown person. It's a pull.” Kabira had been forced to face a new group of people every time she switched schools or her parents changed jobs, and it seemed obvious to gravitate toward the Desi youth amidst these shifts. She contrasted her experience in New York to the couple years she lived in a New Jersey suburb. She pointed out that there people had much more diverse groups of friends with whom they felt comfortable because everyone knew each other since kindergarten.

However, it is important to note that youth also saw having South Asian friends as a natural preference because of the potential of other groups Othering, harassing, or excluding them. One young man explained from whom he generally received offensive comments. He stated, “Mostly Black African Americans. Mostly. The Spanish, they don't really say much. The Bengalis, they would make fun of you but we're friends, so you don't need to take offense to that because you know that they're not serious...But the Black African Americans, when they say it, trying to embarrass you in front of a lot of people, trying to humiliate you for what you

really are, you get that vibe quickly. You notice that. That stands out more I guess. It hurted a lot.” A young woman stated, “I feel alienated from Black and White people. Some of them are really well behaved...but some of them are not...They look at us and they are like, 'Oh that's Brown.' That time I feel that this somebody is not my part. That person is a different one.” Another youth commented, “Some of [my friends] are Muslim. Some of them are Hindu, Spanish...Blacks – I don't talk to them. I'm not going to be racist or nothing, but you don't feel secure around them.”

Some youth referenced the teasing and bullying they went through when moving from pre-dominantly Desi areas to neighborhoods with large Black populations. One young man recalled:

It just sucked being outside. I guess the kids were just tougher than I was. It was just a different vibe. It wasn't so friendly. All the kids would just be like not so friendly...We were the only Brown people in that block, in that whole area. The whole area was predominantly Black, and it was just weird living there. It was just tougher. Like I remember on Eid my mom had told me to go to the deli to get milk, and I was wearing a long ass thing [Desi clothes]. You know what I'm talking about. I just go to the deli and the guy is like, 'Why are you wearing a dress?' I was like mad little, so I'm like oh what an asshole. Stupid stuff like that. When you go to park, it's just weird. You can't go to the playground because other kids are there.

Youth preferred to hang out in public places in Queens where they had, as one youth put it, “a safe home” with other working class South Asians amidst the chaotic flows animating the diverse city. When walking with Aazim and Kabira down Goldman, I was amazed at how they seemed to know all the Desi youth or at least know something about them. Kabira commented, “It's nice to have a place to come to because New York is big, and this is our spot, and we know everyone.” Because of the range and accessibility of public transportation, youths' Desi friends from other boroughs could easily spend their leisure time in public places in Queens, which was

seen as a “nice” (meaning fancier than Brooklyn or the Bronx) but “affordable” (compared to Manhattan) place where they could be themselves.⁶²

Racial Paranoia with Whites

Nakul, for example, enjoyed occasionally going to the city to visit popular tourist areas such as Times Square or Bryant Park, but on a whole he preferred to spend his time in Queens because he felt more comfortable in areas that were not pre-dominated by Whites. In order to help me understand his preference, one day Nakul suggested we take the E train from Times Square in Manhattan to the end of the line in Jamaica, Queens. On the train we found ourselves pressed against the back wall as the train filled with people leaving work, a perfect spot to view the other passengers.

Pointing with his eyes, Nakul whispered to me that it was always the White babies, as opposed to the children of color, who got smiles and cooing noises from fellow passengers. Even seemingly small details of everyday life such as reactions to babies made Nakul question people’s potentially masked racial feelings. As we moved from Manhattan to Queens, Nakul commented on the disparities in station maintenance. All boroughs are not deemed equal in terms of material or cultural status, and Nakul noted how the stations were better kept in Manhattan.

As the train moved along he took great pleasure in predicting, based on race, who would get on and off the train. He noted that most of the Whites would get off at Lexington, the last stop in Manhattan before entering Queens, and if not there, they would exit at Forrest Hills or Kew Gardens, wealthier neighborhoods in Queens. As we got closer to the airport, the train

⁶² In Queens, youth still had to worry about dressing “appropriately” in case they ran into a Desi elder who could diminish their social reputation. Having grown up with that concern, however, they still felt like they got to be themselves more in Queens than Manhattan.

cleared out. Nakul noted that this far into Queens, the only populations we would really see on the train would be Desi or Black. When I pointed out several White people still on the train, he stated confidently: “If you are still on the train [this far into Queens] and light-skinned, you are going to the airport.” When I pointed out they had no luggage, he told me to wait and see. He was correct.

While riding the train was a mundane activity for Nakul, it underscored to him on a daily basis that Whites were treated better on both interpersonal and material bases. Nakul enjoyed visiting Manhattan but felt that he could not really belong in what youth saw — despite all its diversity — as primarily an upscale White space. Being in Manhattan felt foreign in many ways because to him it meant dressing up, behaving more formally, and being around higher class White people whose disparagement he feared. His past awkward and unpleasant interactions in Manhattan made him, to borrow Jackson’s words: “all the more paranoid about the smallest slights” that could be aimed his way from Whites (Jackson Jr. 2008:9). Whether or not the snubs youth received from Whites were race-based, their perceptions of Whites’ acting “hoity-toity,” as one youth put it, fostered their racial paranoia about being hated for being foreign, Brown, and working class.

The perception of Whites as rich snobs made some youth reluctant to apply for elite universities, which they viewed as White spaces. Many had stories about friends who had been snubbed and felt alienated after getting into NYU. Upon completing her Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals paperwork, one senior in high school was relieved that she would be able to apply for financial aid for college. She was frustrated, however, because her mother now had big plans for her and wanted her to attend Harvard. She commented that it was hard to explain to her mother that it would still be hard to gain admittance much less fit in. She imagined the school to

be full of rich and privileged people. Being neither, she spelled out for me the funny looks she envisioned they would throw her way when she asked, “Dunkin’ Donuts anyone?”⁶³

One high school girl commented: “South Asians are generally seen like...you're just on the floor, you're bottom, you're nothing. Somebody came up to me and started speaking, and it's like yes I understood every word that you said. I'm like, 'Why are you speaking to me like that?' They're like, 'You don't know English,' and I'm like, 'Yes I do thank you!'...He was like, 'DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE WORDS THAT ARE COMING OUT OF MY MOUTH? GO HOME!' I'm like, 'What?! Go home?’” Another youth wondered if the racial hatred he sensed from Whites was what Blacks faced regularly. He stated, “We were in a big group of Brown people, and I didn't want anyone looking at me like that because I'd feel like shit, and I'm like yo is this how Black people feel. I'm like damn.”

It is important to note that staying out of White spaces went beyond feeling uncomfortable about wealth differentials. Despite the fact that interracial tensions were more frequent with Latinos and Blacks, given the demographics of their neighborhoods, it was Whites whom youth saw as most dangerous. Youth perceived Whites’ privilege and wealth as their ticket out of being held accountable by the law and mainstream media for racist or criminal acts, which fueled their fears of potential White racism. They noted that even some South Asians, especially those in their parents’ generation, had the perception that Whites always knew better. Nakul commented, “If I gave a speech in the middle of Jackson Heights, people would think I’m crazy, but they would listen if a White person did.”

⁶³ Dunkin' Donuts is a chain that serves coffee, donuts, and ice cream. It was a popular hangout spot for my research participants because of the inexpensive prices.

This sense was reinforced by examples of White privilege and White supremacy in the mainstream media. For example, they questioned why White supremacist groups were not treated as domestic terrorists and why the government focused instead on finding radical Islamic terrorists. One youth commented, “I’ve been watching American media, being exposed to American culture, and a lot of American culture is White supremacy. All of the actors and Superman and all the superheroes are White, and all the people they date and get married to are all White. I feel generally people think that White people are the prettiest people, the smartest people, the richest people.” When riding the train with Nakul, we talked about Hari Kondabolu’s joke about Superman being undocumented.⁶⁴ Nakul remarked, “Superman was not even human. He was an alien, but he could fit in because he looked White.” His comment was meant in contrast to the marginalization of immigrants of color.

Raj commented on how his academic readings, combined with his personal experiences with White people, fueled his racial paranoia concerning Whites:

I really, really dislike White people...I guess it's just all the readings. I'm getting brainwashed by Malcolm [X] – [they are] ‘White devils!’ [laughs] It definitely has to do with me having this anti-capitalist mentality and reading so much about White supremacy...a good majority of them are probably douche bags. And I hate meeting new White people. I'll give them like a hour chance, and within that hour, if I don't feel like I'm going to really enjoy their company, I'll walk away before I say something stupid. When I was younger, a lot younger, I didn't really feel this way. But as I grew, it [the feeling] grew and grew and grew.

Raj learned to distrust Whites as he got older and had numerous negative experiences with them, especially White authority figures. This feeling bloomed when Raj began reading about White supremacy and came to understand it as institutionalized in the United States.

⁶⁴ Kondabolu jokes, “In current day America where the new Superman movies are taking place, we’re filled with anti-immigrant sentiment, right? We call undocumented immigrants illegal aliens. And Superman shows up and he’s an actual alien. And no one’s trying to deport him. Why not? If you think about this, he’s stealing the jobs of soldiers and policemen, right?” (Kondabolu 2011).

In particular, South Asian youth of differing religious backgrounds reported that they felt more fearful around White, Jewish people whom they felt did not want to talk or interact with them in any way.⁶⁵ One youth explained, “I don't want to be rude here, but I don't like many things about my neighborhood. It's like a Jewish neighborhood. I don't want to be rude or mean to them, but I don't think they're very nice people.” She continued on to relate multiple instances of seeing her father being confronted and cursed at by older White, Jewish people.

One afternoon, at the home of a research participant, I asked her visiting cousins what their neighborhood was like. The older cousin told me she did not like her neighborhood and relayed a recent incident where her ten-year-old sister who wears hijab was kicked in the street by two Jewish girls when walking to the store. I turned to look at her quiet ten-year-old sister who nodded and commented softly about people being mean before looking down. She was small for her age and could easily pass as seven or eight-years-old.

Most reports of racism from White Jews came from South Asian youth of various religious backgrounds who attended colleges with sizable Jewish populations. They often distinguished between “modern” Jews who did not seem to take issue with them and the more “traditional” Jews who seem repulsed to shake their hands or interact with them, though they appeared to be nice to non-Jewish White students. One youth wryly commented, “My friends and I stay away from anyone in a long skirt.” Another youth recalled an instance when her Desi

⁶⁵ Jews historically have had a complicated relationship to Whiteness in New York City. Karen Brodtkin (2008) explains how once racialized Jews became middle class, suburban “white folk” thanks to affirmative action. The G.I. Bill of Rights was the largest affirmative action program in American history and served to train Euromales to meet labor needs of the booming post-World War economy (Brodtkin 2008:88). White males were subsequently able to move into a middle class, suburban existence as educated professionals, while Black veterans were faced instead with segregation, redlining, and discrimination (Brodtkin 2008:96-97). Currently, Jews are on some level perceived as Whites by their fellow New Yorkers, but they are also sometimes heartily differentiated, often based on religiosity and appearance. It is important to note that my research participants did not subscribe to all these nuances. They saw Jews as White.

friend was about to shake hands with a Jewish person who pulled his sleeve down over his hand before shaking hands with her friend. The Desi youth read this as an example of a Jewish person not wanting to make physical contact with a Brown person.

In the college setting, furthermore, there were tensions that emerged between Muslim and Jewish students over the Israel-Palestine conflict. Youth felt that faculty generally supported the Jewish students. One youth related an uncomfortable incident when a teacher told a Palestinian student she was not from Palestine but rather from Israel. Others talked about getting reprimanded by school officials for showing support for Palestinians, even indirectly by, for example, pasting “Free Palestine” stickers on their notebooks.

Another youth recalled a meeting she had with a science professor in which he saw the pro-Palestinian stickers on her binder and commented that they were controversial currently and thus inappropriate in college. She commented, “I turned my binder, so the professor had to stare at it the whole time. I’ve gotten so many looks and comments for my folder. One time in an elevator I thought I was going to get killed because a bunch of White, Jewish guys were looking at my folder.” Note, the boys did not actually hurt this young woman or say anything to her, but her racial paranoia signaled to her that she was in a potentially dangerous situation.

Despite that it has been over ten years since September 11th, youth still attracted negative attention and harassment from White people in public spaces, particularly the subway, which fueled their racial paranoia regarding Whites. When people gave them “weird” looks on the subway and moved away from them, they read these actions as the other person seeing them as a terrorist — as opposed to say wanting to maintain some personal space.

For example, one youth commented:

I don't feel comfortable with White people...If you're Islamic, they really make a lot of comments with that...They're really stereotypical. Like they would go to anyone and be mad racist...I'll be honest right now. They just judge too much...On TV and the news, it's majority White people on the news. Like Anderson Cooper. And everyone, they just say, 'Oh the Muslims,' and they make a whole argument on every single small detail. Every time I go to Manhattan, it's the stern White, those type people, and they make a lot of comments. At least Black people say, 'Asalam Alaikum Sister.' They respect you...Hispanics nowadays are really into Brown [Desi] guys...They respect you and are like, 'That's a nice dress. Oh you're Islamic? How do you say the hi, Asalam...?' Then they try to say it. Then they wouldn't bother you. It's the White people who say, 'Don't touch her; she probably has a bomb on her.' They give you that type of attitude. White people in general are scared of anything. They see a Black man in the road, and they'll just go the other way. I see that...This Black guy was walking. He was on the phone talking, and it's like a White guy. The White guy just turns and goes the other way. I'm like he's not going to kill you; what are you doing?

Here this youth is commenting on the race-based paranoia of Whites. Jackson invokes similar examples such as distrustful Whites clutching their purses in the presence of Blacks. He notes that many may defend such an action by referencing statistical connections between race and crime. Moments like these emphasize how “racial paranoia translates fear into social action” on an everyday basis (Jackson Jr. 2008:16). It is important to note, however, that White racial paranoia is not the equivalent of Black racial paranoia because of established power differentials. For instance, racial profiling, fueled by racial paranoia, may be an “attempt to short-circuit uncertainty by stopping everyone who fits a general type” (Jackson Jr. 2008:199). However, the politics of this read differently when a person with more power is surveilling a marginalized minority.

Being called a terrorist by White people in public spaces was not an unusual occurrence, and youth would get upset that there was no recourse. Youth recalled numerous painful incidents when they were suddenly cornered, screamed at, and spit at for being “terrorists,” and

no one stood up to protect them. Instances such as these fostered youths' sense of being at risk, and increased their racial paranoia in multiple spheres of their lives.

One young woman, Swathi, relayed a personal experience during which a White woman entered her subway car and began calling her and the other passengers of colors the N-word and recalling her younger days when she did not have to mix with minorities. She called Swathi a terrorist and told her not to blow up anything at the airport. Swathi exchanged glances with another passenger who looked back at her in disbelief. Swathi commented, "It was scary to think that this old lady must have kids somewhere in the world who probably have her racist mentality."

Another young woman stated:

I have met [White] people who have called me a terrorist to my face. Many times. Many, many, many, many, many times. Out, on the street. I was at the grocery store – this is by 82nd ...and there was this old White lady. And we were coming out of the grocery store, and she goes like, 'Move the fuck out of my way you fucking terrorists.' And Amina [younger sister] was little then. She was like six, seven. The lady takes her dog and puts it in [Amina's] face, and she tells this dog: 'Eat her!'...I was like, 'I will call the cops on your racist ass right now,' and this lady ran.

When discussing racism, a youth who wore hijab stated, "When I go on the train somewhere, it's always an older woman, like an older lady that always look at me in a different way, and I just look down. Most of them are White. If I see people on the train, like if someone looks at me, I'll smile at them because I don't want them thinking I'm a bad person. Just to show them I'm a good teenager." She was hyperaware of being monitored by fellow passengers for her age and hijab, and she sensed suspicion when the old, White women looked at her oddly. In

these interactions of two-way racial paranoia,⁶⁶ she tried to indicate that she was innocent by looking timid or friendly. In attempting to assuage the fears of fellow passengers, she was also protecting herself.

Inter-/Intraminority Tension

I was riding in a car with several Desi women near Jackson Heights. As we paused at a light, we saw and heard one man of color scream to another: “Go back to your country!” One of the women in the back seat shook her head and commented that she would never get used to seeing one immigrant tell another to go back home, though it was something she had witnessed on many occasions over the years. I muttered, “Yeah, what’s the second person supposed to say — let’s split a cab to the airport?” The young woman next to me snorted, exclaiming, “Speak up girl!” She repeated my comment to the rest of the car, and we all roared with laughter together — though we knew the situation was anything but funny.

Though John Jackson focuses primarily on Blacks and Whites, he notes that racial paranoia operates both across and within various racial groups (Jackson Jr. 2008:17). Discourses of risk utilized by the government and media isolate seemingly exceptional groups, moving shared experiences of marginalization to the background. They foster inter- and intraminority divisions, including minorities pointing accusing fingers at other people of color in order to avoid being deemed a risk to society (Taylor 2013:90). By demeaning others as a risk, people attempt to protect themselves from being seen as a racialized threat. This can lead to situations like the one described above where immigrants ironically adopt anti-immigrant speech, and this also explains some of the appeal of diversity patriotism. Even without the presence of members

⁶⁶ It is important to note that though both parties are preoccupied with racialized distrust, this is not to mean that their respective racial paranoia is identical. There are major differences in power here based on age and racialization.

of the White mainstream, at times minorities act out dominant racial logic, and younger Desi youth, in particular, were disturbed by this (Jamal 2007:120).⁶⁷

Older youth like Sheila who had witnessed violence by Latinos and Blacks immediately after September 11th had fewer expectations of an automatic racial solidarity. One youth who had been attending Islamic school when 9/11 occurred remembered his school instituting security measures to protect students from Latino and Black youth from other local schools. He explained:

Hispanic and Black kids...would come by to the Islamic school and just mess with us. They would make fun of us and stuff. The 9/11 stuff was still like fresh back then, so...they would scream stuff at us walking to the gate. The school had to make safety measures. They had to lock the gate after school. They told all the kids to wait inside school...One time me and my brother are there, and a couple Black kids come up to us, and they're messing with us, and my brother said something to them, and they just punched him...I didn't even know what to do... They would scream like terrorist stuff, dumb stuff like that. They would be pretty rowdy about it.

Younger youth expressed frustration when those disrespecting South Asians were people of color themselves whose communities had suffered oppression and violence. In particular, younger youth felt that Blacks should be understanding of and refuse to contribute to their racialization in the War on Terror. They could grasp why Whites might be racist toward them, but they felt that Blacks should sympathize with them given their racial group's historical and current oppression. Racism from Blacks increased racial paranoia in that youth felt that if Blacks, who were at the bottom of the racial ladder of America, could not see that South Asian

⁶⁷ People act out the dominant racial logic for a variety of reasons. This may be linked to White supremacy, of course, but there are many types of ordering in people's lives.

Muslims were being unjustly targeted, how could those belonging to communities relatively less marginalized grasp this and not buy into state of emergency rhetoric?⁶⁸

For example, one Pakistani youth, Amna, told me about her freshmen year in high school when she had an altercation with a Black male student in her class. Their teacher was Bengali and the young Black man kept calling him various offensive names, particularly “terrorist.” Though she and her teacher were from different countries, which were sometimes placed in opposition to one another, Amna still became angry and defensive of her teacher given their shared racialization as South Asian Muslims. She stated:

I got really pissed off because I was like you know what I'm Muslim too. And this could be my father; this could be anyone's father that you're speaking to. So I got up and confronted the guy, and was like, 'Listen, what's your problem? What's the issue?' And so he's like, 'Listen Osama's daughter, stop being a bitch, and stop defending your father.' And I kinda lost it at that point. He was wearing a collared shirt, and I grabbed him by the shirt and was like, 'Look man, I'm going to fuck you up. I will take you to a place that you don't want to be at mentally.'

At a later time, she and the young man began talking and in trying to show him the error of his ways, she explained to him why his treatment of the teacher and herself had upset her so deeply. She recalled, “I was like, 'Out of all the people, I wouldn't expect this to come from a Black person because we've been through struggles. Maybe not specifically you, but your people have been through struggles, and my people have been through struggles, and so at the end of the day if you've been oppressed and you're oppressing someone, what's the difference

⁶⁸ Youth sometimes mentioned incidents of South Asian racism toward Blacks. This was generally in reference to their parents' generation, but occasionally in regard to their peers. Youths' racism toward Blacks was generally indirect. It usually amounted to Desi youth speaking in a South Asian language about Blacks or speaking behind people's backs. I was caught off guard in one instance when a young man directly made an anti-Black comment to me. I had been explaining to him why I was wary of monkeys in India after having several incidents of them stealing my lunch and being unable to do anything about it for fear of getting hurt. The youth laughed and responded, “It's like Black people here.”

between you and the oppressor? What's so different about you and the person who enslaved you, so why would you do that to someone else?"

Another youth recalled an incident soon after the Boston Bombing when he was riding the subway to his afterschool program in Queens:

There was this old guy in front of me, and he's like staring at me...he's just standing and looking at me...He just raises his hand at me and I say, 'Yes?' He's like, 'Oh what are you?' I'm like, 'What do you mean?' He's like, 'What religion are you?' I like, 'I don't know.' I just wanted to see what he says. 'Are you Muslim?' I'm like, 'Maybe.' And he's like, 'What do you mean by maybe?' I'm like, 'I don't know. Why do you want to know?' And he's like, 'I just want to know if you're a terrorist or not.' So I'm like, 'Why do you think a Muslim is a terrorist? Even if I'm not Muslim, why do you think that?' 'Oh we saw what happened in Boston. The guys were coming into New York too. God knows, he maybe hooked up with you as well.' He was Black. I'm like, 'Sir...they used to treat you like shit. They used to put you in the back [of the bus]. Basically, you guys were slaves to everyone. But do you see me going to you and being like, 'Sir can you move to the back?' No. Do you see me calling you the N word? No. You're an old gentleman. I'm not going to disrespect you. But what you did to me, that was pretty disrespectful'...When I was going to leave, I just came back and was like, 'By the way I am Muslim, and I'm not a terrorist.' And I just left. It was so funny; this blonde lady was sitting right next to me was just nodding her head.

This youth became wary the moment he was questioned about his religion by someone staring at him, and he tested out his suspicions to see if they were true. When they were confirmed he responded by pointing out that Blacks had lacked civil rights and been enslaved in the past. He expected that the man should know better than to be “disrespectful” and “racial.” The youth presented himself as a morally sound exemplar who had the decency to speak respectfully despite being attacked. He shamed the older man by presenting the contrast in their behaviors. He chided him for his commentary, pointing out that this man should understand oppression because of what his racial group had historically been through.

Jackson notes that sometime people “internalize the fears and distrust others attribute to their own ostensible racial group” (Jackson Jr. 2008:16). Fear and distrust can exist within and across racial groups. Accordingly, it is important to note that despite the fact that youth largely felt safer within their South Asian networks, racism and racial paranoia was not limited to exchanges with non-South Asians. Furthermore, the existence of South Asian informants infiltrating their communities also contributed to fear and suspicion.

One Pakistani youth identified several divisions in the South Asian community: “South Asians, they work together sometimes, but there are people that are still a little racist between the three [countries]⁶⁹...There's also divisions based on income...I remember the first time I went to my [Indian Sikh] friend's house, and I shook his dad's hand and told him my name. He asked me if I was Muslim, and I was like, 'Yeah,' and he dropped my hand.” The division between “good” and “bad” South Asians has become increasingly pronounced on religious lines (Maira 2009:632).

South Asian American studies scholar Prema Kurien notes that in an attempt to maintain their status as a good minority and avoid attacks and discrimination, some Hindus have made deliberate moves to distance themselves from Muslims (Kurien 2006). For example, they promote themselves as good Americans by emphasizing that Hinduism advocates tolerance and pluralism.⁷⁰ Both are prized American values that form the base of multiculturalism and are

⁶⁹ In this case, the youth does not actually mean he thinks that South Asians from various countries belong to different races. Youth often referenced racism when they were trying to identify any sort of biased or prejudicial behavior.

⁷⁰ They have also translated Hindu traditions through an American lens in the hopes of multicultural incorporation into the mainstream. For example, Hinduism has been transformed in multiple ways to parallel the structure of Christianity. The *Bhagavad Gita* has been analogized to the Bible, when in fact it is one of many well-known Hindu texts. Programs that imitate Sunday schools and Bible study camps have been established to teach children about Hinduism and further systematize it through the very nature of their function. Krishna has been compared to Christ, and some have defined Hinduism as monotheistic at its core. Hindu American leaders have codified Hinduism to

commonly viewed as lacking in allegedly fundamentalist religions such as Islam. Furthermore, after September 11th many Hindu Americans contacted politicians and the media and spoke at community meetings to emphasize their differences from Muslims and explicitly express anti-Muslim, anti-Pakistani, and anti-Bangladeshi sentiments (Kurien 2004).

Youth sometimes even had confrontations with other South Asian Muslims regarding Islam and terrorism. Tension and discrimination between Bengalis and Pakistanis were not uncommon, given the relatively recent war for Bangladesh's independence.⁷¹ For example, one Pakistani youth commented, "I hear someone shouting outside my apartment window...This Pakistani guy is shouting at a police officer who is Bengali. And he was just like, 'If I was Bengali, you wouldn't be giving me a ticket right? It's because I'm Pakistani.'" The youth rolled her eyes and continued, "We're all the same and eating *roti* at the end of the day so shut up."

Tensions between the two nationalities even led to situations where Bengalis separated themselves from Pakistanis, accusing the latter of being the real South Asian terrorists, given

the point where it looks very different from the "diversity of ritual practices and caste observances that are characteristic" in India (Kurien 2004:371). This institutionalization even includes creating conversion ceremonies (Kurien 2004:371). The rigidity of the traditions invented indicates an adherence to the American multicultural model. For example, while it is not necessarily incorrect for Hindus to insist that Hinduism is monotheistic, what is interesting is the fact that they feel the need to label Hinduism at all and within the American religious framework of monotheistic/polytheistic.

⁷¹ While this was much more common amongst the first generation, it was not unusual for it to spill into the second generation as well. This usually occurred half-jokingly, often in reference to which country was winning in cricket. For example, a Pakistani might brag to a Bengali about Pakistan winning in cricket, to which the Bengali youth might retort, "Well we won the war [for independence]!" At other times, the situation became far more serious, usually when involving a first generation youth. One second generation Bengali youth explained:

When people bring up the war of 1971, Bangladesh versus Pakistan, I take it to the heart. You see the people that went through everything. My grandfather actually helped in it too. My grandfather wanted freedom for Bangladesh...My grandfather with his blood wrote, 'Free my Bangladesh.' My other grandfather...was a freedom fighter...He told me everything...and started tearing too...And so this girl...she had a more Pakistani mentality than American mentality, and she tells me, 'Bangladesh should have still been a part of Pakistan.' I got really mad and was like, 'Don't you dare ever say that again'...We fought for our freedom...and you're telling me fifty years later Bangladesh should have still been a part of Pakistan? Bangladesh would have been destroyed. Everyone is ganging up on Pakistan...There's a reason we separated from you people.

their country of origin. One youth who wore hijab relayed to me the story of a Bengali man calling her a terrorist. “He must have heard me speak in Urdu,” she contemplated. Noting that this man’s wife also wore a hijab, she retorted, “If I’m a terrorist, your wife is a terrorist.”

Post-September 11th, Muslims who describe themselves as moderate have worked to distance themselves from Muslims who appear overzealous to the mainstream. “Good” Muslims are useful to the state because they publicly offer “first-person testimonials, in the mode of the native informant”, on the alleged oppressions of Islam, which in turn justify the tactics of the War on Terror (Maira 2009:635). They are included in the nation to a limited extent through “multiculturalist lip service” (Maira 2009:644). They continue to be marked first and foremost by their religion, however, and thus remain an Other who can never attain full cultural citizenship.

Youth also had clashes with other South Asians over unauthorized immigration,⁷² though this was less common. In one incident, a young man got into a heated verbal fight with an older, presumably working class, South Asian man after asking him for a donation for a community program that assisted undocumented immigrants. The older man responded by asking why he should donate to help “illegals” when he migrated legally fifteen years prior. The youth got

72 This can be seen historically in the United States with other racial groups as well. For example, in the late 1920s and 1930s Mexican Americans who were legal American citizens sought to distinguish themselves from their undocumented counterparts. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) limited their membership to citizens and voted to suppress Mexican immigration as numbers of Mexican immigrants surpassed the population of the native-born. Many Mexican Americans resented being linked with the “pejorative ‘Mexican,’ which cast them as foreigners and social inferiors” with even more limited cultural citizenship (Ngai 2004:74). Some members of the middle class referred to themselves as Latin Americans or Spanish Americans in order to separate themselves from undocumented Mexican immigrants and “make a claim to whiteness” (Ngai 2004:74). The *LULAC News* spoke of Latin Americans being the first White race to live in America. However, it is important to note that while middle class Mexican citizens wanted to separate themselves from immigrants, they still felt pride for their cultural heritage (Ngai 2004:74).

upset and demanded that the man stop using the word “illegal” because “no human being is illegal.” A third party eventually intervened and broke up the argument.

Class divisions amongst South Asians also contributed to racial paranoia.⁷³ As Prashad asserts in his work on the South Asian diaspora, affluent South Asians fear their working class counterparts are destroying their racial privilege through their employment in public, low wage positions and negative reputations as potential national security threats (Prashad 2000:82). In an attempt to avoid harassment wealthier South Asians promote the model minority image. Popular perceptions of South Asians as a uniformly successful group, in terms of education and wealth, masks the very existence of working class Desis, not to mention the racial injustices with which they struggle (Iyer 2015:106). If the very existence of working class South Asians is unrecognized, how can they be protected and ever feel safe from racial abuse?

Affluent South Asians also separate themselves from working class immigrant communities that have suffered the brunt of post-9/11 backlash (Maira 2009; Ngo 2006; Prashad 2000; Shankar 2008). Working class immigrants are generally perceived by the government and media as existing in “closer proximity to 'geographies of terror'...than their middle-class counterparts” (Naber 2007:281). One youth commented, “South Asian upper class...only interact with the rich who have parties every weekend.” Another youth recalled, “When I first moved here, my mom used to babysit...my mom went to her [South Asian employer's] house every day. And one day it was my birthday, and my mom was like, 'Oh if you guys could come over, it'd be nice.' And just because she's more rich she doesn't want to come to our house.”

⁷³ Class tensions also existed based on youths' experiences working for middle to upper class Desis. One youth commented on the threats and abuse she witnessed when working at an Indian restaurant in Manhattan. “I saw the boss yelling at the chef. He could have been my grandpa. It's so sad he even has to work there at that age. People are even worse to their own kind. Like if White people worked there, they would have been treated better. People

Youth resented the reluctance of wealthier South Asians to associate with them and their families in their neighborhoods. When they were forced to socialize with one another, often based on ties from the home country, youth were frustrated with the elitism and insulting assumptions of their wealthier South Asian peers. In line with racial paranoia, they sometimes read their avoidance as *de cardio* racism — not just classism — and a means to avoid being racialized as enemies of the state and maintain their model minority image.

CONCLUSION

Jackson calls for new ways of analyzing race and racism in the 21st century that correspond with current expressions of *de cardio* racism and racial paranoia. Given the heavy emphasis on political correctness and color blindness in the current time period, it is less socially acceptable for people to blatantly display their racist sentiments. This leads to racial paranoia, with people intuitively suspecting others of *de cardio* racism, a racism whose existence they cannot definitely prove.

Jackson notes that despite the changes to the racial model in the United States, modes of analysis have not kept up with the shifts as evidenced by the tendency to continue to speak about race using pre-Civil Rights era ideas. Jackson writes, “We have achieved a modicum of racial equality in the law, but we are far less skilled at figuring out what this recent change in race (from blatant to subtle, from explicit to inferential, from biological to cultural) means for how we relate to one another after the courts adjourn and the unabashed bigots have been publicly lambasted” (Jackson Jr. 2008:10-11). The framework of racial paranoia addresses this deficiency. Racial paranoia works productively as a lens to analyze American residents’

take advantage of immigrants and if you’re young.” She noticed similar dynamics when working at a grocery store

everyday internalized racial distrust in a time period when blatant acts of racism are generally no longer socially acceptable.

I expand upon Jackson's ideas by applying them to working class South Asians. In doing so, I learn about state power and structural changes in the American racial order. Analyzing racial paranoia is meaningful in understanding how state and mainstream media discourses shape youths' interpersonal interactions on a day-to-day basis. My research participants' racial paranoia is rooted in their community's racialization as a potential national security risk by the government, mainstream media, and individuals in their day-to-day lives. In the current alleged state of emergency, youth discover that they do not fully possess the right to feel safe and secure, regardless of their legal citizenship status. Their racial paranoia impacts their relationship with other ethnic groups and leads them to choose to associate with Desis in order to feel safe. In being written as a national security risk by the government and mainstream media, youth are actually put at risk themselves. I continue to explore this idea in the next section on the criminalization of youth in the youth control complex.

I also build upon Jackson's work by taking into account that youth are not only exposed to ideas of political correctness but also direct racism. It is important to realize that ideas of a post-racial era can be prominent at the same time public figures such as Donald Trump are repelled and upheld for daring to move beyond political correctness and speak bluntly. Witnessing both in fact strengthens racial paranoia by reminding youth what there is to fear in the public sphere.

The framework of racial paranoia is also important to keep in mind when analyzing youths' experiences with law enforcement and school officials, including their surveillance,

criminalization, and punishment. In this next section focusing on the youth control complex, I discuss the impacts of state preventative and punitive measures, which may appear color blind but monitor, racialize, and criminalize youth in the name of safety during the post-9/11 security-surveillance era.

PART III: YOUTH CONTROL COMPLEX

CHAPTER FOUR: OVERLAPPING RACIALIZATION

INTRODUCTION

Nineteen-year-old Raj was an avid reader, and his favorite book was the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*. He was inspired by Malcolm X's determination to educate himself in jail and fight for equality despite the oppressions he faced. Raj ran a reading group with other high school dropouts and "former junkies" who were, as Raj put it, "drawn together by dysfunction." When looking at Raj's life trajectory, it would be easy to simply paint him as a depressed, oversensitive teenager who made poor choices. When placed in the larger context of the post-9/11 security-surveillance era, however, it becomes apparent that his experiences growing up and experiments with self-education belong to a larger narrative about the racialization and hypercriminalization of working class, minority youth as a method of social control. Social control has been "historically developed to control dissent," and here I use it to mean the state's management and containment of youths' lives through punitive measures (Rios 2011:35). I analyze these processes in these next two chapters.

Starting in middle school, Raj faced constant verbal and physical harassment from his peers and even school officials. Regardless of the fact that he was Hindu and Indian, his abuse originated with stereotypes of Middle Eastern Muslim terrorists. In order to cope with his mistreatment in school, Raj would sneak to the bathroom during the day to smoke cigarettes. At age twelve, he met two older White men at a mall who graduated him from cigarettes to cocaine. By eighth grade he started physically fighting his bullies, and upon coming to high school, where there were numerous Asian-Black tensions, his fighting increased.

After being continually robbed and beat up by Black gang members and confronted for having a Jamaican girlfriend, he opted to join a Latino gang for protection. His participation in the gang increased his urges to fight and to abuse alcohol and drugs. “I was quick to respond to comments then,” Raj reflected. “I would hear a Brown joke, or a terrorist joke, and would be triggered...I remember one kid screamed out, ‘Don’t get mad at him – he’ll put a bomb under your pillow!’ Thanks for that you piece of shit. My teachers would laugh too at the jokes.”

National anxieties have repeatedly led to scapegoating young people like Raj who are seen as a danger to dominant norms and objectified as threats by politicians and mainstream media hyping their alleged drug use, sexuality, and crime (Taylor 2013:67). In times of increasing inequalities and widening economic disparities, youth of color have been even more strongly portrayed as an unruly, morally questionable underclass (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005:24). The current time period is no different with politicians utilizing the mass media to foster public fears of juvenile delinquents.

Rather than representing hope and agency, urban minority youth inspire in the “public imagination a rhetoric of fear, control, and surveillance” (Giroux 2004:24). What is striking in the current time period, however, is how 1) moral panics about youth operate through multiple modes of criminalization, which are intensified by hyper-surveillance,⁷⁴ and extend beyond the Black-White racial model; and 2) crime-control tactics are woven by the state into welfare institutions to maintain social control (Nolan 2011; Rios 2011).

I develop the first point in this chapter through analyzing the relationships between racialization and criminalization in the 21st century, and I examine the latter point in the next

⁷⁴ Despite youths’ high levels of surveillance, surveillance studies have generally not focused on surveillance from the point of view of youth of color until recently (Taylor 2013:12).

chapter through focusing on the normalization of punitive and accountability measures in the New York City public school system. The moral panic centered around youth has led to the development of what scholar Victor Rios terms the “youth control complex,” in which low income minority youth face “repeated negative judgements and interactions” in all the spheres of their lives, and continuous punishment for practically any (perceived) misbehavior (Rios 2011:xiv). Essentially, it forms an overarching punitive system of social control that regulates the lives of marginalized youth by criminalizing their daily behaviors,⁷⁵ which are “ubiquitously treated as deviant” (Rios 2011:xiv).⁷⁶

While Rios focuses on the lives of marginalized Black and Latino boys belonging to traditionally racialized communities, I expand the notion of a youth control complex by identifying and analyzing it in the lives of South Asian youth who were often lumped into the model minority category on the basis of ethnicity, but also uniquely existed at the nexus of social issues involving the surveillance and criminalization of minority groups in the post-9/11 era.

Their complex positioning reveals the murky and complicated character of racialization that challenges Ong’s binary model of blackening and whitening on the basis of economic independence and success. In Ong’s model, those closer to the Black end of the continuum are those who are more reliant on social services and deemed to be less worthy of receiving acceptance and cultural citizenship in the nation (Ong 2003:11). By excavating Desi youths’

⁷⁵ This criminalization is both material and symbolic. Examples of the former include police harassment, enforcement of zero tolerance policies, and jailing. Examples of symbolic criminalization include surveillance and profiling (Rios 2011:40).

⁷⁶ It is important to note, in contrast, that White and middle class youth are not criminalized in the same manner, as evidenced by their removal from the juvenile justice system since the 1970s. They have been treated as troubled individuals in need of psychological care as opposed to Black and Latino youth who are criminalized and harshly punished (Tilton 2010). Performing the same actions, even something as small as telling a joke, may be seen as innocent in relation to White and/or middle class youth, but be framed as threatening and even criminal in regard to working class minority youth (Moffatt 1989).

stories of racialization and punishment, I present how racial positioning is being reconfigured by the state and media beyond a bipolar racial model through multiple modes of criminalization that support and fuel another through their emphases on racialized punitive and preventative measures.

While Arabs, Latinos, and Blacks endure hyper-surveillance due to their alleged ties to terrorism, unlawful immigration, and hypercriminality, respectively, I demonstrate that low income South Asian youth are linked to all these issues and in turn experience surveillance and punitive treatment, although — as the youth themselves acknowledge — to a lesser degree. I chose to examine the workings of the youth control complex in the lives of racialized South Asian youth not because they face the highest amounts of surveillance and punishment but rather because its expression sheds light on how the aforementioned social issues are interconnected; normalize hyper-surveillance and -punishment of youth from a young age; and create and sustain racialized, disenfranchised, and de-Americanized populations.

“COLOR BLIND” ORDER MAINTENANCE

The smallest thoughts can form lethal.... consequences
hundreds of Scorned People..
We need to make this racial storm peaceful
and understand each one of us is born equal
There's so much in sight
it amazes me the type
of a person to see life
in black and white
seems like all they do is stereotype
based on if [you're] dark or light
~Excerpt from Aazim's poem

One of the most popular festivals amongst South Asians was Phagwah, also known as Holi,⁷⁷ and I attended the famous celebration sponsored by Indo-Caribbean associations in a public park in Queens. I will never forget the clouds of color, people laughing with their families, men in full blue body paint dressed as Hindu gods, little girls adorned as goddesses on stage, the texture of the colorful powder in my teeth — and the numerous and varied NYPD vehicles and police officers encircling the park. I wondered why there were so many law enforcement officials at a festive religious celebration full of families, and contemplated if “Color Runs,” which were similar and becoming popular in mainstream society, warranted this level of police attention.⁷⁸

In the current security-surveillance era, there has been an increase in repressive regulatory mechanisms that monitor public spaces and remove groups that are perceived as dangerous or offensive – usually working class, minority, male youth. In the 21st century, war is not simply between countries but also against drugs, affirmative action, welfare, immigration, labor rights and a “host of other open-ended referents that have become synonymous with public disorder” (Giroux 2004:21).

The heavy importance placed on order maintenance demands a large police presence and harsh punishment of general disorder in particular minority neighborhoods through practices such as Stop and Frisk and zero tolerance enforcement. There was a notable difference in the number of police in working class neighborhoods in Queens and Brooklyn, as opposed to the trendy areas of Manhattan. Youth were accustomed to a constant heavy police presence, but

⁷⁷ Some of my research participants criticized Whites’ appropriation of Desi culture, including coming to Holi celebrations in Queens (as was discussed in Chapter One). One youth joked, “White people probably put one dot of color on their face and go, ‘Oohhh I’m Hindu now!’” Another youth criticized the presence of non-South Asians at Holi due to a past incident where a group of tourists said to her, “Dance like you’re a monkey.”

they still noticed when the number of police officers increased, and this sometimes contributed to an elevation in racial paranoia.⁷⁹

For example, youth living in Jamaica commented on the surge in police over a ten block stretch after an alleged terror plot, involving a young Bengali man, was uncovered in the area. When I was hanging out with a young Bengali woman in a more well-to-do part of Queens, she commented on the lack of police presence in the area as opposed to the increased surveillance in Jamaica. She commented, “It makes you feel bad to be a part of the group that they’re suspecting of doing something wrong. People feel on edge like they’re being watched. I don’t know whether to feel safe or offended with all these cops around that they think my group of people will do something.” She continued, “How am I supposed to go somewhere in life, do well, if I feel like my life is always at risk?” It is important to note that she meant at risk from the police, and not at risk from the alleged Bengali terrorist.

Emphasizing the risk to and importance of public safety rationalizes regulatory measures, and their color blind framing also distracts from the racialized nature of order maintenance (Vera Sanchez and Adams 2011:326). Color blindness is the “ideological armor” for institutionalized discrimination such as order maintenance, yet covert because it is largely subtle, indirect, and appears to be nonracial because it does not explicitly subscribe to Jim Crow rhetoric of biological inferiority (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich 2011:191). Mainstream Whites see inequalities and the gaps between racial groups as a result of alleged cultural deficiencies in populations of color, market dynamics, and other “naturally occurring phenomena” (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011:191). Color blind ideology serves as a form of social control. The government and

⁷⁸ Color Runs are five kilometer races where runners are showered with colorful powders.

mainstream media utilize it to prevent consideration of race and power dynamics by insisting that race and racism are irrelevant, including in punitive crime management (Prashad 2002:63).

The New York Police Department has led widespread policing efforts to reclaim the city from the allegedly criminal element since the 1990s (Nolan 2011:24). The sense of risk and increase in crime rate was cultivated through and led to surveilling and criminalizing low-level offenses and actions that were not punished in the past. Crime prevention involves using minor infractions to build youths' criminal records and pushing young people into the criminal justice system *before* they have even committed serious crimes (White 2006).

The parameters of "trouble" and "criminal activities" have transformed and can say more about the current sociopolitical climate than the activities of young people themselves. For example, in 1994 Mayor Giuliani enacted strong prosecution for "quality of life" crimes in the name of security. Quality of life policing targeted "disorderly" youth in the public sphere who were vulnerable given their age and sometimes their immigration status. While hostilities between police and minority youth were not new, what changed in the 1990s was that policing and juvenile justice became increasingly punitive (Venkatesh and Kassimir 2006:5).

The state developed harsh laws against juvenile offenders, and youth arrests went up almost fifty percent (Aparicio 2007:191; Ishihara 2007:14-15). Discourses and practices around care markedly morphed into rhetoric involving retribution, and the media fanned the moral panic surrounding youth. While people were afraid for their own children, they were also "deeply fearful of 'other people's children'" (Tilton 2010:3). The focus on youth punishment rather than

⁷⁹ Despite the constant police presence, several youth had stories of the police brushing them off when they genuinely needed assistance; for example, after being jumped. This neglect had a lasting impact. Some youth did not bother contacting the police after being mugged.

care translated into the “idea of the state as a disciplinary father” who had the authority to regulate youth's presence and behavior in public spaces (Tilton 2010:9).

The American criminal justice system has adopted the theory of broken windows, which states that a delinquency continuum will come into being if minor misbehaviors are not harshly punished. It sees serious crime as the inevitable result of not punishing low-level violations, such as “quality of life” offenses, and nipping emergent criminality in the bud. Force and arrest may be used against seemingly anti-social people in public spaces based on something as unremarkable as their attire (Tilton 2010). One youth reflected:

I personally feel like I was never doing anything wrong. It was always random. Sometimes cops would sneak up on me. Sometimes it would just be like I'm walking with a group of friends, and they'd stop me saying this is gang related activity. Sometimes they just stop me when I'm walking by myself. Say if it's a neighborhood, and I look a certain way, and the people in that neighborhood don't look a certain way, they'd stop me. Even though I am from the neighborhood – I go to school there or I live around the area. They still stop me. And sometimes they'd stop me just because if they knew me, they had stopped me earlier. And maybe I might have had something...nothing like a weapon. Maybe marijuana or something. They would stop me to see if I had something else.

Zero tolerance, which calls for rapid and harsh punishments and prioritizes order maintenance, is the norm and the most “pervasive form of crime prevention” applied to youth (White 2006:238).

While middle class children can afford structured, private after-school activities, working class youth may have little choice but to spend their free time in public spaces (Tilton 2010). Surveillance and punitive measures are often invoked based on working class minority youths’ very presence in public spheres.⁸⁰ For instance, stories of getting ticketed for trespassing were common amongst my research participants.

⁸⁰ The policing of public space is often tied to desires to increase commercial activities and consumption. Urban commercial redevelopment many times involves privatizing urban spaces and excluding youth because they are seen as a threat to commercial success. Public spaces become privatized spaces of consumption and can automatically criminalize youth who are seen on the street and exclude them from the protections of childhood and innocence. In

One summer evening, I was interviewing a young man in a park when he became distracted by police patrolling. Lowering his voice, he commented, “I really hate that sight on the right side of you. Yeah. I really hate them.” I turned my head and saw three male police officers standing amidst the predominantly Black picnicking families. He continued, “I was stopped just three days ago and got a ticket. Other people were playing basketball here in a group, but I was alone, so they decide to give me a ticket...After you've went through that, what I've been through, and you see police, you get an urge to do something...but I'm just going to stay back.” This youth had been traumatized by his time in jail, and seeing police officers and receiving tickets revived his fear and anger over feeling powerless.

The possibility of being questioned by police was particularly frightening for undocumented residents when being stopped for trespassing or other minor disorders because they were technically already guilty of breaking the law (see also De Genova 2005:247). In the 1990s Giuliani’s emphasis on “quality of life” street policing contributed to the practice of specifically targeting immigrants who remained quiet out of fear of deportation in a decade when the anti-immigrant movement intensified.⁸¹

For instance, numerous encounters between South Asian taxi drivers and police involved physical and verbal abuse, ignoring calls for help, and then retaliation against those who complained (Das Gupta 2006:241; Prashad 2000:91). Taxi drivers who spoke out were denounced by the police commissioner as terrorists (Das Gupta 2006:246). An official investigation indicated the need for an independent monitor over the New York Police

Tilton's (2010) ethnography of Oakland, she examines community members' (including elderly and middle class Blacks') suggestions and support for surveillance, including youth curfews and anti-loitering measures.

⁸¹ The modification of immigration laws in 1997 initiated the growth of the immigrant population in prison (Fernandes 2007:193).

Department, but Mayor Giuliani ignored this recommendation. Giuliani's actions went largely unchallenged due to pervasive anti-immigrant sentiment that had reached a level unseen since the 1920s (Das Gupta 2006:239; Nguyen 2005:144; Prashad 2000:200).

Presently, undocumented youth experienced the illegality of their status through a ubiquitous "sense of deportability," the possibility of being removed from the physical space of America (De Genova 2005:215). Some youth made it a point of not being careless in public, including never participating in common youthful activities like jumping subway turnstiles or being drunk in public. Undocumented youth were particularly fearful of having to walk by police when they lost their student IDs, their only form of identification, especially late at night.⁸² One young woman, whose undocumented younger brother had lost his school ID, labeled his situation "double surveillance," recognizing her brother's multiple criminalization in the youth control complex. Their family feared him being stopped by law enforcement because he was undocumented, and knew there was a higher chance of this happening — even compared to his sisters who wore hijab — since he was a young, Brown, urban male.

Youth were ashamed, embarrassed and shocked by the police stops at first, particularly when they were treated violently or asked to remove clothing in a crowded public place like the subway. Many youth had not experienced Stop and Frisk before high school and were puzzled. Getting questioned by police led to feelings of confusion and fear and made youth wonder if they were suddenly doing something wrong to warrant this treatment. Some became convinced that

⁸² It is important to note that police officers of color are also implicated in the harassment of communities of color. A study by *The Associated Press* revealed that according to Census data and 2007 federal figures for police diversity, the NYPD's racial demographic was similar to that of the city. The NYPD's data in 2014 indicated that the department has become even more diverse since 2007 (Cohen and Fredricks 2014).

they must unconsciously be doing something wrong, and this led to issues with self-confidence, depression about the way the world works, and even self-criminalization.

Youth continued to blame and even criminalize themselves even when they understood that police were racially profiling them. One youth who had spent a year in jail for a theft he said he did not commit still blamed himself for making the mistake of “hanging out with the wrong kids,” which led him to being arrested at gunpoint when he ended up in the wrong place at the wrong time. It was easy for some youth to blame themselves when they were Stopped and Frisked because they already felt guilty about some of their behaviors. Some felt guilty for getting into fights, their gang affiliation, and their drug use, and they wondered if they were ultimately “bad kids” for whom police surveillance and punishment were justified.

Raj, who originally joined a gang for protection, was hospitalized after being jumped and stabbed by members of an opposing gang. “I had to be in the hospital for two weeks,” he recalled. “My head was all messed up because [members in an opposing gang] had beaten me with a baseball bat. I was affiliated with [gang name], and I had done something stupid – extremely, extremely stupid...And a part of me feels like I deserved [being beaten] because of what I did.”

Some youth chose to educate themselves on their rights and developed a defiance. One politically active hijabi youth commented:

Some cops walked into the park, and they're just like, 'Oh you can't sit here. It closes at night.' Aunty was like, 'Oh my god! Oh my god! We have to go!' And I was like, 'Listen. Calm down.' And we were still sitting there. Everybody's here every night. Why are you telling us to get out? And then [Aunty] started freaking out...I was like, 'You know what? I'm sitting here because I know my rights and you don't.' I was like, 'You don't have your papers? Calm the fuck down and sit down.' I was like, 'They're not going to come up to you and be like, 'Where are your papers?' They cannot do that. That's against the law...We don't have to fold to them.

Some youth, particularly those who had been frequently stopped, eventually saw through the safety rhetoric justifying surveillance measures such as Stop and Frisk. Aazim commented, “I do not like the Stop and Frisk law. It violates all my rights. If you look at the statistics, Stop and Frisk did not do anything. It doesn't do anything. It didn't lower down the crime rate. I didn't do anything. It's basically a law to lock people up. Because during commission days, I heard the officer gets paid if they lock people up.” He understood that the criminalization of minorities was primarily a means of order maintenance and social control, rather than an effective method to reduce crime.⁸³

For some youth, getting stopped became a regular part of their everyday lives. They normalized this state surveillance and potential punishment as a routine part of the lives of Brown urban youth. One youth said, “The cops get so used to stopping you, like they'll know your name. Every time they see you on the street, they'll ghost ride...and look by you...make a smart comment and then just pass by you. People are actually accustomed to that now around here.” With time, the stops became normalized in their minds, especially when they saw their friends of color being stopped and searched too. Youth assumed being stopped and searched was standard for everyone in predominantly Black working class neighborhoods and for other racialized populations, including those who appeared to be Muslim and/or undocumented immigrants.

One youth commented, “If you're South Asian, they're gonna stop you for immigration. If you're Black or Hispanic – guns and drugs...Guyanese [Guyanese Indians] still immigration,

⁸³ Between 2002 and 2011, Black and Latino residents composed almost 90% of residents stopped (NYCLU 2016c). Stop and Frisk grew more than 600% under Mayor Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Kelly. Since 2002, people have been stopped and interrogated by police more than four million times. Almost nine out of ten New Yorkers who are stopped have been completely innocent according to the NYPD itself (NYCLU 2016d).

the West Indians, Caribbeans.” Later he explained that he had also been stopped for drugs, involvement in gangs, and in his view having a beard -- therefore not necessarily just for immigration. For these young people, the youth control complex involved multiple types of racialization post-9/11, which in turn were indicative of the intersections between larger systems of criminalization.

CRIMINALIZING HOODIES AND HIJABS

The Zimmerman verdict in the death of Trayvon Martin was a major news event. Zimmerman’s release sparked protests, outrage, and a number of debates about whether the killing or Zimmerman’s release was racially motivated. In an era of color blindness, these events opened up discussion about race and racism in the United States and how many minority youth — especially Black males -- are seen in American society as a risk that needs to be tempered, rather than a “symbol of the future” (Giroux 2004:22). Celebrities such as Jamie Foxx and Miami Heat basketball players donned hoodies in solidarity with Trayvon Martin, his family, and other victims of racially motivated violence.⁸⁴ President Obama even gave a (controversial) speech in which he stated, “Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago,” and went on to discuss the surveillance of African Americans (“Remarks by the President on Trayvon Martin” 2013).

The Zimmerman verdict set off a range of thoughts, emotions, and debates with my research participants as well, and served as a segue for youth discussions on racism and surveillance, including their personal experiences being criminalized for their physical appearance. The vast majority saw Martin’s killing as racially motivated and the verdict as representative of a criminal justice system that failed Blacks and favored Whites. Some youth

chose to participate actively in rallies in support of Martin, carrying signs condemning violence against and criminalization of Blacks in America. In one South Asian community organization with a mix of middle and working class youth, young men reenacted the Zimmerman trial but had a hard time playing the defense because they believed he should have been found guilty.

The verdict was particularly disturbing to youth who had personal experience with racism and harassment by law enforcement. For instance, for one young man who had faced constant police abuse and whose friend, another youth of color, had been recently killed, the verdict hit close to home. He explained, “My [Facebook] wall was full about Zimmerman. I was so mad you have no idea. All my friends are angry about it. It’s not fair, it really isn’t...if Trayvon was White...it would have been different.” Anger was common in my conversations with youth — particularly young men — who could relate to Martin on the basis of age, gender, style, and/or belonging to a racialized population.

These youth understood that in American society, surveillance and suspicion, along with punitive measures, are distributed unevenly on a racial basis. Crime is perceived, as criminology scholar David Garland describes, “prospectively and in aggregate terms” in order to calculate risks and preventative actions (Monahan and Torres 2009:3). Young people, particularly minority youth, face “societal backlash” when they are associated with particular youth cultures that are seen in American society as violent or anti-social (Taylor 2013:69). Current youth style complicates the policing of public space because adults cannot always differentiate between minority youth engaging in illicit activities and innocent youth because they often sport the same clothing style (Tilton 2010). For example, the hoodie has broadly been “vilified as the modern day folk devil representing a feral and degenerate youth,” a viewpoint that justified

84 Trayvon Marin was wearing a hoodie the night he was killed in 2012.

Zimmerman's claims that Trayvon Martin appeared suspicious (Taylor 2013:69). When my research participants donned hoodies in solidarity with Martin, they were directly challenging its racialized criminalization when worn by people of color.

My research participants who adopted an urban style, particularly males, experienced surveillance in the various spheres of their life — from school administrators, police, and family. One youth mused, “I started getting stopped [by police] after I got into high school...When you are young, you look like you're not doing anything wrong. When you get a little older, your style is a little different.” Youth styles, which were generally expressions of multicultural cultural citizenship, led to racialization and punishment in various spheres of life, in accordance with the youth control complex's emphasis on social control. Youth were told by police that they “fit the description” or “match the profile” of a suspect, searched for weapons and drugs, and questioned about gang activity.

Young women who wore hoodies were also singled out by police. When grabbing ice cream at Dunkin' Donuts one night, a fifteen-year-old girl related an incident from the night before where she and her three girl friends were wearing hoodies when they noticed a police vehicle following them. She concluded, “We looked really shady because we were wearing black hoodies.” Young women additionally described sexual harassment from police officers and being singled out from their peers if they were the darkest-skinned.

Young women who had not been stopped by the police still took note when their male friends, brothers, and boyfriends were searched. Some even stated that their male peers had been beaten up and robbed by police, which added to their fear of police and what they could do. “You start to see the police in the main subway area more after 5pm. You see people stopped all

the time, especially boys. It's harder for boys because they have peer pressure to look more thuggish and sag their pants," one young woman commented.

I was originally introduced to Aazim by another research participant, Kabira, one cold winter afternoon at the Queens Mall. He and Kabira talked casually about the difficulties of finding work, quitting smoking, and paying for a college education. At one point the conversation switched to Aazim's new girlfriend and whether her brother disliked him. After some discussion, Aazim and Kabira concluded that the brother looked down on him. "A lot of people are afraid of Aazim," Kabira explained, turning to me. I was surprised. Aazim had been friendly from the moment Kabira introduced us, politely asking about my research, and even offering to buy me frozen yogurt. "Why?" I asked curiously. "It's because of how I dress and talk," Aazim explained while Kabira nodded in agreement. "And because I'm from the projects."

Despite the fact that Aazim dressed with cultural sincerity, in a manner reflective of his Bronx roots, he was criminalized even by youth such as his girlfriend's brother who made assumptions about him based on his style. One young woman explained how she herself made presumptions about South Asian male youth based on their appearances, despite being frequently misread herself. She regularly used drugs, sometimes even smoking marijuana publicly. She felt that she was able to skate by unnoticed because her gender, beauty, small size, and young look connoted innocence, whereas boys appeared suspect to the police even if they were not visibly carrying drugs.

She commented, "I think it's because look at me, you can't tell. They stop mostly guys. They would stop Indian guys, but that's like on the way they dress. At the deli, early in the morning before school, it would be a whole bunch of guys, Indian guys, standing there smoking cigarettes and smoking weed...truancy [officers] would just assume they're about to smoke, let

me see what they're up to...even I would assume that, not just cops...in this community if you look suspicious, the cops are behind you.” In her example, it is clear that young men are sometimes stopped even before they break any laws because of their style. This youth’s confession about judging Indian boys by their appearance, despite her own activities and look, demonstrates how deeply engrained assumptions of urban male criminality can run.

As I got to know Aazim, it became apparent that it was not only his girlfriend’s brother who took issue with his urban speech and style — it was also the larger South Asian community and the police. Aazim understood how South Asians, and even his family, absorbed larger messages about the criminality of urban youth and made judgements of young men based on how they presented themselves. They blamed Black youth for “corrupting” Desi youth,⁸⁵ and tried to get them to conform to mainstream expectations. Aazim explained half-jokingly:

My mom looks at me like a criminal because of how I dress. She thinks I go to jail every other weekend...She blames Black people because of me, for corrupting me basically...I have a cousin...he grew up more hardcore than I did. He got into more gang activity, his family left him, he was homeless...He's tatted all over his face, and he talks way different...Desis judge each other all the time. My mom is even scared for me to hang out with my cousin. She has the thought: he is a criminal. And a lot of people, the way I dress, a lot of older Desi people...the older generation would look at me like, 'Oh.' They would obviously stereotype, like, 'Did he just come out of jail?' The way I talk, yeah...My mom is racist as hell. She looks at every Black person like a criminal that just came out of jail if they dress like me.

Aazim and his cousin were not the only youth who were viewed as criminals by their families. Multiple youth had stories of being kicked out of their houses, shuffled between family members, and being disowned by parents who believed their children were criminals based on

⁸⁵ This perception falls in line with segmented assimilation theory, which suggests that only trouble stems from immigrant youths’ interactions with Blacks and Black cultural commodities. Black youth are demonized as an underclass, which consists of native-born minorities who oppose White mainstream norms, and can drag other youth down a path of downward assimilation. Youth who live physically close to the “underclass” are considered particularly vulnerable to the oppositional subculture of marginalized youth (Sharma 2010).

their appearance and run-ins with the police. Their families — not just authority figures like the police — saw their style as an indication that they had chosen to assimilate into what they deemed Black urban underclass criminality.

On another afternoon when Aazim, Kabira, and I were getting ready to go on a hunt for french fries, we grabbed our warmer layers to prepare for the chill outside. Aazim put on his baseball cap, pulled his hoodie on top, and donned his jacket. He turned to me and commented wryly, “See I’ll probably get stopped since I look like this.” While sometimes Desi youth were stopped by police who mistook them for Black or Latino, their style seemed to be the most salient factor. Aazim had been Stopped and Frisked and roughed up by police a countless number of times, beginning in high school. He explained why he was singled out when recounting the following story about trespassing:

There was a precinct right next to school, and I’d get arrested by them all the time. Taking it back to racism, I remember during one of our [high school] lunch breaks, we’d get to go outside to eat. So we went to McDonald’s...About eight cops came inside and told me to get up...I said, ‘What do I need to get up for...What’s the reason?’ One police officer took out his fine book. He was going to fine me. I was like, ‘Why are you taking out your fine book?’ He was like, ‘You don’t gotta worry about it’...I started getting loud with the officer, and that’s when he threw me against one of these benches, threw me against it, and he cuffed me. I’m over here cursing him out like, ‘What the fuck; this isn’t right; I didn’t do anything.’ He’s like, ‘I’m fining you for trespassing’...Doesn’t make any sense...*It was because of the way we were dressed...targeted us because of the neighborhood we were in. Maybe he stereotyped these kids are criminals. Sadly it’s a cop’s job to do that now.*

Aazim was stopped more frequently in predominantly Black and Latino low income neighborhoods in the Bronx in contrast to Queens, which was generally seen as a less dangerous place. He was aware that as a young man of color his clothing sent particular messages to the police, but that as a Desi he had an option his Black friends did not: mainstreaming his appearance in order to attract less police attention. He commented, “I’m stopped more in the

Bronx but definitely outside. Also if I were to come to Queens, have my hoodie and hat on, they're going to be like, 'Okay. This guy looks like a criminal, so let's go and stop him.' I did get stopped in Astoria a few times. They stop me because of how I'm dressed. I could dress properly. I could dress nicely and won't get stopped. If I dress how I'm dressed right now [hoodie, baseball cap], I'd definitely get stopped.” None of the youth I knew changed the way they dressed in order to avoid police attention, although they did take other precautions to make it clear that they carried no weapons or drugs because they knew they would be surveilled. For example, they might make a public show of keeping their hands out of their pockets or demonstrating that they were clearly smoking cigarettes, not marijuana.

While Aazim understood the privileges of being categorized as South Asian, he also perceived Muslims as being widely criminalized in the 21st century security-surveillance era. He commented, “Basically they look at [South Asians] like friendly people because we are a friendly race. Even though there's a lot of people, a lot of Desi kids, growing up just like me, growing up in the projects, lot of gang activity, they don't look at us like them [Blacks]. They see us with friendlier eyes...unless you're talking about Muslim religion.” It is important to note that youth, including those like Aazim with urban style and no obvious religious identification, may also have been stopped by police because of their presumed Muslim background.

Research participants were not just criminalized for adopting Black urban style. Notably, those who wore markers of their religious identity — namely hijabs or Sikh turbans — had their daily actions and styles surveilled in multiple contexts, including by the police. One organizer commented, “Both the FBI and NYPD have put out these ideas of a process of radicalization, and that process of radicalization equates both to religious activity and to political activity... You

grow a beard. You put on a head scarf. All these things are normal, everyday things that become markers for police agencies.”⁸⁶

Girls were usually stopped and searched and asked for identification if they wore hijab or were with a group of friends that included girls wearing headscarves. One young Muslim woman talked about being stopped with her friend who wears a hijab. She recalled, “The cops are like, 'You need to stop doing what you guys doing.' And she's like, 'What did I do?' And then he's like, 'You know what you did. You guys are so nasty, and you guys are always bombing places from here to England' ... So I'm like, 'Let's just walk away, go.' 'Cause you don't want to get into an argument with them 'cause then they'd be like, 'You're arguing back at me,' and then they'd just give you a ticket for no reason!” She had urged her friend not to engage with the police officers’ racist and criminalizing abuse because she understood that in the time of order maintenance and quality of life policing, doing so could lead to tangible punitive actions like being fined or arrested.

Youth felt that having beards could also be read as a sign of Islam and speculated that sporting them was a reason they and their friends were stopped by police. One youth remarked, “It feels like the police are targeting Muslims again. It's like a 9/11 all over again. Because of one man's doing, why you gotta go for the whole religion? Even the president even said it's just extremists. We're *not* extremists. It has just gotten to a point where the police don't even care. They don't even listen to the law. They just do whatever

⁸⁶ The NYPD’s report, “Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat,” which became available in 2007, identifies heightened religious and political activity by Muslim youth as indicators of dangerous radicalization. The report identifies places Muslims could become radicalized by extremist rhetoric. The venues include mosques, hookah bars, and student associations — “seemingly anyplace Muslims frequented could be a potential venue for radicalization” (Iyer 2015:60). Due to the report’s conclusions, the NYPD formed a “Demographics Unit” to monitor Muslims for radicalization. This included Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis as ““ancestries of interest”” (Iyer 2015:61).

the hell they want. Basically, if they see your skin color is brown and you have a beard, they're going to come at you.”

Many youth commonly equated Muslims with Blacks on the basis of the widespread nature of their surveillance and criminalization, and this cemented their feeling of being criminalized because they generally understood the marginalized position of Blacks in American society. For instance, going back to the Zimmerman verdict, one young man who was frequently stopped and questioned by the police stated, “If Zimmerman was Muslim or Black, you have no idea what could’ve happened. It was very racial, it really was.” This youth’s outrage stemmed from a belief that because Zimmerman was not Muslim or Black and could instead be perceived as White, he was able to kill Martin without punishment. Had he been Muslim or Black, he envisioned the opposite verdict.

In these youths’ lived experiences, policing Black urban criminality bled into policing Islamic terrorism. Scholars have shown that racial profiling of Muslims in the War on Terror is an extension of their surveillance for the last forty-something years as well as a broadening of racial profiling techniques that have targeted Blacks since slavery (Daulatzai 2007:141; Nguyen 2005:140). Raj theorized, “It started with linking us to terrorism, and now to seem less ‘racial’ they've linked us to criminals, glorifying our every mistake, and ignoring our every accomplishment.” He felt that by the state naturalizing Desis’ criminalization, their racialization as Muslims would become obscured and acceptable during an era of color blindness.

The racial nature of incidents became especially clear to youth when they realized they were stopped or ticketed while White people behaving similarly were not. One youth explained, “I felt embarrassed because a police officer stopped me, a Brown kid, and he doesn't stop someone else who is a different color from me.” Youth questioned why they were searched by

police in the subway, while White women with multiple bags were not stopped. The difference in police treatment of Whites and people of color led to youth realizing that they were being criminalized through Stop and Frisk on the basis of race and class. One youth explained:

They treat minorities different than they treat White people. They want to check the working class minorities for guns and drugs when they can barely afford it...as opposed to not searching the upper class White people. It is pretty biased with the NYPD...I never saw a Eastern European or Irish person pulled over in [my Queens neighborhood], and it was pretty bad there – one my friend’s father got shot to death over there. And when I went to Brooklyn, there were Italians, but you don't see them go through any problems. But me and my friends get pulled over.

When youth realized the racial nature of the incident(s), they felt angry and defeated by their criminalization. One youth exclaimed, “I almost got charged with beating up a cop because I realize what the hell just happened.” While he was not actually going to hit an officer, he was trying to express the level of infuriation he felt when he realized that he was being subject to racial discrimination. He had been fined for trespassing in a park where students socialized after school when he got too close to the frozen lake. His White friend, in contrast, was not ticketed or reprimanded though he ran onto the lake, clearly breaking park rules. “Cops are basically making money off kids,” he explained tersely. “Basically a racial thing is involved...it do happen to people but people don't think they'll see it happen right in front of them.”

The governance of these youth is an example of a broader reality: the blurred, overlapping nature of racialization, which is met with punitive policies that traverse and connect multiple domains of criminalization. The carceral treatment accorded to the Black population has become the “template for the exporting of this prison regime” during the War on Terror (Daulatzai 2007:136). Domestic communities of color are connected to their “neo-colonial counterparts in the Global South” through racialized terrorism rhetoric (Daulatzai 2007:140).

Scholars have drawn parallels between New Orleans and Iraq, emphasizing the White supremacy that allowed Blacks to perish during Hurricane Katrina while America was preparing for war with racialized Muslims. As one critical race theory scholar, David Goldberg, put it: “post-Katrina New Orleans, in short, is simply Iraq come home” (quoted in De Genova 2010:627).

Current NYPD police chief Bratton equates urban youth gang violence with “homeland terrorism” that the federal government must take seriously (quoted in Daulatzai 2007:140).

There has been an increased relationship between the military and local police as was seen, for example, in Ferguson, Missouri after the death of Michael Brown in 2014. When watching footage of protests in Ferguson at DRUM, youth questioned whether they were looking at images of Gaza or the United States, shocked by the militarization of the police. They discussed how, as Brown youth, they would be denounced as terrorists in the media and jailed and/or deported by the state if they shot at anyone, recognizing how the criminalization of urban youth, immigrants, and Muslims can occur together.

MUSLIMS IN THE MEDIA: RECOGNIZING RACIALIZATION

(To the tune of “Prince Ali” from Disney’s *Aladdin*)

Hey, I’m OK but I’m slightly scared
My husband’s a mark for the War on Terror
Aladdin was taken by the CIA
We’re not Taliban
You’ve got the wrong man in Guantanamo Bay
Prince Ali where could he be?
Drowning in wawa
Interrogation from the nation of the “free”
Bin Laden’s taken the fall
We’re not trained pilots at all
Jafar went crazy and no one put up a fuss
We’re for freedom
Genie can vouch for us

Bush was crazy, Obama's lazy
al-Qaeda's not in the country
Set free my Prince Ali
After Ever After - Disney Parody (Paint 2013)

The images and headlines youth saw regularly in the media strengthened their notion of a double standard between Whites and them. They also supported their conviction that the state and media unfairly criminalized and dehumanized South Asians, especially Muslims, which in turn contributed to their personal senses of being criminalized. The criminalization and victimization of Muslims impacted how youth perceived law enforcement and armed forces and their interactions with them. Deepa Kumar, a scholar who connects Islamophobia and imperialism, notes that the mainstream media rarely strays from the government's "official script" on the connection between Muslims and terror (Kumar 2012:149).⁸⁷ It generally refrains from questioning the criminalization of Muslims, and it helps maintain and grow the narrative of police keeping the United States safe from "barbarian hordes of 'Islamic terrorists'" (Kumar 2012:153).

While their Black and Latino friends commented that they blamed negative media portrayals for people's assumptions that they were violent thieves and gang members, Desi youth focused on the media's criminalization of South Asians and Muslims as innately criminal terrorists. This included journalism pieces as well as fictional work such as the television show *Homeland*, which they suggested could strengthen Islamophobia. Despite these separate categorizations by Black, Latino, and Desi youth, it is important to keep in mind that the

⁸⁷ An example of the mainstream media unjustly criminalizing Muslim looking people after 9/11 was the coverage of Sher Singh, a Sikh American who had a long beard and turban and carried a *kirpan* (dagger) for religious reasons. The day after September 11th, Singh was arrested on Amtrak by law enforcement who pointed rifles at him. Major media outlets including CNN and Fox News aired images of Singh's arrest. Though he was deemed innocent and released hours later, the media did not report to the public that Singh was not charged with any crimes. Images of a

racialization of Muslims in the War on Terror is interconnected with the surveillance and criminalization of Blacks and Latinos in the wars on drugs and immigration.⁸⁸

The Oak Creek gurdwara shooting underscored to youth the difference in criminalization of Whites versus Muslims, as well as the value ascribed to White victims versus South Asians. One youth stated, “If they didn't know it was a White guy [the media] would blame the Hindus, the Muslims. Even the school shooting that happened was a crazy White guy, and if they didn't show him, they would think it's a Muslim and call him a terrorist.” When hanging out with a group of high school girls one afternoon, the gurdwara shooting came up, and the youth commented animatedly, shedding their criminalization by focusing on criminal acts by Whites and South Asian success:

The Sikh gurdwara shooting, so many people that had so much life in them – they got shot to death in own their holy place! Media don't talk about that! It was some White skinhead that did it. It's not just Muslims that do these kind of crap. It's White people everywhere. White people do it too, the school shooting, Columbine High School, Taft High School. We don't ever talk about those...Any incident that happens, you shouldn't blame the Muslims first. It can be a White guy for God's sake...what if it's not a Muslim one day? You're going to say, ‘Oh shit, it's my religion, it's my nationality that did it.’ How are you going to feel?...I mean you [Whites] didn't just come here. You stole this land from the Indians. You did not come here on your own terms, you stole this land, and you have the right to talk about our people like that? When our people come here, we do good things for this place. We're doctors, we're engineers, we're lawyers – what are you?

Media coverage, which youth primarily accessed online through Facebook, led youth to believe that Muslims were hated not just in the United States but worldwide and that their lives

South Asian bearded and turbaned man as a potential terrorist “have become seared into our collective national imagination” (Iyer 2015:15).

⁸⁸ Though I have listed Muslims, Blacks, and Latinos separately for the sake of clarity in discussing the experiences of my research participants, it is important to remember that there is substantial overlap between these categories. For instance, Black and Latino are not always exclusive racial categories, and Muslims can be Black and Latino.

were seen as less worthy than White and/or American lives because people thought they were terrorists. One youth reflected, “Wars nowadays are stupid. I don't really see why we're fighting. They claim it's anti-terrorist, but I don't know why you're sending drone missiles and killing kids. I've seen videos. That little kid is not a terrorist. I don't think he even knows what a gun is. He's on his bicycle, and now he's dead.” The photos, articles, memes, political cartoons, and statuses that youth accessed on their phones, tablets, and computers and shared on Facebook indicated that they were certain that anti-Muslim sentiment after September 11th translated to tangible suffering for many Muslims worldwide, especially at the hands of imperial powers.⁸⁹ One popular cartoon was Uncle Sam’s arm using the burning Twin Towers as a pen to draw bullseyes on the backs of the members of a Muslim family. In particular, youth were focused on war and violence in the Middle East and Pakistan.

Numerous youth annually listed condolences for the victims of September 11th along with the number of Americans who had lost their lives. However, they followed up their remembrances with the much larger numbers of people who had lost their lives in subsequent wars and experienced violence in the Middle East. They pointed out that while September 11th was tragic, people needed to remember what was happening to Muslims abroad. They opposed wars in Muslim countries, stating that a World War III needed to be avoided and that these people were also victims — of post-9/11 backlash and American imperialism. Some shared

⁸⁹ Youth turned to a wide range of media sources. They posted articles from a wide variety of news sources like Yahoo News, the New York Post, Democracy Now, The Huffington Post, The Atlantic, local newspapers, etc. They posted pictures from popular Facebook pages like Humans of New York/Karachi and videos from sources such as YouTube, Al Jazeera, and Now This. They found the memes they shared on friends’ pages, meme sites like 9gag, and pages they liked on Facebook, which included organizations and individual celebrities like ZaidAliT. Their picture and meme sources were countless. To name a few, youth posted pictures and memes from: For Accurate Indigenous Representation, The Idealist, Team Palestina, Punjabi Memes, Occupy Wall St, Welcome to the Internet, Bengali Memes, The People’s Uprising, International Youth Muslim Brotherhood, Europeans Against the Political System, Center for Constitutional Rights.

photos and memes asking Israel to stop imitating Hitler. They questioned spending money on wars abroad when there were so many issues that needed attention domestically.

A popular meme on Facebook stated, “Your 9/11 is our 24/7,” and there were many similar variations. This meme popped up with the shooting at Sandy Hook and youth questioning why the United States cared about White, American children but not the Muslim children losing their lives in the wars abroad to actions such as drone strikes in Pakistan. They insisted that the school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut was tragic, but also that they did not understand why President Obama and many Americans found it more sad than the everyday violence against Palestinians, Iraqis, Afghans, Syrians, and Africans. When talking about her visit to the National September 11 Memorial one youth commented to me, “No one cares or puts memorials when kids are dying in our home countries.” Online, youth shared gruesome photos of children suffering in war zones and lists of children killed in Pakistan and Yemen. They found these on friends’ pages and political pages on Facebook, and reposted them with an insistence that violence against Muslims was not considered genocide because the world devalued Muslim lives.

Youth were upset that not only were violent atrocities being committed against Muslims domestically and abroad, but also that Americans, including their peers, did not seem to notice. They squarely criticized their peers for caring too little because their energies were focused instead on popular culture and celebrity gossip. One young woman commented that one day her children would read textbooks and learn about global Islamic terrorism, but not how September 11th led to wars that ended Muslim lives or made them a “living hell” across the world. Her friends agreed with her, complaining that the current generation was oblivious to real issues.

The “Disney Parody” song verse quoted above was popular with my research participants who showed it to one another. Though the verse was part of a larger song using Disney princesses to critique multiple social issues, it was this portion that was the most meaningful, as evidenced by their comments to one another when it played. They valued it because they felt that someone was acknowledging and sharing the truth with a wide audience — as opposed to the mainstream media — and were impressed that it was someone unexpected: a clean cut White American teenage boy. His song is especially meaningful in light of a 2015 Public Policy Polling report that stated that “almost one-third of Republican primary voters would support bombing the fictional kingdom of Agrabah” from the movie *Aladdin* (Kasperkevic 2015). More specifically, a mere 13% said no, 57% were unsure, and 30% supported it (Kasperkevic 2015).

In a conversation with Natasha she confessed that she was torn about what advice to give her younger sister Zara, who also wore hijab, if she ran into danger, based on what she had learned through the videos and articles that popped up on her Facebook newsfeed. “I tell her not to trust anyone in a uniform, though if she’s really in trouble she can call a cop. I don’t know whether or not I’d call a cop if I was in trouble,” she explained, doubtful of how safe Muslim youth were with the NYPD, particularly when undocumented and living in an era of informants. When wandering around with youth, a common activity, they often grew silent if nearing a police officer or military personnel.

Politicized youth expressed unease at their peers joining the NYPD or military and felt that recruiters were preying on vulnerable youth, particularly males who were looking for acceptance and a life path. They disapproved of the DREAM Act’s military path to citizenship because, as Natasha commented, “It makes you go abroad and kill our own people.”

When waiting for the train at a subway station next to a Queens mall, a research participant pointed out that the entire station was covered in advertisements encouraging people to join the NYPD. I turned a full circle, noting that he was correct. He contemplated that the NYPD was targeting youth, since the mall was a popular hangout for teenagers including working class, Desi youth. Another research participant chimed in, commenting that it troubled her that so many of her Desi friends were studying criminal justice and wanted to become police officers, particularly when many were victims of police harassment. She viewed them as having the perception that Latinos and Blacks were bad and as police they would protect Desis from those “bad guys.”

One afternoon, a young woman brought a flyer from school to show her friends. The flyer was advertising a competition in which people could write to the police commissioner to say what they would do if they were in charge of the police, and the winner would win money and a day with the commissioner. Her friends howled with laughter as they joked about how they would criticize the police. She responded by saying she planned on winning the contest, so she could speak to the commissioner directly! Her friends laughed even harder, debating out loud what she could potentially do if she won — stand him up, ask him for things, act obnoxiously, etc.

One youth got into a public argument when a young South Asian Muslim came to recruit for the NYPD at her college, which had a predominantly working class minority population. She questioned how he could do so specifically as a South Asian Muslim, referencing the victimization of their community by the police and the damage done by NYPD informants. She challenged the recruiter’s assertion that police shootings of minorities were the accidental mistakes of individuals, pointing out larger institutional issues and the police’s strategic targeting

of communities of color. Her friends joined in, demanding to know why the recruiter was even carrying a gun on a college campus. When she denounced him for targeting working class Black and Brown youth, he attempted to shut her down by accusing her of racism for explicitly mentioning Black and Brown youth and additionally accused her of being racist against White people. His reasoning was in line with Prashad's observation that the "fight against racism is twisted into a racist act, for to invoke race even in a progressive antiracist agenda is seen as divisive" (Prashad 2002:38).

In her study of West Indian girls in Brooklyn, anthropologist Oneka LaBennett demonstrates the role of teenagers as cultural actors who strategically — not passively — consume popular culture to assert "agency in defining race, ethnicity, and gender" and opposing mainstream criminal portrayals (LaBennett 2011:3-4). In a similar vein, my research participants often shared, on their social media pages, articles and videos of police harassment, and their opinions of such, especially the mistreatment of South Asians and/or Muslims and lack of police action against Islamophobic acts. For example, a popular meme they circulated on Facebook was one in which a police officer asks a woman why he stopped her and she responds, "You got all C's in high school?"

A news story many youth shared on Facebook was about two Muslim girls, ages twelve and fourteen, who were beaten and had their hijabs ripped off by police in the Bronx (Hafiz 2013). One youth posted on social media a clip from a primetime ABC show "What Would You Do?" in which an American soldier strongly defends a man experiencing anti-Muslim discrimination. The instigator insists that the U.S. is at war with people like the Muslim man. The man from the military defends freedom of religion in America and comments that he is not at war at the moment. The youth who posted the video expressly wished that more members of

the armed forces and police were like the soldier in the video and generally praised him, but he also shared an unease that even in defending the Muslim man from prejudice, there was still a subtle us versus them attitude in the soldier's "not at the moment" comment.

INFORMANTS

Youth also took notice of news stories about informants, particularly youth who had been questioned by police for information, warned against joining Muslim college student groups due to the presence of informants,⁹⁰ and learned about entrapment at local political community organizations such as DRUM. When I first met Natasha, she was getting ready to start college and was considering an anthropology course. She asked me many questions about anthropological methods and terminology, including what someone in her position to the researcher would be called. "You're an informant," I replied,⁹¹ pausing immediately afterward

⁹⁰ In 2012 *The Associated Press* reported that the NYPD had placed informants in schools to spy on students at Muslim student associations. In the article, "I Feel like a Despised Insect: Coming of Age Under Surveillance in New York," an instructor at Brooklyn College writes about an undercover NYPD officer who was present at the school from 2011-2015 and spying on Muslim students. She aptly notes, "Such political targeting has a long history — from attempts to root out 'communists' on campus in the 1950s to the surveillance and disruption of Black Power and antiwar organizing on campus in the 1960s and 1970s (including the use of informants to sow distrust within those groups). Each time, we have come to see such tactics as excessive and degrading of civil rights. Yet here we are again" (Theoharis 2016).

⁹¹ Anthropological ethics — including anthropologists acting as informants — have been previously questioned, especially during times of war and in terms of military alliances. Franz Boas himself published a letter to *The Nation*, accusing several anthropologists of serving as spies under the guise of research. He wrote that such a spy "prostitutes science in an unpardonable way and forfeits the right to be classed as a scientist" (quoted in van Willigen 2002:48).

There have been instances when anthropologists inadvertently harmed their research participants through the information they made public. This was the case with Cora Du Bois and her study on the people of Alor, part of present-day Indonesia. This area came to be occupied by the Japanese during World War II. Several Alorese people — who had never even heard of the U.S. before meeting Du Bois — innocently mentioned to her that they wanted the United States to win the war. When the Japanese came to hear of this, those Alorese were publicly beheaded as an example to their peers (van Willigen 2002:48).

Project Camelot was a case where anthropologists were accused of deliberately acting unethically. In 1964, Project Camelot was initiated by the Special Operations Research Office of the U.S. Army and received the largest grant for social sciences up until that time. The project's goals were to assess the causes of internal wars in order to figure out what the government could do to prevent them. This caused a huge controversy among anthropologists who argued that the social science research would be used to maintain the social order in countries with "clearly identifiable oppressed classes" (van Willigen 2002:49-50). Despite the commotion this caused in anthropology, only one anthropologist was involved and served as a short-term consultant (van Willigen 2002:49). Another

as if hearing the term for the first time. Realizing that Natasha and I were both thinking about the meaning of that term in a community targeted after September 11th, I hastily followed up saying, “I think calling you a research participant would make more sense.” We half-smiled at each other as she energetically nodded and agreed that ‘research participant’ was, in her eyes, the preferable label to use. Natasha’s reaction was indicative of the weight of the term “informant,” even a decade after September 11th.

While mass arrests began to decrease mid-2002, Arabs, South Asians, and Muslims remain targets of the state, subject to FBI interviews and spying.⁹² People are still encouraged to contact the FBI if they see or hear anything suspicious. Obama spoke about living in a new era post-9/11, in which the “government would need new tools to protect the American people” and avoid attacks (quoted in De Genova 2010:619). The increase of fusion centers, joint terrorism task forces, and suspicious activity reporting programs all contribute to the government surveillance of South Asians, Arabs, and Muslims. These communities are also racially profiled and surveilled by local agencies like the NYPD, which denies surveillance without just cause.

In 2014 Glenn Greenwald and Murtaza Hussain utilized leaked documents to demonstrate that the FBI and NSA had been spying long-term on Muslim community leaders (“Under Suspicion, Under Attack: Xenophobic Political Rhetoric and Hate Violence against

controversy was anthropological involvement in the Thailand Project, which was brought under attack in 1960 by the Student Mobilization Committee to end the War in Vietnam. Anthropologists were accused of participating in counterinsurgency research (van Willigen 2002:51).

More recently, the Human Terrain System, which assigned anthropologists to American combat units in Afghanistan and Iraq, was under scrutiny for its ethics. Some feared that those involved gave all anthropologists a bad reputation as intelligence gatherers for the military. Roberto González, an anthropology professor at San Jose State, publicly critiqued the program, expressing concern about anthropological work being used for political suppression and propaganda purposes. He viewed the program as an intelligence-gathering program similar to the U.S. Army's Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) during the Vietnam War. Data on Vietnamese civilians was gathered for CORDS by ethnographers and passed on to a secret branch of paramilitaries who used the data to assassinate more than 26,000 Vietnamese with supposed ties to the Viet Cong (Price 2009).

South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab Communities in the United States” 2014:23) — my research participants already had been tagging the NSA ironically and defiantly in their political social media posts. One Muslim youth expressed his awareness of government surveillance by joking that he was tired of the government looking at his Facebook page and never “liking” his status updates.

Local community organizations, even individuals, remain vigilant about infiltration by informants and subsequent potential for entrapment (“Under Suspicion, Under Attack: Xenophobic Political Rhetoric and Hate Violence against South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab Communities in the United States” 2014:6). One youth commented, “CUNY campuses – they have a Muslim association. They [Muslim students] told us not to join it because they end up having spies there. To trap you. We just know. I try to let people know – don't join it. You're putting yourself in danger, especially if you're an outgoing person...there was this girl my mom knows personally who was undocumented. She was Muslim. She wore a burqa to [school], and they had a spy. They took her words basically, got her in trouble. She got arrested.”

One young woman told me about her mother’s strong objection to seeing newspaper articles in her daughter’s backpack about a terrorism entrapment case. She recalled, “Mom saw those papers in my bag, just reads the part where it said ‘terror plot’ and she flips out. Bad. She's like, ‘Beta you're carrying this in your bag, your bag is big, you go to subway, subway police stop you.’ She had that concept. That hurt me...the fear in her eyes, she's clutching onto the papers, and she's like, ‘What is this? Why are you carrying this?...Don’t put this in your bag.’” Her mother was aware that her daughter, who covered her hair, could appear suspicious

92 Since September 11th as many as 11,000 Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians have been questioned by FBI

to the police and feared that she could face punitive measures or entrapment for even simply carrying mainstream media articles about terrorism.

Raj had been approached multiple times when he was alone by police who asked him for information on drug dealing and shoot-outs. “I would always say, 'Go fuck yourself.' You kicked my ass thirty minutes ago, and now I'm alone, and you want me to tell you things?” he stated. After refusing to cooperate, he would be roughed up by the police again. In other scenarios, being asked for information by law enforcement was directly tied to criminalizing Muslims.

In one instance, one of my research participants was surprised to see his friend’s picture displayed in the news when his friend came out publicly as a paid NYPD informant who had been asked to spy on Muslims, including students, and incite conversations about terrorism and Islam. The two of them had been arrested with other friends several months earlier for marijuana possession. This was the third arrest on misdemeanor drug charges for the Bengali nineteen-year-old who became an informant. Afraid he was in major legal trouble, he agreed to become a paid informant after a police officer approached him in jail.

When he decided he no longer wanted to work as an informant and went public with his story, which was picked up by multiple mainstream news outlets, my research participant was shocked by his friend’s involvement with the police. This story was timely because the press only began reporting on the NYPD’s surveillance of Muslims in 2011, and before that the institutional violations of Muslims’ civil liberties had not been a “mainstream public discussion” (Kumar 2012:144).

His work as an informant included tactics the NYPD had flatly denied utilizing such as indiscriminately spying on Muslims and gathering information without a specific target or lead. He also admitted to baiting people into saying incriminating things and taking what they said out of context to impress his superior officer. News stories such as these added to youths' feeling of being criminalized and surveilled by law enforcement and understanding that state surveillance could seep into their daily lives. They understood that the surveillance and punitive measures they faced stemmed from systems of criminalization feeding one another, in this case the intersection of street policing and the War on Terror.

CRIMINALIZATION MULTIPLIED

Supported by nativist attitudes, the current War on Immigrants in the United States has raged since the late 1980s (Maira 2009:69). It gained momentum in the 1990s with a widespread “national racial identity crisis” about the impending demographic shift into a majority minority nation (Fujiwara 2008:xiv). While anti-immigrant sentiment is not new, what has stood out is the “unprecedented border militarization and criminalization regime” it produced (Oliviero 2013:7). Roughly \$187 billion has been invested in immigration enforcement in the last twenty-five years, making it the government's top concern in regard to criminal law enforcement (Oliviero 2013:7). The War on Immigrants overlaps with the wars on terror, crime, and drugs, which all feed one another through their prioritization of racialized punitive and preventative tactics.

With bipartisan support, in 1996 President Clinton signed into law several pieces of anti-immigrant legislation, many of which included criminal consequences that would be enforced more drastically after September 11th (Fernandes 2007; Nguyen 2005:144). Section 287(g),

which was enacted by Congress in 1996, gives local police the powers to implement immigration law and has been criticized for allowing profiling and violations of immigrants' civil rights. It led to the certification of over one thousand local police officers to apprehend immigrants, fueling the "national culture of enforcement and criminalization" (Iyer 2015:130). Though my research participants were very young or not even born when these policies went into effect, their criminalization of immigrants has had a trickle-down effect into youths' lives and contributed to the youth control complex.

In 2001, President Bush and Mexico's president, Vicente Fox, were discussing steps toward immigration reform. Reform involving some form of legalization had been a priority in the Bush administration in order to gain Latino votes and please employers needing laborers. Legal steps to eliminate racial profiling had also been underway pre-9/11 with the introduction of the End Racial Profiling Act in June 6, 2001 (Iyer 2015:44). However, September 11th deepened concerns about immigration peril, and the War on Terror has "fashioned 'immigration' as its most precious target" (De Genova 2010:627).

After the revelation that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 were enacted by people in the United States with visas, enforcement of immigration laws and an increase in border control became the top priority, and immigration reform was shut down (Gonzales 2015:209; Stephen 2007:149). The militarization of the border has not prevented people from crossing but has resulted in an increase in deaths. These deaths go unreported in the mainstream media (Stephen 2007:25). Gómez-Peña writes that the "demonized brown body in the age of terror has no name or personal identity" (Gómez-Peña 2008:199). While profiling and surveillance of targeted communities has occurred for years, in the current era it has publicly increased due to official state policies (Maira

2009:231). Since September 11th, the law has been strategically utilized by the government and law enforcement to target immigrant communities in the War on Terror.

In the name of safety and national security, civil liberties were transformed by the state from a universal right into a privilege for the select post-9/11 (Kumar 2012; Maira 2009; Naber 2002). Within ten days of September 11th, the Department of Justice had granted federal law enforcement agents the powers to detain noncitizens without charging them, for national security reasons, through an interim rule (Iyer 2015:36). The Patriot Act, which was passed within six weeks of September 11th, allowed the state to detain any foreign-born person declared a potential terrorist without proof or a hearing (Fernandes 2007:16). With its passage, systems of detention and deportation, which had been in place since the 1980s, multiplied (Fernandes 2007:22, 76; Maira 2009:66). By August 2002 the government had arrested and detained 738 noncitizens who were termed “The Disappeared” because they disappeared without any notice to their families (Iyer 2015:37).

Bringing together national security and immigration policies has led to an “unprecedented level of detentions of South Asian, Muslim, and Arab immigrants” since September 11th (Iyer 2015:36). The mass deportation and immigration enforcement culture that emerged post-September 11th has specifically utilized tactics that have been used by the state for decades to criminalize Black communities (Iyer 2015:129). Paromita Shah, associate director of the National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild, explains, “The terrible habits that have infected our criminal justice system, such as the lack of transparency or accountability or prosecutorial discretion, have also permeated immigration enforcement” (quoted in Iyer 2015:130).

The convergence of the War on Immigrants and the War on Terror is apparent in the family history of Fatima whose criminalization as an undocumented immigrant, along with her parents, was directly tied to the criminalization of her brother as a terrorist. Fatima had an older brother — also undocumented — who was jailed on conspiracy charges in 2006 after he allegedly planned to blow up a New York City landmark. As a teenager, he worked in an Islamic bookstore where he was befriended by an older man who turned out to be an undercover agent. His family insisted it was a case of entrapment, citing the brother's age, special needs, and the manner by which the agent brought religion into his conversations with the brother.

Fatima recalled getting detained on the basis of her legal status the very day her brother was sentenced for terrorist conspiracy:

The ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] people came in our home and arrest our whole family. We were detained for eleven days, my mom and me, and my dad was detained for five months...he's still in home arrest with an ankle bracelet he's wearing. They track him wherever he goes, and he has a time limit that he has to be out and in...it's like a curfew on him...they tell you that your second circuit was denied, and you have this deportation thing. We said, 'We are still in progress; it's still pending.' They didn't even hear us, and then they just arrest us. They just use immigration stuff. They didn't talk about my brother at all.

Though ICE did not mention her brother, Fatima made a direct connection between her brother's sentencing and the raid of her family's apartment. Their immigration status was used to detain them until DRUM helped secure their release.

Detentions without formal charges or due process are the “hallmark of the Homeland Security State” (De Genova 2010:627). The need for safety in the face of the threat of terrorism has justified the increased surveillance of and crackdown on immigrants. Non-citizens have been homogenized and dehumanized to the point where the public does not oppose harsh immigration policies (Fernandes 2007:30). The private-prison industry has blossomed as an

enormous number of immigrants have been targeted by the law and detained in the name of combating terror (Fernandes 2007:192; Maira 2009:67; Naber 2002:218). Private correctional facilities with detainees receive substantial funds from the federal government (Welch 2000:80). Jails that utilize immigrant labor significantly cut costs by having prisoners perform janitorial and prison maintenance labor (Fernandes 2007:197). At present, immigrants are one of the most rapidly increasing populations in U.S. prisons (Fernandes 2007:192). In 2009, a youth organizer commented, “One of the issues we’re definitely seeing working in DRUM – detention, deportation, how the government has taken this opportunity to really increase their prison industrial complex in terms of increasing the immigrant sector and enforcing that. So you see lot of raids that happen in homes, workplaces.”

During Bush's leadership, undocumented immigrants were denounced by the state as more than “illegal” -- they became the “evil terrorist enemy within” (Naber 2002:219). After September 11th, non-citizens were seen as dangerous and potentially criminal instead of simply unworthy (Walsh 2014:4). The Immigration and Naturalization Service was incorporated into the Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003 (De Genova 2005:248). Post-9/11, criminal law made otherwise unconstitutional exceptions for immigrants suspected of terrorism, such as allowing them to be detained while the government searched for evidence upon which to base their charges (Fernandes 2007:194). Attorney General John Ashcroft’s “preventative detention” utilized immigration law to detain immigrants, rather than charging them with a crime in the criminal justice system, so that “officials had almost absolute discretion” (Nguyen 2005:14).

Within eighteen months of the terrorist attacks, twenty-five out of thirty-seven national security measures were aimed at Arabs, South Asians, and Muslims, particularly low income,

undocumented immigrants (Cainkar & Maira 2005:6). Anti-Muslim sentiment in the current time period is woven into an already anti-immigrant racial formation (Rana 2011:49). While the law bans racial profiling, it does not outright forbid “profiling on the basis of religion or national origin” (Kumar 2012:144). It is important to remember that to my research participants, Islam was race. Muslims have been treated as terrorists without proof in cases that were supposed to be just about immigration (Kumar 2012:145). Racism against Muslims and immigrants are both based on “social characteristics associated with 'foreignness'” (Rana 2011:49). In the climate of fear, to be deemed “foreign” means susceptibility to nativist violence and government policies (Fernandes 2007:16). While Islamophobia immediately after September 11th focused on the enemy abroad, currently the gaze is on the domestic enemy within (Kumar 2012:159).

Fatima and her family continued to face distrust from the people with whom they interacted. “A lot of people are still accusing — if they think they're Muslim from Pakistan, they straightly say you're a terrorist and don't trust them,” she explained. Fatima experienced criminalization on multiple grounds: her brother’s imprisonment, her father’s house arrest, her immigration status, her detention by the government, and her identity as a Pakistani Muslim. During the time period immediately after 9/11, people in Queens belonging to targeted populations avoided one another, terrified their immigration violations would be reported (Maira 2009:265; Nguyen 2005:120). Fatima recalled her extended family’s rejection after she was released from detention, and their fears of criminalization by association: “Our family...got really scared of us when we go to their home. They don't talk to us the way they used to talk to us anymore.”

Despite the category of Muslim indicating a specific group, it is actually “open-ended and arbitrary in its potential” to tie a diversity of people to terrorism (Naber 2007:289). The

“fungibility of comparative racialization” connects, in numerous ways, the threat of the Muslim terrorist with “illegal” Latinos and “militant blacks” (Rana 2011:53). The construction of the potential terrorist has been essential to anti-immigrant fictions of illegality and natural criminality. Terror is associated with “illegal activity,” and in turn undocumented immigrants are seen as potentially associated with terrorism (Rana 2011:66). The reaction to the attacks of September 11th by the government and media intensified pre-existing racializations and deepened the connection between “terrorism, immigration, national vulnerability, and racial and gendered difference in the public imaginary” (Oliviero 2013:5).⁹³

Anti-immigrant policies such as the Border Protection Bill are popularly seen as a “Latino issue,” while the Patriot Act, with its anti-terrorism policies, is seen as a concern for Arabs, South Asians, and Muslims.⁹⁴ This is problematic, however, because both groups are affected by both pieces of legislation and in fact the “intensified anti-immigrant sentiment sparked by the aftermath of September 11 facilitated support” for the Border Protection Bill (Naber 2007:302). Gómez-Peña aptly notes that the “demon mythologies of the brown body transfer from race to race, from country to country” (Gómez-Peña 2008:197). This can serve as the basis for solidarity for groups such as DRUM.

Being a Brown undocumented immigrant has come to mean smuggler, drug pusher, gang member, and terrorist, especially after September 11th (Gomez-Pena 2008:198). Each issue is not

⁹³ For example, in 2014 Congressman Lou Barletta tied together September 11th and undocumented immigration by commenting, “You know, sometimes we need to remind everyone about September 11th. The pilots of those planes, it was an act of love to a different God that took American lives. And not everyone who is here illegally is all here for an act of love for their families” (quoted in “Under Suspicion, Under Attack: Xenophobic Political Rhetoric and Hate Violence against South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab Communities in the United States” 2014:13).

⁹⁴ Projections indicate that by 2055, Asians will become the largest immigrant population in the United States. They are expected to form 36% of the immigrant population, while Latinos will form 34% (Linthicum 2016).

disconnected from one another, and each type of surveillance is not limited to a particular racial or ethnic group. Thinking this way overlooks the reality that multiple groups are surveilled and racialized in connection to particular social issues. The apparatus and justifications utilized in the War on Crime and War on Drugs have targeted Arab, South Asian, and Muslim communities in the War on Terror (Iyer 2015:43).

South Asians are located at the nexus of these social issues and spectacles around terrorism, immigration and urban criminality. They are at times “denied benefits of citizenship” due to a belief that they are ultimately forever foreign, unable to assimilate to the mainstream, and potentially dangerous — beliefs that have been associated with Blacks, Asians, Latinos and Arabs throughout American history (Jamal 2008:117).

When looking at Aazim’s family history it is possible to connect, though indirectly, his experiences with the War on Youth and War on Drugs with losing his father to the War on Terror and War on Immigrants.⁹⁵ Criminalization in the youth control complex was felt across time and in conjunction with family members. Youth felt connections between their experiences and the racialization, surveillance, and punishment endured by close family members, which exponentially increased their sense of marginalization. For example, the negative experiences of their families immediately after 9/11 were engrained in their memories and had a domino effect that continues to be felt in present time. Aazim — whose poetry touched on the criminalization of Muslims, immigrants, and urban people of color — identified his father’s deportation

⁹⁵ These connections are reminiscent of South Asian positioning in England after the Rushdie Affair and Bradford riots. At that time, the idea of a growing Pakistani and Bangladeshi underclass developed. The media assisted in transforming South Asians from being perceived as a peaceful minority group to being seen as criminals and gang members who had lost traditional values. Public groups of male South Asian youth became racialized and surveilled as an Asian Gang, the “Asian youth folk devil” that threatened the public arena (Alexander 2000:10). The Asian Gang construction combined fears of the Underclass with fears of the Fundamentalist and Terrorist. These youth were seen as the “resentful heirs of a culture of disadvantage,” the “perpetrators of a burgeoning Asian criminality,” and the product of a culture of poverty (Alexander 2000:15).

immediately after September 11th as the root of his issues with racialization and criminalization.

Aazim recalled his last memory of his father:

I remember my dad tucking me in bed...I asked him where he was going, and he said he had to take care of some paperwork and he would be back in the afternoon...I came back from school. My sister picked up the phone – this was post-9/11...that's when everything started getting more strict. I remember my older sister...she got accepted into great colleges. So my dad called and she was excited to tell him 'Oh I got accepted to a good college,' but he broke the bad news. They took him that same day to a detention center in New Jersey, and he told us, 'I'm not going to be able to come out. I don't think I'm going to see you guys soon.' And I remember my sister – she had a plate of food in her hand, and it dropped, and she was crying...I haven't seen my dad for about ten, eleven years. Financially we have a lot of worries over here, and so to go over there, it's really expensive...Since I'm older now, I have a lot of responsibilities...My oldest sister can't go back. My mom can't go. They don't have their paperwork. Basically me and my little sister can go but my mom and older sister can't go...I'm going to wait until...we can all go together as a family...I understand whatever happened post-9/11 and that they want to take precaution. But some of the immigration laws is just retarded and aren't right. I don't find some of them right. How they treat all immigrants like criminals. It's not fair.

Aazim clearly understood the connection between September 11th and the criminalization of and crackdown on undocumented immigrants. With his father's deportation, the path of his family was forever changed. Aazim and his family struggled financially, and they were forced to leave their "good Irish" neighborhood to shuffle between relatives' basements and various low income housing in the projects in the Bronx. His undocumented sister was unable to afford the colleges to which she was accepted, and the family continues to pray for immigration relief.

After September 11th, despite being a child, Aazim felt pressure to become the man of the house, and he struggled with witnessing the harassment his mother and older sister faced. "I remember my mom was wearing a sari one time. They obviously don't know what the hell--. So I remember somebody saying, 'Fucking Osama's wife.' I remember getting into a fight with that kid...it hurt me...if you had Brown skin color, people just hated you." His sister and her friends

stopped wearing hijab because of the threat of violence. Aazim felt people's hatred directed at him when they heard his obviously Muslim name, such as during roll call in school. When attending his mosque, he recalled the discomfort of praying amidst many cops who "looked like they wanted to shoot [them]."

Not only did Aazim feel the weight of his own marginalization as a Muslim since childhood, he also shouldered the post-9/11 criminalization of his father as well as the blatant racism and disenfranchisement endured by the women in his family. Though these incidents were scattered through time and across family members, Aazim felt the pain of them all together. For this reason, I expand the youth control complex to include not just the criminalization of youth's daily behaviors but those of their family members as well. Youth were closely tied to their families with whom they usually resided while growing up, often until marriage, and they depended on them for nurturing and sustenance.

Aazim often spoke about and wrote poetry about the pains of losing his father at such a young age and saw it as a major reason he "went down the wrong path." "Growing up without a father, I had a lot of depression. I hated how the world was treating me back then," Aazim explained. He struggled to navigate living in high crime neighborhoods where being beaten or mugged was sometimes the reality for young men. He started smoking marijuana at age twelve and later became addicted to cocaine. He got caught up in racial tensions between Black and Latino gang members and was arrested multiple times. After seeing the toll his choices were taking on his mother and getting repeatedly stabbed in a gang fight outside his school, Aazim decided to change his life. He went to drug rehabilitation. He tried to become more religious to motivate himself to change his "bad habits" and focus instead on work and school. He managed

to finish high school and began attending college, and his family moved to a Desi neighborhood in the Bronx that was safer than its previous residences.

Despite becoming more stable, the sting of being forcibly separated from his father did not fade nor his sense of not being completely accepted in America. He often posted online about how long it had been since he had seen his father, and his father's criminalization and their subsequent separation continued to mark him a decade later. To Aazim, the various hardships his family and he had faced all tie back to the post-9/11 targeting of undocumented immigrants and Muslims. He believed that had he had a father for emotional guidance and financial support, he would not have ended up in the projects, gotten involved in gangs and drugs, or become a person that was arrested by the police. He took responsibility for his decisions, but he still connected his criminalization back to his father's racialized punishment.

There is a relationship between the criminalization of Aazim as an urban youth and his father as an undocumented Muslim immigrant. Post-September 11th policing borrows from a long existing model of racial profiling and criminalizing the "political underclass" (Nguyen 2005:145). One organizer aptly explained:

9/11 becomes this moment where in a couple year period, there's this intense police effect, whether it's through post-9/11 sweeps, the Absconder Initiative, whether people out of status are picked up and deported, whether it's the Special Registrations. After that we see everyday policing starts to expand in our communities. Whether it's an increase in the targeting of low wage workers, increased harassment of youth, increased surveillance by the federal police or undercovers or the FBI. One of the things that is quantitatively or qualitatively different is the way that our communities get racialized in the moment. Speaking in broad sweeps, before it was kind of like oh you know the nice, quiet, some level of model minority stuff that played out in communities that didn't necessarily fit that. After post-9/11 we see that starts to fade away slowly...If we look at just regular policing and the effect of racialization, maybe about twelve, fifteen years ago, we didn't have that many instances of young South Asian youth being harassed in the street. Or being targeted by teachers or school administrators or officials or security guards. There was still kind of, you made a

mistake, you still get a chance. Much like more Black and Latino youth now — it's one mistake and you're out...It's kind of slowly moving in that direction...this presumption that you're doing something wrong.

Quality of life policing and the broken windows theory emphasize getting ahead of major crime to stop it before it can occur. Similarly, the government insists that “preemptive prosecution' is essential” for Americans’ safety, justifying Muslims’ detentions through implying they are predisposed to terrorism (Kumar 2012:147). The NYPD’s theories of radicalization, which break down the “homegrown threat” post-9/11 to four stages, assert that the NYPD can make predictions about Islamic terrorism, thus validating racial profiling and preemptive prosecution (Kumar 2012:155). Urban youth like Aazim have faced preemptive policing and harsh punishments through measures such as Stop and Frisk. Similarly, in the War on Terror, undocumented immigrants such as Aazim’s father have been detained and deported for immigration offenses in order to allegedly prevent terrorist actions.

In the current security state racial formation, preventative and punitive measures aimed at urban criminality, immigration, and terrorism do not just discipline an already existing society; rather, they also participate in developing it. Laws are key in this — they mirror and also “solidify social prejudice,” working as a tool in the “construction and reinforcement of racial subordination” (Kumar 2012:142). Sociologist Roberto G. Gonzales points out the importance of immigration law in defining boundaries of belonging and managing the “terrain on which immigrants carry out their daily lives” through criminalizing routine behaviors (Gonzales 2015:216). The state has maintained its authority through increasing its surveillance activities, which involve *creating* racialized, criminal Others and then “*protecting*” society from them. Racialized populations are managed through punitive measures, which institute “social control as

a race-creating system” (Rios 2011:30-31). Stated simply, surveillance and punitive measures help create what they purport to see.

CONCLUSION

From the industrial era to the 1970s, the American criminal justice system was based on what Garland calls “penal-welfarism,” a model that frames the criminal actor as socioeconomically disadvantaged and in need of assistance and social reintegration (Nolan 2011:21).⁹⁶ However, since the 1970s, systems of criminalization and surveillance, which are promoted through punitive measures and neoliberal governance, have transformed the trajectory of dependent childhood to independent adulthood that has existed in the United States since the post-World War II era.

This trend, however, affects racialized minorities disproportionately due to their diminished access to the “symbolic power of childhood innocence and dependency” (Tilton 2010:10). White and middle class youth have been removed from the juvenile justice system and treated instead as troubled individuals with mental health issues. Simultaneously, minors of color like Raj, who have suffered domestic violence, bullying, and depression are not offered counseling but instead, as Raj described, “thrown into prison cells with whoever” when breaking the rules or even perceived as about to act out.

With public support, punishments have increased dramatically for youth of color, particularly low income Blacks and Latinos who have been incarcerated in adult facilities at higher rates (Tilton 2010:49; Venkatesh and Murphy 2006). Though youth gun violence leveled out after the mid-1990s, incarcerating youth for nonviolent crimes increased tremendously

⁹⁶ Penal-welfarism is, however, complicated when considering African American incarceration.

(Nolan 2011:25). In his study of undocumented youth, Gonzales notes that the United States currently faces the challenge of reconciling notions of children as a “protected class,” whose well-being is important, with the increasing political emphasis on immigration enforcement (Gonzales 2015:5). While youth can be viewed as expanding for middle class young people in the current time period, childhood is shrinking for many minority youth like Raj.

Youth face hyper-criminalization in the youth control complex that calls for frequent punishment even for minor offenses and serves as a method of social control in marginalized communities. The turn to punitive measures both creates an orderly public space (as defined by the state) and *fuels* the notion that crime is growing in New York City. Youth face Stop and Frisk for low level offenses such as trespassing and are questioned by police on the basis of their appearance as urban and/or Muslim youth. Their criminalization is compounded by the images and headlines they see in the media as well as by the racialization and criminalization of their family members. Studying South Asian youths’ racialization and criminalization in the post-9/11 security-surveillance era allows us to understand how young people “experience and internalize the 'everydayness' of state power” (Getrich 2013:476).

Phrases like “‘targeted communities' have reinforced a multicultural rainbow” in which certain marginalized groups are correlated with particular social issues or events. This in turn masks “long-term historical circumstances” that have led to these groups’ institutionalized oppression (Naber 2007:302). This also obscures the magnitude of racialization and surveillance as well as connections between seemingly disparate groups that may have common experiences with exclusion and racism. Aazim and Fatima’s life experiences demonstrate that working class South Asian youth exist at the nexus of issues involving surveillance, racialization, and

criminalization after September 11th. They are affected by post-9/11 policies and backlash, which are interwoven with anti-immigrant actions and local policing.

CHAPTER FIVE: SURVEILLANCE SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

The first time I walked past Jamaica High School, I was struck by the beauty of the building, which has been declared a New York City historical landmark. From the outside, it looked like a private school or college from the movies — in fact, its exterior has been featured in several Hollywood films. Sara, who had been giving me a tour of the neighborhood and was a recent graduate of the school, suggested we take a peek inside. While acknowledging its outward glamour, she contrasted it wistfully to the White suburban high schools she saw on television where students attended pep rallies and football games.

When we could not find an unlocked door, we walked up to a window at the main entrance, which did not have any handles on the outside. As I craned my neck to peer inside, Sara explained where students went on a daily basis to be scanned by metal detectors and hand wands. Later I would hear youth make up a joke that there was a jail under the high school that was so full, the city planned to make it a new school. I was amazed that this school with its celebrity alumni, which had been named one of the best high schools nationwide by the Department of Education in the mid-1980s, could turn into an under resourced school with a low graduation and high crime rate, zero tolerance policies, and armed NYPD officers.⁹⁷

As we continued our tour, Sara complained that all her school had cared about was ranking and standardized test scores. She criticized the lack of educational supplies and college preparation, which led her to struggle at her current CUNY college campus. Lowering her voice,

⁹⁷ By 1998 the school was no longer prestigious, but it was considered decent with about seventy-five percent of students graduating on time. By 2009 the graduation rate had fallen to thirty-nine percent. Citing this rate and school violence, the city decided to close the school in 2011 (Cobb 2015).

she revealed with disgust that a teacher had had an affair with a student but had not been fired. Despite all its issues, however, Sara expressed regret that the school was placed on the city's closing list before subsequently being split into smaller academies, which she referred to disparagingly as "Bloomberg's little babies." While she understood that the restructuring was meant to raise test scores, she strongly felt that numbers should not be the top or sole priority in education. It became clear why she had earlier referenced school pep rallies and football games from television — they represented cherishing community.

To Sara, her school was valuable because it was a place where she had a community composed of individual people for whom she cared. It was where she grew up. Though her school had been "failing" and had numerous problems Sara herself denounced, she insisted its urban students of color had been just as important as the White suburbanites she watched on her favorite teen shows, and she felt they had deserved according respect from Mayor Bloomberg, the Department of Education, and the NYPD officers stationed in her school.

What stood out in Sara's casual conversation were the multiple types of dehumanizing social control mechanisms students were forced to endure in school. The emphasis on accountability measures in underperforming schools stressing security and standardized exams led youth to feel that they were not individuals but 1) a criminal threat to be contained and 2) merely numbers in the eyes of the state whose worth was determined by school and test rankings.⁹⁸ Sara felt that her peers' learning needs were invisible to the mayor and Department

⁹⁸ While I focus on high schools in this chapter, it is important to note that college students sometimes complained about being objectified as mere numbers as well, though they liked college much more than high school. For example, one youth complained about attending a CUNY college but having no physical professor for her chemistry course. The lectures were recordings of the professor reading notes, and students could only email her questions — they could not meet with her in person. This youth explained, "I don't like that the human element is being lost, that I'm just student #200, not really a person."

of Education, while physically youth were hypervisible to the New York Police Department officers and School Safety Agents stationed in and around their school.⁹⁹

In this chapter I examine the manifestation of the youth control complex in the New York City public school system, and the normalization of surveillance and racialization resulting from objectifying accountability measures. Surveillance, racialization, and criminalization are normalized beginning in childhood along with punishment and social control. Packaged with coded rhetoric emphasizing safety and accountability, preventative and punitive school policies appear color blind and equitable; however, they uphold and even expand racial inequalities by leading people to believe that race is irrelevant and placing students at risk (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011:191).

I analyze youth experiences in schools from their perspectives, though I reinforce their stories with data collected by the NYCLU. Rios aptly notes that it is important to focus on youths' points of view because those of social-control agents are prevalent in the media and in institutional rhetoric and methods (Rios 2011:9). I chose to examine students' experiences and perceptions of school because it is often the first place youth visibly encounter the power of the state, and this interaction shapes how youth respond to their broader criminalization (Bonet 2011:46; Taylor 2013:11).

Schools are reflective of the larger society in which they exist, and through studying their culture of containment, we can learn about the larger current racial formation (Taylor 2013:12). While lack of resources could be read as an indication that the state has abandoned the poor and marginalized, scholars such as Rios have demonstrated instead that the state has restructured

⁹⁹ I will refer to the NYPD officers and SSAs collectively as “security” in this chapter, since youth tended to lump them together when talking about them.

itself (Rios 2011:xiii). David Garland, a scholar who focuses on penology and social control, states that crime-control measures have been extended from the criminal justice system into civil and social institutions, which “assume explicit roles in the larger societal project” of minority youth “penal management” (Nolan 2011:53). It has become increasingly common for the criminal justice system to function in public education, blurring once distinct realms, and I examine this process in NYC public schools (Simmons 2009:215).

For instance, “tough on crime” measures — particularly those focused on order maintenance, such as truancy and loitering ordinances — are the “direct precursors” of the punitive discipline we see in public schools (Nolan 2011:26). Discourses and practices around care have markedly morphed into rhetoric involving retribution. Policing in “failing” New York City schools, which belong to the most segregated school system in the country, parallels larger intersecting societal wars on crime, immigrants, and terror (Ishihara 2007:14). Many of the tensions with surveillance and policing in public spaces were mirrored in youths’ educational experiences, which in turn normalized to youth emphases on punitive measures and order maintenance at large.

While the “class and racial war” targeting youth is most clear when examining policing and militarization in public schools, seemingly neutral mechanisms such as standardized testing, tracking, and lack of resources also play an important role in the youth control complex (Giroux 2004:21).¹⁰⁰ Both security and test-based accountability measures, including “No Child Left Behind,” blame issues in education on marginalized students instead of acknowledging “pernicious racial patterns that eviscerate social responsibility for equality” (Roberts et al.

¹⁰⁰ It is important to note that policing and militarization overlap with standardized testing. For example, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that promotes numbers driven education reform also releases student information to military recruiters (Desis Rising Up and Moving and Urban Justice Center Community Development Project 2006).

2008:335). The emphasis on accountability also leads the way for school restructuring, including the establishment of privately run charter schools (Nolan 2011:28). Presented through safety and accountability discourse, preventative and punitive school policies appear equitable; however, they support and even foster racial inequalities by upholding the widespread belief that race is now irrelevant in American society (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich 2011:191).

CRIME CONTROL IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SECURITY MEASURES

“NYPD is there to be armed and arrest
any student for doing any misconduct.
They were not trained whatsoever to deal with students.¹⁰¹
Their first thought in coming to a high school
would be that all these students are dumb, dangerous.”
~17-year-old Desi high school student in Queens

Police presence in public schools is tied to the widespread assumption that school violence has become a national epidemic warranting high levels of security in the name of student safety and learning (Hutchinson and Pullman 2007:171; Simmons 2009: 216). High rates of youth gun violence in the 1980s and early 1990s in urban areas as well as mass shootings in White suburban schools, such as Columbine, drew national attention to dealing with school violence (Nolan 2011:30). The moral panic over the threat of crime in schools has made them a space where accountability measures, similar to those involving criminalization and punishment in the previous chapter, can blossom in the educational system. The media’s magnification of

¹⁰¹ School safety officers are trained for fourteen weeks, versus police officers who are trained for six months. They are trained in tactics used by police on the street. Furthermore, they receive little to no training in adolescent development, educational psychology, classroom management, bias-based harassment, or positive behavior techniques (Miller et al. 2011).

student violence presents youth as both victims and predators and contributes to the prioritization of harsh punishments over rehabilitation measures in urban schools (Duncan 2000:39; Simmons 2009:216).

Through accountability measures — which are touted by the government and media as sensible school reform — surveillance and discipline for the purposes of order maintenance in school operations have become prioritized over student learning (Lipman 2009:161; Nolan 2011:157; Raible and Irizarry 2010:1197). Policymakers and the general American public assume that order must be established through increased “physical and psychological surveillance, confinement and regimentation” before maximum academic achievements can be made (Simmons 2009:216). Accountability measures that foster a “system of surveillance and coercion” encourage fear and silence on the part of students as well as staff who disagree with their implementation (Lipman 2009:162).

One accountability tactic in New York City was increasing security measures and police presence in schools. Policing in schools is currently the fastest growing area of law enforcement (Rios 2011; Simmons 2009:215). Fears of youth violence in schools have made policing of youth acceptable and even commendable (Taylor 2013:8). Police presence and punitive disciplinary measures have primarily taken effect in urban schools with students of color as opposed to White suburban schools where, ironically, major school shootings have taken place — a fact not lost on youth (Simmons 2009:217). One youth commented, “You go to White neighborhoods, schools like Stuyvesant, they don't have cops.”¹⁰² Because students are required to spend the majority of their weekdays in school, they are “semi captive” to school surveillance

¹⁰² Stuyvesant is a prestigious school in New York City.

(Taylor 2013:11). This daily monitoring contributed to depression in youth such as Raj who were overwhelmed by their criminalization in and out of school.

The first time Raj was publicly Stopped and Frisked by police he was frightened and confused about whether he had done something illegal, if he would be arrested or detained, and how his parents would react. However, as he continued to be stopped and saw that police also operated in schools, their questions, abuse, and racial profiling began to seem routine. A major factor contributing to the acceptance of policing, as Raj explained, was the fact that youth also experienced police surveillance in and around their schools — they knew no other way of life. He explained:

[Police] in high school normalizes a lot of other things. Okay, so in high school there are a lot of cops. Cops are supposed to be out here all the time. I guess I am supposed to be questioned every other day for walking down a block with a few friends. I guess me being this skin color means I'll be stopped and asked where I'm going, what I'm doing, why I'm here. I guess that's all okay. And that's what it does to kids. It makes the cops' presence okay. It makes harassment seem, oh that's okay. They're just doing their job.

A community-based educational research report states that “public schools have always reflected the norms and political trends of society at large...as public institutions, schools are sites where political trends are magnified” (Desis Rising Up and Moving and Urban Justice Center Community Development Project 2006:62). More specifically, school safety measures speak more to the current racial formation, and its emphasis on surveillance and punishment, than to the actual activities of urban youth of color like Raj. The report aptly notes the following parallel: “Division of resources to current law enforcement based approaches to 'school safety' is not questioned, much as diversion of national resources to the 'war on terror' at the expense of

education and social programs goes unchallenged in the name of 'national security'" (Desis Rising Up and Moving and Urban Justice Center Community Development Project 2006:52).¹⁰³

It is vital to note that the moral panic about school crime is not based on an actual increase in criminal activity in schools.¹⁰⁴ Rather, the parameters of what is considered "criminal" have expanded, as have punitive tactics modeled after the criminal justice system. For instance, zero tolerance policies, which became widespread in public schools in the 1990s, originated in the 1980s as part of the War on Drugs (Desis Rising Up and Moving and Urban Justice Center Community Development Project 2006:6). Importantly, states had to institute zero tolerance measures in order to receive federal funding (Nolan 2011:30). Zero tolerance disregards situational discretion; instead it calls for rapid and harsh punishments of minor violations and prioritizes order maintenance, especially in urban school districts with working class students of color. Any deviance, even as small as youth dress, can be strictly regulated and push youth into the juvenile justice system. The number of infractions in the Discipline Code increased by 49% between 2001 and 2010. Zero tolerance infractions that require suspension went up by 200% (NYCLU 2011).¹⁰⁵

Notably, zero tolerance called for a "formal partnership with local law enforcement" who became involved even with minor infractions that were previously handled by school personnel

¹⁰³ The city spends less money on students who attend schools with metal detectors. The average cost per student is \$11,282 citywide. At schools with permanent metal detectors the city spends \$9,602/student, and \$8,066/student at schools with metal detectors and more than 3,000 students (NYCLU 2016a).

¹⁰⁴ The level of criminal activity by students in schools stayed roughly the same from 1976 to 1998, though crime began dropping in 1993 before tough on crime measures were instituted (Desis Rising Up and Moving and Urban Justice Center Community Development Project 2006:65; Simmons 2009:216). Studies have demonstrated that students who would like to lower their chances of being suspended should attend a school with lower suspension rates. This has a greater impact than changing their behavior (Miller et al. 2011).

¹⁰⁵ Research has proved a connection between suspension and dropping out of school (Miller et al. 2011).

(Nolan 2011:31). In 1998 Mayor Giuliani put the New York Police Department in charge of security in public schools, officially ushering a “new security culture” into NYC public schools (Giroux 2004:21). Notorious for its “aggressive policing,” the NYPD gained authority over school safety agents (SSAs) who had previously been under the wing of the Bureau of Education (Hirschfield 2009:43). Both NYPD officers and SSAs became present in schools in varying numbers. Youth differentiated between the two by noting that SSAs carried walkie-talkies, while NYPD officers were armed.

Misbehaviors previously handled by principals could now lead to arrests (Ishihara 2007:17). School officials had no authority to discipline SSAs or police on school property.¹⁰⁶ Since school safety was put in the hands of the NYPD, the number of police personnel has grown by 73% even though school crime has been declining and student enrollment has dropped to its lowest level in over ten years (“NYCLU, ACLU File Class Action Lawsuit Against NYPD Over Excessive Force, Wrongful Arrests in New York City’s Schools” 2010). In her study of an urban public high school in NYC, where confrontations with security are routine, Kathleen Nolan notes that even when well-intentioned faculty genuinely try to prevent arrests by emphasizing to students the serious threat of summonses and arrests, they ultimately strengthen the “culture of control” by asserting the idea that youth lose their rights the moment they misbehave (Nolan 2011:69).

106 I collected the majority of ethnographic data about antagonisms between students and school security in 2009 from youth who attended high schools with relatively high levels of policing. The NYCLU states that the 2008-2009 school year had the highest number of recorded suspensions. Students could be suspended for infractions as minor as using profane language (Miller et al. 2011).

Note, as such, most of my data was collected *before* public reporting on school discipline was legally required. Public reporting only began in 2011, after I had begun my ethnographic research. The statements youth made about security were based on personal experiences and what youth had seen and heard, not numeric data.

By the 2000s, zero tolerance measures and policing in schools became the focus in “public discussions of urban school reform” (Nolan 2011:3). Despite their tremendous financial cost and demonstrated ineffectualness, security measures in high schools continue to be instituted by policymakers to foster the public’s fears of urban minority youth and for purposes of social control. This motive becomes even more apparent when noting that security tactics are often supported by funds redirected from violence prevention programs (Hutchinson and Pullman 2007:174) and that school crime has decreased and students say they feel safer at school than they did in the nineties (Taylor 2009:94).

School security measures contribute to the fabric of the youth control complex, regulating the lives of working class youth of color who have been constituted as a risk to be contained. This positioning parallels broader state of emergency rhetoric used to justify societal wars at the expense of civil liberties. Preventative measures in school echo preemptive prosecution in the wars on drugs, immigrants, and terror. Desi students at failing schools feel targeted on the basis of their class, race, and markers of Muslim identity, and they feel even more vulnerable if they are immigrants and undocumented. Though Desi youth do not face the same high levels of suspension as Black and Latino students,¹⁰⁷ everyday policing in schools contributes to their racial paranoia and sense of marginalization.

Security measures have a range of effects on students, including encouraging them to stop coming to school and making it easier for them to enter into the larger criminal justice system. In some cases, security tactics can even contribute to violence. For example, installing

¹⁰⁷ More than 95% of arrests in schools were of Black and Latino youth in the 2011-2012 academic year. More than 50% of suspensions were Black youth who formed only 30% of school enrollment (“The Student Safety Act” 2006). Black students also are generally given longer suspensions and suspended for “subjective misconduct, like profanity and insubordination” (NYCLU 2011).

metal detectors in schools may foster fears that students need to worry about other students carrying weapons — this in turn can lead to more students carrying weapons to protect themselves (Taylor 2009:33). Nolan observes that police action often “[triggers] the behavior that was ultimately considered criminal” (Nolan 2011:53).

Schools with high levels of violence and poor academic achievement suffer from loss of funding and demoralizing school shutdowns, which pave a path for privately operated schools, which sometimes displace students. Schools are spaces where youth learn what it is to be surveilled, restrained, and abused for alleged safety reasons and where they begin to routinize a culture of penal control on a daily basis (Nolan 2011; Taylor 2009). In his critique of the school-to-prison-pipeline framework, anthropologist Damien Sojoyner demonstrates that schools are places where “control-based strategies” that foster Black oppression are cultivated and normalized (Sojoyner 2013:260).

Disciplinary measures in schools aim to transform youth into obedient individuals who will blindly follow the orders of the “bureaucratically sanctioned authority” (Bowles and Gintis 2011:39). Even youth who have not had serious issues with security personnel are taught to accept their constant surveillance and normalize the presence of police (Giroux 2004; Rios 2011). In the name of discipline and order maintenance, security measures reinforce social inequalities, excluding working class minority youth from cultural citizenship, including the right to feel safe much less nurtured and educated.

Between 2000 and 2005, the high school population increased by 5%, while the suspension rate increased by more than 76% (NYCLU 2009b). One out of fourteen students was suspended in 2008-2009 (more than 73,000 suspensions) — this was an increase from 1999-2000 when the rate was one in twenty-five. The suspensions also became lengthier (NYCLU 2011).

Mayor Bloomberg followed Giuliani's example, establishing metal detectors, holding cells, and sweep rooms on campuses (Ishihara 2007:16).¹⁰⁸ He intended to "take back" public education the way Giuliani had "[taken] back the streets" (Nolan 2011:24). In 2002, Bloomberg convinced the state legislature to "abolish the city's independent Board of Education" and transfer total control of schools to his office (Desis Rising Up and Moving and Urban Justice Center Community Development Project 2006:69). One youth commented, "Bloomberg's a dictator who took over education from the Department of Education," before expressing frustration at the mayor's power to decide educational policy and the diversion of funds toward police.

In 2003 Bloomberg introduced the "Impact Schools Initiative," a program that stemmed directly from Giuliani's quality-of-life street policing programs and increased surveillance and punitive measures in public schools. The Impact Schools Initiative used a computer database called SchoolSafe, which was based on the city's crime-tracking system, to identify schools with the highest reported rates of crime (Nolan 2011). These schools, deemed Impact Schools, experienced the doubling of security and the imposition of broken windows tactics (Desis Rising Up and Moving and Urban Justice Center Community Development Project 2006:13; Hirschfield 2009:44).

A school safety task force including armed police officers and additional security agents, who were untrained to work with students, was distributed in these schools. In 2005, New York City schools had 4,625 School Safety Agents and at least 200 police officers, making the "NYPD's School Safety Division alone the tenth largest police force in the country" (Mukherjee 2007). With increased policing and zero tolerance measures, there were higher levels of student

¹⁰⁸ The NYCLU reports that 77% of incidents with police in schools with permanent metal detectors are non-criminal. There are 48% more suspensions at schools with permanent metal detectors (NYCLU 2016a).

suspensions, expulsions, and transfers.¹⁰⁹ From the 2002-2003 to the 2010-2011 school year, the suspension rate increased more than 130% (Lowery 2016). Policing minor violations led to students accumulating summonses. When they missed court appearances, arrest warrants were issued for them (Nolan 2011:15). Bloomberg’s school safety plan later expanded beyond Impact Schools to other middle and high schools in New York City (Desis Rising Up and Moving and Urban Justice Center Community Development Project 2006:13).

In 2011, Mayor Bloomberg signed into law the Student Safety Act, which requires “quarterly reporting by the Department of Education and the NYPD to the City Council on school safety issues, including incidents involving arrest, expulsion and suspension of students” (“The Student Safety Act” 2006). It provides data on the basis of race, though South Asians are subsumed into the “Asian” category. It does not provide data on the basis of religion.

The Student Safety Act provides data that is essential for understanding the impact of punitive measures — including significant racial disparities — and holding the NYPD and DOE accountable for school discipline. This accountability has included pushback against high levels of suspension by community organizations such as DRUM (“The Student Safety Act” 2006). In 2014 when I spoke to DRUM organizers about changes they had observed since the Student Safety Act was put into effect, they responded that the number of suspensions had decreased but not much else had changed.

The Student Safety Act was reformed January 1, 2016, requiring the NYPD and the Department of Education to begin reporting for the first time on the usage of metal detectors, handcuffs, and restraints. The NYPD itself acknowledged that its school safety officers have

¹⁰⁹ In NYC, suspensions can last a whole school year as opposed to other school districts where expulsion is defined as being excluded from school for more than ten days. Because of this, NYC can claim a low expulsion rate even though thousands are suspended for 10-90 school days (Miller et al. 2011).

used restraints and handcuffs on children as young as five-years-old. Over 100,000 NYC students enter school through metal detectors every day. The amendments also require data on students who are repeatedly suspended in the same school year, arrests and summons by all NYPD personnel, and incorrect use of Emergency Medical Services for disciplinary issues (“Amendments to Student Safety Act Are a Win for School Discipline and Student Well-Being” 2015).

HARASSMENT OF SOUTH ASIAN STUDENTS

The South Asian youth I met attended schools with varying levels of security. Though the students who attended Impact Schools clearly faced the most policing, this is not to say that students in non-Impact schools necessarily faced low levels of policing.¹¹⁰ One youth who attended a school with a large security presence commented, “When you first enter there are six guards checking students. You feel like oh my god they’re checking me!” Conflict with security guards was often surprising to youth who had had no issues with them in junior high (though some youth did face harassment from security in middle school). They wondered why the interactions had to change in high school. While many youth supported some level of security personnel in schools, they were frustrated with their ineffectiveness and insisted that they needed to be more highly trained to work with high school students.

Interactions with police and security have been “riddled with antagonism” because, as youth in this study and justice studies scholars Claudio Adams and Ericka Sanchez argued, police see youth as criminals or potential criminals — a threat to be contained (Vera Sanchez and Adams 2011:331). Raj and his friends were repeatedly verbally and physically abused by police

¹¹⁰ Policing included security guards, NYPD officers, metal detectors, hand wands, police wagons, and truancy vans at their schools.

and SSAs who would slam them around. He remembered a friend who “got his ass kicked by two SSAs who jumped [him] in school, right by the security desk.” After continuing to be harassed in and out of school and seeing his situation as futile, Raj began talking back to police. He felt that he would always be targeted, whether or not he had done anything. He explained, “By the twentieth time I started talking back...It just felt like get the hell away from me. There’s nothing on the radio. There’s not anything about a skinny brown guy...I’m not the only skinny brown guy, so I don’t know how you guys thought it was me, yesterday too and the week before that. And you’re probably going to think it’s me tomorrow too and probably the next week after.” Even when Raj went to testify to the Department of Education about his experiences with police harassment — a space where he had been invited to share his voice — a security guard stopped him to say: “If I saw a kid dressed like you, I would stop and arrest you too.”

Research participants frequently expressed feeling verbally assaulted and physically violated by security on multiple levels. Youth were uncomfortable and sometimes frightened when security guards cursed at them or used racist language. For example, they expressed frustration at having to endure abusive language for small mistakes such as accidentally using the wrong door or moving slowly in the hallway because of overcrowding.

One youth who was generally defensive of her Impact School’s poor reputation spoke passionately about security: “When you think of security guards you think of protection, you think of safety. But when you see these security guards and how they act, the way they talk towards high school students, it’s not what you expect. You see the way they treat them. You don’t feel safe at all...they always have nasty attitudes.” Youth were traumatized by the mistreatment of their peers. One youth recalled, “At school, every door is covered by the police...The *** station is connected to our high school...Cops are the only White people. They

always police here for every small thing. There was *one* girl in a fight at school — I counted, it took *nine* cops to pull her down. They handcuffed her and took her into the building.”

Youth relayed stories about students getting suspended after being punched, jumped, or slammed against the wall by security.¹¹¹ Multiple youth, including physically small girls, had been dragged across rooms for reasons as minor as inadvertently standing in the wrong place. One youth commented, “There’s even been fights with students and security. There was a school security agent that punched a kid, and nothing happened to him. He was just relocated to another high school. And the kid was suspended for ninety days. His education is gone basically. Ninety days of no school. What are you going to do? When you come back you want to continue school? You give a shit about school? No. You don’t. There are people that get suspended over and over.” Students got unnecessarily shoved and knocked to the ground in the name of safety. “They always curse at kids...they push you down. Say there’s a fight going on. They’ll wait until after the fight and then rush and just push people out of their way to get there,” one youth explained. One young woman challenged a security guard for pushing her to the ground when he was “pretending to be on his way to stop a fight.” He blamed her for getting in the way of him doing his job, but she questioned how she could be in the way when she was one fourteen-year-old girl in a wide hallway.

Youth questioned how hurting other students in the process of breaking up fights helped with overall safety. They were also frequently skeptical about whether security were actually

¹¹¹ In November 2015, a settlement was reached in the lawsuit *Bruno v. City of New York*, which was filed in 2010. The lawsuit alleged that officers in NYC schools “repeatedly violated students’ civil rights through wrongful arrests and the use of excessive force” (“School Discipline Settlement Underscores Harm to City Students and Importance of Reform” 2015). The lawsuit named multiple incidents where youth were handcuffed, arrested, and physically harassed by NYPD School Safety Division employees. For example, one sixteen-year-old boy was punched repeatedly by an officer until his face was swollen and he spit up blood. The lead plaintiff, a fourteen-year-old girl, was punched repeatedly, placed in a headlock, handcuffed, arrested, and detained (“School Discipline Settlement Underscores Harm to City Students and Importance of Reform” 2015).

rushing to stop fights or simply attempting to create an illusion of safety. Youth largely felt that security were ineffective in breaking up fights and described them as deliberately waiting until after the fight to show up and create a spectacle -- cursing at students, pushing them out of the way, and thus adding to the chaos and violence. One young woman commented, “There are stabbings that go on around my school...[security] is never there when it happens. They're always doing something else and then...fifty to a hundred appear all over the school and tell you to move...once they're gone it happens again. I would say fights go on every day.” Another youth pointed out that the frequency of fights stayed the same at his school after there were cutbacks in the NYPD presence — he felt it did not make a difference whether or not they were in school.

Youth also felt that security focused on surveilling and punishing shy students because they were easy targets and deliberately ignored youth committing more serious offenses. “Kids who are usually quiet and don't talk much, they take advantage of that,” one youth explained. A young woman remarked, “Every day you see...[students] smoking, like right across the street. Smoking pot, a lot of stuff...security guards won't say anything to them because they're afraid of them. But if you're a regular little kid standing at the school, probably waiting for your friend, the security guard would go crazy on you.”

A youth from another school commented, “Drugs are a problem at school. A lot of people smoke. Right in front of the school a bunch of kids are smoking weed. The cops don't say anything, it's not right. I think the cops would rather not do anything. In school cops pick on small things, but when they see a bigger issue they don't do anything. I think they should focus on stuff like that, not on someone wearing a hat. I think cops are lazy and just stand around picking on little things.” Overlooking drug use around and in school was a frequent

complaint amongst youth, and they concluded that the security guards were either afraid of the students using drugs or simply negligent. The latter view was reinforced whenever students saw security talking on their cell phones instead of paying attention or enforcing rules selectively. They were thus seen as doubly useless in providing protection because they let rule breakers go, while punishing innocent youth.

There were multiple ironies in the enactment of school safety measures. For one, students ended up being physically endangered by security whose motives they found suspect. One youth thoughtfully commented that youth who were criminalized were actually victims of their circumstances and now school security. She stated:

I don't even like to call people criminals. I just don't. They've been through too much in their life to be called criminals. They're more like victims...in this system we're taught to think a certain way...Kids have so many problems – do you think school would be a priority?...Why are kids carrying knives? What happens? Where are they living? Are their lives threatened? Security think they're only criminals!...The kids who had knives and stuff – they weren't criminals to me. I knew them in person. But they were living in danger.

Youth who thought similarly insisted that cellphones should be allowed in schools for student safety. It is notable that urban minority youth are criminalized by law enforcement for bringing cell phones to school, whereas the fear with White suburban youth is that they may get hurt if they are distracted by their phones when driving. Educational policies frame minority youth cell phone use as a “dangerous' [threat] to school safety and achievement” that must be managed, but actually allowing cell phones could protect students by giving them the chance to call for help or record their harassment (LaBennett 2011:83). In recent years, cell phone videos of abuse in schools, such as the incident in Spring Valley High school where an officer physically picked up and threw a female student, have indeed led to investigating police actions (Aarthun and Yan 2015).

Youth were unsure how far security could take their physical violence. They shared with one another personal experiences and stories they heard about private, illegal abuse — both added to their fear of being criminalized by security. For example, one youth recalled incidents in which South Asian students were beaten for minor offenses: “An NYPD officer beat up one of my friends...and another kid we've met. And that kid went to the hospital two times. He broke his leg, his arm, fractured his ankle...just because he wore a hat...They beat up [my friend] just because he had a cell phone. He said, 'Okay fine I'll turn it in. Just leave me alone.' They still beat him up. It was abuse of power.” Above all, students feared and denounced one school’s unofficial “strip search room” where youth had been illegally beaten, strip searched, and even arrested for simply bringing cell phones to school.^{112 113} They circulated stories about youth who had had the misfortune of being taken there. Even youth at other high schools had heard of it.

Multiple girls conveyed discomfort with the way some male security guards seemed to flirt with female students and with their administration of hand wand checks. One girl explained, “When they search you, they use [the hand wand] every single place possible!...It feels nasty, like someone's touching you.” Some girls felt that security searched girls too thoroughly and got nervous if they were wanded multiple times around their belt. One youth recalled an incident where her friend had nothing on her but kept ringing because of the metal in her jeans. The security made her go to the bathroom and remove her clothing and checked her.

Some young women also felt hypervisible to security guards who threatened to report to parents their daughters’ physical interactions with male students. One youth was blackmailed by

112 Youth scholar Henry Giroux also notes that students have been strip searched at schools.

113 This article presents the experience of Desi youth in the strip search room: <http://www.villagevoice.com/2009-01-07/columns/the-strip-search-room/> (Hentoff 2009).

a security guard in her school who claimed to have a video of her acting out and embracing a male student. He threatened to show it to her parents if she did not obey him. She was frustrated by his threat plus the fact that he had not said anything to the two Black youth who were with her and were physically embracing. She explained, “The way it works is that Black, Latino, and White youth don’t face trouble, but they target Desi youth for a reason I do not know!”

In addition to sometimes making students feel more unsafe, another irony of security measures was that they detracted from students’ educational pursuits. The very act of being sent through a metal detector regularly reinforced to my research participants that they were viewed with suspicion as potential criminals, not as students who wanted to learn. Disproportionate punishment for minor infractions, which included suspensions and arrests, marred the records of youth striving to get into college. It created conflict with worried parents who read their children’s punishments as evidence of their misbehavior.

Students were arrested for refusing to be scanned, for holding onto their cell phones, and even for simply stepping out of line.¹¹⁴ Students received long-term detention and suspension for minor infractions such as wearing hats and chewing gum.¹¹⁵ Youth also faced suspension for being in the hallway without a pass, even in cases when their teacher did not have a pass for

114 The *Bruno v. City of New York* lawsuit documented incidents of students being arrested, handcuffed, and physically assaulted for minor infractions such as writing on a desk with an erasable marker, talking back, tardiness, and bringing a cell phone to school (“NYCLU, ACLU File Class Action Lawsuit Against NYPD Over Excessive Force, Wrongful Arrests in New York City’s Schools” 2010; “School Discipline Settlement Underscores Harm to City Students and Importance of Reform” 2015).

115 Starting in kindergarten, students can be removed from the classroom for “Level 1” misconduct, which includes minor misbehaviors such as tardiness, bringing a cell phone to school, or wearing a hat. If students, including youth with disabilities, commit Level 1 offenses more than three times, they can be suspended. Each year new infractions are added to the discipline code. For example, in 2005 it became an offense for students to go into school without authorization — the next year 498 students were suspended for this infraction. In 2005 the Department of Education banned cell phones in schools, which led to the confiscation of thousands of phones. The number of zero tolerance infractions has also increased each year. In 2001 there were seven zero tolerance infractions. By 2007-2009 there were twenty-nine (Miller et al. 2011). In Nolan’s study in NYC, she observes that the two most common infractions were cutting school and wearing hats or do-rags to school (Nolan 2011:130).

them to use or when they were delivering papers for a teacher. For example, one youth caught using the bathroom without a hall pass was sent to the sweep room and later suspended for five days. “There's a thing call sweeping – after the bell rings they sweep the hall and take you away to a room...The sweep room is a place where you sit quietly and do nothing and miss class,” he explained.

Tardiness was a frequently punished offense that frustrated students because they felt that being late was not always their fault. Many youth had extremely long commutes because they were assigned to attend a non-local school in another borough. When the train or bus was delayed, they were late for school. Furthermore, because they could not bring cell phones into school but needed/wanted to carry them, youth had to make an extra stop before entering school. Students would run to delis or other small businesses nearby to deposit their cellphones (for a fee), so they would not be confiscated when scanned at school or damaged by security who threw them in a box.

Youth also faced multiple punishments for tardiness. They might be sent to the sweep room for being late but then were suspended for being late to the sweep room. One youth recalled an instance when she was suspended for being late to class, even though she had a pass and had not broken any school rules. Her teacher tried to defend her but was not able to stop the suspension. “The deans suspend for no good reason,” one youth commented. “They should just give detention...you can't fight your case.”

The security checks upon entering school had a direct impact on student attendance and punctuality. At schools where there was not daily scanning, youth sometimes would skip school

on the days they saw roving metal detectors.¹¹⁶ Security guards who operated metal detectors were “encouraged to make and tally arrests and seizures of contraband” (Hirschfield 2009:43). Youth were delayed getting to class because they needed to remove their belts and jewelry, and they were further delayed because they could not remove the metal on their jeans or sandals. In those cases, they needed to stand in line to be checked with the hand wand, which further delayed them getting to class, an offense for which they could be punished.

One youth recalled an instance when the metal detectors seriously slowed him down from entering school: “There were seven boxes on the side, one box full of cell phones, one box of mp3 players, and the line went around the block. It took an hour and a half to get in...they even take kids’ chips!” Youth questioned the need for metal detectors when they made students late to class. They also pointed out that they were not always effective because they did not always provide accurate readings; security let some youth slide by even if they set off the detector; and youth snuck in electronics or weapons by using alternate entrances or dismantling and hiding items in their clothing. One young woman felt that scanners were unnecessary, and she pointed out that they did not prevent students from bringing in weapons. She recalled, “There was a stabbing in my school. I think it was my sophomore year. People caught with knives at the scanner had little pocket knives, but the kid that got stabbed got stabbed with a huge knife.”

Another common issue was students being punished or kept out of class by truancy officers for allegedly being late. One youth explained, “Most of the times I would get to school late because truancy, right in front of my school, would be stopping us and asking us why we were late, and then that over there takes another fifteen to twenty minutes. Then you get to

¹¹⁶ The roving metal detector program began in 2006 and involves surprising students with metal detectors. Principals have stated that absenteeism shoots up when the roving metal detectors are at school. This is potentially because students choose to leave instead of waiting in line (Miller et al. 2011).

school and then as soon as you do you have to swipe in and on certain days we had scanners. So there was a whole bunch of things that delayed me to get to school...A whole bunch of latenesses would add up into suspensions...I'd see myself maybe for weeks, for months out of school for minor, minor things.” Youth who went to schools that had been divided into multiple smaller schools talked about being cited for truancy when they were physically in the building but not within the parameters of their particular school.

Students spoke with frustration about being picked up by a truancy van even if they were just a few minutes late, being driven around the neighborhood, being written up at the precinct, and missing multiple classes as a result of the former. One youth recalled a time she was only five minutes late, which was technically acceptable given the ten minute grace period, but got picked up by truancy right in front of school: “[Security] take me in the car and carry me all over Mountain Avenue...Then they carry me back to school, so I missed first period and I had a test that day. So I'm like, 'Yo, what the hell?!' Then they write me up, and I have that on my record, and I'm like, 'Why it's not like I was doing anything wrong...You should be going after the kids who do a whole bunch of crap in school — not me.’”

Youth could also be punished by truancy even if they were *not* late to school. One youth recalled an incident his sophomore year when he had a late schedule that began at 11am. By 10:30am he was only a couple blocks away from school when he was stopped by truancy officers who assumed he was cutting school. Despite showing them his school program that clearly stated he did not need to be in school until 11am, they made him get in their van and took him to a precinct in another part of Queens. He was released after waiting awhile for the police to call his school and confirm his schedule. Though this youth had not been late or skipping school, he

ended up missing half a day of school. Incidences like these made youth feel like they were guilty until proven innocent.

Youth also faced punitive consequences in other situations when they had not broken school rules. For example, youth reported being punished for being physically proximate to fights with which they were not involved. One youth recalled passing a fight in the hallway on his way to the bathroom. The police gave him detention along with the youth fighting. He explained that he was simply going to the bathroom and had a hall pass. After repeatedly insisting that security call his teacher, he was allowed to return to class because his teacher vouched for him. Other youth described getting caught in a lose-lose situation when trying to pass fights in the hallway that created student traffic jams. One youth explained, “You get late and then get yelled at, but if I run, they’ll [security will] hold me and say I fought.”

Metal detectors, school police, and security agents thus kept students out of class through their surveillance and punishment of minor infractions. My research participants’ experiences demonstrated that schools emphasized order maintenance over student learning by prioritizing controlling the flow of student bodies over the time youth spent learning in their classrooms. One youth summed up the impact of preventative and punitive measures in schools: “Students are the ones that are supposed to get something out of high school...You're not really getting nothing out of it if you can't learn or feel defeated all the time.”

Despite school objectives to teach youth prized American principles such as freedom, democracy, and justice, students were instead being introduced to totalitarianism, criminalization, and their place in unjust societal hierarchies (Hutchinson and Pullman 2007:175). Emphasizing student discipline and criminalization over educational quality had

serious impacts on academic achievement and future job prospects. In the worst case scenarios, youth felt forced to leave school.¹¹⁷ One youth explained:

They would suspend you and have you out of school for long periods of time. And then you come back and you're expected to make up all the work. You'd ask the dean for the school work while you were suspended. They wouldn't get it to you, therefore you fall back on classes, you fail the class, which eventually ended up with me dropping out of that high school. But I don't say I honestly dropped out of my own decision because I was pushed out of my school. Because I had been literally told by my guidance counselor that you should drop out because the numbers of our school. There are certain group of names in our school that need to either be pushed out of the school or sent off somewhere else because they're making our school look bad. Our numbers look bad. There's a certain list of names. My guidance counselor told me I am on the list. It was a lot of stuff that actually went to my decision in dropping out...I didn't want to be in a school where I wasn't wanted...I was being beaten from the streets, from school-wise, and then I had all this stress when I went home.

The presence of police in low income, urban schools directly connected minority youth with the criminal justice system. Punitive measures criminalized students of color from a young age and led to the “racialized expansion of the prison industry” (Simmons 2009:219). High levels of security in school contributed to youth often expressing that they felt like their place of learning was a jail. To them schools felt like prisons where physical and psychological control of students trumped education (Hutchinson and Pullman 2007:173). In other words, public schools introduced and maintained the youth control complex in students’ lives. Students came to expect criminalization and punishment for minor mistakes or even perceived infractions. One youth summed up the experience, comparing students to helpless prison inmates and animals:

I felt like I was in prison because I was being treated as an inmate...Now I know what it feels like to be an inmate...You don't have a right to treat us like animals – you know checking them, putting our bags in the x-rays, going through the door, beep metal detector with the hand wand, take out everything out of your pockets, no electronics, and all of that. The only difference [between school and prison] is

¹¹⁷ Some youth completed their high school education at local Islamic schools in addition to earning their GED. Their parents registered them as “home schooled” out of concern that Islamic schools were being surveilled by the NYPD.

you get your stuff back. But they check as if you're an inmate. That's an insult to you going to school. I just didn't really like it at all. No actually stood up about it...it's really dehumanizing because you wake up in the morning, get ready for school, you're trying to have a fresh mind. Some of them are really excited to go to school and then they come here, and oh you have to get checked. They are programmed. I wish somebody would step up to that and say something, but I don't know, they just didn't. There would be some fights with security guards because people didn't like anything cop or security wise.

Youth felt at first that they were walking into prisons, but over time they participated in security customs without thinking about them. One young woman who had transferred from an art school in Manhattan to Jamaica High School in Queens remarked on her distaste for the scanners. She stated, "In my old Manhattan high school, they didn't have scanners. You could bring electronics. Don't like that here. Here – every single day scanners, can't bring electronics, hand wand you...At least let me bring my phone and ipod. You even have to take your belt off. I drop off my phone at a deli. Can't have a drink with a broken seal... I felt like I was in jail. I told my mom I want to transfer back, I'm in jail. I hated it. But by April, it was smooth for me...I got used to it."

The "daily social control strategies" students were forced to endure demonstrate the encroachment of the criminal justice system into a "traditionally nurturing" institution (Vera Sanchez and Adams 2011:330). Youth learned to automatically "engage in ritual performances – such as submitting to metal detectors – to demonstrate their innocence" (Monahan and Torres 2009:1). One youth commented:

I mean before I really started politicizing myself, school was just school. After I started really looking at it – I started looking at different high schools. I started seeing high fences, metal detectors, cops, everybody in a single file line. It looked like a prison, exactly like a prison. Every time I see friends going in, they just look like they're going into prison. And they would talk as if they were in prison. 'So when do you get out?' 'Oh I got another year or two.' 'Oh okay. See you in freedom.'

Until this youth became involved in community organizing, he assumed the surveillance in his school was normal and acceptable. He had no conception of any other possibility.

In her study of Desi youth in Silicon Valley, Shalini Shankar points out that school is “not simply a neutral or external part of [students'] identity” but rather a place where youth cultivate their world views, including how to become an adult member of society (Shankar 2008:17). Public schools are places where youth are educated on the meanings of citizenship and national belonging. Education serves as a “‘technology of power’ that constructs attitudes, beliefs, skills, considered necessary for the national citizenry” of tomorrow (Maira 2009:86). Taking this into account, it becomes clear that these youth are being socialized into accepting social control measures in the broader society, including their routine treatment as suspicious, potentially criminal, members of society. As stated by Raj, the presence of security guards and police officers in schools subsequently normalized an everyday police presence in public spaces, as well as frequent surveillance and punitive practices (Bracy and Kupchik 2009:33; Giroux 2004:5; Taylor 2013:8).

RACIALIZED CRIMINALIZATION

TARGETING SOUTH ASIANS

Raj was frequently suspended for things he did not do, and he attributed this to a White racist dean who would constantly single him out, aggressively hurl accusations his way, and then punish him. The dean continuously penalized Raj by keeping him out of school, and stated clearly where he thought Raj was headed: prison. Raj’s experience with the verbally abusive and blatantly racist dean exemplified the racialized nature of students’ criminalization in schools.

Raj was already struggling with peer violence, and the dean eliminated Raj's chance to feel any sense of safety in school.

Raj recalled a time period when random students started writing "FTS" (fuck the system) on school walls based on his friend group that was called FTS. When he got called into the dean's office, the dean started spewing racist comments, including a South Asian racial slur. He yelled, "You fucking sandniggers are going to go to jail, and you guys are going to be raped by a fucking nigger."

In response to the dean's abuse, Raj remained quiet out of fear and shock. He explained, "I didn't know what to say. I was like damn, man. He just really disliked me and my friends. He was White. That only fueled the whole hatred for White people for me." The racialized nature of the dean's comments combined with the fact that he was a White male contributed to Raj's feelings of distrust and fear of White people. The impact he had on Raj was clear when examining his reading group's chosen emphasis on deconstructing White supremacy. Ultimately, Raj learned at a young age in school that he would face race-based criminalization from authority figures who 1) did not belong to his racial background and 2) would favor those who did.

Youth attending heavily policed schools felt that policing was blatantly racialized and that the security officials, in particular, targeted South Asians, Muslims, immigrants, and quieter students who were often immigrants.¹¹⁸ Students mentioned that security spoke rudely to and about them, sometimes using racial profanities they felt forced to accept. For example, they

¹¹⁸ Focus group data collected by DRUM also indicated that Desi youth were subject to racial slurs and believed they were targeted on the basis of religion, ethnicity, and presumed immigration status. 85% of South Asian youth surveyed by DRUM believed they were harassed by security due to their ethnicity, religion, or immigration status (Desis Rising Up and Moving and Urban Justice Center Community Development Project 2006).

struggled with security guards who made terrorism references and mocked their English speaking capabilities and their names. One youth recalled:

My friend was just standing in the hallway, and she didn't say anything to [the security agent]. And he just went off on her. Like, 'I'm speaking to you. Do you *speaking English?* Do you understand what I'm saying to you?' And I was like oh my god, hell fucking no. And I just went off on [the guard]. You couldn't do anything in life, and I was like, 'You think you're going to come here and tell us about English! Don't!'...Going in her face like hello! You are no one to put your hands in anyone's face. No. They were messed up. They think they have power because they walk around school with a freaking stick.

Some youth thought that South Asians were primary targets given the popular perception of them as foreign and suspect in the wars on terror and immigrants. One youth commented, “[South Asians] are most definitely being targeted. They're probably the first one on the list for school staff to pick on and try to find something wrong with them or just make even false accusations and getting them in trouble. Because we look different. The majority of us are totally outcasted from the general society; we don't fit in as the way they would like us to.”

Youth often felt that South Asian students were harassed because security presumed they were Muslim and/or (undocumented) immigrants. One youth commented, “If police see us as Indians — curry, the dress are fine. If they know you're Muslim, they will harass you a lot. Let me see your ID, oh you're here, when are you going there?...They know you're Muslim because they check your last name on your ID. There are a lot of police.” Youth commonly pointed out, as evidence of Muslim-specific harassment, that young women who covered their hair were especially targeted. One youth commented, “It's scary and really unfair because I think everyone, most students, they're really harmless and they have goals just to learn. The principal and administration, because other people have done wrong, will target Muslims, just keep security enforced. When my best friend, she wore a burqa, and I understand it was really scary

for her. She has her beliefs, but...she wasn't a bad person at all.” Instead of feeling protected, this youth’s friend felt more at risk because her garb revealed her religion. This fear made it difficult for her to achieve what her friend pointed out was the point of school: to learn.

Girls wearing hijab often experienced harassment specifically when going through metal detectors, and they expressed frustration at having to get wand checks around their heads afterward. They felt that their hijab was publicly targeted and criminalized in front of their peers. One youth explained, “Sometimes you wear the hijab and you have to pin it and it goes off when they scan you...they're like, 'What do you have? Do you have a phone?' [You're] like, 'It's my pin,' and they're like, 'No it's not that'...They're like, 'I'm gonna suspend you,' and [you're] like, 'I don't have anything!’”

One undocumented young woman recalled a time when security wanted to check her hijab in the bathroom after having scanned her with the metal detector and hand wand. The police officer who would perform the check carried a gun, and the terrified girl refused to go with her to the bathroom, since she was armed. In the end she was forced to publicly endure humiliation as the guards roughly handled her headscarf, which she kept on. Other young women had stories about being screamed at to leave the bathroom quickly when their headscarves were off. One youth recalled, “Once I was in the bathroom fixing my scarf, and my hair was out. And security were just like, 'You need to get out of the bathroom *now!*' because the lady with the gun, the special security guard, needed to use the bathroom...I was like, 'I'm not leaving until I put my scarf back on.'

One youth who recognized the intersection between the War on Immigrants and the War on Youth offered an explanation for why South Asian mistreatment was commonly underestimated and overlooked: “South Asians do not speak up. They're always afraid. They

have that one thing that other, or at least most minorities don't have, and that's their status of being undocumented and being scared of being sent back.” Undocumented South Asian youth felt hypervisible in the eyes of the school security and vulnerable to racialized surveillance given their ethnic background and legal status. Older youth were especially fearful of having their immigration status revealed, since they attended high school during or soon after the September 11th attacks when sweeps, immigration raids, and mass deportations were a reality in their communities, and they did not have the protections of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy.

For instance, older youth remembered the pervasive fear surrounding Special Registration and the possibility of deportation. One young woman commented, “I remember seeing the lines for Special Registration because...the last high school I attended was in Battery Park. I remember just seeing the lines of men having to go through Special Registration...when my uncles had to go it was just what the hell [voice breaks]...I remember my uncle being scared to go. My dad went. Everyone was very, very scared.” Youth had stories of friends and relatives who were detained for days to months, separated from their families, and unaware of their upcoming deportations. Their families were informed that they were being deported right as it happened, so they could not say goodbye. They also recalled homes being raided without proper warrants, police cars in their residential areas and around their mosques, and people being terrified because they did not know their rights.

This climate of fear plagued undocumented youth and made them terrified of even having to walk past security and police in and around their schools. When undocumented youth were harassed by security, they often kept quiet about the incidences, not wanting to draw attention to their legal situation. They worried that security would stop them, and the situation could escalate

into them being deported. They might not have feared getting caught up in the school-to-prison pipeline, but they were scared of being caught in a school-to-detention pathway.

Almost half the youth surveyed by DRUM in 2006 reported that they had been questioned about their legal status by figures of authority, including police and school officials (Desis Rising Up and Moving and Urban Justice Center Community Development Project 2006:7). While it was illegal for students to be questioned about their immigration status at school, this regularly occurred, putting undocumented youth and their families at risk (Desis Rising Up and Moving and Urban Justice Center Community Development Project 2006:18).¹¹⁹ Youth felt alone in their daily struggle to hide their undocumented status even from friends who wondered why they were not eating free school lunches and knew nothing about financial aid for college. The surveillance of peers also served as a mode of enforcement, “adding to the cumulative effect of claustrophobia” in students' lives (Weiss 2009:215). The fear was so great, particularly for undocumented youth who were repeatedly singled out, that some chose to leave school and instead enter the low wage work force.

Issues with staff at under resourced, over policed schools were not limited to security, as evidenced by Raj’s interactions with the dean. Racialized school surveillance and discipline “[emanated] from multiple sources” (Weiss 2009:219). Youth reported incidents of teachers and guidance counselors alienating youth, and even their parents, on the basis of their perceived foreignness. Students felt the collective weight of these racialized moments on their shoulders, and they blurred into their sense of being criminalized. The de-Americanization and criminalization caused by security bled into ostracism by teachers and counselors, which “[bled]

¹¹⁹ Community organizing efforts led to the Department of Education accounting for undocumented youth safety. One youth organizer explained, “We got the Department of Education to include undocumented youth in the bias

into a simultaneous humiliation” by peers who witnessed their harassment by school officials (Weiss 2009:215).

There were multiple instances when teachers joked or commented about youth not understanding English, assumed students attended ESL classes even though they spoke English fluently in class, and singled out South Asian youth to speak to other Desis in “their language” (assuming they all spoke the same South Asian language) though they spoke English. Youth also reported incidents when Desi students were asked to leave class because they were a little late. In these instances, youth felt that their peers were harshly punished for being South Asian, though they may not have had hard evidence of such.

Additionally, youth talked about hijabi girls being seen by teachers and guidance counselors as traditional, meek, and thus less academically competitive. One young college student reflected back on an incident from high school:

Our college advisor, she was a bitch. She was racist. If you were not White or rich, she wouldn't motivate you to go to Ivy Leagues...I hate her. My friend goes into the college advisor's office, and she tells [the advisor] 'I want to apply for NYU.' The advisor says, 'No you're not going to get in. You can't.'...it was because she wore hijab, and [the counselor] thought she was more reserved and quiet...[My friend] had like a 2200 on her SATs, she never cut, she had sky flying grades. She was really smart. She had all the AP classes...She applied all by herself to NYU and got in.

Youth also commonly felt that their parents were mistreated at parent-teacher conferences for speaking with an accent or for wearing cultural or religious attire. During one meeting when a mother came in to talk to the teacher, he screamed at her about her daughter being a failure. He only began being more respectful and apologetic when the mother threatened to report him to the principal, and he realized she could speak and understand English. Her

protection part of the disciplinary code last year, which will protect students from being harassed for their immigration status.”

daughter believed this teacher disrespected her mother and assumed she could not understand English because she wore a hijab and Desi clothing.

Raj and other youth also shared instances of teachers overlooking or laughing at racist comments or even making racist statements themselves. There were also times when students were made uncomfortable by their teachers' generalizations of or jokes about Islam. One Pakistani youth relayed the following incident: "This Pakistani kid walked into class with headphones, and in school you walk around with headphones around your neck. It's like whatever. The teacher was like, 'Why do you have wires around your neck? Only terrorists have wires.'...I called him racist...He responded, 'In my forty years of teaching no one has called me racist.' He was White."

Youth were horrified by debates they heard, in response to school shootings, about whether teachers should be armed with guns. One youth commented to her friends that the teachers' aides at her school had anger issues. She said, "If I hear them saying [to students], 'What are you trying to do? Do you want me to punch you in the face?', I'd be scared if they had guns and feel more unsafe!" Her friend replied, "Arming teachers is scary because there are so many racist teachers!" She was terrified of teachers having guns when there was already physical violence in her school between students and security agents.

Most youth who had been bullied or faced racism from their peers neglected to tell their teachers because they had little reason to believe that they would step in, especially if their teachers were older. Sometimes they worried their older teachers were racist. For example, one youth thought her older teachers disliked her after they heard her obviously Muslim last name. She dreaded the moment her name would be read off of the roster during roll call because she feared the way her teacher might look at her and how her peers would make fun of her. More

often than not, youth felt that their teachers did not acknowledge racism much less help them through it.

Sara, who had moved to a predominantly Black neighborhood in middle school, was deeply traumatized by the harassment she faced in school for wearing a headscarf. To this day, she cannot bear to put it back on. As bad as her mistreatment was, the teachers would not acknowledge it, and after a while Sara wondered if she was imagining things or if racism counted only against certain minority groups. She commented, “Racist things were going on but teachers wouldn't acknowledge it, and after a while you felt kind of crazy.”

In some cases, this lack of support as youth were racialized and criminalized translated into long-term depression and fear. One youth, who had been in elementary school when the attacks of September 11th occurred, remembered his teachers not stepping in even though he was facing serious racial slurs and physical abuse from students. He commented, “After 2001, I was fighting for my life for four years...everybody turned their back on me, and that's when I started to get into fights...I got bricks thrown at me. I had to fight my best friends...From then on [after 9/11] I started hearing things like towelhead, sandnigger, dirty terrorist. I started hearing a lot of Muslim jokes. They said ‘devil worshipper.’ Just hurtful things...They thought I was the baby of a terrorist or something.”

RACIAL FAVORITISM

While many youth who attended schools with high levels of security despised SSAs and NYPD officers in general, they were especially angered at being targeted when other youth were given a pass on the grounds of what they read as racial favoritism. They were upset when punished for minor infractions but understood this system as the inevitable reality (unless they

became politicized), not having experienced anything else. One youth community organizer, who was involved in surveying thousands of New York City public school students on issues of educational justice, reported that one major finding was that students internalized their criminalization and believed they were somehow bad people. This was evident in Raj's story.

However, in situations when my research participants were harassed — in obvious contrast to non-Desi youth — their existing racial paranoia grew, fueling their fear of potential abuse at the hands of non-Desis, in this case school security and other staff. This anger and racial paranoia contributed to Desi students surveilling, racializing, and criminalizing other students, particularly Black youth, and buying into ideas of Desis as a model minority.

Desi youth surmised that they were unjustly racialized and criminalized by non-Desi security, deans, and teachers who privileged students of their shared racial background. “They don't treat students equally. They treat their own ethnicity and religion better and are whatever to people who are different,” one youth observed. One young woman stated, “Some White teachers look at South Asians different and get them suspended. They got me suspended. I was two minutes late with a pass...a White kid with no pass was let go.” She had no hard evidence, but based on the different treatment of the White student and the look on her teacher's face, which she read as racial hatred, this youth believed she was being discriminated against.

Because there were few South Asian staff members, Desi youth felt that they were disproportionately targeted. In the rare situation when there was a Desi teacher or security guard, youth felt that they did favor well behaved Desi students. When walking by a high school track meet one afternoon with a group of Indian, Nepali, and Bengali youth, I witnessed the youth voluntarily going up to a gate to wave at a South Asian security guard who smiled back and made small talk.

In general, youth cited Blacks as the most insular racial group, though some youth conceded this might be a defensive response to their historic and current disenfranchisement in American society. Desi students repeatedly stated that the highest levels of favoritism at their schools involved Black security who would side with Black students and excuse them for actions for which Desi youth would be penalized.¹²⁰ For example, one youth recalled, “Me and my friend – she's South Asian – we ended up in the guy's bathroom, I don't know how, but there was also this Black girl with us. So when we came out the entire security were surrounding us. We had to explain why we were in there, but she didn't have to do anything...we're getting yelled at and they just let her go.” This youth was upset about getting in trouble, but the incident made a lasting impact because the Black student did not get in trouble too.

Another youth commented, “In my school there are more African American security guards and they tend to let their African American kids slide...I'm like that's not fair. In the hallway sometimes during lunch, I don't use the pass because the teacher's like, 'You don't need a pass, it's lunch.' If I go to the bathroom and come back [security's] like, 'Where's your pass?' but the African American kid can pass me and go.” In this instance the youth was frustrated by the racial double standard, especially since she was not breaking any rules. Youth also reported multiple instances of fights between South Asians and Blacks where the Black students were dismissed without punishment, while the South Asian students were given detention, suspended, or sent to the dean.

The double standard was often cited when discussing metal detectors and wand checks. Desi youth questioned why they were hassled when they genuinely had nothing on them, while Black students could be waved through even if they set off the metal detector. Youth reported

¹²⁰ Black youth face the highest rate of suspension (NYCLU 2015).

that security would curse at Desi students if they tried to offer a reasonable explanation. “Since they can tolerate things from their own people, they should listen to us [Desis] too!” one youth exclaimed. Though youth naturalized in-group preferences, as discussed earlier, in situations of perceived racial favoritism they became upset because of the tangible consequences.

Youth went as far as to say that Black security helped Black students sneak in forbidden electronic items. One youth exclaimed, “Oh my god, they [security] were so biased and racist. They were only cool with people from their country. All the Black kids, they'd let them walk out side doors. If I did that they'd call level one security...They showed favoritism all the time. They would let some kids bring cell phones in. They were more on the side of the cooler kids.”

The perceived selective enforcement of surveillance and punishment on a racial basis deepened students' skepticism over the effectiveness and need for security measures, and contributed to youth wondering if racial favoritism and tensions were unfortunate but inevitable in life. One youth commented, “South Asians can't stand Black people, and Black people think South Asian people are weird and scared and all of that. And White people are just totally different. We all have different feelings for each other.”

Youth were also especially upset when Black students were let off the hook because of the pre-existing tensions between South Asians and Blacks that led to situations such as Desi youth hiding out in the library to avoid being bullied. Desi youth frequently mentioned Black students' xenophobia toward Desi students and situations where Black youth picked on, as one Guyanese youth put it, “innocent South Asian kids to get their hype up.” One youth commented, “Mostly its Blacks and South Asian girls [fighting]...maybe 'cause they're Black and we're South Asian and that's that, case closed, but I don't think it's supposed to be like that.”

Frustrations over racial favoritism contributed to youth embracing notions of Desis as a model minority and Blacks as criminals. One youth commented:

One thing I don't like is the Black security guards. We Desi people don't take things inside like metals...they scan us so carefully and sometimes they bother us. One day I needed to take some serious medication, so I was carrying my water bottle...that lady wouldn't let me take my water bottle inside...Their kids, they really carry alcohol. I don't know how come they don't find that, but they could grab our water bottles...the Black kids they're going and sometimes the metal detector beeps, but they don't care. They're like, 'Okay go go go.' And if the metal detector beeps for us [Desis] they're like, 'Come on, what do you have?'"

It is apparent from this youth's language that perceived race-based differential treatment was leading to a clear "us" versus "them," "our kind" versus "their kind": youth versus security guards and South Asians versus Blacks. In addition to citing racial favoritism, this youth stated that Desi youth did not carry weapons to schools because they were good youth, as opposed to Black students whom she insisted were the real troublemakers.

The implication of the model minority myth, which emerged in opposition to native minorities fighting to change unjust power structures, is that Blacks and Latinos are not successful because they lack values necessary for success and instead prefer handouts from the state (Ong 2003:77; Prashad 2000). The myth uses Asian Americans, particularly South Asians, against Blacks and Latinos, stating they have achieved the "American Dream" due to a natural work ethic and strong ethnic network (Prashad 2000; Rudrappa 2004).

The model minority myth complements American multiculturalism by equating each ethnic group with a static cultural essence conducive to success or failure. It detracts attention from structural oppression and places blame on minorities themselves, citing a deficient culture or genetics that promote laziness (Ngo 2006:60; Prashad 2000). One youth chatted with her friends one afternoon after school about how someone in school had said that she "looked

smart.” She wondered out loud if the implication was that other non-Desi minority students were not. Elevating South Asians, and their values and work ethic, is directly related to deriding Blacks and Latinos, effectively preventing a solidarity between the ethnic groups (Das Gupta 2006:28; Prashad 2000:171).

Desi youth insisted that it was Black youth who made jokes in class and did not take it seriously. They sometimes dismissed Black students’ accusations of racism against school officials because they viewed them as disruptive students causing trouble. One youth commented, “A lot of [Black and Latino] kids don't take classes seriously...A lot of teachers say, 'Oh their parents raised them like that.' Meanwhile the parents say the teachers raised them like that. I'm not sure which the problem is.” Even if they did not think of Black and Latino youth as intrinsically bad or cruel people, some youth attributed them with being, as one youth phrased it, “ghetto and loose.”

In contrast, youth attributed South Asian academic success to a strong dedication to their self-sacrificing immigrant parents who taught them the importance of working hard. One youth stated:

[South Asians] don't intend to act up in class. They know what they're here to do. Their mom and dad always tells them why they're here, why they moved from their country to here. They understand the problems that the family faces themselves and that puts pressure on them, their part...they're more concerned with handing in that paper or passing those tests, going to college, getting a better education, stable job and not continuing the cycle that the parents come and face.

While my research participants were not well-off financially, they were seen as possessing the smarts and cultural values to succeed academically. Despite common derogations of South Asian students as 'dirty curry eaters' or 'terrorists,' academically, South Asian youth were often seen as a model minority by teachers, other students, and themselves. One youth commented:

The White and Black community, they care about South Asian people in education...they think South Asians are really smart. They could really do anything; they have the ability to do better. I think it's true. 'Cause in my school I see...whoever is from Bangladesh and a couple Indian and Pakistani friends of mine do really great compared to the Black and Hispanic students. So they're like, 'Yo! Smart Bengali!'...One day a girl [was] like, 'Yo do you eat fish every day at home?' I'm like, 'Why?' She's like, 'My mom said Bengali people eat a lot of fish; that's why they're so smart.'

One youth summed up the significance of these stereotypes in regard to racial favoritism by school officials. He explained, “Everyone complains about each other...The non-South Asians think that South Asians are the smartest kids and that's why they don't get picked on in the hallways, but the South Asians think the non-South Asians...act up and fit the stereotype of a thug, a criminal...It's really rare to find a common ground.”

South Asians were seen as immune from security harassment given their model minority image, while Black students were seen as natural troublemakers. One Desi youth exclaimed, “This whole world is set on not being racist against Black people, but they're not set on not being racist against South Asians. They don't care about us!” This youth was frustrated that racism oriented toward South Asians went unacknowledged and seemingly did not matter. In her view, racism — and even efforts against it in the era of supposed color blindness — still appeared to conform to the traditional Black-White American racial framework that deemed South Asian youth invisible.

Perceived racial favoritism contributed to South Asian youths' senses of racial paranoia and resigned distrust in those, particularly authority figures, who were of a different racial background. They felt devalued and objectified by school security whom they felt were incapable of seeing them as individuals. They felt that they were instead viewed by security as racialized and criminalized “ethnic” students who could not fit in the way Black and White

students could. They tried to express their worth by putting down Black students for acting out and pointing out their sound Desi moral values.

It is important to note, however, that not all Desi youth subscribed to the model minority stereotype or put down Black youth. Politicized youth often spoke out against their peers' perceptions. For example, one politicized DRUM youth criticized her Desi classmates for identifying Latino and African American youth as bullies who did not work hard and for not looking at the bigger picture and recognizing the injustices faced by these groups, including their disproportionately high rates of school suspensions.

SOCIAL CONTROL THROUGH NUMBERS BASED ACCOUNTABILITY

TRACKING

It is important to recognize that in New York City public schools, the culture of control and surveillance was fostered not just through school security, but also through seemingly neutral mechanisms like ranking and testing that objectified students and led to their monitoring and regulation when they and/or their high schools did not meet certain standards (Lipman 2009). At the broadest level, youth were aware that the non-elite urban schools they attended did not provide the level of education available in middle class suburban schools. One youth explained, "I read that an A grade in urban areas is like a C in suburban areas and was like wow. Level of education is poorer here...you can pass with just a 65. It's not really a challenge. They should at least raise it to 70." Lina, who had briefly attended a suburban school, felt that she would have graduated in a timely manner and attended a prestigious college had her parents stayed in New Jersey. While New York had endless options, she felt that the suburbs provided

stability, structure, and a higher quality of education — in her words, a chance at a “real American life.”

Within New York City there were also multiple levels of ranking between and within high schools. The ranking began, even before youth enrolled, with high school entrance exams. Public high schools in New York varied in quality, with certain schools, often specialized, providing a more elite education. Working class South Asian parents doled out generous funds to tutoring centers in the hopes that their children would score highly on entrance exams and gain admittance to prestigious high schools. One youth remarked, “Desis here will work crazy hours to make money to send their children to all these tutoring centers – just to get into these specialized high schools. They pay as much as I pay for college tuition in these tutoring centers...Their fathers are driving taxis, but their kids go to a specialized high school. Kids at better schools probably don't have to face the same things I did...Regular public schools, they make you feel like you can't do it – drop out, leave. Kids at specialized schools don't have to go through that.”

The ranking of schools themselves was a mode of social control that determined the quality of youth’s education. Sorting students into particular high schools led to higher numbers of the “most structurally marginalized and academically alienated students in particular schools,” which received less funding and offered fewer college preparation courses (Nolan 2011:28). Youth were already marked for a certain path when they attend less prestigious schools with lower test scores and graduation rates and higher rates of crime and numbers of Black and Brown students.

Youth were highly aware of the differences between attending a school full of “at risk” students and an elite school, and it impacted how they saw their future potential and the efforts

they invested in schoolwork. Kabira recalled crying when she discovered that she was not accepted into a specialized school. Instead she had been assigned to a high school with a poor reputation based on its location next to housing projects, majority Black and Latino demographic, and failing test scores. Its low ranking and limited opportunities impacted how she saw herself and the other minority students, which in turn affected her academic commitment and sense of self-worth.

For a while Kabira gave up on school, feeling that her educational path had been ruined as was the chance to attend a good college. She explained, “For the longest time, I just sat in class. If you don’t like where you’re at, you won’t open yourself up...For years, because of the fact that everyone has been saying we're so bad, no one cares anymore...It's more society putting a bad name to you that you're not good enough that we've stopped even caring to strive to another level...We think people are right about us.”

Another young woman told me how she had barely missed the cutoff for Stuyvesant, a famous high ranking school, and had tried to repeat her freshmen year just so she could attend. She concluded eventually that it did not matter because regardless of her achievements and the prestige of Stuyvesant she would end up tracked into the CUNY college system, given her socioeconomic background and undocumented status. A friend of hers, Neil, had been the valedictorian of his school, and she saw how his immigration status and class background limited his educational and occupational opportunities despite his exceptional academic achievement.

When I later got to know Neil, he commented that he did not know what path to take educationally or professionally, and he wondered whether he had already peaked when he was eighteen-years-old. In his study of undocumented youth, Gonzales aptly notes that stories such as these of “wasted talent are a heartbreaking illustration of a dysfunctional immigration system

that persistently denies the futures of aspiring teachers, doctors, engineers, and architects...instead of incorporating these young people, Congress has blocked their progress” (Gonzales 2015:211). He explains that youths’ “transition to illegality,” through events such as being unable to attend college due to their immigration status, dims youths’ future prospects as their adult responsibilities increase (Gonzales 2015:215). Neil struggled financially to get through college and find work, all the while solely supporting his ill mother who had no health insurance.

Standardized tests, which helped determine school ranking and prestige, were designed for accountability.¹²¹ However, they also served as one of the “most widespread forms of surveillance and social control in public schools” (Monahan and Torres 2009:5). Low standardized testing scores worked as a “spectacle of dysfunction” that indicated that working class youth of color and their schools required “monitoring and correction” by the state (Lipman 2009:171). Many youth complained about teachers teaching to the test and wished that they were given more space for creative development. One politically engaged youth aptly commented, “They’re socializing us into specific roles in society.”

Given their tie to school funding, high-stakes testing indirectly encouraged schools to push out low-performing students in order to retain their funding and stay open, potentially adding to the school-to-prison pipeline. One high school youth involved in organizing for educational justice explained the process:

At the end of the year, they would bring out lists of schools they were going to close...the persistently lowest achieving list, and this list is determined from every school which has a report card grade, which is based on test scores, teacher evaluations, safety, all that stuff. From there if your school gets a C, D, or F, your school will most likely be on the list...All of them would be low income schools

¹²¹ Research indicates a correlation between zero tolerance policies and lower standardized test scores (Miller et al. 2011).

of color. They would underfund it. There would be one counselor for hundreds of students. They would over police it. And from there the ratings would go down and down and down until one day your school is getting closed...In a lot of low performing schools, students will blame themselves and say, 'It's my fault my school is closing. We're all stupid.'

Education policies such as school closings, which demonstrated the alleged shortcomings of students of color and defended their regulation, were another “facet of the criminalization of these youth and their communities” (Lipman 2009:171).¹²² Students did not like when their school was split into mini-schools for multiple reasons: they noticed the disparities in resources amongst the schools; they disliked being restricted to a particular part of the building and segregated from other schools’ students; they found it complicated to take turns sharing resources including space; and they felt the sense of community broke down.

When her school faced closing, Kabira — like Sara — realized that regardless of its academic failings, the people in her school had value beyond their test scores. They were not simply “bad.” Together they formed a community, a family to which she belonged, and she resented the possibility of being transferred elsewhere. She stated:

When I heard my school was closing, I suddenly felt a rush of why is my school closing? And that's when I started fighting for my school...You go to school every day and you get so used to it. You have like a second family there. For it to close down and make people go to different places, *you're breaking up a family*, and I didn't feel that should be right...Just because our test scores or graduation rates isn't tip top like Stuyvesant or Bronx Science, doesn't mean you can ignore the fact that there are people trying...Their first priority is to bring numbers up. It's all a game of numbers...My school needs to be given more attention by the city and Bloomberg since he's in charge of schools too. So he needs to give us more attention. It can't just be a part of the closing list. We're not just one other school. A school is made of *people*.

¹²² Mayor Bloomberg followed a business model when it came to addressing educational issues, which translated to an emphasis on accountability and testing measures. He closed down larger low-performing high schools and reopened them as multiple, smaller, theme-based schools (Nolan 2011:33).

One youth who drew a connection between the lack of student support, diminished school resources, low test scores, and school closings also opposed what he saw as the deliberate dehumanization and division of low income communities of color. He believed that breaking up the community led to students' displacement and could cycle them into the low wage economy.

He stated:

Essentially it's strangers coming in and closing our schools because people who vote school closures are Mayor Bloomberg's pals...Bloomberg loves to hire businessmen and women for his jobs. Bloomberg calls principals themselves CEOs, so he has a very business analysis of schools. One person on the panel for education policy is the CEO of Goldman Sachs. We know what his agenda is...Their plan is to close the schools and create charter schools. And charter schools are definitely not for the community. They don't support ELL students or students with disabilities. And they just want to privatize education completely. Charter schools are not any more successful than public schools. We're not succeeding because you're not helping us succeed!...They want to create schools for people outside the community...like gentrification...have new people come into your neighborhood and destroy the community.

This youth's viewpoint was in line with that of a Jamaica High teacher who penned a powerful article on school shut downs, illuminating how they were a "carefully drawn out and demoralizing process" (McGeever 2008). He wrote, "The truly galling aspect was the role the DOE played throughout this entire process, pulling all the proverbial strings then acting like some innocent bystander with blood on its hands" (McGeever 2008). He explained how instilling a zero tolerance policy led to a rise in crime numbers, which led to Jamaica being labelled an Impact School, which increased the police presence. Junior high students were encouraged not to attend Jamaica, which led to cutting school funding, and making school closing and restructuring seem like the only option (McGeever 2008).

In addition to ranking between schools, within high schools themselves there were also well developed academic tracking systems that created and further rigidified student hierarchies

and opportunities. In conjunction with the usual 'remedial,' 'honors,' and 'Advanced Placement' courses, academic tracks in schools (computers, robotics, teaching, etc.) prepared youth for entry into particular segments of the labor market (Duncan 2000:29; Maira 2009:146). "In school they have shops which divides what you want to do in life," one young woman stated. Another youth explained, "It's not called vocational, but it still kind of is a vocational school. You have your electives as in automotive, computers, repairs...I'm in medical-pharmaceutical...There's like sixty people in the whole program. That's the most selective program."

Students were sometimes pushed onto paths based on perceived aptitude or even class and ethnic background, regardless of their interests. Importantly, youth noted that the various tracks often served students of different racial backgrounds. For example, they pointed out that prestigious pre-medical tracks were often mostly Asian, even if the school was predominantly Black and Latino. Youth who spent time at high schools out of state (usually because of their parents' employment) found themselves in a difficult position when returning to New York. They struggled to get AP courses and sometimes were even put into a remedial track since they had not taken the state's Regents exams while they were away.

Education is lauded for giving all students an opportunity to create their life paths, but in reality such developed tracking maintained society's socioeconomic hierarchies and promoted surveillance (Duncan 2000:29; Shankar 2008:144-145). Student interactions with those in other tracks were limited because they took different courses. There was a hierarchy in track prestige with students receiving varying levels of encouragement and respect based on their pathway and grades.

One well-performing student explained that she attended a specialized program within her public school. The students in her program were treated as if they were in a specialized high

school and received a higher quality of education in math and science. The rest of the school's students, however, had fewer opportunities and did not receive the counseling and college preparation that she did.

Youth disliked when teachers broadcasted students' scores, or made it obvious who they did and did not believe in based on scores, because it led to peer alienation. They felt that teachers should encourage everyone and not typecast students or give up on them. One youth commented, "I hate the way [teachers] judge the kids on being smart or stupid. If you're like a 90 student, oh you're smart. But if you're an 80 or 70 student, others are smart and you're just dumb. [My teacher] directly says stuff like that."

LIMITED RESOURCES

Attending a school with limited resources — made obvious in comparison to higher ranking schools — added to Kabira's original apathy. She had felt like a failure and second class citizen. After getting involved with the fight to keep her school open, Kabira came to understand that poor student performance or lack of effort was not an indication that they were "bad kids," but rather a reflection of the unjust distribution of resources between and within schools. She explained, "My school is under resourced very much...Give everybody a chance. We don't get that chance because we don't have the resources. If you can give funding to Bronx Science...enough resources and money for students to make green houses, I think you should give us money to at least have new computers...Money is used wrong sometimes...it's spent on other stuff besides textbooks like security."

Schools predominated by students of color are the most under-resourced and overcrowded (Hutchinson and Pullman 2007:178-179; Ishihara 2007:14). Textbooks are outdated and facilities are run down. Students have trouble getting the classes they need to

graduate and may not have access to APs that make them competitive for college. Lack of resources and problematic funding structures hurt students' abilities to succeed in higher education and compete for jobs (Duncan 2000:40).

As Sara mentioned, youths' high school education did not always prepare them to perform at a college level, which led to taking remedial courses in college that extended the time and cost to degree. One youth commented, "If we're given a shit school, your product is going to be shit. We're responsive to things given to us. If you're going to teach us to the test, at least give us some electives or after school activities to keep us interested in school."

A court appointed panel in 2004 discovered that \$5.6 billion per year was needed to establish a "sound, basic education guaranteed by the State Constitution" as was a \$9.2 billion investment into new facilities to address overcrowding in NYC schools (Desis Rising Up and Moving and Urban Justice Center Community Development Project 2006:50). The lack of commitment toward urban, minority youth is clear when comparing the distribution of state funds to prison construction as opposed to urban schools (Duncan 2000:33). One youth explained, "The city's spending more money on jail than school or giving books or equipment...It should be a more stable learning environment. It can't be stable when you don't have utilities."

There was a shortage of guidance counselors in high schools,¹²³ which was frustrating for my research participants trying to succeed in a chaotic environment. One youth commented, "Guidance counselors are supposed to be there to help you decide on colleges, give you information on internships and scholarships, things to help you move forward but they don't. They barely see you...twice a year – one semester each. For like one minute, not even, just to

¹²³ The school police force is almost seventy percent larger than the "entire cadre of guidance counselors" in NYC (Miller et al. 2011).

show what classes you're getting next semester, and they don't even let you choose the classes...they're White and don't get what we go through and don't care.”

Students who finished the basic high school curriculum and wanted to take more challenging courses complained that their counselors would not enroll them. Students also lamented about the length of time they were kept out of class while they waited for their guidance counselors to fix their schedules after having made a mistake.

Lack of counseling was especially difficult for immigrant students who were new to the school system. One young woman explained that she was lucky to attend a school with an effective program for new immigrants. While she received the assistance she needed, her first generation friends at other schools struggled with getting help from counselors and the classes they needed. She explained, “The counselors don't address their issues and don't give good advice. Since they're new in this country, there is no one to help them, and the counselors don't care to help them. The education system is sad.”

The shortage of good guidance counselors was even more difficult for undocumented students who did not know whom they could trust. Every new step in school led to fear about needing to provide documentation. Seemingly simple tasks such as filling out lunch forms and common high school activities such as taking the SATs became suspect and frightening because they required a social security number.

Undocumented students wanted to attend programs that counseled working class youth of color about college, but they feared the collection of their information. Guidance counselors wondered why they were not applying to good colleges or scholarships or attending college readiness programs when they were honors students. Lack of face time with their guidance counselors increased the fear youth had in asking for help with college applications or explaining

why they did not want to fill out school forms. One young woman recalled, “When I was applying to college, I couldn’t apply for financial aid. Having to tell my guidance counselor was so scary. I didn’t know what she’d do with the information and blindly told her about my status.”

Students also struggled with the teacher shortage and lack of effective teaching. Youth wanted to see better teachers who prioritized learning over discipline, but still could keep their class on task. They wanted young teachers who could understand students and were more up-to-date on teaching techniques. They complained that the good teachers got transferred to other schools, sometimes in the middle of the school year. It was not unusual for students at failing schools to have multiple teachers per class throughout the year, making Regents exams, the state standardized tests required for graduation, especially stressful.

One youth complained, “They always get fired, or they quit, or they change them, or they die, or they get sick...Something's always happening to them. I had to learn everything on my own...I was so shocked I passed my Regents.” Another student talked about having seven history teachers in one year, with a sprinkling of substitute and student teachers in between. The following year she had three history teachers who did not coordinate their curriculum with one another. In order to pass her exams, she had to catch up on several years of being behind. Given the teacher shortage, students were especially worried their good existing teachers might leave if their school was put on the official closing list.

The current focus in education reform involves accountability to youth and their families, but when examining the experiences of my research participants it becomes clear that the education system was not designed to be equally accountable to all youth. Accountability practices in “failing” schools served to objectify, surveil, and criminalize youth and created a

“culture of punishment and incarceration” complete with a repertoire of prison vocabulary such as “probation, retention, and supervision” (Lipman 2009:171). Furthermore, being educated within this system of accountability measures taught students to be compliant, uncritical, and resigned to a “culture of blame and suspicion,” which in turn prepared them to accept systematic government surveillance and racial profiling (Lipman 2009:171).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we see that schools serve as a microcosm of and transition into larger systems of surveillance, racialization, criminalization, and social control. Rhetoric about monitoring “at-risk” schools full of minority students mirrors larger models of surveillance of racialized populations in a “risky” time. In under resourced schools, top-down administered surveillance measures dictate social control on an everyday basis through stressing safety and test-based accountability (Hirschfield 2009:44; Monahan and Torres 2009:5). Emphases on discipline, obedience, and standardized testing take precedence over quality of student learning, which in turn has a serious impact on academic achievement and future job prospects (Duncan 2000:30; Hutchinson and Pullman 2007:178). One youth succinctly summed up safety and numbers-based accountability measures, which led to student disengagement: “Schools are heavily policed; teachers teach to the test; school becomes a jail; it becomes miserable.”

Punitive policies have been established in 95% of American schools and “build upon carceral technologies to criminalize minority students,” creating and supporting race and class based educational inequities (Simmons 2009:217). New York City, which has more surveillance cameras per square foot than any other city in the world, is unsurprisingly the leader in creating and carrying out surveillance initiatives in public schools (Weiss 2009:213). Laws such as “No

Child Left Behind” were meant to reduce the race and class based academic achievement gap in the United States, but instead, the emphasis on test-based accountability places blame for low scores on youths’ and teachers’ alleged individual deficiencies, while failing to consider the impact of larger systemic inequities. Penalizing low achievement and splitting failing schools into smaller academies also contributes to the creation of racialized, disenfranchised, and disheartened populations.

We can see the long term impacts of these policies on youth such as Raj. When I sat in on Raj’s reading group, he and his friends covered topics ranging from Marxist theories to how to inspire high school students to become grassroots organizers to the limitations of non-profits given their being “empowered by the state.” Their impressive reading list, which was comprised of literature on the Russian revolution, the Black Liberation Movement, and White supremacy, was comparable in difficulty to the syllabi from my first year of graduate school. They focused on developing a critical lens, debating everything from “revolutionary structure to revolutionary history” — all the topics they wished had been addressed in school.

Instead, public education had been the place where many of their difficulties began. When attending high school, Raj’s tremendous interest and capability to learn was overlooked by staff and law enforcement, as was his suffering and need for help. His teachers had low expectations for him and largely left him alone. Instead, he was hypervisible to law enforcement in and around his school, and felt that his local neighborhood was being “militarized” by the presence of the NYPD. He was repeatedly arrested for cocaine possession, gang affiliation, and fights.

Raj hated going to school because he felt that “everyone was edgy about him.” He was regularly kicked out of classes for asking too many questions, and was repeatedly suspended for

long periods of time for minor offenses such as wearing a hat, chewing gum, and talking back to security guards. He was also suspended frequently for things he did not do. He felt that school officials would rather suspend him to “keep him out of their hair” than invest in him and his education.

Eventually Raj left high school. He explained, “My guidance counselor convinced my parents to push me out, get me to drop out of school. I was pretty bummed and it just felt like...I was really trying as much as I could and yeah, they told me I wasn’t doing enough and it would be better if I dropped out and got a GED instead.” Most of Raj’s friends ended up leaving high school to work in the service sector.

Raj explained why he called leaving school “push out.” He felt that students caught up in the youth control complex were discouraged from completing high school because of the frequent suspensions and constant police surveillance that transformed school into an uncomfortable environment. He explained, “I doubt it’s a completely conscious decision that school isn’t right for me as much as the situation isn’t right for me.” He felt that if students chose to leave school it was because they felt forced out by what was happening to them in their schools — the constant suspensions, harassment by police, negligence by guidance counselors and teachers, and mistreatment by other students. He reflected, “It’s everybody telling you why are you here? You’re not doing anything. Why are you even in class? Get out of class.”

Raj’s experiences illustrate how young people who are actually “at-risk” are transformed into the risk themselves. The emphasis on preventative measures as well as corresponding harsh punishments, for the sake of safety and social control, creates and sustains racialized, disenfranchised populations. Armed with a criminal record instead of a high school diploma, Raj

struggled to find work while dreaming of going to college and becoming an English professor one day.

CONCLUSION

POST-SEPTEMBER 11TH RACIAL FORMATION

On the morning of September 11, 2001, the Khan family headed to Manhattan for their long awaited immigration hearing. The siblings remember being explicitly coached by their parents, as usual, to hide from their friends and teachers the reason why they were missing school that day. No one could know about their undocumented immigration status. Rabia, the third Khan child, who was eight-years-old at the time, recalled:

I saw the plane hit the building, and I was like, 'Baba, look!' and there was a stampede. Maybe like three minutes later a shitload of people covered in smoke... It was so scary. They pushed us into the lawyer's building. They were like, 'Go, go!' And we heard another boom ten minutes later, and we were like what the hell. I was so scared I started crying...We took the stairs. There was no light in the stairs...We were going up the stairs, going up the stairs, and my dad was counting the stairs. And I'm like crying the entire time, like screaming because I can't see anything and am falling every two seconds...Every floor we tried to open the door but couldn't because it was an emergency exit...We knocked on the door, and we heard my little sister crying...then my mom heard us because we were banging on the door, and she opened the door and was like, 'Oh my god what happened?'...Mohammad was crying because the building shook...We were right near Ground Zero. We were in Federal Plaza. I still get goosebumps from it.

The judge did not show up for the Khans' immigration hearing, and the building was evacuated due to a bomb scare. The family walked back toward Brooklyn until they could hitch a ride with strangers also trying to get home. Rabia remembered, "Every time I turned around, there was this huge ass black cloud that just kept following us. And following us. My little sister was tired of walking, and my dad held her. And I was just holding my brother's hand and kept crying like, 'Why does the black cloud keep following us?' I just felt like the entire world was going to become black."

Mrs. Khan instructed her children not to reveal to anyone that they had been near the World Trade Center when the terrorist attacks occurred, for fear of what people might think and how they might react. Though it may seem ludicrous that anyone would suspect children of being involved in the terrorist attacks, their mother was deeply afraid of what people would assume, in a climate of fear and hate, about a Desi Muslim family near Ground Zero on that fateful day. Rabia commented, “We would wear the gold lockets that had ‘Allah’ and some scripture stuff, and my mom made us take it off. We didn't want to wear anything that identified us. It was really a sad thing.” The family knew things were about to change.

The oldest Khan siblings, Nishat and Mohammad, contrasted life after September 11th to pre-9/11 when people admired their “colorful” Desi culture, their communities were not so heavily policed, and their undocumented status did not weigh upon them as a constant liability. Nishat commented, “I feel like before 9/11, we all got by, not having a social security card, not having a work permit, not having all of that wasn't a big deal. After 9/11, it was just like *shit*, we don't have our papers. What are we supposed to do?”

After September 11th the Khans felt hypervisible in the wars on terror and immigrants that racialized and criminalized Muslims and undocumented residents. While their Brooklyn neighborhood was not raided, they had friends and relatives in Queens who were raided, which deepened their sense of being at risk. Family friends were placed in detention, sent to prison, and deported. The Khans also lost some of their Desi Muslim friends who were struggling with the same issues and moved to Canada in an attempt to seek asylum. The vandalism in their mosque and throughout the neighborhood made the family deeply afraid for their safety in everyday interactions.

After September 11th, given the Khans' vulnerability in the War on Terror as undocumented immigrants, adjusting their status became urgent. However, there was a lot of confusion on how to proceed with no precedent on handling such a hostile climate in which civil liberties were rapidly being eliminated by the state. Nishat explained, "Everything was so fresh, so new, what are we supposed to do because no one really knew what was supposed to be done...Everything was just so uncertain."

The family struggled to figure out whether it was more or less risky for Mr. Khan to comply with Special Registration at a time when South Asian Muslim men were disappearing from their neighborhoods. Mohammad explained, "Life was very, very difficult after 9/11. I felt like just being undocumented was really scary, especially for our dads, our uncles, our neighbors who went for Special Registration and didn't come back for a while and couldn't call."

Despite the dangers of being Muslim, undocumented, and in the public eye after September 11th, Mr. Khan had to prioritize his job as a street vendor over gaining lawful residence. Nishat explained, "My dad was so busy hustling for money that he pretty much didn't have the time to actually sit down and figure out does this [immigration legal advice] make sense. His thing was if I have to stop working, even for one day, I lose this much. If I have a lawyer who's taking care of my stuff, even if he's not giving me anything in the long run, as long as he's able to get me my work permit so I can provide for my family, I'm good." The stress eventually took its toll and he suffered a major heart attack, forcing Nishat to find work to support the family financially, a decision that has had long term implications for her education and career as well as broader family dynamics.

Mrs. Khan, who had limited English proficiency, and Nishat, who was still in high school, tried to make leeway on their immigration case in order to gain some protection. They

were deeply afraid of trusting anyone and feared the potentially devastating results of confiding in the wrong lawyer. Even though their legal counsel was supposed to help them, dealing with them actually increased the Khans' sense of vulnerability. The White, male immigration lawyers would speak to Nishat condescendingly, as she put it, "for being a woman, being Brown...still in school, not knowing jack squat." They profited from her family's despair, costing them additional time and money through trumped up legal fees and misinformation. Nishat summed it up: "That guy was straight taking advantage of us. He wasn't even trying to hide it...They knew that we were so screwed – *first of all you're Muslim then undocumented, you're screwed!* We're going to tell you whatever crap we want and you have no choice but to listen to it."

All the while, the family faced ridicule from other South Asians for their immigration issues. Nishat's brother Mohammad remembered, "They'd always come and ask us, 'Did you get your papers yet?' That would always be the conversation. I remember my mom being ashamed as if we'd done something wrong. There was such a stigma attached to being undocumented."

One day I asked the older Khan siblings if they felt like their younger siblings and cousins had it easier, coming of age now rather than during the initial post-September 11th backlash. I received a mixed response. They started off by saying yes of course, particularly since their younger siblings were birthright citizens and the family was now more financially stable. Nishat and Mohammad laughed while they rattled off situations their younger siblings had the fortune of never experiencing: wearing patched over factory rejected clothing, helping their father at his food cart, and crying themselves to sleep on beds made of newspapers. Half chuckling, half tearing up, Nishat commented that she still got emotional when she saw Legos, which were the toy she wished she could have growing up.

They continued with examples of the ways they had spoiled their younger siblings. They were proud they could do so, but also frustrated that the younger people in their family could not truly understand the difficulties of the family's past or appreciate their current privileges. Nishat and Mohammad also pointed out that their younger siblings were growing up with many more Desi friends at a time when New Yorkers in general had become more aware of South Asian cultures and Muslim religious holidays like Eid.

Upon reflecting further, however, they challenged their own statement. They contemplated the fact that they remembered life before September 11th when they were not harassed for their religion. They did not grow up with the same fear of police or seeing their friends hassled or beaten by the NYPD. Now, Nishat and Mohammad pointed out, young people face high levels of surveillance due to Stop and Frisk, the securitization of public schools, and rampant daily Islamophobia. Mohammad commented, "They didn't start scanning [in schools] until 9/11...they look at [South Asians] differently now [post-9/11], negatively...other races, teachers also, students, security definitely suspects you all the time."

Though the younger Khan siblings, Rabia and Nina, were young children when September 11th and the initial backlash occurred, they continue to sense its impact. Nina, who was generally liked and outgoing, still constantly faced being singled out at school for being a South Asian Muslim. She was stereotyped by her peers and sometimes her teachers, both as a member of a model minority group and a part of a terrorist community, and both those perceptions tied into the bullying she endured. Despite the consequences of these racializations, she embraced cultural sincerity, declaring that she never rejected her Bangladeshi identity, even though pretending to be Indo-Caribbean might have watered down her association with Muslim terrorists from the East. She described her high school experience:

Everyone would think I was the smart Brown girl and expected me to understand everything. Everyone was always cheating off of me, using me, and that's obviously because I let them do it, but I didn't want to be bullied. I got bullied because of my last name...Kids would walk by me and say [in mocking tone] 'Mohammad!' or 'Salaam Alaikum!' And would do these stupid things like, [in mocking tone] 'Allah hu' – in the staircase after they've already passed you. Like you'd hear it echo in the staircase. Even in front of me...They'd say, 'You smell like curry. Did you get your daily dose of curry?' People made fun of each other. They're fucking stupid...The teachers wouldn't ever yell at those stupid kids because they were scared of those kids. No matter how much you told the deans, those kids would still bully you...You can't even tell I'm Bengali sometimes. Sometimes people are like, 'Oh I thought you were Guyanese. Oh I thought you were Trini,' and I'd say, 'No I'm from Bangladesh.' And I own up to it. I'm never like, 'I wish I was Guyanese.'

Rabia, who spent a lot of time watching videos online as inspiration for her Bollywood dance performances, also turned to online media sources to educate herself about the racialization and criminalization of Muslims worldwide, a passion she acknowledged stemmed from her own identity and family's experiences. Rabia got involved with anti-war education and organizing in high school, attending workshops around the city and participating in protests. When she started college, she became further involved with educating herself about American military actions abroad. She explained:

We had ROTC at my school, and half my classmates went into the military after they graduated. One of my close friends from college is a veteran. I'm so close with him, but anytime military comes up, I yell at him. I have a U.S. military myth cd in my house. I typed it up with my notes and gave it to him...He was Nigerian. He was Muslim...I'm like, 'What? You can't tell me you don't feel bad you killed your brothers and sisters. That's haram.' In the Koran, you're not supposed to kill one of your own people if you're Muslim. I was so mean to him. I would do it in front of our friends...I watch a lot of documentaries on YouTube and Netflix. Obama promised that we was going to close Guantanamo Bay...Many men have been there for over a decade. So people are still suffering from September 11th. And 'til this day there are still camps and sites where there's U.S. army people killing people. That War on Terror just like developed many other conflicts in other Muslim countries. Like Pakistan and Iraq and Syria and especially Egypt, Palestine. It's like a hate crime all throughout the world against Muslim people. Everyone just hates us.

The Khan siblings are growing up in a multiethnic urban community at a time when South Asians fluctuate, depending in part on their socioeconomic class, between being racialized by the state and mainstream media as a model minority and an internal national security threat. This, notably, is one of the central paradoxes I explored in this dissertation through analysis of multicultural belonging and racial exclusion. In the Khans' reflections, we get a glimpse of how life changed after September 11th for working class South Asians in New York City and the ways in which they have processed the shift. Ethnographic analysis of the daily lives of low income South Asian youth like the Khans provides insight into the current American racial order, namely the racialization and criminalization of Muslims and immigrants in a time of alleged great risk. Risk discourse promoted by the government and mainstream media in the 21st century has created a "state of emergency" in the name of national security that calls for the surveillance of Muslims and immigrants, even at the expense of civil liberties.

After September 11th, working class South Asians and their children became especially vulnerable to hate crimes, racial profiling, police harassment, and systems of deportation. South Asian racial profiling has been government sanctioned through measures such as the Patriot Act, and after September 11th local police turned into immigration agents. Immigrants were broadly criminalized, and this became especially intense with regard to Muslims and those mistaken as Muslim. South Asians, along with Middle Easterners and Muslims, have been targeted by domestic laws and foreign policies that are framed by the government and mainstream media as necessary for American safety, security, and prosperity in a time period that is allegedly especially risky. Ironically, security measures enacted in the terrorist world risk society place families such as the Khans, who have been portrayed as a risk, at risk themselves.

South Asian youth belong to the “fastest-growing major ethnic group in the U.S. and have emerged in new areas” nation-wide (“Under Suspicion, Under Attack: Xenophobic Political Rhetoric and Hate Violence against South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab Communities in the United States” 2014:7). In my experience, however, the general public and even academics are often unaware of the very existence of these populations, much less their racialization and marginality. It is important to challenge perceptions of all South Asians as a successful model minority. Otherwise the lives and experiences of people like my research participants will remain invisible, which makes it harder to champion social justice and equality. The realities of families like the Khans are especially important to evaluate in this time of record deportations in the United States and global crackdown on unauthorized immigration.

Research on urban, minority youth marginalized by societal wars given their race and class is not unusual when concerning African American or Latino populations but is rarer when considering South Asian Americans. My research participants are coming of age as part of the first post-9/11 generation in New York — a city that symbolizes both contemporary America’s grandest multicultural possibilities and largest recent tragedy — in a time when it is considered inappropriate or irrelevant to bring up race. They live in majority minority communities, which have been heavily impacted by post-9/11 policies and backlash, and have limited contact with the White mainstream. I explore how working class Desi youth, some of whom are undocumented, navigate the disparities between their 1) lived experiences of belonging by way of multicultural cultural citizenship and 2) post-9/11 existence at the nexus of surveillance, criminalization, and racialization traditionally associated with Blacks, Latinos, and Arabs.

My findings indicate that South Asians’ paradoxical positioning operates through three mechanisms: ideologies of multiculturalism, diversity, and color blindness that downplay and

disguise race and racism, fostering paranoia about their existence; racialization of immigrants and Muslims, which plays out through state policies, the mainstream media, and interpersonal interactions; and growth of preventative and punitive security measures that are justified by the current alleged national state of emergency.

ENDURING SIGNIFICANCE

Global flows of capital, people, and media in the current time period have “encouraged a view of a 'smaller', more interconnected world” that is potentially more dangerous, especially since September 11th (Muncie 2006:46). While my focus is on the United States, my findings might also be of interest to scholars outside of the U.S. who theorize the post-9/11 order; surveillance, criminalization, and risk; and/or the racialization of Muslims and immigrants.

For example, for all of the many differences between the United States and Europe, immigrants and refugees in both places are racialized as an Other through notions of essential cultural difference, discourse centered on risk, and color blind terminology.¹²⁴ While Jews and Roma were historically the targets of European nativism, Muslim immigrants arouse fear and suspicion in the contemporary era (Silverstein 2005:365-366). These attitudes extend to the second generation as well, which is viewed as torn between two cultures at odds with one another (Silverstein 2005:375).

Furthermore, international human rights have diminished globally, and the U.S. law enforcement model has spread. The shift from rehabilitative measures to punitive policing can be seen across the Americas, in Europe, and in parts of Africa and Australia. It has spread through

¹²⁴ For example, in Karin Norman’s research on nativist racism she explains how Whites in Sweden feel like their home and belonging are at risk due to the immigration of refugees they view as threatening the cultural and racial

transnational institutions, pathways, and media, which, on the other hand, also disseminate notions of social justice (Venkatesh and Kassimir 2006:5). The surveillance of youth is intricately tied up with neoliberal governance and economics that have become popular worldwide.

Not only have punitive measures and ideologies spread globally – so have conceptions of individual and community responsibilities. Around the world, states have stopped providing public services, and the private and civil spheres are handed the task of dealing with crime control and social issues that impact disenfranchised people. This has also led to groups around the globe “[working] collaboratively to forge policing and justice initiatives” (Venkatesh and Murphy 2006:127).

My research is also relevant to populations in the United States other than South Asians. Its focus on racialization, criminalization, and surveillance makes it useful when considering other marginalized minorities in the United States who are targeted by societal wars on youth, immigrants, crime, and terror that are justified through risk and security rhetoric. When considering current events in the United States such as movements for increasing ethnic diversity, incidents of violence and their backlash, and the 2016 presidential race, it becomes evident that the racial formation I mapped out in this dissertation, in response to South Asians’ paradoxical social positioning, has enduring relevance in the U.S. that extends beyond my period of fieldwork and beyond the Desi community. As such, I will briefly mention several recent occurrences and how they may be analyzed in terms of the framework advanced in this dissertation.

THE ALLURE OF DIVERSITY

homogeneity of Sweden. However, they express their opinions without mentioning color or race, instead utilizing

I began this dissertation with a discussion of a majority minority city's increased embrace of racial diversity. Deepa Iyer notes that many Americans believe that the nation's move toward a majority minority nation in the next few decades is proof that the United States is increasingly becoming a color blind, post-racial society and thus does not need policies to address racial inequalities (Iyer 2015:159). This is tempting to believe given the increase in diversity of figures in the public eye, and even the increase of mainstream entertainers making political statements. As the country transforms into a majority minority population, it is likely that we will continue to see increased diversity as companies try to tap into new and growing consumer markets.

Let us consider the increased diversity in popular culture. For the first time in primetime history, television has multiple shows with predominantly Asian, Latino and Black casts. *Jane the Virgin*, for instance, which is aired on a popular network known for its teenager geared shows, has been praised for having a primarily Latino cast, presenting a nuanced version of Latino viewpoints in the United States, and even taking a political stance in directly calling for immigration relief (Martinez 2015). Popular dramas like *The Good Wife* and *Scandal* have included episodes addressing police brutality. In his 2016 Grammy award show performance, rapper Kendrick Lamar referenced mass incarceration, Ferguson, and the death of Trayvon Martin (though CBS did censor some of Lamar's more inflammatory lines).

While this increase in mainstream diversity is both moving and meaningful, it is important to keep in mind that increased representation and the move to a majority minority demographic does not mean that institutions of racial injustice in the United States will automatically disappear. The American preoccupation with multiculturalism and racial diversity

color blind rhetoric focused on purity and pollution (Norman 2004).

can steer discussions about racialized minorities away from socioeconomic inequities and tangible social change.

My research participants' life experiences demonstrate that it is possible to feel a sense of multicultural cultural citizenship but still face multiple oppressions. The youth in my study, including the Khan siblings described above, generally felt like they belonged in New York City due to their comfort with multicultural cultural citizenship. They did not feel a need to assimilate to the White mainstream, but instead felt like they fit into city life by being true to who they were in their heart of hearts by embracing diversity, urban style, and their South Asian heritage.

However, while multicultural cultural citizenship translates to cultural belonging, it also adds to the widespread perception of the United States as a color blind society and masks the reality of youths' concurrent racial exclusion. It does not challenge mainstream institutions that promote socioeconomic and racial injustices. It was clear that despite their sense of cultural belonging, youth like the Khans also felt excluded from American society due to their racialized surveillance and criminalization, which robbed them of the ability to feel safe and fostered their lived experiences of being at-risk in their schools and neighborhoods. Through their daily experiences in the physical world and the online realm, youth experienced both cultural belonging and racial exclusion — sometimes within the same interaction. Diversity and multiculturalism operate with notions of fear and risk to bypass equality and disguise, even strengthen, social injustices. Cultural belonging, therefore, can contribute indirectly to a larger model of racialized social control.

CONTINUED RACIALIZED STATE OF EMERGENCY

In this dissertation I have demonstrated how the state and mainstream media's utilization of a "color blind" risk society model — versus an explicitly racial one — emphasizing national security concerns and preemptive safety measures has justified the 21st century criminalization of marginalized minorities and precluded them from national belonging. In the process, those who are criminalized as the risk end up being at-risk in their day-to-day lives. It is possible to use this racialized state of emergency framework to understand recent events, including the continued racialization of Muslims and immigrants. For example, it can be utilized to analyze the aftermath of the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris that left 130 people dead and hundreds injured, and the 2015 shooting in San Bernardino perpetrated by a Pakistani Muslim couple who killed fourteen people. These incidents led to increased fear of potential mass violence by Islamic terrorists as well as increased day-to-day racial paranoia.

After these tragic incidents, I was disturbed to discover that I was unsurprised to hear my research participants share that they were encountering hostile, racist interactions in schools and public places. Their families debated whether it was safe for their daughters to wear hijab in public, and youth commented, as they did after the Boston bombing, that it was like 9/11 all over again. Younger research participants who had not directly faced backlash post-9/11 expressed their shock at becoming victims in public to the hatred and rhetoric they had heard friends and family describe in regard to the September 11th aftermath. This day-to-day backlash fostered racial paranoia in my research participants and their families who became afraid of how Desi youth who are or can be mistaken for Muslim might be treated in the future. These moments were reminiscent of the temporal process Mankekar describes in her discussion of the September 11th aftermath in which the "past, present, and future intermixed" (Mankekar 2015:235). My

research participants were not exceptional in sensing a surge in Islamophobia. Since the Paris and San Bernardino attacks, hate crimes against Muslims have tripled (Mangla 2015).¹²⁵

It is telling how powerful terrorist world risk society rhetoric is when considering that present politicians have stated that Japanese internment during World War II (for which the American government formally apologized and paid reparations) was potentially justified in the context of war and increased risks to national security.¹²⁶ The implication of course is that extreme national security measures targeting Muslims could be similarly rationalized in the current time period. The backlash immediately after September 11th led scholars and activists to reference the abuse and internment of Japanese Americans during World War II in the hopes of legitimizing their challenge of anti-Muslim state policies and media portrayals (Cainkar and Maira 2005; Kang 2001/2002). In contrast, several current politicians, most notably 2016 presidential candidate Donald Trump, are now justifying anti-Muslim actions by rationalizing Japanese internment. They are utilizing national security fears to push for preemptive surveillance and punishment of Muslims who continue to be racialized as an Other threatening the safety of America.

¹²⁵ These hateful acts include everything from arson, to vandalism, to assaults, to shootings, to having passengers removed from flights. These incidents victimize not just Muslims, but also people of various ethnicities and religions who are mistaken for Muslim. The Center for the State of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino analyzed FBI data and determined that before the incidents in Paris and San Bernardino hate crimes against Muslims averaged 12.6 per month. After the Paris attacks in November 2015, the number went up to 38 attacks, 2.94 times the average monthly rate. Eighteen of those occurred after the events of December 2, 2015 when a Muslim couple enacted a mass shooting in San Bernardino. The significance of these numbers becomes even more apparent when taking into account that the average monthly rate during the immediate aftermath of the September 11th attacks was 40.1 (Siemaszko 2015). SAALT and its allies have been tracking hate crimes since the Paris attacks. To see a full list of the main incidents, go to <http://saalt.org/policy-change/post-9-11-backlash/> (SAALT 2016a).

¹²⁶ For example, David Bowers, the mayor of Roanoke, made the following statement when opposing helping Syrian refugees: “I’m reminded that Franklin D. Roosevelt felt compelled to sequester Japanese foreign nationals after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and it appears that the threat of harm to America from [the Islamic State] now is just as real and serious a threat as that from our enemies then” (quoted in Bever 2015).

As the country's demographic shifts toward a majority minority population, it is important for scholars to continue analyzing the ongoing racial panic targeting Muslims and immigrants in the name of national security. Deepa Iyer writes that the move to a majority minority landscape fuels racial fears about the "perceived loss of an imagined 'American' culture on the part of White communities" (Iyer 2015:157). This can lead to growing xenophobia and state of emergency rhetoric when, for example, considering whether to accept Syrian refugees needing humanitarian assistance. Research has indicated that this demographic change has already pushed some White people toward political conservatism, especially regarding race, though this may not be immediately evident given the emphasis on color blindness (Iyer 2015:157).

This may, in part, explain the unexpected popularity of Trump as the Republican presidential nominee. Trump is advocating for an extension of the racialized preventative and punitive measures that have gained traction in the War on Terror and War on Immigrants.¹²⁷ Trump has defended his anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant rhetoric by criticizing America's obsession with political correctness (Milbank 2015). As I stated in Chapter Three, exposure to blatant racism and the discarding of political correctness contributes to the growth of racial

¹²⁷ Trump's slogan for his presidential campaign is "Make America Great Again," which critics have translated to "Make America White Again." Trump has continually championed building a wall on the border between Mexico and the U.S. to keep out immigrants, and he has made an "unprecedented proposal by a leading presidential American candidate" by calling for a ban on all Muslims entering the United States (Healy and Barbaro 2015). He has also advocated for shutting down certain mosques and insists that he has seen footage of American Muslims celebrating the 9/11 attacks, despite the fact that there is no video evidence, and the police have denied this occurrence. In the name of national security, Trump has also suggested registering Muslims in a national database and making them carry special identification with their religion listed. Yousef Abu-Salha, whose sisters and brother-in-law were murdered in 2015 in Chapel Hill for being Muslim, commented "I've heard speech [Trump's suggestion to ban Muslims] like that before — and I've heard speech worse than that before. What's surprising to me is that someone can have those views and amass such a large number of supporters" (quoted in Daileida 2016).

paranoia. Being victimized by hate crimes, the mainstream media, and prominent politicians like Trump increases racial paranoia by demonstrating that there are genuine reasons to be afraid.¹²⁸

The legal director of the Sikh Coalition, Harsimran Kaur, stated in 2015 that the Sikh Coalition received three times as many requests for help from victims of discrimination since the Paris and San Bernardino attacks. Specifically naming Donald Trump's campaign she explained, "The Paris and San Bernardino attacks, as well as all of this rhetoric by politicians about Islamophobia and xenophobia—all these incidents have emboldened people who feel biases to act out." She continued on to state, "Over the last few weeks, the level of intimidation is worse than it was after [September] 11th" (quoted in Stahl 2015).

When examining Kaur's statement, it becomes all the more apparent why it is important to study the government and media's formation of a terrorist world risk society through the racialization, surveillance, and criminalization of Muslims and immigrants. As Amara and her sister pointed out in Chapter Three, the anti-Muslim hate crimes that occur cannot simply be pinned on the insanity of attackers who have not grasped America's multicultural tenets. Perpetrators of such violence have been socialized in a particular way by the state and mainstream media, and their actions must be connected to the broader racialization of immigrants and Muslims (Maira 2009).

The number of anti-Muslim hate crimes and the Islamophobic and xenophobic rhetoric spewed by mainstream politicians make it vital to continue to consider the processes I have highlighted in this dissertation. For one, it will be important to keep analyzing how racialization

¹²⁸ As I demonstrated with Zara, this racial paranoia extends to children. In 2015, the hashtag #IWillProtectYou gained traction among U.S. service members showing support for an eight-year-old girl whose mother posted on Facebook that her young daughter was afraid that her Muslim family would be deported because of Trump's call to ban Muslims (Bowerman 2015).

can occur through seemingly non-racial categories, a process which makes it harder to reveal and challenge racism because race itself is difficult to pinpoint (Suad Joseph et al. 2007:232). In line with this, it is telling that the FBI only began tracking hate crimes against Sikhs, Hindus, and Arabs in 2015 (Iyer 2015:21). It is necessary to keep studying the shifting forms of racialization in the hopes of fueling vital data collection about hate crimes as well as enacting laws and policies that protect people from discrimination.

OVERLAPPING RACIALIZATION

The contemporary events presented thus far serve as evidence of the continued endurance of the racial formation I presented in this dissertation. My research participants' positioning at the nexus of the wars on terror, immigrants, crime, and youth can only be understood with reference to a range of racializations, several of which have not been popularly associated with them. The youth did not exist simply at the intersection of distinct racial formations. The framework I have put forth can be used to illuminate the ways the War on Terror, War on Immigrants, and War on Crime feed one another. This includes shedding light on how their overlaps have continued to fuel the racialization and criminalization of marginalized minority communities in the United States — including in public schools — and in doing so intensify the emphasis on utilizing surveillance and punitive measures in the name of safety. Furthermore, my framework can be used to analyze how color blind terminology continues to be used by the government and mainstream media to mask the racialized nature of risk and prevention rhetoric.

For instance, the FBI recently adjusted its “Preventing Violence Extremism in Schools” guidelines in such a way that likely will target Muslim youth in high school. Notably, the guidelines do not explicitly name Muslims but instead use color blind language to identify potential risk factors that are so “broad and vague that virtually any young person could be

deemed dangerous and worthy of surveillance, especially if she is socio-economically marginalized or politically outspoken” (Lazare 2016).

High schools are being encouraged by the FBI to report students who, for example, criticize government policies and western imperialism as they allegedly may be at risk of becoming radicalized as future terrorists. “Cultural and religious differences” are also risk factors, and the guidelines state that immigrant families may not be able to lead their children down a righteous path. These guidelines place responsibilities for national security on a civic institution, fostering the growth of citizen detectives. They operate using the same preemptive logic that defines the broken windows theory and the See Something, Say Something campaign. By encouraging schools to report any suspicious behavior to law enforcement, the state is “calling for sanctuaries of learning to be transformed into panopticons, in which students and educators are the informers and all young people are suspect” (Lazare 2016).

Iyer aptly notes that Islamophobia and the current national security framework are part of a larger system of White supremacy that allows the United States to conduct wars, deny civil rights, militarize domestic police, and sanction laws that racially profile and target marginalized immigrants and communities of color (Iyer 2015:103). In line with her assertion, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grants to state and local law enforcement are meant to be used to fight terrorism, but the DHS acknowledges that it has a larger mission, which includes “ordinary law enforcement activities” (ACLU 2014:17).¹²⁹ It is necessary to acknowledge and understand

¹²⁹ The ACLU reports that policing in America has become overly militarized through the government’s overfunding of drug law enforcement and its usage of war and risk rhetoric — these actions have resulted in diminishing civil liberties (ACLU 2014:18). The Pentagon can supply local police with surplus gear meant for wars abroad, which has led to the increase in military-style police raids. During Obama’s time in office, police departments around the country have received tens of thousands of machine guns, almost 200,000 ammunition magazines, thousands of pieces of camouflage and night-vision equipment, and hundreds of silencers, armored cars, and aircrafts. Police SWAT teams are being used more and more for routine jobs (Apuzzo 2014). It is important to note, furthermore, that the Border Patrol has received drones and attack helicopters to use in its War

these processes in order to push past racial panic and state of emergency rhetoric and push instead for policies, research, and racial solidarity movements that address institutional and interpersonal racial inequities.

It is important to also recognize that the increasing emphasis on punitive tactics to address alleged security threats also contributes to multiracial solidarity networks and political organizing. Multiracial coalition building has led to significant social justice victories in recent years such as passage of the Community Safety Act, which was passed thanks to the continued efforts of the coalition Communities United for Police Reform (CPR), which included DRUM. The bill, which was enacted January 1, 2014, limited the NYPD's powers of profiling and surveillance and gave the people who are victims of such a way to take legal action (Iyer 2015:68). The director of CPR explained, "We were able to tell the story that profiling affected *all* New Yorkers... This wasn't just about one community. We were able to tell a joint story which was not only about stop-and-frisk or broken windows that affects Black and Latino communities but also about surveillance and profiling of Muslims as well" (quoted in Iyer 2016:70). Multiracial solidarity building warrants further research as the United States moves to a majority minority demographic.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this dissertation, I demonstrate that during the post-September 11th time period, race and racism operate in conjunction with mainstream media rhetoric and state policies centered on

on Immigrants (Kane 2014). Tactics from the War on Terror are currently being utilized to surveil and punish domestic activists. The Department of Homeland Security has been surveilling the Black Lives Matter movement since the 2014 protests in Ferguson, Missouri against police brutality. An FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force monitored a Black Lives Matter protest at the Mall of America and arrested eleven protestors for misdemeanors (Iyer 2015:151). This leads to important questions over whether DHS has "allowed its mission to

surveillance, risk management, and national security, which conceal processes of racialization, criminalization, and social control and bypass the importance of equal rights. This, granted, is apparent in the fields of public culture, law, and politics. However, the value of my ethnographic approach lies in the fact that I theorize directly from the daily lived realities of youth who have largely known only the post-9/11 world and consequently offer a unique lens into specifically how race is being reconfigured and experienced in novel ways in the 21st century.

For example, through analyzing the day-to-day, we learn how 21st century racism often appears more covert than historical forms, but still has a significant impact. In the present post-9/11 “color blind” era, race and racism operate in part through rhetoric and policies that perpetuate surveillance and other preventative measures in the name of safety and security. We see how racialized crime control measures have made their way into civic and social institutions that manage youth through punishment. We also see how youth’s optic switches from culture to race when going from thinking about their positive experiences to considering their negative interactions in their schools, neighborhoods, and online. Ultimately, the everyday experiences of my research participants illustrate how race and racism are produced on multiple, at times intersecting, planes: in people’s minds and emotions, during interpersonal interactions, and systematically in state, legal, and civic institutions. The emphasis on surveillance and punitive tactics shapes the American racial model beyond a Black-White binary and redefines notions of Americanness.

South Asians in the United States historically have occupied multiple and equivocal positions in relation to citizenship and the American racial model. Their continued ambiguity makes them keen subjects for in-depth research on racial formation in the United States, and

creep beyond the bounds of useful security activities as its annual budget has grown beyond \$60 billion” (Joseph

their life experiences reveal the contradictions of race in America. Analyzing their paradoxical positioning can lead to revelations about race and racism, including their contradictions, connections with cultural citizenship, and relation to power beyond a single scale.

Understanding racial formation after September 11th provides the possibility to learn about race more broadly — including its continued significance and its development during times of war, nativism, and coalition building.

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