

<https://beingsouthasian> - Studying cultural identity in South
Asian diasporic youth, offline and online.

Word Count: 21,254 words

Student name: Tilottama Chatterjee

Student number: 430915

Supervisor: Dr. Lijie Zheng

Master Media Studies – Media & Creative Industries
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master Thesis

June 2020

Abstract

Immigration, while always being a salient feature of human life, has gained considerable prominence in modern society, and while the effects of immigration are realized across ages, children of immigrations are especially vulnerable. By virtue of having to spend their formative years across multiple geographical, political and socio-cultural locations, these young members of the immigrant community are especially vulnerable to the processes of cultural identity creation, experiencing cross-cultural streams in manners more nuanced and complicated than among adult immigrants. Further, within the movements of global immigration, South Asian society constitutes a greatly substantial proportion of the migrant population, and the South Asian cultural identity is robust in its individuality, making it more resilient in the face of competing cultural influences, courtesy of immigration.

A steady increase in flows of immigration has also made its mark in the digital realm, with the immigrant communities using digital platforms and outlets to engage with, educate about and seek solidarity from fellow diasporic members, suggested the existence, development and constant evolving of a digital, diasporic sphere. The focus of this research design was on cultural identity within young members of the South Asian global immigrant community, exploring the validity of the robustness of the South Asian identity. Given the digital predispositions of the younger members of the global South Asian Diaspora, in examining cultural identity, this research design further hypothesized that there existed a diasporic, digital space, sustained by concepts of collective, cultural memory.

Owing to the discursive nature of the research topics, the study was conducted qualitatively. 10 in-depth interviews were conducted with members of a younger sub-diaspora under the South Asian immigrant community. Following a multi-tiered coding approach, and using practices of inductive, thematic analysis, the outcomes of this research design could be conclusively perceived as positively indicative of the three main research aims. Firstly, as former immigrant children, the participants did indeed experience a substantial amount of cultural friction across their childhood. Secondly, the behaviours and performances of South Asian cultural identity were consistently replicated within young members of South Asian diaspora, despite their distance from their native culture. Finally, the members of the South Asian diasporic youth narrated cases of cultural identity performance both, in real life and on an online, digital realm, thereby proving the existence of a Diasporic, Digital Memory.

KEYWORDS: *South Asian, Digital, Memory, Identity, Diaspora*

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Research Topic.....	1
1.2. Research Question.....	5
2. Literature Review.....	7
2.1. Diasporic Identity in a Globalized World.....	7
2.2. Cultural Friction.....	9
2.3. Being South Asian.....	11
2.4. Cultural Nostalgia.....	14
2.5. The Young Diaspora.....	16
2.6. Navigating Cultural Identity through New Media.....	17
2.7. Digital Memory.....	19
3. Methodology.....	22
3.1 Sampling.....	24
3.2 Interviews.....	25
3.3 Participant-Reported Content Analysis.....	26
3.4 Data Analysis.....	27
4. Findings.....	29
4.1. An individual South Asian Identity.....	29
4.2. A collective South Asian identity.....	32
4.3. Cultural Influences on Participant Cultural Identity.....	34
4.4. Cultural Expressions and Manifestations.....	37
4.5. Technological Outlets of Cultural Expression.....	40
4.6. A South Asian Community, Online.....	42
5. Conclusion.....	52
5.1 Answering the Research Question.....	59
5.2 Relevance of Research.....	61
5.3 Limitations.....	62
5.4 Future Research.....	63
6. References.....	65
7. Appendices.....	73
Appendix A: Interview Information Sheet.....	73
Appendix B: Interview Guide.....	74
Appendix C: Interviewee Overview.....	75

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introductory overview of the research design, introducing the general concepts, key focus areas and framing the research question. The following chapter will provide a summary of existing literature to construct the theoretical framework for this study, while Chapter 3 will provide an outline on the research methods applied to this project. Chapter 4 will cover the findings gathered from data analysis, which will be further discussed and concluded in Chapter 5, along with suggestions for future research.

1.1. Research Topic

Society in present day experiences processes of globalisation, creating an intricately and progressively intertwined world, comprising of complex relations that span multiple, spatial and cultural boundaries (Ozer, Bertelsen, Singla & Schwartz, 2017). The expansion of these complex connections has impacted countries and their ensuing cultural and social groups at real and conceptual levels, creating a transcontinental network of connections that yield multicultural influences and corresponding identities for the citizens who live, and move in between this network – namely, immigrants. Immigration is a long-existing, global phenomena, referring to the detachment of people from their native culture, through a conscious act of displacement, (Sarwal, 2017; Ozer et al., 2017), followed by the inhabiting of, and settling down in new, host countries which often imply the imposition of a foreign culture (Gajjala, 2003). In today’s day and age, “immigration is the human face of globalization” (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009, p. 2) embodying a deeply interconnected world (Amrith, 2014). Immigration has been increasingly gaining prominence as a research area, and according to the United Nations there are approximately 272 million international migrants, comprising 3.5 percent of the total world population (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019).

The magnitude of immigrants in the global population has both, warranted and generated academic interest in immigration as a research area, and a principal characteristic of immigrant identity is that of their cultural identity (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Owing to

a lifetime of prolonged exposure to multiple cultures, immigrants develop multicultural identities in their efforts to balance the cultural influences of their geographical host locations while simultaneously internalizing and maintaining their native home cultures in processes of acculturation. Taking into account the magnitude of cultural exposure in today's globalized, urban societies, cultural identity has become strikingly prominent in multiple dimensions of immigrant identity (Ozer et al., 2017, pp. 295-296). Immigrants exist within a framework of their native cultural society, while also existing as members of society within their local, host community and on a larger scale, within the global population. They also have to balance their identities on each of these scales, and the impact of this globalized, multi-tiered society then creates 'hyphenated' identities among its most mobile citizens (Saw, 2018, p. 342), with immigrants needing to combine multiple cultural influences, creating a bonding link not only with their native culture, or the culture of their homeland but also with the other influences that arise from the countries they live in, of their host lands (Saw, 2018, p. 339).

There are also degrees of immigration; first generation immigrants are those who directly shift from one culture, usually their native one, while second and third generations usually live exclusively in their host-cultures, maintaining their relationships to their homeland solely through outlets of cultural expression and cultural maintenance (Berry & Hou, 2017). The first generation, who were born and potentially spent a significant amount of time in their homeland, tend to experience a tough cultural conflict in balancing the cultures of their homeland and host-lands, while the second and third generations are more easily assimilated with the cultures of the host country, where they were born and have lived, while potentially experiencing a more detached approach in their relationship to their culture of origin (Bruneau, 2010). The combination of influences arising from home and host cultures create ambiguity regarding cultural identity in varying severity for the various generations of immigrants. This confusion can be detrimental to individual immigrant identity assimilation within a global society (Ozer et al., 2017), but it can also lead to successful multicultural identity construction (Moore & Barker, 2012).

The differences that arise within the intersections of these multiple cultures cause what is termed as cultural "friction", at the intersection of cultures on a level where combinations of cultural differences simultaneously occur (Luo & Shenkar, 2011, p. 2).

Cultural friction is an overarching part of every immigrant life, and is particularly high within South Asian immigrant communities, as studies suggest that immigrants from non-Western countries are especially vulnerable to cultural globalization (Ozer et al., 2017). The South Asian community in migration literature encompasses communities of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan (Minocha, 1987; Pison, 2019), and is responsible for a significant volume of total global immigration. India has the highest number of migrants in the world, and Bangladesh and Pakistan follow closely (Pison, 2019; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019). Literary discourse on South Asian immigrant affiliation with their homelands popularly indicate that they tend to strongly emphasize their connections to their homeland cultures, through ethnic or diasporic outlets, underlining the precisely specific identity of the South Asian diaspora (Sarwal, 2017; Smets, 2018, pp. 605-606). Additionally, within individual South Asian communities there exist many cultural similarities, leading to the recognition and creation of a singular, communal, South Asian cultural identity. Therefore, while immigrants from these communities are especially at risk of experiencing ambiguity regarding their cultural identity, owing to their weakened ties with their local culture, they also have the possibility of accessing an abstract, larger-scale, communal South Asian identity they find recognition in (Ozer et al., 2017; Sarwal, 2017; Saw, 2018).

Within these diasporic populations, there exists a whole generation, who are raised completely in the immigrant lifestyle, namely, second and third-generation immigrants who experience a new level of connection to their influential cultures through the role of technology, in the age of digitalization and globalisation (Rai & Reeves, 2009, p. 149; Suárez-Orozco, 2009). This generation of society can be academically classified as “neo-diasporas” (Saw, 2018, pp. 340-341), seen to be existing within fluid “homes” (Cohen, 2009; cited in Saw, 2018, p. 353) connected to both, their host countries, and their homeland, through their existing positions within the diaspora. This neo-diaspora has had to go through their formative years in between worlds, split between two cultures; they often leave behind, or lack the opportunity for one, overarching familiar language, culture, community and social system, having to establish a position in their new society, while still retaining aspects of the native culture. This young diaspora has the possibility to engage with their multiple cultures in the traditional ways that the older generations did, but they also have an additional outlet

through the possibilities extended by the presence of the Internet (Arnseth & Silseth, 2013, pp. 23-25).

The world as it exists today is increasingly intertwined with the ‘online’, daily life has become increasingly enmeshed within a ‘digital’ sphere, and the internet constitutes an unavoidable, key feature of contemporary, cosmopolitan society (Villa-Nicholas, 2019). The digital world permeates society, creating a series of cultural streams transmitted through technology and media, which are woven in with the journeys of people and society, especially for those navigating through cultural identity. A significant portion of this cosmopolitan, online society now includes immigrants. Immigrants comprise a significant amount of the global population, and this, in combination with the universal societal shift towards a digital sphere, has led to an increase in a number of diverse, diasporic, cultural spaces in the digital world, especially via social media (Yu & Sun, 2019). The intersection of immigration with technology creates a digital space on mediated platforms which sustains across time and space, and also includes the existence of collective, diasporic memories, implemented through processes of forming memories, storing, administering and further communicating them (Drotner, 2013; Reading, 2009). Among immigrant literature, the term ‘diaspora’ is also used to classify migrant groups who have been distributed across various geographical, socio-cultural boundaries, and these groups are also theorized to have in possession a “collective memory of and identity associated with the ‘homeland’” (Yu & Sun, 2019, p. 18). This collective memory is responsible for creating a collective hybrid consciousness related to diasporic cultural identity, and this is further translated digitally (Drotner, 2013; Yu & Sun, 2019).

These processes of cultural affiliation, manifesting in the form of collective, cultural memories, which can visibly be traced to online spaces. These spaces are created and upheld with the help of media technologies (Georgiou, 2006; cited in Macri, 2012; Tsagarousianou, 2004), owing to the fact that media works as “memory banks” (Macri, 2012, p. 84) that allow members of ethnic communities, through acts of creating, managing, storing and recording digital ‘artefacts’, to retain characteristics, behaviours and aspects key to their cultural identity, while simultaneously creating a global, digital, diasporic memory accessible to every member part of an immigrant, socio-cultural native group (Czerwinski et al., 2004; Reading, 2009). A digital version of diaspora is created (Yu & Sun, 2019), and the globalized

world now extends not just to social, economic and cultural spheres, but also to an ‘online’ sphere. This, then, creates an additional level to the hyphenated identities of immigrants. The role that digital technologies play in immigrant identity construction, act as a connecting factor to not only the native cultures, but also bring with it the potential to connect to other diasporic social groups with common origin, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Thus, through the presence of a digital, diasporic memory, a new diaspora is taking shape which is highly engaged with the online, virtual space (Saw, 2018).

This research is designed to evaluate how young immigrants within a South Asian cultural group in the 21st century, navigate their cultural identities, through balancing the influence of multiple home and host cultures while also maintaining their South Asian identity, which is theorized to be more ingrained in cultural identity than non-South Asian cultural influences. Given the digital propensities of these young, diasporic members, it is hypothesized that their cultural behaviours are transplanted to an online, digital platform and this transplantation has led to the consolidation of a diasporic, digital memory which constitutes a significantly important part of acculturation processes, helping young immigrants, especially the neo-diaspora navigate their way through diasporic cosmopolitanism, creating a nostalgic, culturally-familiar, safe space from which they can infer and create their own cultural identities (Villa-Nicholas, 2019, pp. 2-4).

1.2. Research Question

Bearing that in mind, the main research question for this design is –

How does the South Asian neo-diaspora construct and contribute to their cultural identities, offline and online?

From themes identified following extensive literature review of existing research, three main research areas under the general theme of diasporic, digital memory were intended to be examined. The first area of research to be considered, was the presence of Cultural Friction. In framing the study around immigrants, it was expected that they would have been susceptible to the multitude of outcomes possible in growing up among different cultures. The communal nature of the specific cultures being studied - in this case, Being

South Asian cultures, constructs the second theme. Theoretical research on the topic theorizes that the boundaries between South Asian cultures are not fixed or clearly demarcated social entities, but are fluid (Chatterji & Washbrook, 2013, pp. 318-320). Lastly, the role of a Diasporic Digital Memory, especially in a cultural space, will be weighed; while ‘digital’ broadly refers to all things virtual and online, for the purposes of this design, the digital memory concerns explicitly only social media platforms, since they are the most efficient outlets of user-generated content. The manners in which the South Asian neo-diaspora commit to the consumption and expression of cultural identity online, specifically through the utilization of social media, will be investigated and used to conclusively frame the existence of diasporic digital memory spaces.

2. Literature Review

This chapter will offer an academic background to this research project, through a brief overview of past research and relevant literature, highlighting seven key concepts to construct a theoretical framework for designing a study most effective in measuring the research question. The three key research areas outlined in this research design are Cultural Friction, Being South Asian and a Diasporic Digital Memory. All three are individual theoretical concepts within the theoretical framework, supported by four other theoretical agendas. Further, within the seven literary models presented, the first two concepts are used to abstractly define the nuances of studying cultural identity, while the next five elaborate on explicit theoretical concepts that are then used in structurally framing this research design.

2.1. Diasporic Identity in a Globalized World

In order to measure cultural identity construction and performance among immigrants in contemporary society, it is important to acknowledge and evaluate the influence of globalization, which creates an overarching factor of cultural connectivity and fluidity, which has resulting influences on immigrant cultural identity. Placing diasporic identity within theories of globalization and immigrant research supports the notion that cultural identity within a mobile, global diaspora composes a valid and essential research area.

With the rapidly increasing rate of globalization in the 21st century, society experiences a multitude of multidimensional, cross-cultural streams, which are enacted through technology and media (Ozer et al., 2017), creating a cosmopolitan, digital diaspora. Diasporic cosmopolitanism is marked in the existence of a cultural middle ground, embedding the influence of the native culture in a broader framework (Smets, 2018), in curating an assimilated cultural identity between an immigrant's native, ethnically charged, cultural identity, and their social identity based on the cultural practices of their country of residence. Immigrants have the abilities to cultivate and create their own social spheres of cultural performance, enacting behaviours which allow them to integrate commodities and behaviours of consumption, along with rituals and practices that arise directly from, or in relation to the countries they originate from, as well as live within. These immigrants shift

between dual or multiple societies, inhabiting multiple homes, and playing multicultural roles and identities (Bhatia & Ram, 2004, p. 225; Kumar, 2011).

In conceptualising diasporas as communities that move out of their country of origin, it is understood that these communities have experienced “dispersal” from their homeland (Macri, 2012, p. 49). However, migration patterns in the era of globalization have a nature of highly advanced technology added to them, allowing for increased connectivity among various cultural spaces for various diasporic populations. The geopolitical borders that demarcate political societies and their corresponding cultures, still exist, but the strength of their individual, cultural singularity is weakened greatly, primarily owing to an increased rate of flows of movement of peoples, technology, goods, ideas and information, thereby contributing to highly fluid, global society (Saw, 2018, p. 340). Therefore, contrary to prior immigrant cultural studies, the cosmopolitan diaspora have at their dispersal the tools of advanced technology and communication. The new communication technologies that have emerged over the years have influenced many aspects of diasporic identity, including social, cultural and intercultural attitudes and behaviours. Technology-mediated communication allows for plenty of new opportunities to construct online spaces for intercultural interactions between different cultures (Robson, Zachara & Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska, 2014). Contemporary diaspora faces the traditional aspects of high mobility and multicultural influences in their lives as immigrants, but they also have the connectivity potential of technologies. The benefit of this additional layer to immigrant identity is reflected through a sense of belonging to evolving transnational networks, and the identities of the diaspora are no longer confined to a mere conflict between a homeland and host-land binary. Owing to the expression and ease of access to cultural spaces digitally, there are numerous, nuanced and intertwined levels of multicultural influences that form layers of immigrant cultural identity (Saw, 2018; Shekhar, 2020).

While immigrant studies have consistently been relevant within the academic fields of identity construction, this research project aims to bring to light an aspect within immigrant identity construction that has not been explored to its full potential, that of the role of digital technologies, through new mediated platforms. Immigration, also known as the “human face of globalization” (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009, p. 2) has acquired an additional sphere of influence in contemporary society, that of the role of technology in connecting

diaspora to their cultures. A directed focus on analysing the real-life, socially enacted and personal experiences of immigrant identity within cosmopolitanism, can enable us to understand the cultural practices and social belongings within diasporic communities (Smets, 2018), and therefore is a fundamental aspect of studying immigration and its resultant cultural identities. Furthermore, the advent of technological development has allowed the cosmopolitan diaspora to shift their processes of balancing multiple cultural influences on to a digital sphere. Studying these online communities allow researchers to “grasp the meaning of diasporas beyond the physical borders of either the home- or the host-land” (Macri, 2012, p. 150), and therefore, cultivates an explicit need to be researched further.

2.2. Cultural Friction

For the diaspora in a globalized world, the combination of cosmopolitan society with digital technology has equipped diasporic individuals to acculturate to other cultural streams within the context of their home and host lands (Ozer et al., 2017). In the process of creating a research structure designed to measure diasporic cultural identity, there exists a requisite to understand immigrant identity construction. Owing to a lifetime spent in the intersection of multiple cultures, cultural friction is a key constituent of immigrant identity.

Globalization is primarily responsible for ushering in a massive wave of immigration, creating colossal cultural intersections between the native and the host countries for the immigrants. Prior research conducted on immigration cultures frames a lifestyle of mobility and cultural adjustment as often leading to complications in constructing a sense of belonging, or identity, and experiencing grief and loss of cultural consistency (Chang, 2015; Talwar, 2014). As part of adapting to their host cultures, immigrants have to undertake processes of acculturation, which are intended to allow them to function smoothly within their host society (Moore & Barker, 2012). However, while these acculturation processes are theoretically indicative of a cleanly bicultural, or multicultural adaptive identity, research on cultural influence has suggested that an acculturated, or acculturating immigrant can find themselves experiencing significant resistance in trying to unite two or more cultural contexts, more so if the cultures in question are perceived as incompatible and in stark contrast to each other, like those of the East, versus cultural practices and behaviours of the

West (Ozer et al., 2017, pp. 296-297). The interactions within multiple cultures is defined as cultural friction, especially in reference to cultures that contradict each other (Luo & Shenkar, 2011) - this cultural friction then manifests within diasporic individuals in either adverse or affirmative ways.

For the adverse, even though immigrants ordinarily settle in well in a new country, their perception and construction of home is usually permanently altered, which have detrimental impacts on the construction of their native cultural identities (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2014). Highly mobile lifestyles are also theorized as causing difficulties in experiencing a sense of belonging, enculturation and identity, owing to not having sufficient contact with either their home culture, or the host cultures (Choi & Luke, 2011; Schaetti, 2000; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). That being said, cultural friction also has beneficial impacts on immigrant cultural identity construction. Multicultural mobility allows immigrants to sustain hybrid, 'hyphenated' identities, maintaining strong cultural ties and enacting multiple behaviours relevant to both, immigrant homeland and host-land cultures (Sarwal, 2017, p. 27). Research advocates for immigrant ability to successfully execute and retain multiple cultural identities, acknowledging and balancing the varying weights of these cultures in their expressions of identity, depending on the situations (Falicov, 2007; Moore & Barker, 2012). Although one's cultural identity is one of many components that construct an individual's global identity, literature argues that cultural identities tend to become strengthened and at the same time challenged by physical relocation. Consequently, a new process of negotiating between these cultural identities takes place in different, multiple contexts, creating an air of dissonance regarding the same. However, the same process can also result in fluid conceptualizations and performances of culture, resulting in these identities being even more hybrid, never homogenous (Umana-Taylor, 2004; Macri, 2012).

Therefore, the actuality of multiple cultural spaces within which an individual's social sphere exists, exhibiting substantially in cultural identity within immigrants, resulting either in cultural fluidity, or cultural dissonance between one's social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and one's ethnically-influenced, cultural identity (Umana-Taylor, 2004). Another key indicator of the process of constructing participant cultural identity is their conceptualization of their native cultures. For diasporic individuals, research indicates that their native culture plays a central role in identity construction, and that immigrants can never perfectly detach

from their native cultural identities, and completely assimilate with a new culture of the host society (Macri, 2012, pp. 102-104). In the foreign society, immigrants tend to implement connections to their native cultures by working on building an association to their native culture within the spatial context of their 'home'; The home, or the place where these immigrants reside then develop as a symbolic space for cultural maintenance (Macri, 2012, pp. 219-221).

In order to effectively map out the role of technology in changing the nature of cultural identity construction, this research design must first establish contemporary opinion on immigrant cultural identity itself. In cultivating identities to best fit within the multiple cultural situations that present themselves in the everyday life of an immigrant, this study theorizes that more commonly it is the role of the native, ethnically-rooted cultural aspect that experiences confusion, conflict, or some mode of cultural friction. Additionally, cultural identities within a wider social framework, encompasses a broad social group comprise shared experience which construct socially cohesive relationships within the group, to give its diasporic members common and stable frames of reference. The role of the cultural, social group is then hypothesized to strengthen the corresponding cultural influence on the diasporic individual, and within the framework of this study, this hypothesis is directly applied to the role of South Asian cultures and communities. One of the research aims of this study, is to measure South Asian cultural identity performance among the corresponding diaspora, and while cultural friction forms a key constituent of immigrant identity from every cultural background, the power of South Asian cultures are slightly differently weighted, resulting in potentially skewed cultural friction, which this research will then be designed to effectively weigh.

2.3. Being South Asian

Within the paths of contemporary, global immigration, South Asia plays a significant role in the dynamics of migration across the world (Sarwal, 2017, p. 50). Consisting of a select few countries, the ensuing South Asian culture then, is unique and localized to these nations and their citizens. However, owing to immigration, citizens have been able to migrate to nations foreign to their native cultures, and are then tasked with curating their own

exposure to, and interaction within their native cultures. In order to gauge cultural identity construction and performance in South Asians, it is imperative to examine the fundamental characteristics of South Asian culture, and to identify what it means to be South Asian.

The top fifteen percentile of countries with the highest number of migrants globally, include three South Asian countries, with India leading, accounting for 6.4% of the total, global immigrant population followed closely by Bangladesh and Pakistan (Rangaswamy, 2005; Pison, 2019; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019). The formulating of an umbrella term ‘South Asian’ implies a grouping together of “a wider range of people and experiences” (Sarwal, 2017, p. 28) as a common, encompassing cultural identity. For the purposes of this academic research, ‘South Asian Diaspora’ refers to the nationalities of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

While comprising different nations, South Asian identity can be grouped together and measured as one, overarching cultural identity. The strength and extent of these cultural similarities among the dominant South Asian cultures allows its diasporic members to feel solidarity amongst one another despite their different nations (Finn, 2008; Sarwal, 2017), due to the concept of cultural nostalgia, which will be explored in the upcoming section. Additionally, within the South Asian cultural umbrella exists fragmented cultures, with differences manifesting in various ways, like religion, political and socio-cultural beliefs. Diasporic communities are unified in terms of their cultural backgrounds, but when it comes to individual identity, can be fragmented based on a range of criteria such as age, gender, and political affiliation (Macri, 2012, pp. 52-64). These differences are clearly outlined social entities in themselves, but are also fluid and permeable based on different contextual situations. With a complex amalgamation of multiple sub-cultures, languages, practices and histories, and different methods of integration into host-land cultures, the South Asian diaspora then “defies easy categorization” (Sarwal, 2017, p. 29).

However, despite being hard to ground within precise demarcations, the South Asian identity is a significant factor within cultural identity studies. There exists a myriad of common cultural traits which allows immigrants to “feel solidarity” among members of other South Asian migrant populations (Sarwal, 2017, p. 28). Embedded deep within the South Asian identity are traditional values centred around concepts of family, cultural community, and constant social group interdependence, which are common across the multiple South

Asian cultures (Finn, 2008; Stuart & Ward, 2011, pp. 118-120; Thangaraj, 2010). These are maintained and replicated across generations of immigrants, and are usually in contrast to, or in conflict with the values of their host cultures, which, given the statistics of South Asian migration, are predominantly those of the West. South Asians then face a different notion of cultural friction, wherein their native identities are both, more strongly emphasized and prioritize different aspects of social lives.

Lastly, taking into account the sheer magnitude of South Asian immigrants within the global diaspora (Pison, 2019), the South Asian diasporic group then constitute a significant part of the consolidation of global, cultural streams. Wherever South Asians have migrated, moreover, they have transported with them the socio-cultural and religious practices as they learn them within the contexts of their homeland. Given the digital nature of cosmopolitanism today, these practices also manifest within online spaces (Rai & Reeves, 2009; Rajiva, 2009). The South Asian cultural propensity to favour and value a community is theorized to be enacted online, by immigrants within the digital space who, engaging in their South Asian values, prioritize the cultural camaraderie that exists across the region. Given the ease of global access implemented through the wide reach of technology, there lies a relatively unexplored area of research to evaluate the recreation and consolidation of South Asian cultural identity online. Tapping into theories of digital cosmopolitanism, cultural friction and the characteristics of South Asian identity allows the visualization and consolidation of a more comprehensive understanding of cultural, digital spaces.

The primary aim of this research study is to appraise the role of South Asian cultural identity within the diaspora. In theorizing immigrants as being at risk for rootlessness and cultural dissonance, literature does not fully consider the extent of influence of Asian – more specifically, South Asian cultures on their own citizens and diaspora (Moore & Barker, 2012; Thangaraj, 2010). Using the established cultural values of the South Asian community, along with their theorized propensity to favour, or seek culturally similar communities, the research design will be constructed to measure how diasporic individuals both, enact these cultural values, and the impact of these on their native cultural identity. Further, given the consideration of a digital integration within cultural spaces, the performances of South Asian cultural identity are not just limited to real, tangible behaviours, but can also be enacted in virtual, digital space, and as such, the research design will be reflective of that.

2.4. Cultural Nostalgia

Cultural identity is constructed, re-constructed and replicated across boundaries of time space, across borders and generations. The continuity of cultural aspects within multiple, individual cultural identities is primarily upheld by the role of memories, which are valued owing to their nostalgic traits. The nostalgia associated with cultural values and memories is an essential constituent of cultural identity, and as such, needs to be investigated within a research designed to chart diasporic cultural identity.

Within the realm of cultural identity studies, cultural memories are conceptualized on personal and societal levels. Among contemporary, digital, mediated platforms, the dual division of personal and societal levels are subjected to reconsideration. Through the ease of global access via social networking websites, depictions of cultural memory can “generate and transform concepts” of native, cultural identities (Munoz, 2000; cited in Villa-Nicholas, 2019, p. 2), blurring the lines between distinctly individual and explicitly social cultural identity (Reading, 2009). Nostalgia exists and results from both, an individual and collective displacement from a native culture, physically and symbolically (Kalinina & Menke, 2016, p. 63; Macri, 2012; Yu & Sun, 2019). Nostalgia also plays an active role motivating cultural communities to engage with and participate in a shared identity based largely on shared characteristics, which generate a sense of longing or yearning, thereby shaping the construction of immigrant cultural identity. Nostalgic yearning linked to practices and behaviours arising from one’s native culture is a chief characteristic of the diaspora- the detachment these immigrants experience from their native cultures, usually implemented in their formative years, imbibes within them a sense of grieving for the potential loss of a relationship with their homelands (Kalinina & Menke, 2016; Moore & Barker, 2012).

This nostalgic yearning is usually recreated across immigrants, stimulating the existence of an intricately connected, social and individual cultural memory. While the diasporic individuals may have limited, or no personal memory of their native cultures, through the role of cultural nostalgia they seek out citizens across the globe, with similar backgrounds, who are able and willing to share their own personal experiences of the native culture in question, helping the disoriented diaspora then construct a shared cultural memory (Kalinina

& Menke, 2016). These collective memories can be constructed and maintained through the roles enacted by family, parents and immediate social spheres of influence, they are best enacted online, owing to the fact that while parents and 'offline' communities too are from cultural backgrounds similar to the diasporic individual, and are also assimilating within the same host culture, their experiences differ to the younger members experiencing nostalgia. Being displaced themselves, parents and older generations of immigrants undoubtedly too experience longing for their native culture, but they are in possession of their personal experiences of the native culture. The younger, usually second or third generation immigrants also experience cultural nostalgia, but do not have active memories to support their nostalgic yearning, and as a consequence, the memories of their parents and the older generations are, while informative and interesting, not applicable to their version of cultural nostalgia. Due to the wide reach and ease of access from Internet technologies, these younger immigrants can seek out similar diasporic individuals experiencing the same phenomenon, and in doing so, digital communities of common cultural backgrounds are enacted, wherein they share memories and discuss interpretations of their common cultural roots. Nostalgia helps to form people's identities in the present, connecting the individual with a broader sense of community (Kalinina & Menke, 2016, pp. 61-63; Yu & Sun, 2019).

For the South Asian diaspora, who often maintain hybrid cultural identities from their host countries and their diasporic consciousness (Sarwal, 2017), cultural nostalgia acts as a major driver for engaging in diasporic communities, and by extension, communal, collective memories. In a digital world, the native culture is easily accessed through reimaginings in a symbolic space, most commonly distributed across media platforms (Macri, 2012). Diasporic communities in the 21st century are able to smoothly acculturate within global cultures, while simultaneously maintaining a solid relationship with their native cultures. Considering that, this research project attributes that to the role of cultural nostalgia in facilitating and negotiating immigrant participant in a collective, social memory (Saw, 2018; Villa-Nicholas, 2019). Moreover, second and third-generation immigrants, being a part of the diaspora, access and engage with this collective social memory despite never having a direct relationship to the memories itself, generating and altering cultural identities through the established presence of nostalgia within diasporas (Villa-Nicholas, 2019). Cultural nostalgia constructs a key characteristic of immigrant relationships with their native cultures, and

therefore, is essential to be included in designing a study on diasporic performances of native cultural identity, both, in the ‘real’ world and online.

2.5. The Young Diaspora

Globalized immigration in the 21st century is also deeply intertwined with the advancements of technological developments. As such, no contemporary research study on immigrant cultural identity can be academically robust without factoring in the role of digital technology, and within the fields of immigration research, there is growing attention on the younger generations who navigate their immigrant journeys across cultures both in their daily lives, and online. Given the focus of this study on the intersection of cultural identity and the digital, it was imperative to scrutinise this research area in particular.

Technology plays an integral part in contemporary globalisation, permeating the processes and outcomes of immigration in new and underexplored manners. A new version of diaspora exists in today’s contemporary world, surrounding second or third generation immigrants, but also encompassing those whose lifespans have been intertwined with technology and digital development: those known as ‘digital natives’, who, having spent the majority of their lives in contact with digital outlets, are technologically confident and fluent in using digital, web-based, media technologies and platforms (Williams, Crittenden, Keo & McCarty, 2012). Usually referring to the millennial generation, this generation of digital natives within the diaspora can be conceptualized as “neo-diasporas” (Saw, 2018, p. 340). This sub-diasporic community usually spends most, or all of their lives in a country outside of their native culture, but also tend to be more mobile and more connected to their homelands and other similar diasporas, owing to their connectivity to digital technologies (Cohen, 2009; Saw, 2018). This neo-diaspora has been exposed to, and are required to balance and integrate their cultural selves various cultural streams and traditions (Ozer et al., 2017). They are categorized as being technologically advanced and integrated with the digital sphere (Williams et al., 2012), having had to spend their formative years growing up in what is framed as “the most rapid period of technological transformation ever” (Palfrey & Gasser, 2011, pp. 3), which can be used to explain the inclination of the millennial generation towards living cultural lives online. Consequently, the digital natives, in their lives as

immigrants, experience their processes of cultural identity cultivation, and these processes are also converted to the online space (Palfrey & Gasser, 2011).

Digital cultural spaces are fluid outlets that create multiple prospects for navigating, balancing and even choosing, or reconstructing identities (Chisholm, 2013), and these influence the way the neo-diaspora work on their cultural identity construction. While literature on immigrant studies theorize second and third generation immigrants engage in locating their native cultural identity from outside their homeland, within transnational host cultures (Bhatia & Ram, 2004; Berry & Hou, 2017), contemporary society, owing to globalization, immigration and digital connectivity, usually has in place existing cultural spaces corresponding to diasporic native cultures, regardless of the location of the host culture. Immigrants, particularly the younger generations, then no longer have to struggle to construct their native cultural identities on their own, within a foreign cultural space (Chen et al., 2014), they are now afforded direct connections to their native cultural, either in the presence of real or virtual communities.

Therefore, the processes of cultural identity construction among the neo-diasporic generation of immigrants are not the same as those of the earlier generations, and for the purposes of this research project, the subcategorization of the diaspora into the neo-diaspora is an essential step required, before proceeding with studying the cultural identity performances of South Asian immigrants. Further, youth originating from third world, developing, non-Western countries are especially vulnerable to cultural friction (Purkayastha, 2006; Ozer et al., 2017), and the role of digital cultural spaces, best navigated through by digital natives are instrumental in charting out diasporic, or rather, neo-diasporic conceptualization, internalization and external performances of their native cultures.

2.6. Navigating Cultural Identity through New Media

Globalization processes have had a fundamental influence on the processes of cultural identity development among immigrants, especially the youth. Cultural identity development forms a principal characteristic of youth identity, since young people are vulnerable to, and in the processes of navigating and framing their individual positions within a global society, and

given the predilections of the young diaspora towards incorporating digital technologies in their daily lives, an analysis of the same technologies are warranted.

By means of adapting certain values, beliefs, behaviours and preferences that are enacted in daily life, young immigrants cultivate their cultural identities to best reflect the cultural groups within which they identify the strongest senses of belonging. These identity processes of developing a coherent sense of self can, however, be challenged within contexts of interaction, and subsequent cultural friction between various cultural streams (Ozer et al., 2017, pp. 295-297). Identity is constructed through the processes of learning and enacting, and contemporary identity work is concerned with the manners in which modern globalization leads “changing notions of the self” (Giddens, 1991, cited in; Sefton-Green & Erstad, 2013, p. 3), which undoubtedly impact individual identity. These changing notions are further influenced by the crossover of cultural identity into digital, mediated spaces, and “identity work is no longer limited to local space and time” (Appadurai, 1996; cited in Amseth & Silseth, 2013, pg. 26). Identity studies posit that a person’s identity is no longer wholly determined by individual agency, instead being shaped by a number of external factors, like socio-culturally relevant stories and narratives, either active or passively related to the individual constructing their identity. These external factors, independent of individual agency, are augmented when technology is factored in, enmeshing new media with people’s participations in the socio-cultural activities and stories that then shape their identity (Amseth & Silseth, 2013; Sefton-Green, 2013).

Digital media is increasingly developing as a stimulus for new forms of knowledge production, digitizing global discourses that allow for the storing, spreading and sharing cultural knowledge and exhibiting cultural behaviours, consolidating in both, online and offline spaces (Drotner, 2007, p. 39). Furthermore, within digital media, social media plays a unique role, allowing media users to venture from product consumption to production, playing a personal role in their own and in the cultural meaning and identity construction processes of others. Another aspect of individual performance on digital platforms is analysing how users post, view, retrieve and interpret data as forms of online identity communication, construction and performance (Drotner, 2007; Good, 2012).

Media posts can be conceptually framed as indicative of ‘beliefs’ communicated to explain perceived media structure and meaning, by users of the platforms (Lukacs & Quan-

Haase, 2015, p. 493). Research work on cultural performance on social media directly links social media use to a number of constructive outcomes, including the formation and consolidation of identity as well as the creation and maintenance of social capital, and finally, enacting cultural nostalgia in the form of creating memories (Volčič, 2007, pp. 21-25.). Digital posts can also be seen as constructing cultural memories, which link past experiences with the future and are a very powerful tool that people have at their disposal. Processes of digitizing memory enable new potentials for cultural identity construction, with the help of technology (Dobbins, Merabti, Fergus & Llewellyn-Jones, 2013). People have differing motivations for digitizing these memories, and other aspects of their lives – for the sharing of personal experiences, reflection and keeping track of their experiences (Czerwinski et al., 2004). The motivations behind storing and accessing a digital memory space can also impact behaviours of consumption among the digital diaspora.

The inculcation of cultural nostalgia and cultural expression on a digital realm, are a key factor to be considered when designing a research to evaluate cultural identity performance among a young generation of South Asian immigrants, who are likely to engage in online cultural identity formation. Studies have also shown that social media sites are fields within which users engage in impression management and identity performance (Good, 2013, pp. 566-568). These varied identities then exist in private and public mediated contexts, which have a myriad of meanings to the multiple individuals who consume it, construing multiple continuities and discontinuities with immediately and more remotely past moments and events – consolidating as digital memories. These digital spaces, therefore, play a key role in cultural identity construction of the members who exist within these mediated memory spaces, and are a key constituent in designing this research study.

2.7. Digital Memory

Bringing the literature review to a conclusive finish, the concepts of cultural nostalgia and memories, when combined with the advancements of digital technologies, allow for the conceiving and exploration of the concept of digital memories. The third focus area of this research design posits that the neo-diaspora, in constructing and accessing their cultural

identities, are also engaging in these cultural processes digitally, thereby consolidating in a digitized cultural space.

In today's globalized world, there exists a well-established network of connectivity amongst different cultural groups, at physical and real, but also at virtual levels. Social processes are being mediatized (Kalinina & Menke, 2016, p. 61), and memory studies, when measured on a digital scale incorporates certain 'artefacts' that digital media users produce, consume and share within a digital platform. Through profiles, messages, photographs and creating relationships by virtue of friends and followers, users engage in processes of curating their digital spheres of connectivity (Good, 2012). Digital recreation of cultural group patterns captures all the principal aspects of maintaining social relationships, albeit digitally, and the access of it all being afforded to such a large base creates an appeal of putting together societal memory practices in one, common platform (Reading, 2009). This then facilitates network flows that connect and produce new types of migrants who are no longer limited by national, geographical borders (Shaw, 2017), and who are facilitated not just by their native, cultural and social identities, but also by an online catalyst of diasporic cosmopolitanism, a key facet of which culminates into digital memory.

Digital memory is constructed via online media and social media platforms, tracing how enactment of cultural memory can be used to "generate and transform concepts of national, racial, and gendered identities" (Muñoz, 2000; cited in Villa-Nicholas, 2019, p. 2). With the rapid advent of social media, dialogues of memory have shifted from being constructed entirely in private spheres to being shared on public media spheres too, and have therefore become a part of the online, digital space, enabling the materialization of collective, online cultural communities (Kalinina & Menke, 2016). Digital memory employs the notions of a participant-driven digital community of practice (Jenkins & Ito, 2015), a phenomenon that drives the neo-diasporic immigrants to actively participate in the consolidation of the diasporic digital memory, which is a testament to how social media acts as an important medium of identity-formation, while also functioning in its primary purposes of a "cultural communication medium" (Brock, 2012; cited in Villa-Nicholas, 2019, p. 9).

The existence of a diasporic memory facilitating access to online cultural discourses, however, does not instinctively enable an individual's intention to consume or contribute to these memories, or its cultural implications. Additionally, the virtual sphere of diasporic

memory construction is not available to every member of the cultural social group, with factors such as access to Internet, solidarity within fellow immigrants or even speaking a common native language – given that despite cultural similarities, South Asian diaspora boasts a numerous number of languages. Lastly, there also exists a question of the presence of individual and collective cultural narratives produced within the diasporic memory space, with the presence of a communal cultural identity potentially strengthening the strength of the social group to which the individual belongs to, but might not contribute directly to the individual’s cultural identity (Kalinina & Menkne, 2016). However, be it on an individual or a communal level, millennial immigrants do engage with a virtual, diasporic space at different levels, and therefore, virtual cultural memories constitute a vital research area, to be explored in this study.

Digital memory constitutes a tool for measuring ethnically-influenced cultural identity formation that is happening through social media (Villa-Nichols, 2019), capturing both, how daily interactions on a digital space influence and are also indicative of cultural identity performance, but also leaving space to measure the role of cultural nostalgia in rooting the South Asian diaspora within a predominantly South Asian diasporic, digital memory, and creating the possibility for new methods of identity formation and performance. Therefore, the concept of digital memories must be integrated in studying cultural identity construction and expression, offline and online.

3. Methodology

The studying of abstract concepts such as cultural identity construction among immigrants, especially the young-adult, neo-diaspora, who – in comparison to older immigrants, hold vulnerable connections to their cultures, is a research area that is extremely nuanced, and therefore, requires a qualitative approach in designing the research (Ozer & Schwartz, 2016), expected to provide insight on intangible aspects of individual identity, like personal opinions and experiences (Mack, 2005; Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2014; Ozer & Schwartz, 2016). Furthermore, this research was intended to engage in a qualitative, in-depth analysis of media usage, as representative of significantly cultural performances (Smets, 2018), of the South Asian community. Given the intricate nature of this research area, a thorough exploration of the topic through the interpretations of actual members of diaspora is required. For this purpose, in-depth interviews were selected because they allow for a meticulous and comprehensive exploration of ‘human experiences’, while grounded in concrete truths from the interviewees themselves (Seamon & Gill, 2016). This form of interviews was selected as the most suitable for the present research, as it allowed for participant-driven learning and meaning construction, as opposed to framing participant experience within preconceived notions (Wengraf, 2011). Additionally, one of the many flexibilities afforded through in-depth interviews was that of a semi-structured questioning framework for the researcher, utilizing a thematic topic guide to construct an initial, open-ended list of questions were created, leaving open the potential to restructure the questioning order during the interview, making them relevant to participant experiences (Hermanowicz, 2002).

This research aimed at gauging how the neo-diaspora constructed their cultural identities within the intersection of cultures, focusing on the influence of their native, South Asian cultures. Designed around the theoretical framework outlined in the preceding chapter, the aim of this research process was to gain insight on the cultural identities of these neo-diasporic sample group. The cultural identities, evaluated in the form of expressions and behaviours, were not just limited to their actual, tangible, physical lives, but given the technological predispositions of the generation in question, were also enacted within a digital space (Diamandaki, 2003). Diasporic citizens constitute an important part of their communities, especially online, through the sharing and consuming of personal memories and experiences

within mediated online discourses (Villa-Nichols, 2019). Given the heavily qualitative nature of this research design, the primary research method employed were in-depth interviews and conversation analysis, utilizing their potential to successfully measure personal aspects within a social group as context for data analysis (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). For the purpose of conducting the qualitative exploration and collecting data, a series of 10 semi-structured in-depth interviews was conducted, implementing a flexible approach that allowed for participant-generated construction of meanings (Hermanowicz, 2002).

However, the extent of personal information that was intended to be collected in this research also puts the interviewees in a position of vulnerability, especially when collecting data heavily dependent on private engagements within a digital, media space. In order to fruitfully collect such sensitive data, the role of personal solidarity within the interviewer and interviewee was merited, since a pre-existing positive relationship between the two creates a sense of trust and good faith (Oakley & Cracknell, 1981). In light of that, participants were selected from within personal circles – something further discussed in the sampling section. Furthermore, as a native member of the South Asian neo-diasporic community, the researcher acknowledged the possibility of researcher bias, and actively worked to put practices in place to avoid the same. In conducting personal, in-depth interviews with second and third-generation South Asian immigrants, personal experiences and feelings were intended to be scrutinized, along with outcomes on a digital, cultural space that the researcher was an active member of too.

Factoring in the risk of in-group bias, the experiences and meanings of these cultural behaviours already existing within the researcher's self-concept were deliberated and calculated. However, literature on ethically-sound, qualitative research posits that a pre-existing, established personal point-of-view can provide instrumental and invaluable insight in rewardingly analysing data heavily sensitive to personal experiences of the interviewees (Chenail, 2011). Additionally, seeing how it is virtually impossible to obtain a completely objective hold on any research of qualitative nature (Mays & Pope, 1995, p. 1111), a personal connection to the topic provided an 'insider edge' to the researcher (Blichfeldt & Heldbjerg, 2011), especially given that researcher identity can often shape context around, and influence responses within an in-depth interview (Goffman, 1989; Macri, 2012). The pre-existent, established social presence of the researcher within the field was considered as beneficial to understand interviewee data better, ensuring a

successful framing of follow-up questions accordingly, to guarantee the most optimal data collection from the research process (Blichfeldt & Heldbjerg, 2011).

3.1 Sampling

The aim of this research study was to measure and explore how members of the South Asian neo-diaspora construct their cultural identity, especially in relation to their native culture. Additionally, the manners in which these South Asian neo-diasporic members engage with and contribute to the presence of a digital, cultural memory space were also factored into the research design. Therefore, the sample group was designated to exclusively centre on millennials, or those born between 1981 and 2000 – who are academically acknowledged to be well-situated and thoroughly immersed in technology (Williams et al., 2012). While younger diaspora members too, would classify as prime candidates for constructing and consuming a digital memory, this research design opted to study those diasporic members who were past their adolescence, because while adolescents still undergo cultural-identity formation processes (Erikson, 1994), young adults were more likely to have a clearer grasp on their cultural identities, which was further assumed to be more constructive in studying patterns of how diasporic digital actions were indicative of their cultural identity within online cultural spaces.

Given the time scale of the research project, and the specific nature of the research – especially given the availability of prospective participants, given the state of the Covid 19 pandemic at the time of data collection, the sample size was intended to be around 12 participants, but eventually comprised of 10. While this undoubtedly was a microscopic proportion of the South Asian neo-diaspora, within this group, equal representation was endeavoured to. Given the sample size, participants from the dominant migrant groups of the South Asian region, namely Indians, Pakistanis, Sri Lankans, and Bangladeshis (Chatterji & Washbrook, 2013; Gopinath, 2005) were interviewed, acting as a uniform representation of the South Asian community. Therefore, the sample was determined to be adequate enough to efficiently answer the research question posed (Marshall, 1996).

The participants were accessed through the use of personal networking, given the researcher's existing situation within the research space, and further by snowball sampling,

which has been identified to be effective in locating members of “special populations” in potentially sensitive categories (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). The using of pre-existing social networks allowed for personal reassurances concerning confidentiality and research aims (Browne, 2005), which provided easier access to participant information. Acknowledging the small sample size, the individual experiences narrated in this study were intended to be viewed as symptomatic, and not generalizable indicators of how immigrants access the digital diasporic memory.

3.2 Interviews

A total of 10, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted over the course of two weeks. While participants were selected in advance, at varying times, all the interviews were conducted consecutively, so as to ensure consistency. Additionally, while the conceptual integrity of the theoretical outlook was maintained, the specific framing and order of the questions were adapted on a rolling basis, based on each individual interview experience. All ten interviews were conducted virtually, through the use of audio-visual communication platforms Skype and Facebook messenger – owing to, both, the outcomes of the Covid 19 quarantine and the scattered locations of the diasporic participants. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for the possibility of in-depth exploration of personal matters and thought, both, in an individual and within a wider, social context (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), and flexibility to frame questions depending on participant response.

Following an extensive literature review, central themes were identified and structured in a theoretical framework and was used to frame both an initial and the final interview guide. Broad interview questions were prepared and standardized (Appendix B), ensuring consistency in data collection (Wengraf, 2011), while the organisation and wordings of interview questions were marginally adjusted following the initial few interviews, to ensure efficient data collection. Keeping in mind that the topics explored in this research required a substantive amount of personal reflection, the research aims of the project were provided to the participants beforehand, by means of an Information Sheet (Appendix A). Participants were also assured of confidentiality of their information, and assured anonymity

through the use of pseudonyms. Furthermore, the participants were informed and reminded of their power to withdraw from the study or discontinue the interview at any point. As per good interviewing practices, participants were asked to provide consent before the interviews proceeded (Willis, 2006), acknowledging that they were aware of being recorded and transcribed. While initially, a consent form was intended to be signed, owing to the virtual nature of the interviews, verbal consent was acquired.

Since distance eliminated the potential for face-to-face interviews, video-call interviews were selected, considering they still allowed for consideration of certain non-verbal cues, like expressions and body language, that were also indicative of participant response and would have also been measured in face-to-face interviews (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). Additionally, virtual interviewing allowed for interviewees to be able to participate at times convenient for them, rather than having to schedule and physically attend interviews (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Ethical considerations for this particular form of online interviewing were assumed to be comparatively the same as face-to-face interviews. Room for technical errors, considering strength of Internet connections, and distractions arising at interview settings, were acknowledged and accounted for – with some technical difficulties arising during the processes. However, given the lack of options and considering the value of the raw data collected despite them, the impact of the technological complications were deemed as not significant enough to impact the quality of the data collection process.

3.3 Participant-Reported Content Analysis

While the interview questions were broad and vague, leaving room for participant input and adaptability of the research method, they were all concluded on the same note, through the help of a probe asking participants to shed insight and provide explicit examples of their social media usage in relation to their cultural spaces, which was primarily relevant for the purposes of measuring the existence of a digital, diasporic memory (Opdenakker, 2006). In line with the flow of the interviews, which organically were directed towards cultural expressions on a digital realm, interviewees were explicitly asked to provide examples of how they interact with elements of their native culture, online, specifically through the use of

social media platforms. They were also asked to provide their reasoning for submitting those particular items, and their reasonings too were included as raw data, and included in the analysing process as indicative of participant cultural identity performances online.

Given the immensely sensitive nature of this probe – and the fact that social media behaviour was inherently personal in nature, participants were explicitly requested to only provide examples of content that originated from general, collective ‘group accounts’ (i.e, no personal account posting), that were publicly accessible and explicitly intended for mass consumption, and no manner of personal, identifiable information was to be included – be it of the participant themselves, or of any other member within the diasporic community online. In the case of unavoidable personal information – if the participant truly believed such an example to be of utmost importance to their case, all manners of identifiable information were blurred or anonymized before being reported in this research. Examples of public Facebook group posts, publicly-accessible Instagram accounts’ content and public Twitter account ‘Tweets’ were received and analysed, by means of this probe, which provided necessary support to participant responses and its subsequent analyses. Additionally, the nature of the posts provided by participants were evaluated and considered to be indicative of their personal manners of interaction of digital content, within cultural contexts (Schwartz, 1989), which were then conclusively presented as indicative of a diasporic, digital memory.

3.4 Data Analysis

An inductive thematic analysis approach was adapted for its convenience and flexibility (Braun and Clarke, 2006), conducted to determine the presence of a South Asian neo-diasporic construction of digital memory. Using the three central grounded concepts - Cultural Friction among Immigrants, Being South Asian and the presence of a Diasporic, Digital Memory, these were then applied to the data analysis process through a triple-tiered coding approach, which allowed for a comprehensive outcome that was then framed to validate the research design, applying principles of constructivist grounded theory to data analysis (Chapman, Hadfield & Chapman, 2015).

The initial stage of coding was conducted through a thorough examination of the interview transcripts creating researcher familiarity within each data set, along with

identifying recurring patterns of data (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Multiple open codes were identified in broad categories which were associated with the three central concepts. The second stage of data analysis concerned the recognizing of nine axial codes that reflected the link between the themes identified in open and focused coding (Charmaz, 2014), while in the final stage, the open themed categories were narrowed down to six final codes which would construct the key conceptual framework around which the findings of this research design were to be presented (Cooper, Chenail & Fleming, 2012). Through multiple coding stages, this research design was able to develop abstract concepts into theoretically-sound explanations supporting both, the theoretical framework and the proposed outcomes.

4. Findings

This chapter discusses the findings from the research conducted. The objectives of this research project were to, firstly, identify and validate, within participant experience, the existence of a unified, universal South Asian society. Second, the study aimed to measure the participants' cultural identities within both, the South Asian cultural space, and any other cultures they were exposed to, while, lastly, the concluding objective of this research design was to recognize patterns in which participants engaged with their native or origin cultures, in online, mediated platforms.

Drawing on the themes, identified during the data analysis, and placing them within the theoretical framework, this chapter is divided into six distinct sections, corresponding to the three, primary research focus areas for this project. The first two parts report findings from data analysis to support the establishing of the collective and communal nature of the South Asian culture, both at individual and at societal levels. The third and fourth parts frame the various ways in which Cultural Friction manifests within immigrants, measuring the cultures of both, the homeland and the host-land, and their impacts on practices and preferences, and on cultural identity. The fifth and sixth parts shed light on how the neo-diaspora, being a digital generation, use technology to sustain and uphold their cultural behaviours, practices and overall identities, and are then inferred to be indicative of a Diasporic Digital Memory. Participant pseudonyms, accompanied by the details of their cultural influences, have been used in reporting the findings, while a complete overview of all participants is provided in the Appendices (Appendix C).

4.1. An individual South Asian Identity

Before examining and deducing a diasporic, digital memory from participant cultural behaviour, the foundations of individual cultural identities of the participants had to be laid down. Therefore, one of the main aims of the initial interview questions was to ascertain the existence of a communal, South Asian, collective identity, and place the participants within it. An individual's personal relationship to their political and cultural origins helps consolidate the influences of the same (Bennet, 2012), and therefore, within the South Asian diaspora, personal connections to their native cultures are central to their cultural identity.

The South Asian umbrella encapsulates a number of countries, and while there are common characteristics within South Asian cultures, the South Asian countries themselves are quite large and diverse, ranging from a variety of languages, customs, religions and social practices (Sarwal, 2017). For members of the South Asian diaspora, there exists a likelihood that they originate from regions that have distinct cultures of their own, thereby giving them distinctive characteristics. It is up to the diasporic individuals then, how much of these native, individual characteristics they choose to uphold in cultivating their cultural identity, and how much they are willing to accede to a broader, South Asian identity, which can also discredit certain national and coinciding cultural beliefs (Saw, 2018, pp. 355-357). As a result, ‘South Asian’ was not seen a commonly colloquial term adapted in daily use, with participants choosing instead to identify either directly as a native of their culture of origin, or within a broader cultural framework.

“I wouldn't, I don't think I would describe myself as a South Asian. I said, I'm Asian. And if, if asked then, more than that, I'm Bangladeshi.” (Logan, 24, Bangladeshi-British)

Moreover, an overwhelming response to whether participants identified as ‘South Asian’ was to instead refer to another identifier, that of being ‘brown’, based off the most prevalent shade of skin color among the South Asian communities (Finn, 2008). Another identifier consistently reported across participants was the word ‘*desi*’, a term meaning ‘from the homeland’, originating in the Hindi language which constitutes the most predominantly-spoken vernacular in South Asia (Rajiva, 2009).

“it’s weird though, like we never call each other that though. It’s always brown, or desi...” (Brooke, 25, Bangladeshi-British)

In categorizing themselves as ‘brown’ or ‘*desi*’, participants also mapped out their communal identities to include a broader spectrum of cultural groups, ascribing to a broader cultural narrative of being from continental Asia – usually in the face of Western cultures (Finn, 2008; Handa, 1997).

“I think it's one of those things that I think in the UK, if you say you're Asian, or you say to someone, “Oh, he's Asian|, I think they, I think they envision a brown person...” (Logan, 24, Bangladeshi-British)

While the label of a ‘South Asian’ identity itself was disputed, the notions of self-uniting and categorizing under a common, cultural umbrella was a belief well-enacted within the diaspora, and there were insights on both positive and negative aspects of a South Asian cultural identity. Amidst a collective cultural cognizance, there also exist exclusionary patterns within South Asian communities, behaviours often originating from the native cultures, but also replicated across immigrant communities (Yu and Sun, 2019). An ostracizing characteristic of South Asian cultures concerned a collective, societal – and in some cases, legal, aversion towards individuals of different sexualities. Forms of societal and communal oppression based on sexualities different from heterosexuality are systematically embedded in South Asian society (Tappan, 2006; cited in Sandil, Robinson, Brewster, Wong & Geiger, 2014), and this was expressed by a participant who identified as queer, sharing their experience of being able to consolidate and access their identity as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, explicitly in the absence of a South Asian culture.

“[in present location] I cannot do it like in person, that much? Because I can't like... go to LGBT society... I cannot like, be gay?... And I was in the UK, a lot of the culture that I was involved in was queer culture” (James, 24, Indian)

The concept of a united ‘South Asian’ cultural identity is hypothesized to encourage solidarity and camaraderie (Sarwal, 2017, pp. 150-154). However, when pursued in active participant experience, this did not sustain, primarily due to the fact that nearly every participant rejected the idea of independently identifying themselves within the label “South Asian” itself. Some, when pressed further, acceded to fitting within the parameters of a South Asian identity, but made it clear that it was not an identity they were predisposed to recognize instinctively, instead indicating towards colloquial terms like ‘brown’, based on the predominant, perceived color of skin among the South Asian countries. Within that context, a participant noted that having physical features different from a majority of the community was a cause for exclusionary feelings, thereby negating the strength of the value of community.

“I’m not brown. The color of my skin, it’s not brown. My parents aren’t brown, my family isn’t brown... Even though we’re Nepali, and we’re Indian, we’re not actually brown-skinned, so I’ve never really felt like a part of that either... it’s literally called ‘brown’, and based on the color of people’s skin, and when I look down and see not-brown skin, there’s like a... disconnect there” (Paul, 22, Indian)

4.2. A collective South Asian identity

Apart from individually placing themselves within a South Asian cultural context, there was also a corresponding account of the South Asian cultural space as a collective. Immigrants possess tendencies to engage in behaviours that are the norm in their culture, and for the South Asian cultures, these behaviours include prioritizing engaging with what is considered as a community or as a ‘family’ (Ayyub, 2000). Even in non-native countries, cultural communities are key players in tradition maintenance among South Asian immigrant families (Bhat, 2006), which form an essential part of diasporic cultural-identity construction and continuation (Macri, 2012; Tirumala, 2009, pp. 28-31). The importance ascribed to the presence of a cultural community was distinctly noticeable in interview data. All ten participants interviewed were of South Asian origin, but had spent a significant chunk of, if not their entire lives, in places foreign to their native culture. However, even in moving to places distinctly removed from it, participants reported finding comfort in the presence of South Asian communities in foreign lands.

“I know there’s a stereotype that Brown people always seek out other Brown people, and it’s seen as, like, not expanding or whatever... but I think there’s a certain level of... comfort, you know? *Sukoon* [Urdu word meaning ‘inner peace’] ... But yeah, I guess comfort is pretty close to what I mean, and it’s just, comforting to know that you have your people, or people like you in some form or the other” (Claire, 23, Pakistani-Dutch)

While migrating to a distinctively Western or foreign culture has the potential to disrupt conventional cultural customs, South Asian societies are theorized to maintain their communal tendencies, characterized by strengthened group and family relationships (Stuart

& Ward, 2011). This sentiment was echoed across participants who spent a large portion of their formative years in two distinctly different cultures - the United Kingdom, where the presence of brown communities made it so that “even though it was home away from home, it still felt a little like home” (Marina, 23, Bangladeshi-American) and in the Middle East.

“I mean, they had people with the same-ish backgrounds and cultural values and stuff, and while we all had different... you know, political views and religious ideas and whatever, it was still like... familiar you know? Like my mom knew if she ran out of cinnamon powder, our Indian neighbour would have some... there’s some sort of... I don’t know, family or society kinda feeling in that no? And it was like a growing up in a family... a very big, mixed family” (Marley, 29, Sri Lankan)

Some participants also shed light on how these culturally-united communities were perpetuated over generations, reasoning that the concise cultural circles maintained by their parents lead to them cultivating a similarly categorized social circle amongst the children of their parents’ friends.

“When I say like my family friends, I mean, there's a lot of people, most of my friends are from school obviously, but there's like dozens of friends in mind are like around the same age-ish. And they're like the sons and daughters of my, um, parents university friends... They're all Bangladeshi.” (Logan, 24, Bangladeshi-British)

The integrating, common South Asian identity allowed the members of the diaspora feel camaraderie despite their different national origins (Sarwal, 2017, p. 28). Upon pondering the motive behind the tendencies of South Asian communities to culturally congregate, a participant indicated towards the influence of the commonalities in between them, citing that there was relief to be found in cultural solidarity, especially in the face of new, foreign cultures.

“I guess that's a thing with anyone from a desi culture, like if you are with someone from a different desi culture, you can always find out their differences, but like the moment you're confronted with something new, they are still who you go to, like for

the sense of familiarity? ... the thing is if you leave a Pakistani and Indian and Bangladeshi and a Sri Lankan in a room together, you can see the differences between them. But if you leave them in a room together, in a room filled with people from another nationality, like, non-brown, you will - they will, they will bond together” (Jack, 23, Indian).

In the actuality and perpetuations of these South Asian communities, there also existed a realization among participants that while they identified cultural similarities with multiple social groups, there was a guarantee that the strongest similarity would be among other South Asians.

“also, because, like, we have so much in common with each other, a little more in common than the rest of, like, say East Asians, or Middle Eastern people, so we’re... yeah, we’re always - I’m always going to be brown. And I’m always going to be a part of this global, brown community.” (Tanya, 25, Pakistani-British)

4.3. Cultural Influences on Participant Cultural Identity

The maintaining of traditionally-valued communities help the neo-diaspora sustain their links to their native cultures in an increasingly globalized, cosmopolitan society. This paper argues that the broad field of research on immigration and acculturation processes of migrants needs to incorporate and adapt to studying diasporic relations in light of globalization, placing them in a multi-levelled, multicultural context (Saw, 2018, pp. 352-357). Second, third and younger generation immigrants in particular, can be at risk for experiencing difficulties in self-identifying between two or more cultures. However, studies have found South Asian cultural identity to be of great importance, largely influenced by family and social relationships (Tirumala, 2009). This was well reflected among the participants, who indicated that even within the multiple cultures that shaped their cultural identity, it was the influence of their South Asian culture that was omnipresent.

“With Bangladesh, of course, that’s the chunk of it, that comes from my home, my family. That’s something that can’t be dulled no matter wherever I move, so that

influence - well, I wouldn't say influence so much so as it is my cultural identity, you know? With the others just being like, additional layers to it... Does that make sense? So yeah, I mean, I'm always going to be a Bangla girl." (Marina, 23, Bangladeshi-American)

Some credited the strength of their native cultural influence to attributes like their genealogical characteristics, like looks and skin-colour.

"we look pretty Nepali... I can't outrun those, no matter how hard I try. And I'm still Nepali, even though I have no patriotism or loyalty to the country, as such... but I mean, my face, my skin... that's Nepali. That's always going to be there." (Paul, 22, Indian)

The emphasis on collectivism fosters community-based interdependence throughout the lifespan of the immigrants- for second and third generations, growing up within South Asian households meant enforcement of traditional, collectivist homeland, South Asian values, which were usually contrasting to the more independent and individualistic principles of the host cultures (Stuart & Ward, 2011). Seeing how all participants had to navigate their cultural identity developments across multiple cultures, there were exhibitions of the strength of their native cultures in active comparison to that of the foreign ones.

"I'm probably more interested in the Bangladesh cricket team, than the England cricket team, which is a weird one... [in watching a Bangladesh versus England cricket match] Well, everyone, there was like a British citizen or whatever, but we were all in like the Bangladeshi bit of the ground? And we're all cheering for Bangladesh. Even at that time, I thought like, this is a bit strange, but I sort of just by thinking... like I do, I do support England most of, most of the time. But when we play Bangladesh.." (Logan, 24, Bangladeshi-British)

A multicultural upbringing also brings with it cultural fluidity, allowing immigrants to engage in patterns of intercultural flexibility such as fluency in multiple languages and ease of adaptability in unfamiliar situations (Moore & Barker, 2012). In line with this, interview

questions were designed to measure the compounded influences of multiple cultures among participants, and the outcomes were evident in participant response, particularly when asked to identify their cultural origins.

“I’m all of those places. I have a British passport, I have a Bangladeshi passport, I was born in America, I lived in England most of my life, another 4 years in Italy and I can become an Italian resident... what nationality do you want?” (Brooke, 25, Bangladeshi-British)

Immigrants move back and forth between multiple cultures, inhabiting multiple homes, and executing multiple identities dependant on their cultural situations (Bhatia & Ram, 2004). Owing to the large volumes of immigration, and the heavy presence of the South Asian diaspora across major immigrant hubs, participants were able to, both, find established South Asian cultural communities, and acclimatize to their host cultures while cultivating a healthy balance of the influence of both. One participant reported finding an existing immigrant community in their foreign, host country.

“I think there’s a very, um, hybrid culture of like German into, like, immigrant culture? Like, there’s a very well... long established history of immigrant cultures in Germany... so, like, it was an already established, sort of, culture we were born into, or that we settled into. So yeah, I think, there was a very strong, sort of, immigrant culture that made it quite easy for me... for people like me, to, sort of, balance the - to balance our native and our, German cultures.” (Tanya, 25, Pakistani-British)

While a majority of the interviews contained numerous examples of how a multicultural upbringing instilled a manner of cultural fluidity, there can also be outcomes of cultural dissonance, where the role of the host culture negates the strength of one’s native culture. A participant who was well-integrated in their host culture reported experiencing trouble in facilitating smooth access to their origin cultures. However, they also reported accepting this cultural dissonance as part of their lives as diaspora members.

“... not having a really specific way to express like my Indianness the way that a lot of other Indians from India or Americans of Indian heritage knew to, because I didn't fall into either those blocks, and so I think if anything it like brought me to a point where... I think at some point just realized that, like, I didn't fit into any of them? And then that was like not a big deal, like it was OK.” (Annie, 23, Indian)

4.4. Cultural Expressions and Manifestations

A definite manifestations of the ways in which the diaspora engage with their native culture, is through rituals, best manifesting through behaviours and practices. Keeping in line with the values associated to community within South Asian societies, multiple participants referred to actions through which they held on to their families, labelling it as “the brown co-dependence” that “never leaves” (Tanya, 25, Pakistani-British). Some even addressed how these patterns were replicated across generations, providing examples of how their parents too, held on to this familial dependence when living in foreign cultures.

“[when I was a kid and my] parents were younger, and [they used to go back to our native country quite often, being] like “Mummy, I miss you” to my grandparents.” (James, 24, Indian).

Ethnic and cultural identity can be demarcated to include aspects like culturally-specific knowledge, behaviours and practices (Phinney, 1990; cited in Malhi, Boon & Rogers, 2009; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and this was evident among the diasporic interviewees of this study. In line with theory, when asked to reflect on their own behaviours and how they could be explicitly linked to their cultural roots, the two most common answers among participants were that of speech and of food (Macri, 2012). Participants provided examples of favouring native food habits on a daily basis, or as a source of comfort and joy in times of both, celebration and distress.

“I won't lie, I find myself craving *parotta* [form of bread] and curry every now and then, and then I'm like hunting down the Indian store in the area at 1am or something.” (Paul, 22, Indian)

Speech, in particular, was a primary connector to their native cultures, through their local languages, or mother tongues. Since all participants were fluent English speakers, as a result of the post-colonial influence of the British on the South Asian region, they would consciously switch to their native languages particularly at moments of conflict or detachment from their South Asian cultural identities.

“if you go through my chats with like my friends and my parents, then you see I speak in say, I tried to speak, atleast in - say with you, in Hindi, or my parents in Malayalam more? But if you speak with me now, it's like very rarely, I drop in Hindi. So that was just me trying to - Oh yeah, when my parents used to call me, I just used to make the conversation... like, we used to have the conversation either in Hindi or in Malayalam, like, even though... I can communicate easier in English” (Jack, 23, Indian)

The association of food with comfort and cultural solidarity establishes a key characteristic of South Asian cultural identity (Dasgupta, 1998, p. 956), as does engaging with native languages. While a traditional, assimilationist approach to immigration cultural identity suggests that, in order to successfully integrate, migrants would need to be completely acculturated into the language of the host nation (Macri, 2012, p. 21), immigrants, especially the neo-diaspora have already been established as having fluid, multicultural abilities, one of which include the ability to switch between languages (Chen, Benet-Martinez & Harris Bond, 2008). Participants indicated to correlating their native languages to a strengthened cultural identity, with one interviewee referring to a time in their life when they felt distanced from their South Asian identity, because they were distanced from their native tongue, also recognizing the effort they put in to rectify that.

“I've worked - there was a time in my - like, when I was a teenager that my Bangla was like, like, it was starting to go a little bit? Like, I, I wasn't as good at it? But I made an effort to speak it more. And now it's probably now it's actually pretty better than it ever has been.” (Logan, 24, Bangladeshi-British)

The ritualization of native cultural practices, while most tangibly exhibited through behaviours and practices, can also surface through items and artefacts (Kumar, 2011). Another participant alluded to the patterns in which their parents decorated their houses across multiple locations, citing the consistency of the presence of particular articles and objects as a source of comfort in conceptualizing home.

“I think... it has to do with the way my parents decorated - well I say parents, but really it's my mum... but I think, just the way she's done the house, it's got like... remnants of all our houses across the world? So there's like some sort of continuity in that? And wherever we live, wherever they live, it'll always feel like home?” (Claire, 23, Pakistani-Dutch)

In exploring their positions as members of their cultures of origin, a significant percentage of participants engaged in a clear demarcation between the geographical location of their native culture, and the culture itself. They followed this up by explaining how, owing to a life spent outside the city, or country in question, they did not frame the actual locality as 'home', but being raised in a prevailing South Asian manner meant that they found similarity within the culture itself, in a way that allowed them to conceptualize the culture as 'home'.

“Bangladesh has never been home to me... I know it sounds sad, and don't get me wrong, I'm a Bangla[deshi] boy through and through, Bangladesh will always be a part of me. But the country itself has never been home... I'm always going to be Bangla, and the Bangladeshi culture will always be a home to me...” (Brooke, 25, Bangladeshi-British)

However, a life lived in between multiple cultures also has negative impacts on cultural identity, enabling dissonance in balancing the influences of multiple cultures.

“But I still would not... I wouldn't call it home now. But like, when I go back, I'm like “Yeah, this is my homeland”. Like, it's the only time I - I don't really get nostalgic about it until I go there and I realize, like, that I am in some way connected to the place. I'm

connected to some of Tamil culture... And then that is like some, like, Dubai culture that I sort of, like, snuck in there and like a little bit of Leeds... Just like, you know, like it's not really - I'm not really 100 percent at home in any one place? I'm homeless.” (James, 24, Indian)

4.5. Technological Outlets of Cultural Expression

A large part of these behaviours, engaging in native languages or enacting desires for native food habits, are upheld with the help of media and technology, especially for the digitally fluent neo-diaspora. Participants offered accounts of using mobile ‘apps’ to acquire regional food via delivery (Marley, 29, Sri Lankan) – especially popular amongst second, third and younger generation immigrants who were, on the whole, not as dedicated to making local food at home as the earlier generations. They were also quick to link their behaviours of connecting with their South Asian identity to acts of connecting with their family and friends within the South Asian umbrella. For the mobile, diasporic sample group, these acts were easily implemented with the help of digital technology- examples of audio and visual telecommunication platforms like Skype and Facetime were labelled “the immigrant families’ best friend” (Marina, 23, Bangladeshi-American), while social messaging applications like Whatsapp too, were identified as a significant connective tool.

“I mean, obviously there was media usage and just generally - talking to you, talking to my other friends, talking to my parents... It's uh, it's just like a, very, like a typical Indian household and we, I talk to my grandparents every week.” (Jack, 23, Indian)

However, the constant connectivity allowed by technology was also viewed as potentially negating the necessity to overtly maintain connections to participant cultural spheres.

“It's so easy to connect with people we don't like, value it, maybe? ... I don't honestly know, I mean, when, when I say that, I mean, like I never feel the need to communicate because I know I can communicate whenever?” (Logan, 24, Bangladeshi-British)

Additionally, within technology, the role of media and productions centred around representations of culture in mediated spaces were seen to play a role among the diaspora, with participants relating instances of how they were able to support and validate their cultural identities (Purkayastha, 2006), even the hybrid selves that arose from their lives in between multiple cultures.

“seeing like, brown people in my German shows - there’s this show *Druck*, they had a season on a brown, Muslim, hijabi girl... and like, it wasn’t specifically relatable to me, but it was a good reminder, or connection to the immigrant, German culture I was talking about... which was so close to home... Like, I’ve never not felt like not German, but I always carry a chip on my shoulder about where I’m from... and it was just good to see that.” (Tanya, 25, Pakistani-British)

A participant indicated how they utilized media to frame their behaviours among different cultures, referring to their tendency to mimic actions they viewed on media platforms when encountered with the equivalent culture.

“there is a very strong urge to act like the people you saw on TV or respond to things in a certain way or I think be a caricature of like others around here, than, you know, like express yourself in a way that maybe you did before, you know?” (Annie, 23, Indian)

Participants also credited the ease of access afforded by digital technologies, through social media, to allowing them to create and sustain personal relationships to their cultures, independent of their social relationships and spheres of influence.

“Like people, I don’t know directly, or didn’t know directly... but through social media, and through, finding people on social media, it’s helped, kinda, strengthen that bond that I personally have with my culture? Like independent of my mother, or my *nani* [grandmother], but these are cultural bonds I make on my own, and that’s thanks to social media.” (Claire, 23, Pakistani-Dutch)

Additionally, social media and its unique methods of connectivity have allowed participants to pick and choose parts of the culture they exist within in a manner that would allow their cultural identity to flourish, without obstacles. James, who identified themselves as queer and inferred to how their sexuality was not acceptable within the South Asian culture, shed light on how they were able to maintain both, their queer and their South Asian identity within different digital spaces.

“That's how I access that part of myself... I just block people.... When you don't have a safe place to be yourself in your real life, you have to turn somewhere. When that somewhere is online, it's really easy to be yourself there! I still use technology to, like, hold on to all parts of my identity.” (James, 24, Indian)

4.6. A South Asian Community, Online

Research on diasporic identity indicates the existence of a collective memory and a vision of the homeland kept intact through the efforts of the members within (Smets, 2018). Among the neo-diaspora, a generation well enmeshed with technology, this collective memory is theorized to be replicated in a digital space (Macri, 2012). The existence of this digital memory is what the project was ultimately designed to explore, and evidence of this was inferred from participant accounts of both, the communal nature of South Asian social groups and their disposition to use technology to stay connected to their cultural identities. Combining all the data gathered from the earlier sections of the research, the penultimate part of the interview aimed at getting participants to share their experiences of dealing with a cultural community in a digital, mediated, social space.

“[A lot] in our process is very much like, aided by just having access to, like a lot of social media, but also a lot of like, just, personal archives of like photos and videos and things like that. But I definitely think like a lot of social media, so much as I think - even if you're not going back to like... In a very generic way, like pictures, or memories that you have, like sort of splayed across social media with friends, you are still like going to said social media, you know, of friends, you know, to sort of like feel a closeness or something like that. I think another way is just like, very simply it kind of like feeling

connected to other people by watching, like, the same videos or memes or TikToks and things like that becomes like a very large piece then, in like, feeling connected...”
(Annie, 23, Indian)

For the diaspora that weren't as strongly rooted in their South Asian identities, the presence of these communities online helped them develop and reinforce their cultural personalities. For those who identified themselves as well-connected to their South Asian identities in their real, 'offline' lives, the presence of a diasporic community online allowed for them to cultivate “cultural bonds” on their own, “independent” of the cultural ties implemented and maintained by familial values and relations (Claire, 23, Pakistani-Dutch). Apart from directly making connections to fellow members of , the South Asian diasporic communities are also replicated and sustained online and across digital media technologies in the form of ‘memory banks’ (Macri, 2012, p. 84). With the advent of new media technologies, immigrant communities have been able engage in a system of ‘cultural maintenance’, being able to sustain and maintain traditional cultural values across digital platforms (Appadurai, 1996; Tirumala, 2009; Ladha, 2005), engaging in processes of cultural nostalgia.

Cultural nostalgia refers to the feeling of longing, to return to, or access again, a culture left behind. For a mobile diaspora, this forms a key constituent of their cultural identity, and is most effectively dealt with, through personal involvement with the corresponding cultural institutions. In a tangible sense, this involvement is usually manifested through engaging with cultural neighbourhoods and stores and consuming ‘ethnic products’ (Kandiyoti, 2006) – a behaviour well reported among participants. However, given the presence of cultural spaces on a digital plane, the act of personal involvement with cultural institutions to tackle nostalgia has become simpler and more accessible. Participants were quick to report instances of finding common ground among other cultures, expressing “joy” at being able to relate to “subtle references to being brown” (Tanya, 25, Pakistani-British). Within a digital, social media space, united by their shared cultural experiences, these young, diasporic individuals were able to customize their online cultural spheres, consolidating in ‘groups’ for some.

“I met them on a group... And yeah, we sort of bonded over food. And that seems to be another common thing that you can find, that sort of unites cultures?.. Like that group is like a huge example of it, because you will find like Latinx people and East Asians and like South Asians and, you know, Middle Eastern people... like all of us, just bonding over the same thing?” (James, 24, Indian)

When explicitly asked about the presence of a South Asian cultural space on social media platforms, nearly all participants referred to a Facebook group in particular, titled “Subtle Curry Traits” (Logan, 24, Bangladeshi-British; Jack, 23, Indian), which has “what, like 21 thousand people? All sharing common laughs and stuff...” (Marley, 29, Sri Lankan). Upon verification by the researcher, the group was seen to have 786.5 thousand members (Source: Facebook). This group self-defined as “Uniting and inspiring subcontinental cultures through humour” (Curry Traits, n.d.) – the term ‘subcontinental’ referring to the cultures of the countries geographically located in the Indian Subcontinent, thereby proving to be an excellent candidate for the manifestation of the very diasporic, digital memory this research study set out to explore. One participant referred to the ability to access the digital memory, and the cultural members within it as something replicating values and feelings of ‘home’ – especially significant for immigrants who often feel the loss of a stable ‘home’ in their lives across multiple locations and cultures (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

“realizing how universal our experiences are, seeing someone dress up for a wedding - it feels like family, honestly. I think in losing out on our home cultures together, we created our own family. And I’m super happy that we have this, you know, like the Subtle Curry groups on Facebook, the Instagram fashion and makeup and food pages, the Twitter groups - it feels so, so good, like I’m honestly more in touch with my Bangla self now, with these people, than I’ve ever been.” (Marina, 23, Bangladeshi-American)

True to the primary aim of this project, the concluding questions of the interviews were framed to measure how participants constructed, contributed to and consumed content within the diasporic, digital memory, and each of these were addressed by the participants, without explicitly being probed. In talking about how they utilized the cultural spaces available

online to construct their version of the digital memory, participants gave examples of how they curated access to culturally-specific spaces across various social media platforms.

“...[through] following a Indian meme pages on Instagram or like Indian trends on Twitter...” (Jack, 23, Indian)

Most users of social media also have propensities to contribute to these spaces themselves. Within the findings, participants reported contributing to the diasporic, digital memories like posting pictures “taken in [native country], on Instagram” (Logan, 24, Bangladeshi-British), through sharing content specific to their native cultures, on a social media platform.

“I think my contribution... my contribution to a Pakistani cultural space online, to use your words, would be limited to an Instagram story of me in a *pashmina* [Pakistani shawl], holding a cup of chai or something.” (Claire, 23, Pakistani-Dutch)

The majority of user time spent on social media concerns their consumption of subject matter (Marwick & Boyd, 2011), and therefore, was a behaviour this study explicitly wanted to evaluate. Participants were asked to provide examples of content they encountered in their journeys across the digital, diasporic memory, and they responded with examples of content from social media applications and platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Instagram, elaborating on which aspects they related to.



“This is a South Indian singer who sings about my culture in this song... This particular screenshot is important too, because she’s wearing traditional South Indian clothes, and of course, the name of the song is in my regional tongue... This is something I used to go to when I felt home sick... or really reminds me of my roots.” (Jack, 23, Indian)

Jack shed light on how encountering a distinctly cultural-specific post on the social media platform Instagram helped her access a pre-existing bond, generating a longing immersed in cultural value (Kalinina & Menke, 2016) for her homeland.



“I follow a lot of these ‘cultural’ pages on Instagram... and I’ve definitely felt like, I’ve gotten closer to my cultural roots through these, in ways my parents couldn’t teach me - just because they don’t know it themselves, you know? Like just today, I saw a post that said the game Snakes and Ladders originated in pre-colonial India, and I had no idea! Imagine, I grew up all my life playing a game probably my great great great grandfather was also playing or something!” (Marina, 23, Bangladeshi-American)

Marina inferred to acquiring new, historical knowledge, consuming and reproducing an abstract memory that existed independently across the cultural digital space (Finn, 2008) into her own, cultural identity.



“This is, like, a scene I grew up around, you know! I know people don’t usually associate Christmas decorations with Karachi, with Pakistan being a Muslim country, obviously, but it always thrilled me when I came across it as a kid, because it felt like, it was our secret or something... But yeah, so, when I saw this on Instagram it was so cool, it was like going back in time! But also, nice to know that this still happens!” (Claire, 23, Pakistani-Dutch)

Claire provided an example of a social media post being symbolic of what she dubbed a “secret” between her and her native culture, in the act of a popularly Western, non-Islamic event being celebrated in her Islamic, South Asian country; Through viewing a picture, Claire was able to access a culturally-specific memory that rooted her in her cultural identity.



“Man, this cracked me up! [It is a] super annoying reminder at how often non-brown people confuse us [Sri Lankans] for Indians... They do that for others too, like, they see a brown person and they always assume they’re Indian and it’s just... People need to realize it is possible for other people to also be brown and not Indian!” (Marley, 29, Sri Lankan)

In his sample, Marley shed light on the perceived commonality in between South Asian cultures, and how this often led to confusion between identifying and recognizing the specific cultural groups under the South Asian umbrella, especially within Western society. By clearly mentioning the terms “them” and “us”, Marley ascribed to the social constructivist theory of classifying oneself within and in comparison to other cultural groups (Hall, 1990), while also signposting the propensity of Western society to both, converge individual South Asian cultures as

one, and also identify South Asian cultures as primarily to be Indian (Finn, 2008, pp. 14-15).



“It's not just like a cultural thing, it transcends generations! Coz like, I showed this to my dad and I showed it to my mom and they were like, 'yeah, we do this also!' Literally my dad, oh my God, his reaction to that video was “[...] This is an invasion of privacy”... Like, that's a thing that I sort of used to both bond with my parents, and I remember... we both got it. And I feel like that's a thing that if I went up to like anyone who's like in like India, I can be like “Ey, have you taken bucket bath”...” (James, 24, Indian)

James, through their example, was able to indicate the continuity of the cultural value of a specific behaviour as a memory relevant across generations, while also crediting the role of a culturally-specific digital media space in sustaining these memories, and being able to access them at ease.

The cases provided by participants were all on public, social media platforms, accessible to by people of all cultures, but presumably most commonly viewed by South

Asians. The popularity and relatability of the posts could be seen, both through participant explanations and through the displays of statistics included in the photographs - for example, the data reported in this study, showing 220 thousand views, garnering 5.6 thousand likes and acquiring 5 million views and 97 thousand likes. This study argues that communal acceptance of these culturally specific contents are indicative of the diasporic, digital memory, and members of this sizeable community utilize their access to this digital memory as a way of keeping their native cultural identity “alive and strong” (Marina, 23, Bangladeshi-American).

“I’m always going to be connected to my cultures, but sometimes I worry about, forgetting, like, specifics, or something? Like, I can’t really explain it [laughs], but it’s just, it’s comforting to know that I can have this, this online space, where I can... derive this joy from being able to relate to something so specific... you know?” (Tanya, 25, Pakistani-British)

Through the acts of construction, contributing to and consuming these cultural content online members of the neo-diaspora are able to construct, re-construct, sustain and evolve their cultural identities while also engaging with and sustaining the presence of a diasporic, digital memory. These behaviours are therefore indicative of cultural identity within members of the South Asian neo-diaspora.

5. Conclusion

This research project was designed to evaluate how members of the South Asian neo-diaspora construct and perform their cultural identities, as part of their daily lives in the real world, but also on a digital realm. By measuring how the young diaspora utilized the benefits of technological advancements to sustain their cultural identities, this research also aimed to explore and corroborate the existence of a cultural, digital memory space (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). To do so, the diasporic identities of the participants of this study had to be established first, before gauging how they used using digital technology to maintain their connections to their cultures. Based on the six themes identified in the data analysis, this chapter will first justify the research question, before conclusively discussing and placing the findings within the theoretical framework established in Chapter 2.

With the advent of globalization in the recent decades, immigration has increasingly become a significant research area in the fields of sociology, anthropology and cultural studies, growing faster than the rate of global population growth (Amrith, 2014). Owing to their lifestyles of constant mobility between multiple nations, immigrants are exposed to a variety of cultures across their lives. This, then, affects the cultural identity of these immigrants, which is a critical and prominent component of overall individual identity (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Identities are open to reconstitution across time and geographies, and a lifetime of contact with varying ‘host’ cultures, while also dealing with the internalized ‘home’ culture, can lead to a substantial amount of friction in immigrant cultural identity (Chisholm, 2013; Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2014; Luo & Shenkar, 2010; Moore & Barker, 2012). This friction can either have negative impacts, creating cultural dissonance, cultural rootlessness (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), challenges in assimilating successfully (De Meyer, 2014) and identity confusion (Schaetti, 2000). Conversely, cultural friction can also have positive bearings on immigrants, resulting in culturally fluid capabilities like increased intercultural sensitivity (Christmas & Barker, 2011), ability to adapt swiftly and successfully to unfamiliar cultures (Moore & Barker, 2012) and hold multiple cultural identities (Berry, 2008). Cultural friction, thereby, has immense influential potential for immigrant cultural identity development.

Among the global immigrant population, the largest proportion, based on cultural and political origin, migrate from South Asia, which, owing to their similar postcolonial journeys,

refers to the nations and cultures of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan (Minocha, 1987; Sarwal, 2017; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019). South Asian culture, while comprising of distinctly individual nations, also promotes a monocultural association and spirit of solidarity, encouraging a common belief of unity as comforting in the face of obstacles arising in foreign cultures (Rangaswamy, 2005; Sarwal, 2017). This common, cultural emphasis on collective unity implements the upholding of traditional values like importance of family and social networks, resulting in the formation of explicitly South Asian, cultural social groups in non-South Asian locations. The presence of these groups are significant for ethnic, and subsequently, cultural identity construction (Macri, 2012; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For first generation immigrants who spent a significant part of their lives within their native cultures, culturally traditional behaviours are embedded organically, but for second and third generation South Asian immigrants, these are recreated by their parents. Furthermore, immigrant parents tend to seek out similar cultural social groups, thereby extending the framework of South Asian cultural influence for the young diaspora (Stuart & Ward, 2011). The core values of the South Asian culture, like upholding a South Asian social group, are almost consistently maintained across generations of immigrants. However, the later generations have to deal with their host cultures almost in the same capacity as their home cultures, owing to the fact that these younger immigrants often spend their whole lives outside their native cultures, making them a deserving research area in their own right.

Digital technologies allow for a dismantling of the constraints of time and space, enabling communication and exchange between individuals and groups that otherwise could not possibly learn together or form an ongoing community of practice (Chisholm, 2013, pp. 73-75; Fitzgibbon & Reiter, 2003; Sefton-Green & Erstad, 2013). Within the diaspora, these are most commonly second or third generation, or the children of first generation immigrants, and these are proposed to be classified as the “neo-diaspora” (Saw, 2018). Owing to their digital native propensities, the neo-diaspora experience different cultural identity journeys, and the opportunities they are afforded through technological advancements were not available to their earlier generations. Since the neo-diaspora were key associates for measuring the diasporic, digital memory, this research looked exclusively at diasporic individuals between the ages of 20-30, generating insight on how technology and media in the 21st century are being used to express and access cultures online.

In order to ascertain the construction and performance of South Asian cultural identity, there was a requirement to map cultural identity within the individual members of the South Asian neo-diaspora. Every participant in this study was of South Asian origin, deriving their homeland culture from either India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka or Nepal, while their host-land cultures consisted of a wider range, from Western cultures like American, British, German and Dutch to Middle Eastern cultures like Bahraini and Emirati. While not explicitly aimed for in determining sample selection, this was concurrent to the chief locations of the South Asian diaspora, since nearly 5.4 million South Asians live in the United States (SAALT, 2019), consist 50% of all ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom (Iqbal, Johnson, Szczepura, Wilson, Gumber & Dunn, 2012), while also consisting a significant proportion of immigrant populations in Europe (Eurostat, 2017) and the Middle Eastern countries of Saudi Arabia and the UAE (ILO, 2018).

Research on cultural identity suggested that adherence to traditional customs and conventions uphold a sense of continuity and familiarity across generations (Chen, Benet-Martinez & Harris Bond, 2008). In line with this, findings regarding South Asian immigrants in Western countries suggest that while the diaspora have always been able to adapt to local cultures, they still managed to retain their traditional values concerning home, family and religion, among others, while also simultaneously incorporating foreign, perceived ‘Western’ values and behaviours such as individualism, and cultural and social nonalignment (Dasgupta, 1998, p. 962; Ozer et al., 2017, p. 298). These native cultural ideals are maintained both, at individual and societal levels (Berry, 1995), and a driving force behind keeping these values intact, through the presence of culturally-similar community. Within the findings, there were layered approaches to which participants accessed their South Asian cultural identity, the most superficial one being identifying with, or rejecting the phrase ‘South Asian’ itself, but also extending to reporting positive associations with South Asian social groups, correlating them to concepts of “home”, “family” and “familiarity” (Marina, 23, Bangladeshi-American; Marley, 29, Sri Lankan; Jack, 23, Indian).

Those with multicultural identities need to sustain a connection not only with their homeland but also within other cultures, either within a broader, diasporic umbrella, or in relation to the multitude of external cultures encountered (Saw, 2018, pp. 352-357). This was evident in trying to chart participant cultural identity, with nearly every respondent reporting

hybrid identities. Many were able to point at instances and behaviours which were indicative of an inclusive, well-balanced cultural identity and ability to fluidly shift between multiculturally influenced aspects dependent on the situation at hand. A small fraction of participants, however, expressed feelings of dissonance in navigating their hybrid identities, still being able to identify and attribute parts of their identities to their various cultural influences, but also reporting not feeling a “100 percent at home” (James, 24, Indian) among any one, particular culture. These reports were thematically categorized as indicative of cultural friction, and while this friction is imagined to create conflict in cultural identity formation (Farver, Narang & Bhadha, 2002), in reality, second and third generation immigrants, or the neo-diaspora, tend to be quite skilled in adapting a multicultural approach, demarcating their identity amongst various cultures based on the situation at hand (Chen, Benet-Martinez & Harris Bond, 2008). This was seen in participant response as the operating of one cultural identity “at home” and another one, “outside” (Jack, 23, Indian).

Furthermore, the presence of collective South Asian communities and social groups across the world has ensured that young members of the South Asian diaspora are able to consistently access and uphold the native parts of their cultural identity long after leaving the direct influence of their parents (Handa, 1997), thereby giving their South Asian identity an ‘edge’ over the influences of other cultures. This perceived ‘edge’ was well demonstrated among participants who expressed clarity in being rooted to their native cultures “no matter where I move” (Marina, 23, Bangladeshi-American). The strength of their South Asian cultural identities were further explained through expressions of personal preferences, behaviours, rituals and possession of items, usually linked with, or originated from their homeland (Chatterji & Washbrook, 2013, pp. 319-322; Nasir & Hand, 2006), accrediting physical and tangible objects like food and products, but also intangible behaviours like speech, as “remnants” (Claire, 23, Pakistani-Dutch) of the cultures they’ve left behind.

Immigrants are able to express and sustain their cultural affiliations and identities through the use of ritualized behaviours and objects (Kumar, 2011), and within the context of a digital, contemporary society, a large proportion of these expressions of cultural processes are now being replicated online (Thompson, 2018; Robson, Zachara & Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska, 2014). Technology and innovation has risen to the forefront of the modern, global society that exists, and the world is now ‘online’ (Villa-Nicholas, 2019; Williams et al., 2012). Within immigration

studies, electronic media and digital technologies have been an essential tool for the diaspora in rooting and strengthening their cultural identities (Appadurai, 1996), helping keep diasporic communities connected with their cultural roots by providing them access to cultural spaces at their convenience (Tirumala, 2009, pp. 46-50). Media technologies were marked as diasporic tools of identity construction in participant response, with accounts of culturally-specific media products like television shows and movies rooting the diaspora in their cultural identities, deriving “joy” from recognizing and relating to “subtle references to being brown” (Tanya, 25, Pakistani-British). The cross-cultural relevance of this digital content could also be attributed to the values of cultural nostalgia, with cultural values and memories shared and replicated across generations of diaspora contributing to a communal cultural nostalgia. Due to the increased availability of digital technologies, the grounds of expression of cultural nostalgia through cultural memories are being restructured, through content being created and consumed across immigrant communities is magnified greatly ‘online’ (Villa-Nicholas, 2019; Yu & Sun, 2019). This allows for the creation of fluid associations between multiple cultures for the young diaspora in a globalised world (Arnseth & Silseth, 2013, pp. 25-27).

Within the findings of this study, most participants noted the role of Internet technologies in “opening up borders” virtually (James, 24, Indian), allowing its users to learn about other cultures and recognize the commonalities between them. Moreover, given the increased likelihood that the architects of these online cultural communities were also fellow, digital natives, and consequently, part of the young, neo-diaspora, they were likely to be experiencing parallel journeys in their cultural identity development. One participant explained it as “in losing out on our home cultures, together”, these digital natives united in their loss with a sense of solidarity, consolidating a virtual “family” (Marina, 23, Bangladeshi-American). Another participant made an inference to learning and formulating opinions about the politics of South Asian countries and communities through the social media platform Twitter, attributing the presence of “intellectual discussion and think-pieces” as learning materials concerning the political realities of South Asian cultures and their corresponding countries (Tanya, 25, Pakistani-British). Apart from directly making connections to fellow members of , the South Asian diasporic communities are also replicated and sustained online and across digital media technologies in the form of “memory banks” (Macri, 2012, p. 84). With the advent of new media technologies, immigrant communities have been able engage in cultural maintenance, being able

to sustain nostalgic value and maintain traditional cultural values across digital platforms (Appadurai, 1996; Tirumala, 2009; Ladha, 2005).

Personal identity is being digitised with the help of social media, as activities on online social network sites are theorized to closely mirror user identities in the offline world (Sinn & Syn, 2013). The many aspects of personal identity, including cultural identity, then are being synchronised with this sizeable digital memory that is being created as culture is being practiced online. These identity-making processes have adapted a nature of constant revision in a fluid, constantly evolving digital space (Good, 2012), which is primarily conceptualized as a Diasporic, Digital Memory (Villa-Nicholas, 2019). The performance and perceived construction of cultures online are being carried out through the contribution and consumption of digital artefacts, like the content that is being produced and shared across social networking sites. User profiles, photographs, text content, and even ‘friends’ and ‘followers’ are commonly either representative or suggestive of user identities “offline” (Garde-Hansen, 2009, pp. 132-133; Good, 2012). In exploring participant behaviour in manners pertaining to their cultural identities online, this study had to factor in the role of digital artefacts, since they were actual, published ‘posts’, instead of abstract thoughts and feelings, that could be translated directly as indicative of the cultural, digital memory being appraised. While documentation is done on a personal basis, the social network potential of these digital spaces allow for a consolidation of groups, or communities (Sinn & Syn, 2013). Within cultural studies, communities of shared cultural backgrounds – such as the South Asian community, often share similarities in their memories of the same, which affect the way they conceptualize these cultures. These similar cultural expressions, when shared online by different individuals, also create a South Asian collective community online, usually matching the reality offline (Srinivasan & Shilton, 2006). For the South Asian neo-diaspora, their cultural values emphasize on community and cultural solidarity, and respect and dependence on the continuation of these values, and in combination with their ‘offline’, physical spheres of cultural influence, like their families and culturally similar social circles, these individuals also engage in cultural identity ‘online’, through the role of a diasporic, digital memory (Ozer et al., 2017; Saw, 2018, pp. 340-341).

Participants, upon confirming that they recognized the presence of the South Asian culture online, were then asked if and how they directly interacted with this cultural space themselves. While two participants reported shirking social media, a majority of them were

quick to identify social media platforms Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as outlets of cultural engagement and expression. All three being social networking sites, provide various venues for regular interaction, through outlets such as status updates, comments, photographs and user profiles, thus making it possible for users to share personal expressions of behaviour (Sinn and Syn, 2013). In order to effectively measure and further support participant response, this research design also integrated a specific request to its participants – to provide actual examples of these digital artefacts, which they, both, encountered within the cultural memory space online, but - factoring in the diversity under the South Asian umbrella, also those that were directly related to their specific cultural identities. A crucial challenge in categorizing digital memories, for both, users and researchers, is how to cope with the vast quantity of material (Czerwinski et al., 2004). For users, they engage in processes of filtering which, while filtering through an endless platform of content can be demanding, can also be inductive and more easily applied, like political views and cultural groups. Users tend to gravitate towards content directly appealing to their identities, and in doing so, automatically curate their online exposure, even within boundless digital memories. Among participants, instances of this automatic curation were implied through mentions of ‘groups’ on Facebook – one group in particular, named ‘Subtle Curry Traits’ was the most common occurrence in this category. The group name being a nod to the phrase ‘curry’, a vernacular commonly used by Western or non-South Asian cultures to categorize South Asian people, the ‘Subtle Curry Traits’ group has nearly 800 thousand members and identifies as a “platform that exists to empower a community of subcontinentals worldwide no matter your background, race or caste” (CurryTraits, n.d.).

This research conclusively argues that the manifestation of this group in itself, taking into account the volume and demography of its members, and its self-stated purpose, is a highly relevant example of a South Asian, digital ‘memory’. However, there are many other curations of cultural memory spaces, as exhibited in participant response, referring to other Facebook ‘groups’ and Instagram ‘pages’, explicitly dedicated to transferring South Asian content across to the global diaspora who seek it out. Each of these ‘groups’ and ‘pages’ had a significant volumes of user traffic, indicated by ‘likes’, ‘comments’ and ‘shares’. These were useful in filtering out the data for reporting findings in this study, as the more popularly engaged or interacted-with an example of cultural, digital content was, the stronger implications it had for being reflective of a communal, South Asian identity. As reported in the findings, both through participant response

and through engagement statistics, it was evident that a majority of these social or digital media posts, or academically framed as ‘digital artefacts’, were being created and consumed for the purposes of undertaking, recreating or sustaining cultural behaviours online, across substantial volumes of people. The popularity of these digital artefacts across the diasporic sample were suggestive of a Diasporic, Digital Memory, which was identified as indicative of resolving Cultural Friction among the diaspora, through engaging in behaviours and performances of Being South Asian cultural identity online, thereby answering the research question this study was designed around.

5.1 Answering the Research Question

The research question for this study was- *How does the South Asian neo-diaspora construct and contribute to cultural identity performance, offline and online?*

In conducting this research, it was essential to ground three central theoretical concepts- Cultural Friction among immigrants, Being South Asian and the presence of a Diasporic, Digital Memory. The presence of these foundations, in combination with the theoretical framework helped analyse, frame and contextualize the findings of the study, with the help of a three-tiered coding process. Six final codes were outlined, two per central concept, and together, they helped generate an answer to the research question. While cultural friction as a concept was omnipresent in every neo-diasporic member of this study, the research question was focused specifically on their South Asian cultural identities. As a result, the flow of information both, in the raw data, and in the final outcomes, addressed participant South Asian identity first, before approaching the other two concepts.

Within the South Asian cultural umbrella, identity was seen to be performed in two levels, as individuals expressed their South Asian identities both in personal, individual terms and within the concept of their social spheres. While the specific moniker ‘South Asian’, theorized to generate feelings of solidarity (Chatterji & Washbrook, 2013; Prashad, 1999; cited in Sarwal, 2017; Saw, 2018), was rejected as not being colloquially popular among the respondents, the presence of a common, communal South Asian identity was well acknowledged, with participants indicating to more informal practices of categorizing themselves, using phrases like ‘brown’ or ‘desi’ as indicative of the foundations for

similarity within the group. However, the individual influences of the nations under the South Asian umbrella were not remiss, with some respondents reporting to favouring their singular national identity before assenting to a common, South Asian one.

The importance of family, and other social relations within the same cultural sphere are well emphasized in South Asian cultural values (Ozer et al., 2017) and the presence of these values and beliefs were both, intact and highly relevant within respondent lives. Family and friends of family were frequently attributed to, across conversations about staying rooted within the South Asian culture, along with instances of engaging with other South Asians outside participant inner circles. The presence of a South Asian group within participant social spheres was assigned a degree of comfort and familial feeling, even when referring to relationships outside biological or chosen families, thereby proving that the neo-diaspora maintained, respected and upheld the traditional South Asian value of the importance of a cultural community, and drew inferences from their interactions to and within these communities, as acts of performing their South Asian cultural identity.

Upon further discussion on their perceived acts of performing South Asian cultural identity, participants were able to shed light on the ways they navigated through the waters of cultural friction that they were all a part of, owing to their lives growing up across a multitude of nations and geo-political cultural grounds. While charting out their relationship with the multiple cultures imposed on them, a majority of the sample size exhibited cultural fluidity through accounts and expressions of ease of adaptability and switching between cultural behaviours depending on the situation. Some, however, were symptomatic of experiencing cultural dissonance, through expressions of feeling unrooted from their host and home cultures. The strength of the South Asian cultural influence was felt across all accounts though, in the form of self-reported behaviours and expressions of thought and preferences. Not only across accounts of participants well-adjusted within their cultures, but even within those who perceived themselves as detached from their cultural identities, the influence of their South Asian roots were noted and recognized by participants themselves. Linguistic expression and food preferences were, in line with literature, identified as two principal expressions of a South Asian cultural identity (Dasgupta, 1998), but the rituals of calling family members, and the presence of tangible items in their places of residences, directly linked to their cultural roots, too, were widely reported across all respondent data.

Furthermore, in expressing how they performed acts of cultural expression privy to their South Asian roots, participants spontaneously approached the third central concept themselves, linking their performances of cultural identity within a digital space. Indicating to how mobile applications helped them order culturally-specific food or watch culturally-specific media content, and social networking platforms helped them both, keep in touch with their families or other relationships within the cultural sphere, but also participate in speaking, or ‘practicing’ their native languages. Since all participants, like the majority of the South Asian neo-diaspora, spoke English as their first language, the acts of speaking their mother tongues were deliberate efforts to remain rooted within their South Asian culture.

Social media, which constituted the premise of the concept of digital memories, was widely cited as the focal point of participant connection to native cultures, especially since most of them had been living apart from family for a while. This not only cemented the digital native characteristic of the neo-diaspora, but also confirmed the presence of a cultural, digital memory. Alluding to the theoretical concepts of a cultural memory made collectively relatable across South Asian cultural groups due to cultural nostalgia, participants spoke of curating their cultural experience of social media through public ‘pages’, public ‘groups’ and public accounts on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, dedicated exclusively to South Asian content. Moreover, the fact that within the examples of social media outlets, there were examples of heavily populated ‘groups’ focused on overall South Asian content, not just content pertaining to the individual national cultures under the South Asian umbrella, implied that the nature of cultural solidarity among South Asians were common practices among the neo-diaspora, and translated online to consolidate in the form of a diasporic digital memory. This was viewed as conclusively indicative of South Asian neo-diasporic performance of cultural identity online.

5.2 Relevance of Research

In light of globalization, leading to increased cultural diversity, cultural identity is a particularly salient area in academic fields. The primary aim of this research design is to appraise the role of South Asian cultural identity within the diaspora. While a large body of

research seemingly already exists on the South Asian culture, this project argues that the fields of cultural identity construction are in constant flux. The theories surrounding South Asian cultural identity two decades ago, while still relevant, are not entirely indicative of the identity making processes in today's world; the traditional, core values and priorities of the South Asian cultural identity may not have changed over time (Hussain, 2017), but the surrounding world contexts have evolved significantly. The South Asian diaspora now have to deal with different modes of external, host-land cultural influences, while also factoring in the role of cultural digital spaces. Additionally, digital technologies are in rapid and constant development, and the resultant implications for the potential of recreating cultural and social communities online are constantly being adjusted and adapted with advances in new media technologies. Therefore, the premises surrounding cultural identity of a mobile, digital diaspora are changing and evolving, and cultural identity construction and performance needs to be measured on an online, digital scale.

While this research does not claim to be representative of all South Asian diasporic identity, either online or offline, it does cover a considerable fraction of the population, and the findings conclusively prove that immigrant cultural identity and digital memories are intertwined for the neo-diaspora in the 21st century, and therefore, the fields of identity construction and digital memories, while extensively researched in their own right, have to be combined in order to gain an extensive and comprehensive overview of diasporic identity construction in the digital age.

5.3 Limitations

Given the niched nature of the area of research, and the researcher's presence within the intended sample group, the sample size consisted of individuals with whom the researcher had varying degrees of acquaintance. During the data analysis process, an explicit effort was made to ensure objectivity by constantly referring to literature in argumentations, while during the data collection process, the researcher strode to steer clear of referring to any personal input while questioning processes they were a part of, in order to ensure that the participants lead the discussion areas, and provided substantive, uninfluenced responses. While the benefits of in-group researcher-presence extended to participant familiarity,

thereby making them more comfortable in divulging deeply personal information, it also meant that the researcher was selecting a sample of like-minded individuals, with varyingly similar backgrounds, not just culturally, but also socially, economically and politically. Given the sheer volume of South Asian immigrants in the world, even within the sub-group of a neo-diaspora, the actual sample group then has members originating from a wide range of diverse socio-economic, political and even, in terms of their host cultures, cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the findings of this research cannot be generalized to be applied to the entire field of South Asian, neo-diasporic cultural identity performances.

Considering the time frame and scale of the project, and factoring in the unprecedented global events taking place at the time of the research process, this project was successful in achieving its research aims. However, within the fields of academic research on cultural identity and digital memory studies, this research project should, at best, be considered symptomatic of a small portion of the research areas.

5.4 Future Research

In order to gain a truly comprehensive idea of cultural identity construction and performance in the South Asian neo-diaspora, the research design should be expanded and adapted to a wider framework, since the classification of the South Asian diaspora is quite substantial and expansive. Further, while experiences of the South Asian diaspora can be unified and clustered under a common, cultural umbrella, there are distinct differences in the South Asian diasporic lifestyle across members of the broad community, ranging from gender, religious beliefs, political affiliations and socio-economic class, to name a few. Incorporating and evaluating how these differences originating from native cultural origins, exist and subsist within the diasporic frame of reference, can be important for future research on South Asian immigrant identity.

Cultural identity in immigrant studies can no longer be robustly measured without factoring in the role of digital cultural spaces in today's globalized and digitalized world. While this research design sought out examples of participant-generated cultural expression within social media platforms specifically, there were spontaneous instances within participant response of other mediated digital artefacts, like movies, music, news, blogs and

discussion boards. In future research, the extent of a digital memory framework can and should be extended to include these as indicative of cultural expression too, providing a more well-rounded, comprehensive conception and understanding of diasporic, cultural identity construction and expressions, in an online space.

6. References

- Amrith, M. (2014). Why migration matters - united nations university. Retrieved from <https://unu.edu/publications/articles/why-migration-matters.html>
- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization* (Vol. 1). U of Minnesota Press.
- Arnseth, H. C., & Silseth, K. (2013). Tracing learning and identity across sites: Tensions, connections and transformations in and between everyday and institutional practices. *Identity, Community, and Learning Lives in the Digital Age*, , 23-38.
- Ayyub, R. (2000). Domestic violence in the South Asian Muslim immigrant population in the united states. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 9(3), 237-248.
- Berry, J. W. (1995). 20. Psychology of acculturation. *The culture and psychology reader*, 457.
- Berry, J. W. (2008). Globalisation and acculturation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 32(4), 328-336.
- Berry, J. W., & Hou, F. (2017). Acculturation, discrimination and wellbeing among second generation of immigrants in canada. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 61, 29-39.
- Bhat, C. (2006). Continuity and Change in the Perception of 'Indianness': Issues of Identity among Indians at Home and in the Diaspora. *Peripheral Centres, Central Peripheries: India and its Diaspora (s)*, 243-50.
- Bhatia, S., & Ram, A. (2004). Culture, hybridity, and the dialogical self: Cases from the south asian diaspora. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 11(3), 224-240.
- Blichfeldt, B. S., & Heldbjerg, G. (2011). *Why Not?: The Interviewing of Friends and Acquaintances* (pp. 1399-7203). Department of Entrepreneurship and Relationship Management, University of Southern Denmark.
- Browne, K. (2005). Snowball sampling: Using social networks to research non heterosexual women. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), 47-60.
- Bruneau, M. (2010). Diasporas, transnational spaces and communities. *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, 3(1), 35-50.
- Buckingham, D. (2007). *Youth, identity, and digital media*, The MIT Press.
- Chang, C. C. (2015). Migratory loss and depression among adult immigrants of Chinese Descent.

- Chapman, A. L., Hadfield, M., & Chapman, C. J. (2015). Qualitative research in healthcare: an introduction to grounded theory using thematic analysis. *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 45*(3), 201-205.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*, Sage.
- Chatterji, J., & Washbrook, D. (Eds.). (2014). *Routledge handbook of the South Asian diaspora*. Routledge.
- Chen, S. H., Hua, M., Zhou, Q., Tao, A., Lee, E. H., Ly, J., & Main, A. (2014). Parent–child cultural orientations and child adjustment in Chinese American immigrant families. *Developmental Psychology, 50*(1), 189.
- Chen, S. X., Benet-Martinez, V., & Harris Bond, M. (2008). Bicultural identity, bilingualism, and psychological adjustment in multicultural societies: Immigration-based and globalization-based acculturation. *Journal of Personality, 76*(4), 803-838.
- Chen, Y. (2014). Are you an immigrant? Identity Based critical reflections of teaching intercultural communication. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 2014*(138), 5-16.
- Chenail, R. J. (2011). Interviewing the investigator: Strategies for addressing instrumentation and researcher bias concerns in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report, 16*(1), 255-262.
- Chisholm, L. (2013). Learning lives in second modernity. *Identity, Community, and Learning Lives in the Digital Age, , 70-86*.
- Choi, K. M., & Luke, M. (2011). A phenomenological approach to understanding early adult friendships of third culture kids. *Journal of Asia Pacific Counseling, 1*(1), 47-60.
- Christmas, C. N., & Barker, G. G. (2014). The immigrant experience: Differences in acculturation, intercultural sensitivity, and cognitive flexibility between the first and second generation of Latino immigrants. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication, 7*(3), 238-257.
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The Psychologist, 26*(2)
- Cohen, R. (2009). Chapter five. solid, ductile and liquid: Changing notions of homeland and home in diaspora studies. *Transnationalism* (pp. 117-133) Brill.
- Cooper, R., Chenail, R. J., & Fleming, S. (2012). A grounded theory of inductive qualitative research education: Results of a meta-data-analysis. *Qualitative Report, 17*, 8.

- CurryTraits. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://currytraits.com/>
- Czerwinski, M., Gage, D. W., Gemmell, J., Marshall, C. C., Pérez-Quiñones, M. A., Skeels, M. M., & Catarci, T. (2006). Digital memories in an era of ubiquitous computing and abundant storage. *Communications of the ACM*, 49(1), 44-50.
- Dasgupta, S. D. (1998a). Gender roles and cultural continuity in the Asian Indian immigrant community in the US. *Sex Roles*, 38(11-12), 953-974.
- Deakin, H., & Wakefield, K. (2014). Skype interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative Research*, 14(5), 603-616.
- Diamandaki, K. (2003). Virtual ethnicity and digital diasporas: Identity construction in cyberspace. *Global Media Journal*, 2(2), 26.
- DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical education*, 40(4), 314-321.
- Dobbins, C., Merabti, M., Fergus, P., & Llewellyn-Jones, D. (2013). Creating human digital memories for a richer recall of life experiences. Paper presented at the 2013 10th IEEE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NETWORKING, SENSING AND CONTROL (ICNSC), 246-251.
- Drotner, K. (2013). Processual methodologies and digital forms of learning. *Identity, Community, and Learning Lives in the Digital Age*, , 39-56.
- Erickson, F. (1984). School literacy, reasoning, and civility: An anthropologist's perspective. *Review of Educational Research*, 54(4), 525-546.
- Erikson, E. H. (1994). *Identity and the life cycle* WW Norton & Company.
- Erstad, O., & Sefton-Green, J. (2013). *Identity, community, and learning lives in the digital age* Cambridge University Press.
- Falicov, C. J. (2007). Working with transnational immigrants: Expanding meanings of family, community, and culture. *Family Process*, 46(2), 157-171.
- Farver, J. A. M., Narang, S. K., & Bhadha, B. R. (2002). East meets west: Ethnic identity, acculturation, and conflict in asian indian families. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 16(3), 338.
- Faugier, J., & Sargeant, M. (1997). Sampling hard to reach populations. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26(4), 790-797.

- Finn, R. L. (2008). South Asian? American? Confused?: Categories of Identification for Young Women of South Asian Descent. *Journal of Social Science*, 10, 11-21.
- Fitzgibbon, A., & Reiter, E. (2003). Memories for life: Managing information over a human lifetime. *UK Computing Research Committee Grand Challenge Proposal*, 22, 13-16.
- Gajjala, R. (2006). Consuming/producing/inhabiting south-asian digital diasporas.
- Goffman, E. (1989). On fieldwork. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 18(2), 123-132.
- Good, K. D. (2013). From scrapbook to facebook: A history of personal media assemblage and archives. *New Media & Society*, 15(4), 557-573.
- Gopinath, G. (2005). *Impossible desires: Queer diasporas and south asian public cultures* Duke University Press.
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora.
- Handa, A. (1997). Caught between omissions: Exploring 'culture conflict' among second generation South Asian women in Canada. Phd Thesis: University of Toronto.
- Hermanowicz, J. C. (2002). The great interview: 25 strategies for studying people in bed. *Qualitative Sociology*, 25(4), 479-499.
- Hussain, Y. (2017). *Writing diaspora: South asian women, culture and ethnicity* Routledge.
- ILO. (2018). Labour migration statistics (labour migration). Retrieved from <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/policy-areas/statistics/lang-en/index.htm>
- Iqbal, G., Johnson, M. R., Szczepura, A., Gumber, A., Wilson, S., & Dunn, J. A. (2012). Ethnicity data collection in the UK: The healthcare professional's perspective. *Diversity and Equality in Health and Care*, 9(4), 281-290.
- Jenkins, H., & Ito, M. (2015). *Participatory culture in a networked era: A conversation on youth, learning, commerce, and politics* John Wiley & Sons.
- Johnson, R., & Waterfield, J. (2004). Making words count: The value of qualitative research. *Physiotherapy Research International*, 9(3), 121-131.
- Kalinina, E., & Menke, M. (2016). Negotiating the past in hyperconnected memory cultures: Post-soviet nostalgia and national identity in Russian online communities. *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 12(1), 59-74.
- Koh, J. (2020). "*Subtle Asian Traits*": *Multimodal Construction of Dialogue and Identity on Facebook* (Doctoral dissertation, Georgetown University).

- Kumar, A. (2011). Bharatanatyam and identity making in the south asian diaspora: Culture through the lens of occupation. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 18(1), 36-47.
- Ladha, S. (2005). Second generation immigrant adaptation: Construction of a hybrid cultural identity.
- Legard, R., Keegan, J., & Ward, K. (2003). In-depth interviews. *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*, 6(1), 138-169.
- Lijadi, A. A., & Van Schalkwyk, G. J. (2014). Narratives of third culture kids: Commitment and reticence in social relationships. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(25), 1.
- Lukacs, V., & Quan-Haase, A. (2015). Romantic breakups on facebook: New scales for studying post-breakup behaviors, digital distress, and surveillance. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(5), 492-508.
- Luo, Y., & Shenkar, O. (2011). Toward a perspective of cultural friction in international business. *Journal of International Management*, 17(1), 1-14.
- Mack, N. (2005). Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide.
- Malhi, R. L., Boon, S. D., & Rogers, T. B. (2009). Being Canadian'andBeing Indian': Subject positions and discourses used in South Asian-Canadian women's talk about ethnic identity. *Culture & Psychology*, 15(2), 255-283.
- Marshall, M. N. (1996). Sampling for qualitative research. *Family Practice*, 13(6), 522-526.
- Marwick, A. E., & Boyd, D. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, 13(1), 114-133.
- Mays, N., & Pope, C. (2000). Assessing quality in qualitative research. *Bmj*, 320(7226), 50-52.
- Minocha, U. (1987). South Asian immigrants: Trends and impacts on the sending and receiving societies. *Pacific Bridges: The New Immigration from Asia and the Pacific Islands*, , 347-373.
- Moore, A. M., & Barker, G. G. (2012). Confused or multicultural: Third culture individuals' cultural identity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 36(4), 553-562.
- Oakley, A., & Cracknell, J. (1981). *Subject women* Pantheon Books New York.
- Opdenakker, R. (2006). Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. Paper presented at the *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, , 7(4)

- Ormston, R., Spencer, L., Barnard, M., & Snape, D. (2014). The foundations of qualitative research. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, 2, 52-55.
- Ozer, S., Bertelsen, P., Singla, R., & Schwartz, S. J. (2017). “Grab Your Culture and Walk with the Global” Ladakhi Students’ Negotiation of Cultural Identity in the Context of Globalization-Based Acculturation. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 48(3), 294-318.
- Ozer, S., & Schwartz, S. J. (2016). Measuring globalization-based acculturation in Ladakh: Investigating possible advantages of a tridimensional acculturation scale. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 53, 1-15.
- Palfrey, J. G., & Gasser, U. (2011). *Born digital: Understanding the first generation of digital natives* ReadHowYouWant. com.
- Pison, G. (2019). The population of the world (2019). *Population & Sociétés*, (8), 1-8.
- Pollock, D. C., & Van Reken, R. E. (2009). Third culture kids: Growing up among worlds. revised edition. *Boston: Nicholas Brealey*,
- Purkayastha, B. (2006). Writing diaspora: South Asian women, culture and ethnicity. *Contemporary Sociology*, 35(5), 504.
- Rai, R., & Reeves, P. (2008). *The south Asian Diaspora: Transnational networks and changing identities* Routledge.
- Rajiva, M. (2009). South Asian Canadian girls' strategies of racialized belonging in adolescence. *Girlhood Studies*, 2(2), 76-95.
- Rangaswamy, P. (2005). South Asian Diaspora. In *Encyclopedia of Diasporas*.
- Reading, A. (2009). The Globytal: Towards an understanding of globalised memories in the digital age. *Digital Memories: Exploring Critical Issues*, , 31-41.
- Robson, G., Zachara, M., & Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska, A. (Eds.). (2014). *Digital diversities: social media and intercultural experience*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- SAALT. (n.d.). Demographic information | SAALT. Retrieved from <https://saalt.org/south-asians-in-the-us/demographic-information/>
- Sandil, R., Robinson, M., Brewster, M. E., Wong, S., & Geiger, E. (2015). Negotiating multiple marginalizations: Experiences of South Asian LGBTQ individuals. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 21(1), 76.

- Sarwal, A. (2017). *South Asian diaspora narratives: Roots and routes* Springer.
- Saw, S. K. (2018). Globalization and migration in the contemporary world order: An insight into the postnational condition and the diasporas. *Social Identities*, 24(3), 339-363.
- Schaetti, B. F. (2000). *Global nomad identity: Hypothesizing a developmental model* Union Institute.
- Schwartz, D. (1989). Visual ethnography: Using photography in qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology*, 12(2), 119-154.
- Seamon, D., & Gill, H. K. (2016). Qualitative approaches to environment-behavior research. *Research Methods for Environmental Psychology*, 5
- Selvadurai, S. (2005). *Story-wallah: Short fiction from south Asian writers* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Shekhar, V. (2020). Reviewing 'south Asian diaspora narratives: Roots and routes: By amit sarwal'.
- Sinn, D., & Syn, S. Y. (2014). Personal documentation on a social network site: Facebook, a collection of moments from your life? *Archival Science*, 14(2), 95-124.
- Smets, K. (2018). Ethnic identity without ethnic media? diasporic cosmopolitanism,(social) media and distant conflict among young Kurds in London. *International Communication Gazette*, 80(7), 603-619.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., & Suárez-Orozco, M. M. (2009). *Children of immigration* Harvard University Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1986). The Social Identity Theory of Inter-group Behavior, in S. Worchel and LW Austin (eds) *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Talwar, G. (2014). *Acculturation, construction of gender and social identity in a sample of Afghan immigrants in the US* University of Maryland, Baltimore County.
- Thangaraj, S. I. (2010). "Liting it up": Popular Culture, Indo-Pak Basketball, and South Asian American Institutions. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2(2), 71-91.
- Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 8(1), 45.
- Thompson, B. Y. (2018). Digital nomads: Employment in the online gig economy. *Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics and Innovation*, 1

- Thompson, T. (2017). What does it mean to be a human? green-skinned troublemakers and us. *Narrative Culture*, 4(2), 185-200.
- Tirumala, L. N. (2009). *Bollywood movies and cultural identity construction among second generation Indian Americans* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Tsagarousianou, R. (2004). Rethinking the concept of diaspora: Mobility, connectivity and communication in a globalised world. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 1(1)
- Umaña-Taylor, A. J. (2004). Ethnic identity and self-esteem: Examining the role of social context. *Journal of Adolescence*, 27(2), 139-146.
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2019). The number of international migrants reaches 272 million, continuing an upward trend in all world regions, says UN. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/international-migrant-stock-2019.html>
- Villa-Nicholas, M. (2019). Latinx digital memory: Identity making in real time. *Social Media Society*, 5(4), 2056305119862643.
- Volčič, Z. (2007). Yugo-nostalgia: Cultural memory and media in the former Yugoslavia. *Critical studies in media communication*, 24(1), 21-38.
- Wengraf, T. (2011). Interviewing for life histories, lived situations, and ongoing personal experience using biographic-narrative interpretive method (BNIM): The BNIM short guide bound with the BNIM detailed manual.
- Williams, D. L., Crittenden, V. L., Keo, T., & McCarty, P. (2012). The use of social media: An exploratory study of usage among digital natives. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 12(2), 127-136.
- Willis, G. (2006). Cognitive interviewing as a tool for improving the informed consent process. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*, 1(1), 9-23.
- Yu, H., & Sun, W. (2019). Introduction: Social media and chinese digital diaspora in australia. *Media International Australia*, 173(1), 17-21.

7. Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Information Sheet

[provided to participants prior to conducting interviews]

*Participating in Tilottama Chatterjee's Research Project for her Masters Thesis.
Conducted at Erasmus University, Rotterdam.*

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study!

The topic I'm researching is a concept called a Diasporic Digital Memory, and it is based on the idea that as society and technology are getting increasingly intertwined, people are living 'online' lives concurrent to their offline lives. In particular, this research project is directed at studying members of the South Asian community, measuring how they are able to hold on to their South Asian identities. In combination with the concept of a Digital Memory, this research hypothesizes that there exists an inherently cultural, South Asian space on the digital realm.

Members of the South Asian diaspora are assumed to be engaging with distinctly culturally relevant content on digital spaces, like on Social Media platforms – outlets like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. So through this research project, I'm trying to measure the extent to which these social media spaces can be utilized for cultural content, and what this implies, about both, South Asian cultural identity and the existence of a Diasporic Digital Memory.

By agreeing to be a part of this research, you consent to being subjected to a short list of pre-prepared interview questions that explore and question your own cultural identity perceptions and independent thoughts, opinions and experiences. You will also be asked to provide an example of a digital, or social media post, to support your explanation.

Further, you would also be consenting to being recorded and transcribed for the purposes of this research study. However, at any point of time during the interview, should you feel uncomfortable or wish to withdraw your participation, please feel free to let me know.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

The questions have been written as they would broadly be presented to the participants. When interviewing, it is at the researcher's discretion to feel free to deviate from the prescribed questions below. The interviewer must be prepared to clarify any doubts, and encourage the participants to offer more information/ more complete (detailed) answers to the questions below. The potential for follow up questions are indicated within '[]' square brackets after the leading questions.

1. Where are you from?
2. Where do you currently live? Where have you lived across your life?
3. How long have you lived outside your native country?
4. How long have you lived in your present location? [have these non-native locations and their cultures influenced you? In what way?]
5. What do you understand of the term 'South Asian'?
6. Do you consider yourself as a 'South Asian' [Why? / Why not?]

Deep dive:

7. As someone who's grown up in different places, do you have one place as home? Is it one place? [If you're not there right now, how do you maintain your connection to this place?] Is it multiple places? [How do you manage to balance the multiple connections?] Is it no place? [do you find it to be a problem?]
8. When you move to a new place [in the past, or in the anticipated future], do you feel lost, uncomfortable with the unfamiliarity? Or are you quick to settle in? Does using digital/technology help you settle in new places?
9. Think of the previous generations of immigrants. How do you think they managed to assimilate with the new countries, or hold on to their "roots"? *
10. Now looking at our generation, we have the gift of technology - we have social media and sharing and connectivity - How would you say that has changed the ways you/we live across multiple cultures? Does it make it easier to adapt to foreign settings? Does it help hold on to your native culture stronger?
11. How connected would you say you are to your native culture? Do you consciously try, on your own, to maintain connections to your multiple cultures? How?
12. What role does social media play into this? [Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Media content]

Content provision: Interviewees will be explicitly asked to provide examples of how they interact with elements of their native culture, online, specifically through the use of social media platforms, through screenshots of public posts/contents. They will also (presumably) offer an explanation for their selection

*only use to imply/nudge interviewee in direction of the role of technology in rooting diaspora by comparing to previous generations, depending on flow of the interview.

Appendix C: Interviewee Overview

Name	Pseudonym used	Age	Gender	Nationality	South Asian Cultural Background	Other Cultural Backgrounds	Date of Interview
Mashaba Rashid	Marina	23	Female	American	Bangladesh	United Kingdom, United States of America	5/5/20
Anzal Rana	Brooke	25	Male	British	Bangladesh	United States of America, United Kingdom, Italy	9/5/20
Meeravan Jagannathan	Marley	29	Male	Sri Lankan	Sri Lanka	Bahrain, United Arab Emirates	10/5/20
Karan Paul	Paul	22	Male	Indian	Nepal, India	United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom	14/5/20
Pooja Balaji	James	24	Non-binary	Indian	India	Oman, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom	14/5/20
Jacqueline Joice	Jack	23	Female	Indian	India	United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom	14/5/20
Arnab Haque	Logan	24	Male	British	Bangladesh	United Kingdom	19/5/20
Anvi Bahl	Annie	23	Female	Indian	India	United Arab Emirates, United States of America	19/5/20
Anjum Sheikh	Tanya	25	Female	British	Pakistan	United Kingdom, Germany	20/5/20
Fernwa Fasil	Claire	23	Female	Dutch	Pakistan	Suriname, Netherlands	23/5/20