DIASPORIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND BOLLYWOOD. SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN YOUTH AND THE MEANINGS THEY MAKE OF INDIAN FILM.

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For David

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Abstract

A particular youth identity in the South African Indian diaspora is being forged in a nexus of local and global forces. The globalisation of Bollywood and its popularity as a global media and the international commodification of the Indian exotic have occurred at the same time as the valorisation of 'difference' in the local political landscape. Indian youth, as young members of the South African Indian diaspora, are inheritors both of a conservative — yet adaptable — home culture and the marginalised identities of apartheid. However, the tensions between their desire to be recognised as both 'modern' South Africans and as 'traditional' Indians create a space in which they are able to (re)create for themselves an identity that can encompass both their home cultures and the desires of a Westernised modernity through the tropes of Bollywood. Bollywood speaks to its diasporic audiences through representations of an idealised 'traditional yet modern' India. Although India is not a place of return for this young generation, Bollywood representations of successful diasporic Indian culture and participation in the globalised Bollywood industry through concerts and international award ceremonies has provided an opportunity for young Indians in South Africa to re-examine their local Indian identities and feel invited to re-identify with the global diasporas of India.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1. A personal note

Jaipur was growing hotter by the day. It was February in 1997, on a late Friday afternoon, and nothing was happening. My friends asked me if I had ever seen a Bollywood movie. I hadn't. "Let's go and see *Hum Aapke Hain Koun*," said Rajesh. "It's old, but everybody still loves it". There was just enough time to get to the movie house, and I clung onto the back of a moped as we sped through home-going crowds. At the movie house, a huge crowd of young men were pushing to get in at the front door. Rajesh and the others struggled to the ticket office, dragging me along. There were no more tickets. "Just wait," shouted Rajesh through the hubbub. "Maybe I can pay the doorman something to let us in anyway". But the crowd had other ideas. Suddenly the frustrated young men started to mob us. I was pinched and pulled and pushed from every side. Angrily, I struck back and shouted. The crowd fell away in a circle around us, grinning. I was shaken, and the doorman let us wait in the foyer until they had dispersed.

I never did get to see a Bollywood movie in India. It was only in 2002 that I saw my first Bollywood production, *Devdas*, at a film festival at Rhodes University. The theatre was packed with Indian people. A year later, on my way to a lecture, I stumbled by mistake into a hall where a large group of Indian students were drinking tea and waiting to watch a Bollywood movie. The Jaipur incident and the film festival returned to mind. I asked myself what these young South African Indians felt when they watched a Bollywood movie. I wondered about the ways in which they were so different – and similar – to the people I had met and known during my stay in India, and why Bollywood seemed just as popular here in South Africa as it was there. I thought about my own reactions to the Bollywood movies I had seen, so different to Hollywood. They were so emotional and melodramatic, but I loved the music, the exquisite costumes and the romantic stories, and also the beautiful actors and actresses. I wanted to be able to look at these things through

their eyes. What did Bollywood movies mean to them and how did they 'fit in' with their lives?

2. The research field

My search for an interpretation of and insight into Bollywood in the world of the South African Indian community took me down various academic paths. Understanding media consumption in Cultural Studies calls for the radical contextualisation of the media within the social and cultural structures of its reception community. As a community, I knew Indians in South Africa to be the descendants of the old trade diaspora of the British colony, but in order to avoid using the term 'diaspora' as a glib description of its history and experiences of socio-cultural change, I needed to understand more fully what is meant by this term and in what ways it could be applied to the South African case. In addition, the diasporic experience may be an intrinsic feature of late modern society and the postmodern imagination, but in what ways could an application of the ways in which it has been so theorised add depth and perspective to the phenomena I had heard about and observed in contemporary South Africa, far away in time and space from both an originary India and the Indian diasporas of the north, about which and upon whose experiences so much of the literature depends?

Young South African Indians at Rhodes University are situated between the home cultures which have formed their identity up until their arrival at university, and the worlds beyond home which have the power to disrupt the valued traditions which constitute that identity. Their words and actions reveal how they live out the dualities of 'modernity' and 'tradition' and use the representations of an 'authentic' traditional yet modern Indianness in Bollywood movies to mediate and construct a diasporic identity particular to their experiences as local South African subjects.

This study necessarily entails a discussion of several interlocking and inter-dependent research fields. In Chapter 2, I give a brief overview of diaspora theory and elect to use Vertovec's (2000) schema of diasporic literature as a model on which to base my examination of the South African Indian diaspora in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I give an

overview of Bollywood and outline some of the criticisms that have been made concerning the implications of its production as a global media aimed at a diasporic audience. The use of media by diasporic youth audiences is argued by Vertovec (2000) to be a key means of cultural change and Chapter 5 gives an overview of two studies of the consumption of Bollywood by the youth of two very different diasporic Indian communities: that of the Punjabi community in Southall, London, and the twice-moved Fijian diaspora in Australia. Chapter 6 is an overview of Bollywood in South Africa and here I present a discussion on what has been theorised to date on Bollywood reception by local Indian audiences. In Chapter 7, I outline the methods which I used to gather and interpret my data through recorded interviews and participant observation of a number of activities organised by and for the members of the Hindu Students' Society and the wider Indian community. I use Vertovec's (2000) schema once again in Chapter 8 to organise my findings, and argue in a discussion based on interview transcripts and observation that the consumption of Bollywood and the meanings that are made from it cannot be understood apart from its contexts of viewing within a wider web of familial and social relations. Chapter 9 concludes the thesis and summarises my interpretation of the situations in which my respondents use Bollywood to negotiate the passage between history and futurity in their own distinctive context.

3. Limitations of the research and other possible areas of investigation arising from the data

This study is an exercise in understanding the consumption of and the meanings that are made from a particular media product by a very specific socially-situated audience. While I often use the phrase 'the Indian community', I do so in the full knowledge that there is no one such homogenous group. Gujaratis are also slightly overrepresented in the research sample, which altogether was drawn from the educated middle class. These categories form only one part of a highly differentiated whole. This, of course, has political implications which it is not my purpose to investigate here, although such an investigation would doubtless be of value. Readers will also no doubt become aware of my exclusion of Indian Muslim students and the lack of attention to differences in

gendered readings of Bollywood. I have also excluded from my analysis the popularity of local media, particularly South African soap operas, amongst my research group.

Chapter 2

Diaspora: a brief overview of some approaches in the literature

> [T]he term [diaspora] that once described Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community. (Tololian 1991: 4–5)

> Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands. (Sheffer 1986: 3)

> Seeing "the entire world as a foreign land" makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, and awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal... For an exile, habits of life, expression of activity in the new environment inevitably occurs against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally. (Said 1984: 171-172)

1. Introduction: why describe diaspora?

In the introduction to the thesis, I outlined its aim, which is an attempt to use the consumption of Bollywood by Indian students at Rhodes University as a means of teasing out the complexities of the subjective experience of being a young South African Indian in post-apartheid South Africa. These Indian youth are members of the country's diasporic Indian minority, which was initially brought to South Africa over 100 years ago as indentured labour, or arrived shortly thereafter as part of an ongoing

wave of traders. I argue that this diasporic history is pertinent to their subjective understandings of the present. It is impossible to come to any meaningful conclusions about personal and communal perceptions of being Indian at this point in South Africa's history without being able in some way to theorise about the many influences such a past might have at both the subjective, personal level, and at the level of the wider Indian community. A useful way of looking at this history and the impact it has had — and continues to have — on the lives of Indians is through diaspora theory.

In the following chapters, I will discuss Bollywood films, their production, and some of the ideas that have been put forward regarding their relationship to the wider Indian cinema. I will outline the values that some theorists see as inherent to the context of Bollywood's capitalist production. Then, by situating the consumption of these Bollywood movies within the South African diasporic experience, and by exploring the ways in which the students consume and interpret them, a means is created of looking both ways, as it were, inwards towards the subjective, lived reality of being a young South African Indian, and outwards towards the wider, communally-held diasporic identity. I will also be able to come to a more nuanced understanding of the theory of Bollywood as it pertains to my particular South African case study.

2. Diaspora theory

Diaspora theory is broadly — and very roughly — a body of literature which speaks about the historical, political, subjective and creative experiences of societies which have come through various circumstances — some violent and traumatic, other more benign — to live permanently in countries outside of their country of origin (Bhabha 1990b; Clarke *et al.* 1990; Hall 1990; Gilroy 1993; Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997; Vertovec 2000; Werbner 2000 to name but a few). They differ from immigrants in that they do not try to assimilate into the wider culture of the host country. Instead they make more or less conscious efforts to remember and maintain ties with their homeland and to foster intra-communal ties which, to some degree or another, set them apart from the mainstream culture and society where they permanently reside.

Because of the range and complexity of diasporic literature — ethnography and history, as well as criticism — it is impossible to present a comprehensive overview of it within the compass of one short chapter. Instead, this section will confine itself to looking at how theorists have tackled the problem of defining the limits of the term, so as to clear a space for a more specific and detailed discussion of the parameters of the South African Indian diaspora. This is necessary because diaspora is not only a historical, but also a subjective experience, and this has direct implications for understanding the ways that South African Indian youth see and experience the world. As this thesis is an attempt to understand the complexities of the ways in which Indian youth use and interpret Bollywood movies, I argue that it is impossible to understand their worldview — which includes Bollywood — without contextualising them within the wider diasporic experience of their communities. The challenge to me as a researcher is to justify my choice of theoretical approach to the subject of diaspora, as this will influence the ways in which I interpret my data on Bollywood consumption.

3. Two approaches: just history, or a way of seeing the world?

The first and earliest theoretical approach to diaspora attempts to delimit the meaning of the word in order to preserve its use as a descriptive term. Broadly, this first method speaks of diaspora in terms of historical movements of people that are characterised by certain defining elements, depending on the circumstances of their movement and settlement (see Vertovec and Cohen 1999 for an overview). It is useful to know what kind of diaspora the South African Indian one is, as its original pattern of migration and settlement gives us insight into the ways it has subsequently developed. Describing the type of migration and settlement also provides a foundation for comparative studies with other, similar diasporas, although this is a project beyond the scope of the present study. However, it is not enough to describe the South African Indian diaspora merely in socio-historical terms. What would such an approach lack, take for granted, or even obscure?

In partial answer to these questions, the second approach looks at diasporas as part of the global postmodern (Hall 1990, 1992; Bhabha 1990b, 1994; see also Cohen 1997 and Vertovec and Cohen 1999 for an overview). Diasporas are dynamic social and cultural processes that

contribute substantially to the ongoing movements of peoples, capital and culture around the globe. They are internally differentiated in terms of class and gender, to name but two, and may be far from being economically subaltern, as the term might suggest. However, it remains true that diasporas remain minority groups within the nation state, and this leads to the need to negotiate ways of living with and within the dominant host cultures. This path brings us to the politics of culture, from which theorists working within cultural and literary studies, such as Gilroy (1993) and Hall (1990), have interpreted the diasporic experience. They approach diaspora through discussions of cultural identity, and come with a specific political aim in mind: that of presenting alternative histories of marginalised groups to counter the West's normative and hegemonic discourses of race and nation. This second approach is also concerned with ways in which diaspora re-define their identity, and the processes of accommodation and negotiation with the host culture which lead to the creative or 'hybrid' cultures of diaspora.

What is useful to take from this second approach is that diaspora is not merely a telling of the history of diasporic society. Instead, together with these histories, it becomes an approach to understand the ongoing, culturally creative attempts by diasporic communities to (re)define themselves in the face of the norms of the wider political and socio-cultural groups in which they live. Here, I will be asking myself: to what extent are the phenomena I see and hear (politically) active and creative redefinitions of self and community identity by the South African Indians I interview?

In order to combine the strengths of these two ways of looking at diaspora — their historical and social situatedness, and creative agency — I have chosen to discuss Vertovec's (2000) threefold typology of diaspora as social form, as type of consciousness and as mode of cultural production. I will argue that this typology, which is an attempt to differentiate the different literatures on diaspora, provides a simple but productive model from which I can work to tease out the different strands (historical, social and cultural) of the South African Indian diaspora in the next chapter.

3.1 Describing diaspora

Some of the earliest writings on diaspora are attempts to understand and delimit the parameters of the term itself, in order to preserve its definitional, and thereby analytical, integrity. The drive to come to a consensus about the definition of diaspora was fuelled by a belief in its ability to create a field within which diverse diasporic communities could be usefully compared. Clifford captures this project succinctly: "This is the domain of shared and discrepant meanings, adjacent maps and histories that we need to sort out and specify as we work our way into a comparative, intercultural studies" (1994: 303). These attempts to come to a consensus on diaspora are exemplified by three theorists — Armstrong (1976), Sheffer (1986) and Safran (1991) — who are interested in the dynamics and mechanisms by which diasporic communities negotiate their position within the host country and manage and maintain the group boundaries.

The common elements of their theories are that diasporas are created by the permanent, forced expulsion or voluntary emigration of a group from the homeland, and their settlement in one or more countries. There, they remain minorities. However, they retain a communal sense of ethnic and/or religious identity and solidarity, while fostering a myth of the original lost homeland, or even a desire to return there. This has repercussions for both the host and the homeland, as it fosters contact between the group's activist elements, which may or may not complement or conflict with either government (Sheffer 1995: 14). The main contribution that these theorists made to diaspora studies was to emphasise the importance of the "'triadic relationship' between (a) globally dispersed yet collectively self-identified ethnic groups, (b) the territorial states and contexts where such groups reside, and (c) the homeland states and contexts whence they or their forebears came" (Vertovec 2000: 449). Their object in setting up these checklists was to preserve the analytic power of the term from being diluted by its *ad hoc* use for any kind of transnational settlement or migration.

Clifford elaborates on the difficulty of maintaining exclusivist paradigms, of "exclusivity tests" (1994: 304) such as advocated by Sheffer and Safran above. First, how can any one diaspora qualify on all counts of any list of given criteria? And how many criteria of any one

list need to be fulfilled? Clifford suggests that even the "central teleology of origin/return", or "the projection of a specific origin" may not be as important as "decentred, lateral connections", or a "shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering adaptation or resistance" (1994: 306). By comparing them with ideal types, such as the Jewish diaspora, there is the problem of placing diaspora on a continuum (together with all its political associations and ambivalences) of 'more' or 'less' diasporic. Cohen (1997; also 1995, 1996) attempts to transcend the limitations of these checklists by looking at primary motivating factors of diasporas, such as expulsion, slavery, labour and trade, rather than what they do or do not include or resemble. However, he does include a 'checklist' of "basic features of a diaspora" based on Safran's (Cohen 1997: 26), which maintains the core ideas of dispersal, a relationship with and idealisation of the homeland, the maintenance of an ethnic group consciousness, a troubled relationship with the host country and the development of a creative, enriching life within the host country.

Second, there is a potential problem inherent in the use of restrictive descriptive criteria: that of the temptation to essentialise what are fluid and changing categories of ethnicity, race and community on the one hand, and on the other, to work from within an uncritical acceptance of hegemonic discourses concerning the national boundaries and normative culture of the host nation within which and against which diasporas are examined. These are all categories which have been questioned in the advent of postmodernism and globalisation.

3.1.1 Diasporas, postmodernism and globalisation

One of the major objections to the descriptively 'closed' approach to diaspora studies is that it cannot adequately take into account the pressures exerted by the increased global movements of peoples within late modernity or postmodernity. If diasporas are predicated on the binaries of nation — we/they, member/non-member, citizen/alien, same/different — and these are in the process of distorting under the weight of the ruins of colonialism and the imperatives of a globally-organised economy, how are we able to speak of diaspora?

I argue that this trend in global movements of peoples lends more weight to the quest of reserving it as an inclusively descriptive yet analytically sound term:

> The term is certainly contestable as a way of grasping all forms of dispersed peoples, but there is value in retaining it in this expansive sense, as it captures the dynamics of cross-cultural and cross-language settlement in particular, rather than such neutral and technical terms as immigration (Sinclair and Cunningham 2000: 18)

The characteristics of postmodernity — global economics, media and communications networks, air travel, the collapse of space/time — and what Appadurai calls the "deterritorialisation" of corporations, ethnic groups and political and sectarian movements (1991: 192) have caused normative and centring categories such as community, culture and nation to lose their definitive value in the reordering of the political, social and economic structure of late capitalism. Diasporas are, for example, defined against nation states — as living in but not being of a nation, as accommodating themselves to, but not assimilating with, the national community of particular bounded locality, or even as being themselves 'landless' nations, a people without a true place looking back to a mythical 'home'. Yet, as theory on transnationalism suggests (Vertovec 2000; Appadurai 1991; Kearney 1991, 1995), the absolute social and geographical boundaries that nations are supposedly able to inscribe on their territories and members are slowly being eroded by the "peripheralisation of the core" (Kearney 1991: 57), as mass movements of people from previously colonial and third world countries voluntarily move to (or indeed oscillate between home and) the centres of the global capitalist economy.

In such a scenario, it is necessary to move away from identifying diaspora solely with loss and exile, especially as the recent large-scale movements of people — and their economic resources — imply that it is no longer enough to look in on them as objects of colonial displacement. While some diasporas did indeed occur for these reasons, there are many others wherein the liminal state of the recent exile or immigrant is less important than long-term issues of permanent settlement and negotiation of cultural continuity within the host

country. Others are important for the light they shed on the spread of global capital and its products, especially media (Kotkin 1992; Harvey 1989; Friedman 1997; Cohen 1997; Castells 1996). Moreover, diasporas do not necessarily remain economically subaltern, regardless of their overall minority status: the ongoing movements of people who come from dominant class positions in the home country are easily subsumed in an unthinking "rhetoric which submerges the class question and speaks of migrancy as an ontological condition" (Morley 1996: 347 in Sinclair and Cunningham 2000: 21). Their internal structural and cultural dynamics also need to be taken account of, and the ways in which they too harbour differences along class, gender or racial lines.

The first approach sees diaspora as particularly motivated movements and settlements of peoples who retain links to their homeland and resist assimilation into the normative culture of the host nation. While this approach is descriptively useful, it is limited by its inability to explain the cultural dynamics of the settled diasporic communities, especially at a time when global flows of information and people call into question the ability of nation states to define national culture. In the next section, the second approach to diaspora looks at the creative cultures of immigrant communities and their political implications.

3.2 The politics of culture and diaspora

What does it actually mean to 'have' a culture in the global postmodern society or nation, when borders, both personal and geo-political, are so permeable? The old way of conceptualising — of reifying — culture as a whole way of life of a people bounded in space and time has only been slightly modified by a critical understanding of 'the' national culture being the product of the discourse of its dominant groups (Hall 1992: 297; Bourdieu 1984). Hall argues that old ideas of national cultures are inadequate for understanding the new kinds of cultures produced by global movements of peoples, as exemplified by diasporas (Hall 1992: 299). "In such a world, individual cultural identities become decentred in the same process as national cultures lose their hegemony" (Sinclair and Cunningham 2000: 17). As nations lose the ability to define and maintain a monopoly on cultural boundaries, so the ways in which communities and individuals conceptualise their identities must shift and adapt to being 'loose in the world'. Hall makes the point that this ability to adapt, "the capacity to live

with difference" is the hallmark of the new millennium (Hall 1993: 361). In the age of globalisation, cultural pluralism must triumph over cultural absolutism.

Diasporas, those groups most readily associated with the permanent loss of home, and the ongoing need to adapt to a host culture while trying to maintain another identity derived from, but not necessarily adhering to, the homeland, are the primary exemplars of this type of interaction. Hall writes (1993: 362):

> The new diasporas which are forming across the world... are obliged to inhabit at least two identities, to speak at least two cultural languages, to negotiate and "translate" between them. In this way, though they are struggling in one sense at the margins of modernity, they are at the leading edge of what is destined to become the truly representative "late-modern" experience. They are the products of the cultures of hybridity.... These hybrids retain strong links to and identifications with the traditions and places of their "origin". But they are without the illusion of any actual "return" to the past... They bear the traces of particular cultures, traditions, languages, systems of belief, texts and histories which have shaped them. But they are also obliged to come to terms with and make something new of the cultures they inhabit, without assimilating to them. They are not and will never be *unified* culturally in the old sense, because they are inevitably the products of several interlocking histories and cultures, belonging at the same time to several "homes" – and thus to no one particular home.... They are the product of a diasporic consciousness. They have come to terms with the fact that in the modern world.... identity is always an open, complex, unfinished game – always under construction.

At one level "the innovative collective responses that real people can and do make when having to negotiate between one culture and another" (Sinclair and Cunningham 2000: 17) are the result of the inability of the modern nation to make multiculturalism a true project of the state (Parekh 2000). A more critical approach would address the political will behind states' continued promotion of a normative dominant culture while paying lip service to an anemic appreciation of 'difference'. But given such a status quo, writers have looked at these creative cultural adaptations for what they can tell us about the kinds of responses that subaltern groups needs make to living within, or negotiating with, other (dominant) cultures. These adaptive measures have been described as 'translocal' (Nederveen Pieterse 1995), 'cosmopolitan' (Hannerz 1990), 'third cultures' (Featherstone 1990), 'mestizajes' (Martin-Barbero 1993), or what Sinclair and Cunningham call "the master metaphor" (2000: 17), the concept of 'hybridity' as used by Homi Bhabha (1994; also Nederveen Pieterse 1995).

These terms point to the ways in which minority groups creatively interact with, and define themselves within, the cultural and political forces of the wider societies which surround them. They are different from the historical approach because they look at the politics of identity, not merely the processes of migration and settlement. Hall (1990: 222) speaks of the difficulty of pinning down 'identity' in a world where the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which go to make up what we would call 'cultural identity' have been fragmented, distorted, or buried by the enforced diasporas of slavery or colonialism. He proposes that "[diasporic] [i]dentity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 1990: 222).

By problematising issues of diasporic identity, he is challenging — or at least highlighting — the need to enquire into the ways in which diasporas 'become'. How do they maintain their ethno-national identity, and why, and what does it mean to 'consciously' maintain ties with which homeland? The question here is not functional, or even merely descriptive, but interpretive: Hall advocates that it is necessary for the diaspora communities to confront their

past and present and engage in an act of imaginative (re)discovery of identity which "offers a way of imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation" (1990: 224). But acknowledging this process of historical disruption also acknowledges ongoing change and difference: "[c]ultural identities ... [l]ike everything which is historical, ... undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialist past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (1990: 225). An example of this "'play' of history, culture and power" is Gilroy's (1993) work, *The Black Atlantic*. He presents us with a counter-history to normative American and Eurocentric formulations of the past, emphasizing "the need to bring historical specificity and complexity to the term 'black'" (Clifford 1994: 319), and rooting/routing blacks as diaspora subjects in particular places and times. By comparing these, he can examine the production of what he calls "the changing same", collective identities formed from a traumatic past and stored in memories and practices that have changed, yet the essence of which have persisted, over time and space.

3.3 A holistic interpretation of diaspora experience

The discussion so far has separated writings that speak about the historical processes and definitions of diaspora from writings that look at the politics of diaspora identity formation. But is there any structured way to link the two so as to theorise about a particular case? I propose to use Vertovec's analysis of the various types of Hindu diaspora as a model on which to structure my discussion of the South African Indian diaspora. Vertovec (2000) identifies three ways in which the concept of diaspora is used across a range of academic disciplines: diaspora as social form, as a type of consciousness, and as a mode of cultural production.

The first — diaspora as a social form — corresponds to what has been described in this chapter as the historical approach, identifying and naming the various aspects of the diasporic process and concerned with the praxis of immigration and settlement. Vertovec includes in this category: the act of migration from one home location to at least two other countries; the maintenance of a collective identity sustained by a myth of common origin; the creation of transnational and local networks and organisations; the fostering of implicit or explicit ties to

the homeland; developing ties of solidarity with diaspora members in other countries; and the maintenance of group boundaries that make them unable or unwilling to be integrated into the host society. These all contribute to *a unique way of life*, which includes the ability to live in several societies simultaneously (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992: 11 in Vertovec 2000: 143). They may also lead to *conflicting political loyalties* between the host country and the homeland. Diasporas use kinship or community-based *economic strategies* to maximize their resources, and they also maintain the *triadic relationship,* mentioned earlier, between globally dispersed yet collectively identified ethnic groups, the specific place of their residence, and the homeland of origin.

The second concept of diaspora, as a 'type of consciousness', refers to the particular kind of self-awareness that is generated in individuals and communities by the experience of the diasporic process and the changes it evokes in the originary culture. This corresponds in part to the second way of looking at diaspora, above, as it is concerned with the ways in which cultures of hybridity are formed and maintained. Vertovec identifies the characteristics of such a consciousness. It has a *dual or paradoxical nature*, "constituted negatively by experiences of discrimination and exclusion, and positively by identification with a historical heritage... or contemporary world cultural or political forces" (2000: 147). It is also influenced by the tensions, described above, of belonging to two homes at once, an awareness of *multi-locality,* which connects individuals and communities to others both 'here' and 'there' and which "serves to bridge the gap between the local and the global" (Cohen 1996: 516). The many places of dispersal and the differences of intergenerational experience also lead to a *multiplicity* of collective memories and histories, communities and selves, which are seen as positive adaptations to the stresses and demands of maintaining different racial, national and ethnic identities at both a local and a global level. These experiences also lead communities and individuals to *engage publicly with political and social issues*, and this interaction with wider social norms and values may lead in its turn to a *self-conscious questioning* of previously-held religious values and beliefs.

Vertovec's third category of diaspora as "a mode of cultural production" is concerned with the *production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena*. Diasporas

are well suited by their nature as transnational communities to take advantage of the flows of cultural objects which are the result of globalisation. Vertovec links this idea to new anti-essentialist approaches to understanding culture within anthropology and cultural studies. These disciplines now prefer to see culture as something processual and contingent, producing "syncretic, creolised, translated or hybrid" forms of culture (Vertovec 2000: 153). This is especially so amongst diasporic *youth*, who seem to be most open to the influences of different cultural fields and whose socialisation is often self-consciously selected from a variety of cultural heritages and modern influences, of which one of the most pertinent is *global media and communications*.

Useful though Vertovec's approach is for dividing up what is a complex and diverse body of literature, it is questionable whether the categories are as discrete as he suggests. All three share to some extent the premises of the other: there cannot be diaspora without movement (change), and change means a transformation of some kind, be it in social organisation, media consumption, consciousness or religious affiliation. Thus, to separate diaspora as a mode of cultural production from type of consciousness seems slightly misleading: consciousness of one's social being is surely as much a result of culture as culture is a product of such consciousness. There is not much difference really between "variety of experience, a state of mind and identity", "duality of consciousness" and "the need to conceptually connect oneself with others, both 'here' and 'there'"(Vertovec 2000: 146–7), and "variegated processes of creolization, back-and-forth transferences, mutual influences, new contestations, negotiations and constant transformations" (Vertovec 2000: 153), yet the former three are placed in the category 'type of consciousness' and the latter in 'mode of cultural production'.

A useful reply to this criticism is to suggest that phenomena such as the development of diasporic youth culture through the production and consumption of media and music (the 'mode of cultural production' aspect of Vertovec's schema) is dependent on the other aspects of diaspora, its settlement ('social form') and general way of life ('type of consciousness') within the host country.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion to the foregoing sections, it is important not to take the use of the term 'diaspora' for granted and to avoid the temptation to use the term indiscriminately as a figure of speech for the deterritorialised, decentred, postmodern or postcolonial subject (Clifford 1994: 319, Ghandi 1998: 30–32). Historically, diasporas were theorised from the centres to which they had gravitated, and these theories were concerned more with the social 'problem' of the migrant and the praxis of migration, settlement and ties with the homeland. The more critical approach, often led by voices from within diasporic minorities, appreciated the importance of diasporic cultural difference both for its own sake and for the politics of its (re)production within the hegemony of the normative society in which it found itself. This shift signified a change from viewing culture as something essentialised, or unchanging, to viewing it as something more dynamic or adaptive. Diaspora comes to be looked at as a complex process of cultural negotiation, resistance and adaptation which, although perhaps prone to being captured by an unthinking celebration of difference or hegemonically-structured 'multiculturism', leads to a more critical understanding of the production and maintenance of identity in the age of globalisation.

What implications does diaspora theory have for the particular South African case, and more specifically, my localised case study? The limitation of a purely historical approach would be to restrict my study to the level of mere description and comparison, without offering any insight into the internal dynamics — the psychology, if you will — of the particular diaspora and the permutations of its expression in lived experience. As I will show in the chapter on South African Indian history, Vertovec's typography, used as a model, is useful to the extent that it allows me to situate a particular diaspora within the wider experiences of diaspora globally. In the next chapter, I argue that the South African Indian community is no longer 'just' a labour diaspora, even though historically this was the case. Other factors have to be taken into consideration, such as the past (and on-going) impact of apartheid, the ongoing arrival of newcomers from the sub-continent, and the present increasing identification and contact with global media and other globally-situated Indian diasporas. The South African case is a good example of the need to

historicise the distinctiveness of a particular diaspora. By looking at its 'roots', it is possible to reflect on the communal and individual responses to diasporic life in South Africa, whether pre- or post-apartheid. The idea of diaspora as a 'type of consciousness' allows me to talk about some of the ways in which the diasporic community has and is changing, both in relation to its originary culture and to the wider South African polity. The 'mode of cultural production' aspect is a way of theorizing the ongoing attempts by young South African Indian people to (re)define their roles and identities as members of both local ethnic communities and a wider society confronted with the realities of globalisation.

While recognising the limitations of Vertovec's analysis of the literature, this chapter concludes by suggesting that his schema is a useful way of approaching a single case study, and the following chapter will attempt to explore the South African Indian diaspora by referring back to its various elements as a model. This chapter has presented three ways of looking at diaspora: historically, in order to tease out its constituent characteristics; critically, as a way of presenting counter-histories to nation and race within the age of globalisation, and finally a synthesis of the two, which sees the history, identity and continuing life of diasporic communities necessarily dependent on each other in the ongoing production of culture.

Chapter 3

The South African Indian diasporic experience

1. Introduction

In the literature review in Chapter 2, I outlined some of the ways in which the idea of diaspora has been conceptualised. In this chapter I will use a modified form of Vertovec's (2000) three ways of classifying diaspora — as a social form, as a type of consciousness, and as a mode of cultural production — as a means of discussing the particular South African case. Bearing in mind, as mentioned in the previous chapter, that these 'meanings' are not altogether discrete, and show some overlap, especially in those areas where culture and consciousness come together, they nonetheless provide a neat model for discussing how particular groups have come to be, and are, diasporic. I have chosen such an approach, as it is easy to be distracted by the wide field and competing theoretical positions of diasporic studies into paying attention to only specific aspects of the diasporic experience. By using the categories suggested by Vertovec, pertinent aspects of the South African Indian diaspora can be highlighted, and their interrelationships emphasised, without having to go into too much surface detail, or lose perspective through over-emphasising certain aspects at the expense of others.

My aim is to achieve a general impression of the South African Indian diasporic experience by means of which I can contextualise and position my research, not only to explore, say, the relationship with the homeland, or the class politics of Bollywood consumption (though these are in themselves pertinent areas of diasporic research which would be of interest and use to other researchers pursuing different aims). In this chapter, I will relate the various aspects of Vertovec's three types in a general way to the political, social and cultural history of the South African Indian community. While this overview must necessarily be brief, it will outline the ways in which South African Indians have been, and are, diasporic. I argue that, as my research findings focus on the uses and interpretations of Bollywood (a global medium associated with the Indian diaspora world-wide) by South African Indian diasporic youth, it is necessary to present a coherent

account of general diasporic experience within which their social and cultural lives are embedded, and without which it is impossible to understand the novel 'culture of hybridity' they are in the process of creating.

2. Histories of the Indian community in South Africa

South African Indian history has been approached from various theoretical and interpretive points of view, according to the internal politics of the country over time. However, not much has been written about South African Indian history or lived culture from the perspective of diaspora theory, or as an example of diasporic experience. One reason for this is of course that diaspora theory is of fairly recent academic provenance and many of the standard histories of the Indian community were written before or just as diaspora theory became a fashionable part of literary and cultural studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Pachai 1971; Bhana 1991; Bhana and Brain 1990; Freund 1995). In addition, some, such as Freund (1995), were politically motivated re-readings of the history of the Indian community's social and political development. The other reason for the lack of a systematic examination of the South African community as a diaspora is that researchers may perhaps feel that the local Indian community is not such an example, or is no longer, because of its long-standing separation from India. It is hard to tell because of the relative paucity in this area of contemporary Indian studies.

As recently as 1990, Bhana and Brain's work *Setting down Roots*, a painstakingly thorough account of the arrival and first 50 years of social and political history of Indian indentured labour and traders, does not mention their recruitment, emigration and settlement as diaspora at all. Ebr.-Vally (2001) does mention that the Indian community is a diasporic one, but this is not elaborated and left to explain itself. Writers from outside the country include South Africa in their examples of diaspora. However, these studies also lack depth, as they use South Africa, often together with East Africa (which is heavily researched due to the 'second wave' of immigration that followed the expulsion of Indian settlers and their resettlement in Britain), mainly as illustrative examples of trade and labour diasporas with the barest mention of dates and areas of settlement

(Clarke *et al.* 1990; Cohen 1997; Vertovec 2000). One mention of the South African Indians as a diaspora is in Hansen (2004).

3. Diaspora as a social form

Diasporas are created by forced or voluntary *migration* from the original *homeland* to a *new place* or places of settlement, where they form a self-identified *community*. Vertovec suggests of this triadic relationship that "these distinctions all ultimately concern diaspora as a social form in that the emphasis remains upon an identified group characterized by their relationship-despite-dispersal" (Vertovec 2000: 142). These social relationships, and the unique way of life that they give rise to, are formed by the common experience of immigration to and settlement in the host country and the collective maintenance of a group identity connected by affective, political and economic ties with the original homeland and to other diasporic groups around the world. Vertovec also includes in the social form of diaspora the economic strategies they employ to maximise their resources, and the tension of political loyalties between homelands and host countries. As minorities, diasporic groups often experience discrimination that pushes them into political roles: "individual immigrants may be significant actors, or collective associations may be powerful pressure groups, in the domestic politics of their host countries as well as in the international political arena by way of interests in the political plight of a country of origin" (Vertovec 2000: 143). In the following subsections, I will give examples of the unique ways in which the Indian community in South Africa displays these diasporic characteristics. The examples are given in the context of a commentary on recent literature on the history of the South African Indian community, especially work by Ebr.-Vally (2001).

3.1 Migration and settlement

Indians came to South Africa as a result of the need for cheap labour on the sugarcane plantations in the Natal colony in the late 1800s. Between 1860 and 1911, 140 000 Indians came to Natal as part of the indentured labour system agreed to by contract between the British colonial Indian and Natal governments. The first group of Indians consisted mostly of Hindus from Madras. They were accompanied by 'passenger'

immigrants from Mauritius and Gujarat, many of whom were Muslim, who immigrated to South Africa at their own expense to take advantage of the trading opportunities that the indentured labour system opened up. Although the numbers of passenger immigrants was originally only about 10% of the total (Lemon 1990), they now make up about 30% of the overall Indian population, due to the more balanced sex ratio of the 'free' immigrants: the Natal government restricted the number of women arriving with the indentured labourers, 40 to 100 (Ebr.-Vally 2001). Today, more than three quarters of the Indian community is settled in Natal. Other major concentrations are in the Pretoria/Witwatersrand area and Pietermartizburg (Lemon 1990). Immigration continues, but slowly, as for many years it has been restricted to dependents.

3.2 The relationship with the host country under apartheid and post-apartheid governments

Diasporic communities are often characterised by the complex political relationships that evolve between them and the host society, and the host society and the diaspora homeland. The political status of the Indian population was a continuing bone of contention between the South African and Indian authorities. Originally, as British subjects, their treatment as indentured labourers caused an outcry, and forced the Natal government to honour its settlement contracts with those who had worked out their time. However, the establishment of the Union in 1910 began a series of attempts — for example, the Asiatic Bill of 1925 — that were aimed at dealing with 'the Indian question', or how to deal with a persistent population of British 'aliens' who would not go home, but stubbornly stayed despite the discriminatory laws that made their lives so uncomfortable and curtailed. The Union government also used various laws, ostensibly aimed at everyone to make life as difficult as possible for Indians, especially Indian traders who were seen as a threat to White business interests. This was a period of intense political debate around the colour bar. These discriminatory laws and social practices saw the beginning of political activism, the anti-discriminatory movement associated with Gandhi, who became the spokesperson for the Indian community after fighting for the repeal of registration tax laws (Ebr.-Vally 2001: 82).

The independence of India in 1947 saw a change in status of Indians in South Africa. Between 1947 and 1961, Indians in South Africa became Indian subjects with the status of permanent residence. This period also coincided with the election of the Nationalist Party and the ascent of apartheid ideology and social practice. At this time, among many other restrictions that interfered with their freedom of movement, trade and education, Indians suffered from forced removals that destroyed the organic communities that had grown up in areas like Cato Manor, and serious inter-racial fighting that intensified the hostilities between them and the local Black population (Lemon 1990; Freund 1995; Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2000).

Between 1961 and 1994, Indians were granted the status of full citizenship, mostly in order to put an end to the Indian government's attempts at interference in domestic affairs. This period also saw the consolidation of apartheid law, and witnessed the most serious waves of political opposition by the ANC and its affiliates, of whom many were Indian. This had serious implications for the way in which the status of Indians again changed: from permanent residents, to citizens, they were now granted their own place in government in 1984 with the establishment of the tri-cameral parliament (Freund 1995: 85; Lemon 1990). This came at a cost. Many Indians benefited from more lenient policies that allowed for the growth of the middle class, and a publicly-validated 'ethnicisation' of classical Indian 'taste' culture, which resulted in more space allocated for Indian culture, news and music in the media, and extended educational, trade and social facilities (Hansen 2004). However, the politics of divide-and-rule, as the White government sought to create a conservative Indian elite, meant that parts of Indian society suffered from a conflict of interests — some would say, it even went so far as to break ranks — with the wider struggle community. However, the low poll turnout in the 1989 elections, and the affiliation of the Indian Congress with the UDF, made it clear that the Indian community as a whole did not want the tri-cameral system to succeed at the expense of the broader political issues around apartheid (Lemon 1990: 147).

Many commentators — and Indians themselves — designate Indians as Black, placing them together with other historically disadvantaged and suppressed peoples (Ebr.-Vally

2001: 94). However, post-apartheid South Africa has seen an increasingly strident debate about the status of the Indian community, as it once again tries to position itself within the wider polity. This is the historical result of falling between two political stools, as it were: never being accepted as full partners with the White minority government, nor being seen as entirely trustworthy partners in the independence struggle, and in both cases (and arguably even more so now) the haunting question of not being autochthonous. In addition, despite a record of fighting for racial equality, there is a history of racial prejudice between Black and Indian groups. One of the latest and most well-publicised examples in this regard is the song *amaNdiya*, released in 2002 by the well-known struggle poet Mbongeni Ngema, in which he crudely accuses Indians of being oppressors and even worse than Whites. Another is the request to the Indian community by Mbeki during the election campaign of 1999, that they should try to be 'African' first and then Indian: "Why can't you just call yourselves African Indians?" suggesting that this gesture would make a difference to the way they were viewed, and increase their acceptability as South Africans (Hansen 2004).

3.3 Relationship with the homeland: South African Indians and India

The relationship with the homeland can, as we have seen in the chapter on diaspora, be concerned with both effect and affect, with the praxis of maintaining political, economic and family ties, and with the less tangible but equally influential nurturing of personal, and communal, sentimental and emotive cultural connections. Part of understanding diaspora as a social form is to understand the diaspora's unique way of life, the way that their external relations with the wider community intersect with their internal, intra-communal relations and allow — or compel — its members to live in several societies simultaneously, connected to both homeland and host. We have looked briefly at the historical political relationship of the Indian community to the wider South African society. What of its abiding connection with India?

From 1946 to 1993, South African Indians suffered from the severing of diplomatic relations with South Africa (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2000); from 1984, this consisted of comprehensive cultural, diplomatic, trade and economic sanctions. The Indian

government had up until 1946 tried to mitigate the more severe effects of nascent apartheid policy under British rule. Some believe South African Indians are not, or are perhaps only partially, diasporic because of the loss of ties with India. Hansen remarks that the Indian intellectual Tejaswini Niranjana "regards South African Indians as diasporic because there are groups actively involved in interactions and exchange of goods, signs and symbols with India... This is indeed true of elite groups, particularly Gujarati communities. It is not true, however, of the average Indian middle class family ... For them, India is immensely distant... is nowhere in the picture as an object of identification" (2004: 19). Ebr.-Vally remarks that for young people, the relationship with India is only "quasi-mythical" (2001: 171). To insist on a completely severed relationship with India, however, excludes South African Indians from the important defining triadic relationship of diaspora, between original homeland, the new place of settlement and the immigrant community's identity. The chapter on data and findings will show that the connection with India is not as 'lost' as might be believed, and I would argue that by this historical definition alone, South African Indians do indeed constitute a diasporic community.

The relationship with the homeland is not merely diplomatic. It is, as commentators have pointed out, also affective and sentimental (Cohen 1997), and there remain ties through marriage, trade and mutual visiting. Many of these have of course revived since 1994. The resumption of relations with India after the political transition in the 1990s has led to greater exposure to forms of dance and music from India under cultural exchange programmes (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2000: 27) often sponsored by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, though South African Indians were never totally without support from visiting artists (Schauffer 1994).

In *SA India*, the local magazine devoted to Indian life in South Africa, it is commonplace to read articles on visitors from Indian religious organisations, classical musicians, dance groups and singers and sports teams. One of the most significant connections with India in recent years has been the upsurge of visits to South Africa of Bollywood stars and singers on film shoots and for concerts, events which are dwelt on at length in local

Indian media. The *SA India* March 2005 edition contained (amongst others) the following articles: an address to the South African Indian community by the Indian Consul General, Suresh Goel, in which he remarks "Your performance and your roles in the country here build the image of India inasmuch as the happenings in India reflect on you and your image in other countries" (*SA India* March 2005: 4); a visiting Bollywood dance troupe; an Indian magician performing "to spread the Gandhian philosophy of love and peace" (*SA India* March 2005: 7); an article on the commemoration of the assassination of Gandhi, also attended by the Indian Consul General; a visit by an Indian poet, Kanhaiya Lal Nandan; and 12 pages of articles and gossip about Bollywood celebrities. This edition also contains a full-page advertisement for an international Internet Indian marriage agency, http://www.saindia.com/shaadi (*SA India* March 2005: 3). Together these articles suggest a vibrant connection with the people, ideas and religious and artistic culture of the subcontinent.

4. Diaspora as a form of consciousness

In Vertovec's schema (2000), diasporic consciousness is a direct result of the historical processes of migration, settlement and accommodation within the host country. It is a particular way of looking at the world, shaped by the exigencies of coping with often hostile political circumstances. Diasporic consciousness is marked by its dual or paradoxical nature "constituted negatively by experiences of discrimination and exclusion, and positively by identification with a historical heritage (such as 'Indian civilisation') or by world cultural or political forces" (Vertovec 2000: 147). This leads to a self-conscious awareness of belonging to more than one place and community, not necessarily in real terms, but in the imaginative and cultural connections with others who have shared the same 'routes' and 'roots'. Diasporic culture in this arena becomes highly self-reflexive, due to a

> heightened awareness that one's own life as well as the lives of all others are shaped by culture as a reified heritage.... An awareness that whatever one, or anyone, does and thinks is intrinsically and distinctively culture-

> bound, and defined in relation to both one's own culture and the cultures of others (Baumann 1996: 98, 107, in Vertovec 2000: 150–151).

To what extent does the South Indian community display such a consciousness? In this section of the chapter, I choose to look at the ways in which the Indian community has adapted to the social and cultural circumstances of South African life, and the 'dual' nature of their resulting culture. I draw extensively on the work of Ebr.-Vally (2001) to illustrate the tensions between change and tradition, and I also look at the ways in which attempts have been made to foster a self-conscious amalgamation with other cultures in South Africa.

Ebr.-Vally's book, *Kala Pani* (2001), is an original work that not only situates South African Indians within the historical context of immigration, settlement and apartheid, but also within the social structures and identities that they brought from India to South Africa, and continue to perpetuate through contemporary family and social ties. She argues that South African Indians carried their sub-continental identities with them to the new country — "with all that that implied, including social differentiation" (2001: 99–100). The identities that were brought to South Africa from India are important markers for both individuals and the different parts of the Indian community to which they belong.

In this thesis, I use the phrase 'the Indian community' as a convenient shorthand while being aware that it can, according to Ebr.-Vally's analysis, perpetuate a stereotyped 'collapsing' of what is a highly differentiated group into one undifferentiated mass. It has only been with the recent reappraisal of the representation of race during apartheid and the way in which representation practices contributed overtly and covertly to the apartheid mission that new historiographies specific to the Indian community have been published (Freund 1995; Desai 1996; Ebr.-Vally 2001). Apartheid policies entrenched segregation along monolithic race lines, and enforced a perceived homogeneity that effectively obliterated what Ebr.-Vally calls "the heterogeneity that … derives from the many identity markers that Indians brought with them and that today's 'Indians' [i.e.

South African Indians] have inherited, diffused and transformed. 'Indian' identity markers derive from the heritage of the caste system, a large number of vernacular languages and dialects, various religions and different territorial origins"(Ebr.-Vally 2001: 84).

Ebr.-Vally (2001) brings to the forefront the "layered group identities" that comprise the Indian community, identities that are based on families' and groups' places of origin within India, their languages and castes, as well as their method of arrival in South Africa. In a macabre way, she argues, the apartheid government's lumping together of the Indian communities as a homogenous ethnic group based on a common phenotype played into the communal desire to perpetuate the group structures that formed the foundation of a caste-based social organisation back in their original homeland.

> Isolated from other groups, 'Indians' resumed their community's life according to the accepted principles and social behaviours that defined their identity. Despite the internal stratification and the complex web of hierarchical relations within the community at large, most 'Indians' had the feeling of belonging to a distinct entity. The already existing boundaries between 'Indians' and the rest of the population were further reinforced by segregation and Apartheid. Compulsory classification and the creation of 'Indian' townships, together with the omnipresent threat of inter-group social conflict, helped sustain the boundaries between groups. (Ebr.-Vally 2001: 170–171)

Freund mentions that in the very beginning of the indentured labour process, the indentured workers "succeeded in creating a new sort of society, partly through the moulding of a neo-Indian creole identity… influenced by the interaction with both the indigenous African population and the dominant White colonist element" (1995: 8). One of the ways in which South African Indians adapted to South African life was through the adoption of English as the mother tongue, via an early creolized standard language, Natal Bhojpuri, which "absorbed words from English and from Zulu and indirectly from

Afrikaans via both other languages" (Freund 1995: 9). However, "The gradual disappearance of the vernacular languages has not meant the demise of communities formed around linguistic criteria. 'Indians' still identify themselves as members of linguistic communities (Gujarati, Hindustani, Mehmon, Tamil etc.)" (Ebr.-Vally 2001: 173).

The other major change was the loss of caste structures for most of those who arrived as indentured labourers, although caste remains somewhat important for Gujarati settlers who came as traders (Freund 1995: 9; Ebr.-Vally 2001). Caste can be defined as a "system of social functions embedded in religion", that "operates both at a social and at a spiritual level by defining the place that groups have in the world order" (Ebr.-Vally 2001: 20). Ebr.-Vally argues that the social ordering and organising power of caste was taken over by linguistic groups – Gujarati, Tamil, Telegu and Mehmon – which corresponded roughly to the ports of origin of the migrants: "The characteristic dynamic of the caste system that organises the Indian world provided newcomers with the tools to create three distinct categories of Indians upon arrival in South Africa: the *Madrassi*, the *Calcuttie* and the passenger Indians ... Linguistic differences operated within each of the three categories...which are still to be found within the 'Indian community'" (2001: 138).

Hansen, in an article about the plays written by and produced for the Indian community (2000), shows how community theatre has contributed to the formation of Indian identity in Durban. Many of these plays deal self-consciously with the concept if what it means to 'be Indian' in South Africa. One such play, Aldrin Naidu's *Mooidevi's Muti* dealt with the huge public scandal and debate that was created by the divorce of Amichand Rajbansi, the former chairman of the Minister's Council in the House of Delegates in the 1980s, from his wife Ashadevi. The play wittily combines elements of White, Zulu and Indian languages and cultures and mocked

> what are seen as the vices of the Indian community: greed, excessive status consciousness, hypocritical family life, vanity and political opportunism... the play... presupposed, posited but also reproduced the

> 'Indian community' through half-embarrassed self-mockery of vices and accents. There was obviously something comforting in this for audiences who recognised elements of their own world in the style of joking, speaking and saucy humour in the play. It allowed for an enjoyment of community and ethnic closure" (Hansen 2000: 257–258).

Hansen argues that Indian theatre is an important means of self-reflective understandings of the tensions between tradition and change: "mocking 'family values' and political leaders [are] ways of dealing with anxieties and bewilderment in the face of the actual dissolution of these perceived pillars of the 'community'. But the use of humour also indicates a certain disarming broadmindedness and signals a capacity for critical self-introspection" (Hansen 2000: 268). The 'dual' nature of Indian diasporic consciousness in South Africa reflects the endogenous culture(s) and characteristics of the community, as well as the need to be a part of the wider South African society.

4.1 Cultural consciousness after apartheid

Generally, discussions on Indian culture revolve around its maintenance or loss in the face of wider global and local cultural forces, with little attention paid to the perspective provided by diaspora theory. Ebr.-Vally connects the 'Westernisation' of values and lifestyle amongst South African Indians with an increasingly distant originary India from which the cultural and social structures of the community at large derived, and which had been in some ways protected from change by the relative isolation of the group during apartheid, as mentioned above.

The end of apartheid, Ebr.-Vally argues, brought to an abrupt end this imposed — yet in some ways comfortable — seclusion. Suddenly able to live outside of an imposed Indian identity formed within a separate ethnic space, this rupture with the past enables Indians to move and mix and do business where and with whom they wish, a freedom that brings with it a concomitant sense of a crisis of identity, especially for young people. The present generation of Indian youth is the first that will live outside colonialism and

apartheid, and their relationship to their home communities and the wider South African society is markedly different to those of their parents or grandparents.

> [M]ost young 'Indians' seem to be trying to redefine the constitutive elements of their own identity.... Each 'Indian' group is witnessing the diminishing relevance of their specific tradition among the youth. The youth is largely English-speaking, longs for a more Western and individualistic lifestyle, is more educated and has access to professions that were unthinkable for the previous generations, all of which constitute potential dangers for the preservation of tradition. (Ebr.-Vally 2001: 172, 174).

While these observations seem convincing enough on the surface, Ebr.-Vally's conclusions do bear some comment if not criticism. First, it is not only since the demise of apartheid that young Indians have sought an identity other than the one they were born into or ascribed. As the previous section shows, the very moment of immigration and settlement brings about a redefining of identity in relation to the homeland and vis-à-vis the communities with which the settlers have to interact. Vertovec argues that a search for an 'authentic' originary culture is futile:

> It is ... easy to observe overseas Hinduism and comment that it is different from Hinduism in India. It is often inherent in popular views of diasporas that the homeland is 'authentic' and that the diaspora represents but a deviation from the 'true' or presumed normative form. [We must begin] analysing and accounting for the dynamics of cultural reproduction, innovation and change *in situ.* (2000: 2)

Diaspora theorists argue that there is no such thing as an authentic or originary culture: there are only variations of 'the changing same'. Ebr.-Vally, although acknowledging the ways in which Indian culture has transmuted over time and place within South Africa, seems in her conclusions to return to writing about culture in a formalistic sense, where

the preservation of 'traditional' culture is seen to be under threat by modern trends amongst Indian youth.

5. Diaspora as a mode of cultural production

Vertovec's distinction between diasporic consciousness (above) and diaspora as a mode of cultural production slightly blurs the lines between cultural consciousness and lived culture. The latter proceeds from the former in many ways, as the consciousness of having two or more overlapping social *milieus* within which to operate opens the opportunity for diasporic subjects to select and syncretise aspects from each heritage in a creative cultural life. Dhupelia-Mesthrie for example argues that the choreography of the dance company *SuriaLanga* (Hindi and Zulu words meaning the Sun) (2000: 27), with its mixture of African and Indian dance, is an attempt by Indian artists to seek their African roots. An interesting photograph in the same book depicts the Speaker of the South African Parliament, Frene Ginwala, wearing a sari bordered with an African 'ethnic' motif and 'ethnic' jewelry to the opening of Parliament (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2000: 270).

This more or less self conscious production of a unique set of cultural characteristics and behaviours is a social dynamic which has always already been in process within the South African Indian diaspora. Global media and communications are a prime way in which diasporic awareness is fostered. Gillespie shows how television and film are used differentially by Punjabis in London to negotiate a diasporic culture:

> While young people use Indian films to deconstruct 'traditional culture', many parents use them to foster cultural and religious traditions. Some remain sceptical of parental attempts to 'artificially maintain a culture through film' *but, successful or not, it is clear that the VCR is being used for the purposes of reformulating and 'translating' cultural traditions in the Indian diaspora* (1995: 87; my italics)

Vertovec (2000) argues that the ability and desire to negotiate the complex field of cultural agency is prevalent amongst the youth of any diaspora, as it is they who are most in touch with the 'two worlds' of parental and host cultures. He further argues that for both generations, the media may not be a benign presence, as "complex transnational flows of media images and messages perhaps create the greatest disjunctures for diasporic populations, since in the electronic media in particular, the politics of desire and imagination are always in contest with the politics of heritage and nostalgia" (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1989: iii in Vertovec 2000: 154). While the availability of Western global media and the comparisons it gives rise to may indeed cause a sense of distancing between the cultures of home and host, I later argue in the chapter on Bollywood that it is not so for Bollywood as a global media in South Africa. In this genre, a role model is provided for the balancing of diasporic identities, modernity and tradition: in Bollywood representations of diasporic youth culture, the 'politics of desire and imagination' are no longer in contest with 'the politics of heritage and nostalgia', but are consummately reconciled. My research is directed at the extent to which young Indian students at Rhodes display this kind of consciousness. I argue that the young people I interviewed use Bollywood to reflect on lived culture at home and to (re)imagine the local community as one of many global Indian diasporas.

6. Conclusion

What comes across in the histories of the Indian communities in South Africa is the continued creative cultural resilience against the injustices of both indentured labour and apartheid law. Although it may be true that Indian communities in general 'turned inward' as a result of laws such as the Group Areas Act, the overall success of the community could not have been achieved without a determined effort to engage with the wider polity. This is in a sense quite different to – and even contradictory of – the negative charge of 'ethnic closure' posited by Hansen (2000, 2004), Ebr.-Vally (2001) and Mistry (2004). Such a phrase suggests an imposed inability or lack of desire to foster contacts with or engage with others inter-communally. It is contradicted by the ways in which the Indian community has incorporated aspects of the wider community within its

cultural boundaries, at the same time as it looks to foster particular aspects of lived culture derived from the subcontinent.

The chapter on findings will highlight some of the ways in which a complex 'diasporic consciousness' is lived by the youth I interview. Culture here, as it applies to the youth, is something real, 'out there', reified, not the ongoing, dynamic, creative response by individuals and their communities to the many intra- and inter-communal impulses and stresses that surrounded the older generation during colonial and apartheid years. It also suggests that the youth, dazzled by opportunities that a fast-modernising, post-apartheid society offers them, are unthinkingly abandoning their home cultures in their favour, as if culture is something that can be taken up or put down at will, or only to be adhered to under duress: "The young generation is, however, aware of family, language and religious identity markers and often still has to comply with them" (Ebr.-Vally 2001: 171). My research attempts to show that this is indeed not so, and in many instances contradicts this gloomy picture of second and third generation Indian elders stranded by time and their children in a fast-diminishing cultural space, and having to protect an identity that is in danger of being 'lost'. It is certainly not the case that the youth I interviewed wish to abandon their home cultures in favour of a modern, Westernised lifestyle, nor do they comply with certain forms of traditional culture out of duress, but out of a very real sense of belonging, and a feeling that they have a valid, if sometimes unorthodox, contribution to make to the creative and social life of their communities.

Chapter 4

Bollywood

1. Introduction

The Indian film industry has recently become the subject of a large body of scholarly literature which focuses on two main areas of research, one into its production and reception within India (Nandy 1998; Mishra 2002; Ganti 2004), and the other into its reception amongst various diasporic Indian communities abroad (Gillespie 1995, 2002; Alessandrini 2001; Kaur 2002; Rajadhyaksha 2003; Moorti 2003a; Hansen 2004). In the first part of this chapter, I will give an overview of what is meant by Bollywood. I will then briefly discuss the literature that deals with the ideological underpinnings of its production and reception in India. The second part of the chapter continues with a discussion of Bollywood abroad, and deals with theories which, extrapolated from interpretations of its production and reception at home, indicate how Bollywood is presumed to influence its diasporic audiences. These two overviews help to contextualise my study of audience reception of Bollywood movies at Rhodes University within the larger body of theory on Indian film, and lead to the next chapter, which is a review of the literature on the reception of Bollywood film by audiences within the Indian diaspora. My research is motivated by an interest in the ways that South African Indian youth, as members of the South African Indian diaspora, understand Bollywood and incorporate its representations into their lived culture.

2. Bollywood and the ideological context of its production and reception in India

Indian film refers to the wider corpus of cinematic film produced within India from the earliest days of film production. Bollywood, derived from the combination of 'Hollywood' and 'Bombay' (the British name for the city of Mumbai), is "a tongue-in-cheek term created by the English language press in India in the late 1970s... to refer to the prolific and box office-oriented Hindi language film industry located in Bombay" (Ganti 2004: 2). It is a part of, yet distinct from, a much larger Indian film industry, which produces feature films in various centres in about 20 local languages, and whose

total output of film is far larger than that produced in Mumbai. "The most frequent factual error perpetuated in the international and Indian press is that the Bombay film industry produces 800 – 1000 films a year (see for example, Mishra 2002, Kaur 2002). The Bombay industry actually produces about 150 – 200 films a year" (Ganti 2004: 3). Many of these are now made with an international audience in mind.

These films, produced in Hindi (the Indian lingua franca), although comprising approximately only 20% of total national production, are the ones that are disseminated around the world, and are talked about. Their international flavour and slightly more Westernised production values make them particularly exportable to the global Indian diaspora. However, they share stylistic characteristics – spectacular song and dance routines, lavish sets, melodrama – with Indian film in general. "Thus, 'Bollywood' has become a shorthand reference not only to a specific industry, but also to a specific style of filmmaking within the industry which is aggressively oriented towards box office success and broad audience appeal" (Ganti 2004: 3).

Bollywood, as I use the term here, also needs to be distinguished from films made by diasporic Indians living and working abroad — such as Chadha's *Bend It Like Beckham* — whose work, although set in a Bollywood-style idiom, has a critical and emancipatory political and cultural agenda (Rajgopal 2003).

2.1 Early Indian film

There is no space to discuss the history of Indian cinema in detail (for which see Ganti 2004; Mishra 2002; Chakravarty 1993). However, most commentators argue that it is important to understand the way in which Bollywood has emerged from within the previously relatively disadvantaged commercial Indian cinema to become an international force within the last two decades, at the same time as a conservative and nationalistic Indian government has supported a strongly essentialised Hindu culture. Filmmaking in India has a long history, starting in the late 1800s with the advent of moving film. The first showing of a film in India was on 7 July 1896, when the Lumiere brothers exhibited their *cinematographe* in Bombay, only six months after they had

shown it in Paris (Ganti 2004: 6). It was a great success and an 'indigenous' cinema immediately sprang up. However, despite its popularity (or because of it), the history of early Indian cinema both before and after Independence is a story of a struggle against legal impediments of one kind or another. The colonial government imposed censorship against films that might support the Independence movement, controlled the importation and distribution of raw film stock, and heavily taxed final productions, practices that continued, and even intensified, after Independence (Ganti 2004: 26).

Despite the fact that the film industry was the second largest in India in terms of capital investment (Ganti 2004: 34), the post-Independence government did not perceive film as a vital part of the economy at a time when emphasis was placed on national tasks such as the provision of basic health and education, and industrial development. In addition, although the film of the time reflected a nationalistic agenda "predicated upon a representation of an India no longer cursed by the reality of untouchability" (Mishra 2002: 18), it was not regarded as an valid part of contemporary Indian culture, a term that was reserved for the traditional taste or high arts of the Indian canon (Ganti 2004: 43). Despite the legal and bureaucratic difficulties it faced, however, this period is regarded as the 'golden age' of Indian cinema. Influenced by political emancipation from Britain, the partition wars with Pakistan, and the project of nation-building, the cinema was concerned with the lives and troubles of the urban and rural poor, and the effects of urbanization such as capitalism and the growing divides between generations, tradition and modernity.

2.2 Indian film goes Bollywood

Two major national events occurred in the 1990s: the first was the adoption by government of a policy of economic liberalisation, the condition of two IMF loans in 1991, and the second was the subsequent advent of satellite television in 1992. Relaxation of import regulations meant that a greater variety of foreign film was available for consumption, and export of film became more competitive, due to a devalued currency. In turn, there developed a growing synergistic relationship between the film industry and satellite television networks, which depended heavily not only on

the films themselves for their broadcasting content, but on their ancillary industries in music, video, fashion and advertising (Ganti 2004: 34). Also, by the early 1990s, the Indian government had begun to attract investments from the large numbers of non-resident Indians (NRIs) living and working abroad, aware of the potential contribution to the national economy they could make with their foreign currency remittances. Part of this potential investment lay in the media, which led to a consolidated media bill to regulate the mergers of satellite communication with television, cable and the IT industry (Rajadhyaksha 2003: 32).

It is at this historical juncture that Rajadhyaksha (2003) discerns the development of a split between what was the original Indian cinema, and the sudden advent of Bollywood upon the national and international scene. Bollywood, Rajadhyaksha argues, is not just the Indian film industry, but rather "a more diffuse cultural conglomeration involving a range of distribution and consumption activities from websites to music cassettes, from cable to radio" (2003: 27). In asking why Bollywood is so popular now, Rajadhyaksha looks at the social and psychological ramifications of the state's official recognition of the film industry (granted in 1998) and the advent of international capital investment and technology. He argues that Bollywood is in effect the inheritor of the long-standing government attempt to control the film industry as a vehicle for its nationalist mission. The nationalist project of the late colonial and postcolonial state was to "define itself in terms of a modern, 'national' culture", and in order to do so, "[it] instituted a whole paraphernalia of activities defining the identity of the 'modern citizen'", of which the 'freedom' to go to the cinema constituted a significant part (Rajadhyaksha 2003: 34).

This mediation took place within the new look of the high-budget Bollywood productions, which became increasingly sophisticated, influenced by the high-tech production values of Hollywood and MTV, and sponsored by money brought back to India by members of the global diaspora. In content, they moved away from the violent themes of the 1980s, and concentrated on highly choreographed song and dance sequences, feel-good, happy-ending love stories of the wealthy middle class with an emphasis on family values that reflected 'our culture' (Rajadhyaksha 2003: 28). Thus,

Bollywood succeeds only 'on the whole' in mediating the transition mentioned above: by consistently celebrating "a form of Indian national identity that constitutes upper-caste, middle-class Hindus (and until quite recently and with very few exceptions, northern Hindu speakers) as the only true national subjects" (Alessandrini 2001: 323).

Writers criticise the conservative Indian state project of modernisation (reflected in Bollywood representations of middle-class Hindu culture) which stands at odds with its other professed goal of democracy (Alessandrini 2001; Gillespie and Cheesman 2002; Rajadhyaksha 2003). Bollywood films no longer provide a panoramic view of Indian society and turn away from the issues of social justice and caste oppression: instead they "solve the problem of how to represent subalterns by dispensing with them altogether" (Alessandrini 2001: 323). What take their place are consumer goods and the rituals of capitalist consumption within the upper-caste, middle-class Hindu family, themes that are entirely in accordance within the context of India's abandonment of its socialist projects and its move towards a policy of economic liberalisation under conservative political governments.

3. Bollywood abroad

The international dissemination of Bollywood cannot be understood outside of the context of economic liberalisation and the processes of globalisation in India under conservative governments. The circulation of Indian media among the South Asian diaspora constitutes the export of the Indian spectator together with the discourse of Indian nationalism, "now commodified and globalised into a 'feel good' version of 'our culture'" (Rajadhyaksha 2003: 37). Alessandrini takes this one step further and calls this "a new sort of political mission: to 'sell' India to the West" (Alessandrini 2001: 328). Of course, this must raise questions as to the links that connect cultural products such as Bollywood film with the Asian sub-continent and its diasporas, and how these foster increasingly important political and economic ties between the two. Standing between 'the West' and India are huge numbers of globally mobile, middle-class non-resident Indians, with cosmopolitan lifestyles and social aspirations, whose economic participation in the economy of liberalised India has, scholars argue, fostered "a

particular brand of aggressive hypermasculine nationalism" in league with capitalism and the ideology of the 'Indian' family (Moorti 2003a: 356; see also Cullity 2002; Gillespie and Cheesman 2002; Kaur 2002).

Commenting on the rise of 'diasporic nationalism' and the consumption of Bollywood film, Alessandrini analyses the 'ultimate family film' and international hit, *Hum Aapke Hain Koun*, and finds that the film tries but ultimately fails to reconcile 'tradition' (centred in the family) and the demands of a global (post)modernity (centred on capitalism). (2001: 315). One of the questions which this background raises for my study is: to what extent is the consumption of Bollywood in South Africa, among a very particular set of diasporic youth, influenced by its formative background? Bollywood can no longer be thought about as a peripheral cinema: as a globally disseminated, capital dependent media industry, it has become one of those global media with its own cultural, political and economic agenda, which stands accused of 'cultural homogenisation'. Bollywood forms part of a South Asian 'mediascape', "image- and sound-centred narrative-based accounts of reality and fantasy [which] are formed of actual and imagined lives, of selves and others in near and far-away places" (Dudrah 2002: 164), and which ultimately contribute to the formation of particular sorts of political, social and cultural identities within the diaspora.

This is not to advocate a simplistic media effects-type criticism: it is my opinion that audiences have at least some ability to resist the hegemonic underpinnings of the media and instead to use it in complex and imaginative ways to re-configure personal and wider communal cultural identities. But, as Alessandrini points out, "understanding the complex phenomenon of diasporic nationalism means working to understand the crucial role played by cultural politics in the way national ideology has increasingly become transnational" (2001: 336). Similarly, Rajadhyaksha warns against what he calls "Bollywood-culturalist" explanations of the international popularity of Bollywood: their 'human values' and messages that money is not everything in life hide a nationalistic ideology promoted by an entire industry marketed to the global diaspora (2003: 30).

4. Conclusion

The corollary of these arguments is that it is not enough to simply assume that diasporic Indians merely watch Bollywood in order to maintain a nostalgic relationship with the lost 'homeland'. In the South African case, it is also necessary to ask why now, at this particular political and economic juncture, do Bollywood films so appeal, constructed as they are within a particular hegemonic discourse? What is it about the particular South African context in general, and the local Rhodes University context in particular, that contributes towards the pleasures that are experienced in watching Bollywood films?

Chapter 5

Bollywood and the global Indian diasporas: international case studies

1. Introduction

In Chapter 4, I outlined the development of Bollywood in India, and gave a short account of the critique of the conservative, middle-class nationalist ideology that some critics claim characterises Bollywood representations of Indian life. In this chapter, I will examine what writers have said about the reception of these representations via Bollywood movies in the Indian diaspora, and I argue that simply ascribing a homogenising effect to Bollywood consumption in the various diasporas is simplistic and misleading. Instead, I advocate that media consumption should be looked at in the lived cultural context of its reception. I then briefly look at two instances of ethnographic research of Bollywood reception by diasporic Indian communities in London and Fiji. As it is my argument that the Indian community in South Africa retains the characteristics of a diaspora, it will be useful for the sake of comparison to examine the general ways in which Bollywood reception by diasporic Indian audiences is theorised.

2. Bollywood and the globalisation of 'our culture'

The chapter on Bollywood drew attention to the ways in which the films of this genre play into and draw from a state-supported ideology of an essentialised Hindu middle-class capitalism structured in patriarchy. Bollywood is also made and broadcast as a global media. Together, these two claims make a case for examining Bollywood in the same way as globally disseminated Western media products, which have been criticized by scholars of the cultural imperialism thesis for their culturally homogenising power. The cultural imperialism thesis argues that Western media are the prime means by which Western value systems are spread throughout the world, leading to a flattening out of local cultural differences and the adoption of a Western-style consumerist ideology (Schiller 1976, 1991). Several writers have indeed attributed this media-effects type of influence to Bollywood and its associated music and satellite television industry, or at least the potential to be so influential amongst the widespread audiences of the Indian

diaspora (Rajadhyaksha 2003; Kaur 2002; Asthana 2003; Cullity 2002, Gillespie 2002, Gillespie and Cheesman 2002). They claim that globally disseminated Indian media are able to influence diasporic audiences to participate in a conservative brand of Indian nationalism, building an idealised global Indian identity based on a cosmopolitan brand of middle-class consumerist lifestyles.

Thus, Kaur argues that attendant on the appearance of India on a par with its Western counterparts in the 1990s, as it began to participate in free-market reforms, conduct nuclear tests and develop a huge, globally-networked IT industry, was the expansion of a film industry that reflected those values:

> [Bollywood] plots are far removed from the clichés that a developing country like India is associated with. Rather, the emphasis is on Indian traditional and family values where the young Westernised characters keep returning to the roots located in a traditional-yet-modern India.... The new Bollywood films are definitely not about what India as a whole is, but do reflect the reality of the resurgent urban middle class, far removed from the woes of the rest of India. Both privileged Indians at home and the diaspora abroad who have grown tired of routine stories of callous deaths, mishaps, drought, or famine in India as reported in the international media are keen to devour a cultural product that brings them no shame. Indeed, they can claim moral superiority over their Western counterparts by emphasizing family values, commitment and traditional oriental warmth. The belief that popular Indian cinema is removed from reality is misplaced. It may not depict the whole reality, but the new films of the 1990s quite effectively bring home the reality of the urban middle class and its immunity from the rest of India. (2002: 207–208)

Similarly, Alessandrini (2001: 337), reflecting on the way in which Bollywood is immediately available to diasporic audiences, sometimes even before the film appears in India, makes the point that the diasporic and domestic Bollywood audiences are mutually

influential. Further to this observation, and reflecting that Bollywood viewing by diasporic audiences may not be as simple as an act of nostalgic reconnection with a 'lost' homeland, Alessandrini asks a question with pertinence for my study: "What are the connections between the production of popular films in India and the creation of particular sorts of political identities, both in South Asia and in the South Asian diaspora?" (2001: 336).

3. A critique of the media imperialism thesis

In the media imperialism thesis, Western media are responsible for the destruction of tradition and its replacement with the consumerist values of a particular brand of Western modernity. Bollywood critics, on the other hand, lament the promotion of an essentialist or 'traditional' Indian Hindu culture. However, both claims can be addressed by a more nuanced understanding of audience reception, which argues that the kind of effects ascribed to the products of the media industries are too simplistic to account for the processes of media reception and appropriation.

Thompson argues that far from being able to infer from the structure of the media industries what the presumed interpretation of the media product by the audience might be, the critique of the media industries fails to take into account the "complex, varied and contextually specific ways in which messages are interpreted by individuals and incorporated into their day-to-day lives" (1995: 171), what Ang calls "the profound embeddedness of [media] consumption in everyday life... its irreducible heterogeneity and dynamic complexity" (Ang 1996: 69). Tomlinson reminds us that regardless of the presumed representational power of the media, what also needs to be taken into account is "the lived experience of culture [which] may also include the discursive interaction of families and friends and the material-existential experience of the routines of life" (1991: 61). Ang, Tomlinson and Thompson are concerned with understanding the social dynamics of localised reception as a socially and historically-situated activity, in preference to presuming that globally disseminated media necessarily affects different parts of society in the same way.

Such an argument has many supporters in cultural studies theory. Hall (1980) proposed that audiences accept, negotiate or oppose the meanings of the texts they consume, depending on the extent to which the encoded ideology agrees with their social position. Morley's research on television audiences (1980, 1993) shifted the focus away from the ideological content of the text, and emphasised the importance of taking into account the historical and social production of the audience as a means of understanding the ways in which they interpret media messages. Indeed, Fiske argues (1987) that one of the pleasures that a hegemonically-oppressed audience member takes in ideologically-loaded media texts is his or her ability to interpret them in a way contrary to their message.

The point that Hall, Ang, Fiske and Morley make is that it is not enough to treat the audience as passively positioned by the media text. Other things are happening at the time of consumption. One of the more important of these things is "the ways in which media texts construct for their readers particular forms of knowledge and pleasure, making available particular identities and identifications" (Moores 1993: 137). To understand the full significance of media, we need to look at its affective content and use. One such affective use is what Thompson calls "symbolic distancing":

> The appropriation of globalised symbolic materials involves.... [t]he accentuation of symbolic distancing from the spatial-temporal contexts of everyday life. The appropriation of symbolic materials enables individuals to take some distance from the conditions of their everyday lives – not literally but symbolically, imaginatively, vicariously. Individuals are able to gain some conception, however partial, of ways of life and conditions which differ significantly from their own. They are able to gain some conception of regions of the world which are far removed from their own. (1995: 175)

The importance of the media text lies not so much in its ideological subtext (although this must always be a part of the reception equation) as the audience's affective (emotional, personally related) appropriation of its content. Texts provide a safe and imaginative

space for the audience to explore different ways of life and thought, or to participate in ways of being that are not immediately their own. My own position on this issue is that I support the idea of idiosyncratic understandings of media messages, while recognising that this may be a limited freedom and that our choices for resistance are in part predicated on the presence of alternative representations of possible social and personal lives.

The chapter on diaspora showed that the ways in which diasporas are compelled to adapt to the social, cultural and political circumstances of their new place of residence have profound implications for the kinds of 'hybrid' culture that emerge over time. In keeping with the critique of the power of global media, I argue that it is important to avoid ascribing homogenous kinds of reception of Bollywood films amongst the various diasporic cultures. In this, I am arguing against the received consensus of most writers on Bollywood who look at Bollywood's homogenising power. Mishra argues, for example, that

> Bollywood brings the global into the local, presenting people in Main Street, Vancouver, as well as Southall, London, with shared "structures of feeling" that in turn produce a transnational sense of communal solidarity. ... Bombay Cinema constructs an Indian diaspora of shared cultural idioms [which] disarticulates this heterogeneity through a form of cultural intervention that must always keep both the non-negotiable primacy of the homeland and a unified response to it intact. (2002: 238)

I will briefly review some of the ways in which researchers have interpreted the meanings which diasporic audiences make of Bollywood. If Bollywood is not to be merely a means of inscribing an essentialised Hindu subject position on diasporic audiences, what do they do? How are they enjoyed and what role do they play in the construction of the everyday social and political identities of their audiences?

4. Watching Bollywood

Many authors have now documented or commented on the affective and effective uses that various diaspora and minority groups make of the media (see Sinclair and Cunningham 2000 for a comprehensive overview; also Naficy 1993, Srikandath 1993, Gillespie 1995; Cunningham 2001; Cullity 2002; Dudrah 2002, Kaarsholm 2002, Christiansen 2004 inter alia). Lack of space prevents a comparative look at media use by different diasporic groups, which could usefully highlight elements common to the needs of similarly-situated minorities. Briefly, Silverstone calls the space that old and new, local and global media, especially IT, provide for the creation of minority, marginal, diasporic social and political presence the "global commons" (2002: 107). Such groups use it to raise the profile of and gain support of political causes (e.g., the Zapatista movement, (Froehling 1999 in Silverstone 2002) and/or create and sustain the identity of their community upon the foundational sense of communion and belonging that media creates (Silverstone 2002: 115).

These groups now make extensive use of an increasingly globalised media network, not only of larger, globally-positioned and corporate-based mass media in broadcast, print and film which may keep them in touch with 'home', but also the more private domain of video, e-mail and electronic newsletters, audio-cassettes and phone calls, to name but a few. Dispersed groups invent and maintain their own version of the local within global culture and, as Silverstone remarks, minorities anywhere now have the capacity "to be minorities everywhere" (2002: 116). However, only one large-scale work deals specifically with Bollywood in a specific Indian diasporic community (Gillespie 1995). Another short article on the Bollywood culture of the twice-displaced diasporic Indian community from Fiji is by Ray and Mukherjee (2002).

4.1 Representing the homeland

While it is my argument that global media texts cannot predetermine the readings that are made from them, it is however indisputable that Bollywood's representations of India are a means of maintaining links to the homeland, although it would be wrong to think of this as their only function, or to stop short at such an interpretation. Bollywood is one of the

major ways in which diasporic communities — in the process of adapting to the exigencies of living within, and identifying with, the new nation state — maintain a sentimental link to the homeland.

> The failure to connect with the idea of the new state has its obverse side in the sublime otherness of the homeland which also eludes substantialization, but which nevertheless needs to be grasped under a "translatable" sign. In the diasporic production and reproduction of "India" one of the key translatable signs... is Bombay (Bollywood) Cinema which... has been crucial in bringing the "homeland" into the diaspora as well as creating a culture of imaginary solidarity across the heterogeneous linguistic and national groups that make up the South Asian (Indian) diaspora. (Mishra 2002: 237)

As diasporic communities struggle to accommodate themselves to the demands (and racism or nationalist chauvinism) of the state, the common experience of watching Bollywood movies creates a "transnational sense of communal solidarity" (Mishra 2002: 237). The movies serve to construct a fictive homeland with which all diasporic communities can identify, and within which they can retreat as a means of mediating the fissures between diasporic culture and the wider society.

Bollywood achieves this suturing between the immigrant as member of a diaspora and immigrant as citizen of the state by creating its own version of the diasporic experience and the diasporic Indian. The physical setting for many Bollywood films is not India, but some exotic international locale, and its protagonists are Indians living abroad. Bollywood movies portray the West as the site of transgressive but nonetheless permissible lifestyles, while nonetheless maintaining the Indian homeland as the site of 'pure' Indian virtues and culture. By representing to the diasporic audience the 'real India', it represents those kinds of ideals that the diaspora should aspire towards (Mishra 2002: 267). 'Modern' ways of life — especially Western-style middle-class consumerism

— are endorsed, but the diasporic subject is ultimately encouraged to return to India, which remains untouched by 'foreign' values.

Ray and Mukherjee (2002) argue for a more complex understanding of representations of India. They argue that the success of Bollywood lies in its ability to create a particular contemporary diasporic spectator, the 'citizen consumer', and to "locate itself in the locus of influential and contesting definitions of 'Indianness'" (2002: 137). This is particularly attractive for diasporic youth, for the action of the films not only takes place in the West, but the protagonists themselves are young diasporic subjects. Bollywood offers its diasporic youth audience "a trajectory of 'Western-style' glamour, wealth and liberty, but on its own terms" by providing the 'narrative communities' of diasporic and postcolonial subjects with the material from which to "reconstruct 'India' outside India" (Ray and Mukherjee 2002: 140, 143). This emphasis on the use of Bollywood to construct "new imaginings and politics of community" (Ray and Mukherjee 2002: 145) by a diasporic youth audience is particularly pertinent, as it reflects Vertovec's claim that it is the youth of a diaspora, in touch with transnational media and the sense of dual belonging that this evokes, who are primarily responsible for effecting cultural change within the diasporic community (2000: 155). The following section deals with media consumption by the youth of two Indian diasporas: that of the Punjabi community in London, and the twice-displaced Fijian diaspora in Australia.

4.2 Media consumption by the Punjabi diaspora in Southall, London

An important ethnographic study which looks at media consumption by Indian diasporic youth is that by Gillespie (1995). Gillespie's research focused on the "role of television in the formation and transformation of identity among young Punjabi Londoners" (1995: 1). The Southall Punjabi community is comprised of two groups of Punjabi settlers, one directly from India after partition, the other arriving via East Africa, following 'Africanisation' policies in post-independence Kenya and Uganda. Her work is important because its in-depth audience ethnography illuminates "the microprocesses of the construction of a British Asian identity among young people in Southall, against the backdrop of the emergence of 'new ethnicities' in the context of post-colonial migration

and the globalisation of communications" (Gillespie 1995: 205). Her research explores the ways in which young men and women negotiate between becoming adults within the conservative Punjabi community of Southall and belonging to a wider British society.

One of the principle means by which this negotiation takes place is through the use of television and video media. Parents use home videos of Bollywood movies and sometimes programmes produced in India for the Indian national television station and broadcast in Britain as a means of teaching their children about and fostering Indian religious and cultural traditions. Although the video-viewing culture developed as a means of supplementing the cultural marginalisation of the Indian community, which has few cultural facilities provided for it by the state, Indians in Southall regard it with some ambivalence. It is seen by the younger generation as serving to isolate the Southall community still further from mainstream British society by fostering traditions that leave their elders "more Indian than Indians" (Gillespie 1995: 80). To the older generation however, it serves to bring 'India' into the home, and for women especially it is a vital part of female domestic culture. For both generations however, the 'oppositions' that Gillespie identifies in Bollywood themes — tradition/modernity, rural/urban, poverty/wealth, communality/individualism, morality/vice (Gillespie 1995: 82) — serve as pointers for discussion and negotiation about how 'to be' Indian in Britain, especially around the subject of kinship duty, relationships and marriage.

Apart from Bollywood, 'TV talk', gossip about the local television content, allows young Punjabi people to discuss issues of deep pertinence to their own lives, such as the change in gender norms between the 'new' peer and 'old' parental cultures.

> TV talk is a crucial forum for experimentation with identities. It is possible to say things in TV talk which would be otherwise difficult or embarrassing if not unsayable.... Common experiences of TV supply referents and contexts for talk which is explicitly or implicitly about identities and identity positions. [N]ews, soaps and ads serve as cues and as resources for the reflexive exploration of cultural differences and for

> the articulation of both real and imaginary options. Young people respond to these genres by collectively and individually positioning themselves as citizens, social actors and consumers in various relations to parental diasporic cultures, British national 'White' culture and the global culture of teenage consumerism. (Gillespie 1995: 25, 27–28)

Being exposed to a variety of local and international media representing a wide range of different cultural options does not have altogether comfortable consequences. The young Punjabi Londoners are 'caught' between the strictures of their parents' cultural and social milieu and the attractive representations of cosmopolitan lifestyles promoted by Western media, representations which do not necessarily coincide with the sometimes hostile realities of wider London society. "This is the kind of context in which the construction of new ethnic identities becomes both an inevitable consequence and a necessary task.... [Young Punjabis] must acquire skills in negotiating from context to context between various cultures and various positions within each" (Gillespie 1995: 206–207). This conclusion reminds us of Hall's point: that this ability to adapt, "the capacity to live with difference", is a vital life skill, the hallmark of the social and cultural complexities of the new millennium (Hall 1993: 361).

4.3 Bollywood and the Fijian Indian diaspora in Australia

The history of the Fiji diaspora bears some minor comparison with the South African case. Indians were brought to Fiji in 1874 as indentured labourers to work the sugar plantations of the British colony. They were mostly of north Indian extract, and were accompanied by passenger Indians, mostly Gujarati who came for the purposes of trade. Ray and Mukherjee describe how, despite the hardships of indentured labour, the Fiji Indians "never accepted the status of racially and culturally doomed proletariat and went to great lengths to fashion new hybrid diasporic realities" (2002: 125) by drawing on the festivals and religious rituals brought from north Indian village life (especially re-enactments of the Ramayan narrative) and re-fashioning them to speak to the exigencies of their new circumstances. Hindi film — characterised at the time by the 'mythologicals', epic histories of the gods based on the Ramayan — arrived in Fiji in the

1930s and readily found a home in the diasporic culture of the now post-indenture communities whose "linguistic and religious identities were differentiating. Hindi cinema's primary impact in Fiji was to bond [these communities] through meta-narratives with which all the different groups of Fiji Indians could identify" (Ray and Mukherjee 2002: 128). Bollywood continued to play an important role in the structuring of social life up until the mass exodus of the majority of the diaspora to other international centres after the 1987 coup.

On the other hand, Indian Fijian immigrants to Australia use Bollywood to (re)structure a whole way of Fijian Indian life based around community cinema, music and dance performance, fashion boutiques and film magazines, and the production of their own Bollywood music and movies. This is in response to being outside the dominant White culture, and also being ostracised — as lower-caste — by the contemporary Indian diaspora from the mainland, which is mostly of upper-caste professionals and who for the Fijian Indians "constitute the community's 'other'" (Ray and Mukherjee 2002: 120). The uncertainties of urban life in Australia and tensions with 'other' Indians has led to a "resurgence of religion and folk traditions neglected in today's urban Fiji" (Ray and Mukherjee 2002: 132), especially performances of the Ramayan and devotional bhajans. Bollywood derives much of its music, narrative and allegory from the same sources and "in a Western diasporic context [they] provide young Fiji Indians with the cultural capital to really appreciate Bollywood" (Ray and Mukherjee 2002: 133).

Ray and Mukherjee's study of Bollywood consumption in a twice-displaced Indian diaspora attempts to show how young Fiji Indians "more than any other Indian group in Australia, are keen on appropriating Hindi popular films to fashion a cultural identity that is their own" (2002: 115), even though India is remote from their direct experience by many generations. "Bollywood in its contemporary manifestation offers Indian diasporic youth a platform for organizing their cultural life which is 'acceptable' to the West and at the same time retains a measures of difference" (Ray and Mukherjee 2002: 114). They insist on the importance of positioning the use of Bollywood and the resulting 'culture of cinema' within the specific socio-historical trajectory of the group in order to understand

the specificities of the ways in which Bollywood has informed the (re)structuring of Fijian Indian life over the course of two diasporas.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen how authors writing about recent trends in Bollywood and Indian pop music have emphasised their nationalist drive, celebration of the middle-class within capitalism, excessive consumerism, marginalisation of the poor, and their continuing subordination of women (Alessandrini 2001, Asthana 2003, Cullity 2002; Ray and Mukherjee 2002). However, Bollywood film is also used imaginatively as a link between home and the homeland, fosters connections between members of the 'imagined community' and provides safe avenues for negotiations between older and younger generations around topics concerning family and community that might otherwise be too threatening. In particular, it provides a particular representation of 'Indianness' around which social and cultural concerns particular to a diaspora can coalesce. Emphasising the importance of the historical particularity of each diaspora, Ray and Mukherjee remind us that "As a matter of *positioning* and not essence, this 'Indianness' varies with different communities, is used at times for contradictory purposes and quite often gives rise to unintended consequences" (2002: 118).

Media are not neutral texts, and are neither produced nor consumed in a social or political vacuum. The uses that diasporic cultures make of media, and in particular the uses that diasporic youth make of Bollywood and their creation of new forms of culture (which include media), cannot be divorced from the contexts and methods of Bollywood's production and consumption. Externally, there is the real difficulty of establishing and maintaining a social and political identity within a majority host culture. Internally, there are negotiations as to how far an accommodation with this host culture should be allowed to go. By looking at the particular circumstances of the lives of my young South African Indian respondents, my research leads me to ask in what ways the "shared cultural idioms" of Bollywood are understood and incorporated into their lived culture as part of an ongoing, creative attempt to (re)imagine diasporic culture in South Africa. In the next

chapter, I look at Bollywood in South Africa and how its reception by the local diasporic community has been theorised.

Chapter 6

Bollywood in South Africa

1. Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 6, I gave a brief history of Bollywood and an overview of the ways in which diasporic consumption of its representations of an essentialised Hindu culture have been theorised. I have also argued a case for the South African Indian community to be considered as a diaspora. This chapter gives an overview of Bollywood in South Africa, and also looks at some of the (scant) literature on the reception of Bollywood. I argue that Bollywood reception by South African Indians is not necessarily as reactionary or escapist as interpretations by Hansen (2004) and Mistry (2004) claim.

2. The growth of Bollywood in South Africa

The last few years have seen a growing interest in Bollywood in the South African mainstream press. This trend coincides with a similar high-profile promotion being given to it in other international centres. London, the home to a large 'second wave' diaspora of NRIs (Non-Resident Indians immigrating post Second World War for business and work in White-collar industries) and a prime consumer of Bollywood, was the venue for the first International Indian Film Awards in June 2000. This staging of Bollywood for an international audience followed on the successes amongst diasporic audiences of some now-legendary films over the previous five or so years: *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun?* (1994), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998) and *Taal* (1998) (Rajadhyaksha 2003). These films were not only popular amongst their targeted diaspora audiences but also amongst the wider society: *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* and *Taal* "created a record of sorts by climbing into the US/Canada Top 20 and UK Top 10 charts" (Kaur 2002: 200).

The following year, 2001, South Africa hosted the event at Sun City. It was held in South Africa again in May 2003 in Johannesburg, to "mark a decade of diplomatic relations between India and South Africa" (Von Klemperer 2003). This award ceremony and the

link between India and South Africa was further consolidated by a charity cricket match, held in Pretoria by teams of Indian film stars and South African and Indian cricketers. In addition, the 'Now or Never' concert, starring Amitabh Bachchan — the "Star of the Millennium" according to a BBC poll — in Durban in 2002 was billed as "one of the largest live extravaganzas in the history of Indian entertainment" (Munusamy 2002), and attracted over 50 000 people.

At the same time, the main South African cinema complexes started to show Bollywood movies. This was an unusual move. In the past, Indian film could only be seen in local, privately-owned cinemas: those cinema theatres which had traditionally showed Indian films to local Indian audiences were affected by the arrival of video and DVD for home viewing and many had shut down (Jagarnath 2002). Ster-Kinekor, the cinema wing of Primemedia, which had hosted the 'Now or Never' concert, held a 'Bollywood Festival' of new and old films in Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg, in 2002. Bollywood movies also began to be screened at the rate of about two a month, to 'cross-over audiences' at Ster-Kinekor's main theatre complexes, such as Durban's Gateway Mall, The Zone in Rosebank and Cavendish in Cape Town (Msomi 2003). By 2003, Bollywood was making between 2% and 3% of the box office, and Ster-Kinekor's main rival, Nu Metro theatres, had also started to take an interest in Bollywood and had shown 10 movies, although it preferred British-Indian films such as *Bend it like Beckham*, which were more sure of attracting a cross-over market (Pillay 2003).

Bollywood also came out on South African television. DSTV, the main satellite subscription network, offers 'South Indian' and 'North Indian' bouquets under its 'separate subscriptions' category. The 'South Indian' option includes Sun TV, a global Tamil channel, KTV, for Tamil showbiz, and NDTV24x7, an Indian news channel specifically directed at an international (diasporic) Indian audience. This channel is also included in the 'North Indian' choice, together with Sony Entertainment Television, for Hindi family entertainment, B4U, a Bollywood channel showing five Bollywood movies a day and ZeeTv, the largest Asian satellite television channel. There are also two channels directed at Muslim audiences. In the case of Eastnet, eight Bollywood movies

are shown are shown each month, and the satellite channel has also acquired the rights to the South Asian news programme, News Week South Asia.

The public broadcaster SABC3 started showing Bollywood movies on a Saturday night in 2004. This was a good move commercially, with a reported increase in viewership among Indian viewers by 250%, and a general increase in viewing rates of about 45% (Pather 2004a). However, this move was not without controversy amongst the Indian audience. The decision to screen the more commercially lucrative movies was taken at about the same time as the SABC moved *Eastern Mosaic*, a programme reflecting the interests of the Indian community, from its prime-time Sunday morning slot on SABC1 to the unpopular slot of 10pm on Tuesday evenings on SABC2, with a repeat on Sunday afternoons at 2.30pm. At the same time, frequent complaints were heard from the Tamil-speaking sector of the community, which protested against the overwhelming Hindi content of the screenings. However, the success of the screenings was such that a second season began in August, together with repeats of the previous season's films, movies that had only just been released on the Indian circuit, and at least one Tamil film (Pather 2004b).

3. Bollywood in South Africa pre-1990s

Recent media hype about Bollywood makes it seem as though it has only just arrived in South Africa. On the contrary, Indian film has been screened here for many years. 'Mythologicals', based on Indian myths and epics, such as the Mahabharata and Ramayan were some of the earliest films made and exported from India, and they made their way to South Africa from India almost from the start of film production there. As early as 1936, the Indian government had tried to negotiate the lowering of taxes and import duties of films exported to South Africa, but had met with resistance from the Union government (Jagarnath 2002). This did not stop Indian film arriving in South Africa, often illegally, or through very circuitous and expensive loophole routes via London, Singapore, Hong Kong, Beirut or the Fiji Islands (Jagarnath 2002: 167), a trade in pirated films that carries on today: a flyer for a music and DVD company handed to

me recently advertises itself as "Specialising in Original and Approved Indian Films and Indian Music".

Jagarnath's (2002) study of Indian cinemas in Durban during apartheid, from the 1950s to 1970s, is a study in miniature of the physical, social, political and cultural space occupied by the diaspora. Inter-race relationships, intra-communal tensions, external political pressures and the creative effort necessary to find ways around a bureaucratically heavy state administration all pressed heavily on the cultural, social and physical environment of South African Indians. The experience of going to the cinema offered an evening of escapist family entertainment in a luxurious and pampering environment (the extravagant toilet facilities were part of an advertisement for the Avalon cinema in Pietermaritzburg, for example (Jagarnath 2002: 168) that invited a sense of participation in a nostalgic re-enactment of an ideal Indian milieu.

Excluded from 'real' public spaces to which only Whites had legitimate access at this time, Jagarnath (2002) argues that the enormous and beautifully decorated foyers were public places where the community could meet and be seen, and the films themselves opened a private Indian space to see representations of Indianness, made by Indians outside of the South African context. At the same time, these cinemas and their supporting industries were lucrative business enterprises that helped to establish a wealthy and influential business class from a predominantly Muslim or Hindu Gujarati background. They were also a means whereby Indian people came together with or openly showed their affiliation with people from 'other' groups and concurrently were instruments whereby the economic imperatives and (il)logic of the apartheid system could be turned to home advantage.

4. Bollywood post-apartheid: life after *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*

The advent of video and home viewing had an adverse affect on the financial viability of the community cinemas, and many went into decline or closed (Hansen 2004: 8; Coan 2003). After the 1970s, the decline of home use of Indian vernacular languages also meant a loss of interest in the vernacular film, especially amongst young Indian people,

who, like many other South African youth in the 1980s and 1990s, took American youth culture as a role model (Hansen 2004: 9). But this suddenly changed, Hansen argues (2004: 1) with the local screening in 1998 of the international Bollywood hit, *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (or, KKHH, "Something or Other is Happening"). This film was not only a success with Indians of all generations, but also amongst a sector of the White community, and it was screened for eight months in the "White" middle-class cinema complex in the Durban Musgrave centre. KKHH created an unprecedented demand in South Africa for Bollywood videos, and also an increased public awareness of, and interest in, the genre in both the White and Indian communities.

The popularity of the film amongst its South African Indian audience was based on its content. On the surface, KKHH takes place in a "pure fantasy space" (Hansen 2004: 4), within an Americanised Indian setting stripped of all that might be shameful (i.e., dirt, poverty or squalor), or inconsistent with an idealised middleclass Indian modernity. The characters seem to act only out of altruistic love, personalised moral values and conscience-directed goodness removed from the heavy hand of tradition. For the South African Indian audience, especially the youth, this spectacle provided something unique: "KKHH portrayed a dreamy and hazy but also more attractive space of recognition: a global Indian diasporic identity imagined to be more hospitable and generous than South Africa, yet distinctly Indian and modern" (Hansen 2004: 19). This fantasy space, Hansen argues, is especially dear to the youth because of their spatial, temporal and affectual distance from India, a distance which fosters two stereotypes of India, either as an embarrassing place of poverty and dirt, or as a symbol of "spiritual sublimation" (2004: 17). Indians were suddenly able to view a Bollywood movie without embarrassment, in English, in a previously White public space.

This freedom, to identify with a positive representation of Indianness, and to move into previously restricted public space, resonated with the growing need of young South African Indians to find an identity in post-apartheid South Africa, separate both from the stigma of the overt Indian ethnicity inculcated by apartheid practices, and from the potential instability of being non-autochthonous within a Black majority state. Thus, the

appeal of KKHH: "KKHH and the way it inscribed its viewers as Indians, but modern and middle class, offered Indians in South Africa an opportunity ... to inhabit more comfortably the identity space that they had already been assigned by dominant orientalising discourses in South Africa" (Hansen 2004: 11).

Hansen (2004), Ebr.-Vally (2001) and Mistry (2004) all argue that Indians post-apartheid are suffering from a deep crisis of identity, as the Black independence government replaces the dominant White minority with which the Indian community has so long identified. Not only are they in the process of "[fathoming] what the new nation expects from them, how they should behave like proper citizens in the gaze of the new politically dominant African elite" (Hansen 2004: 13), but Indians also appear consumed by internal debates around distressing social and cultural issues, such as 'imaginings of the motherland', 'divides among generations', 'worries' about Westernisation, moral corruption of the youth, internecine struggles between religious factions, and the loss of language, to name but a few (Hansen 2004). In this scenario, the popularity of Indian film post-apartheid derives from the way in which it "presents images of a supposedly Indian form of modernity that many local Indians felt comfortable with" within the purview of the dominant White gaze. Bollywood now, with its attractive and exotic sets, slick, up-to-date production values, handsome men, beautiful women and a portrayal of sound moral yet modern values, was something that could be unashamedly shown to the White world and could become a space within which to construct an 'acceptable' post-apartheid identity.

5. Agency or reaction?

Ebr.-Vally (2001) argues that apartheid accomplished its task with regards to Indians almost too well: forced by legislation to confine themselves to particular spaces and to reproduce within the racially (i.e., defined by phenotype and origin) ascribed group, the Indian community turned inwards, towards itself, hardening group boundaries that had already been demarcated for them. Ebr.-Vally (2001) and Hansen (2004) see this as a negative and stultifying act of withdrawal. However, I disagree. Cohen argues that "[m]any members of diasporic communities... can spot 'what is missing' in the societies

they visit or in which they settle. Often they are better able to discern what their own group shares with other groups and when its cultural norms and social practices threaten majority groups" (Cohen 1997: 170). Just as the traders among the early settlers became middle-men, astutely going between wholesalers and the larger community be it Black or White, with their wares, or cinemas, so they were also able to negotiate their way within the complex social and cultural hierarchies within South Africa.

By 1911, when immigration was officially restricted, 50 years after the first indentured and free immigrant Indians arrived from the subcontinent, a new generation of South African, or 'colonial-born', born Indians was beginning to influence the economic and political life of the community. They spoke English, went to South African schools, and were deeply aware of the fissures of race and class that divided them from within. Apartheid policy kept the Indian community as a whole mostly to itself as far as 'mixing' with other race groups was concerned (a fact that Ebr.-Vally points out [2001: 144] suited the higher caste Gujaratis very well, as it preserved a tradition of endogamous marriage within strict cast boundaries). But at the same time they interacted socially and politically on many different levels with other groups within South Africa, and used their status as a small but significant minority with ties to Britain and India as leverage to gain advantage for the group as a whole. In addition, family and group affiliation has served to foster economic prosperity over generations, despite the restrictions of apartheid on education, trade and cultural interaction.

6. Conclusion

In the scenario put forward by Hansen (2004) and Ebr.-Vally (2001), Indians are merely reactive, prodded this way or that, pushed from political pillar to cultural post, interminably searching for the ever elusive-stability that a fixed identity will give them. I would argue otherwise. The historical, social and cultural evidence is that despite over a century of attempted cultural and political isolation and economic oppression, the Indian community is more resilient and richer in material and cultural resources than ever. In 1911, there were about 150 000 Indians living in South Africa, just over 44% of which had been born within the country. Although agriculture was the most important category

of employment, occupying 36 000 people, the workforce was already becoming more diverse. Bhana and Brain's statistics (1990: 194) show that while there were large numbers engaged in manual and menial labour, in industry and domestic service, totalling about 53 000, there was a very small but growing professional class of 729 people, and in addition the number of people engaged in commerce was over 10 000. By the late 1980s large numbers of Indians had adopted middle-class lifestyles, and popular magazines for the Indian market today are not aimed lower than LSM 7.

This is not to deny the very real structural and economic inequalities that exist within the community and between it and other groups in the larger polity (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2000: 27–28). While acknowledging these inequalities, the general success of the social and economic development of the wider Indian community has given rise to an explosion of interest in an asserted Indian identity. It is perhaps propitious that this quest for a new look at local Indian identity comes at a time when local ethnicities are generally celebrated as part of the post-apartheid national discourse: "The new South Africa allows those who rejected Indianness at the height of apartheid to explore their roots and be what they want to be" (Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2000: 27). While this is particular to the South African history, it is also in tune with a more global trend of what Ray and Mukherjee call "the ethnicization of the nation" as national cultures fail to assimilate ethnic minorities. In the era of global movements of capital and people, the "yearning for 'roots' … has become a common phenomenon for both the White and various diasporic communities" (2002: 121).

In the same way that Indian people in South Africa have time and again used the spaces that are available to them (and some of the spaces that were not!) to accomplish what they could, so they are doing with the social and cultural space that is now available post-apartheid. The fact that this space has become available at the same time as the global spread of Bollywood creates a social dynamic that deserves more attention. Young people's desire to imaginatively inhabit an Indian identity coalesces around the attractive and affective Bollywood tropes of a modern, global Indian identity rooted in the 'pure' culture of India. The question I ask of my research is: what do the young people I

interview gain from the ways in which they 'read' Bollywood and imaginatively incorporate its representations into their lived South African Indian diasporic culture at the present time?

Chapter 7

Research methods

1. Introduction

The previous chapters have all contributed towards building a general theoretical foundation of Bollywood film, and the diaspora which constitute its focal audiences. In Chapter 8, I will reflect upon this theory by using the particular understandings of my case study, Indian students at Rhodes University. In this chapter, I present my research methods, including the research design, method of data collection, the research procedure and my approach to data analysis and presentation. I begin with a short overview of the methodological framework that informs my particular approach to audience research and discuss its relevance to my research goals.

2. Methodology: qualitative methods in Media Studies research

Divergent epistemological assumptions about the nature of human societies and cultural phenomena have encouraged an ongoing debate amongst social science researchers and theorists as to the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative methods, such as the questionnaire, survey or laboratory experiment, provide data that is easily reducible to statistics. While empiricist research methods may produce large quantities of 'clean' statistical data, there is much debate on the validity of such data when it is taken into account that the laboratory or the survey cannot reproduce the intricacies of the social settings in which media messages are ordinarily received, and that numbers in themselves explain very little when it comes to understanding the meanings that people make of the complex social worlds that they inhabit in their daily lives (Deacon *et al.* 1999: 6; Bryman 1988).

One reason for media researchers questioning positivism as a research methodology *per se* is that research in the social sciences in general has been influenced by post-positivist theories, particularly socio-constructionist and interpretivist perspectives, which deny that the social world has inherent laws. Instead, the generalities that we — both the researcher

and the researched — see in the world are the result of the ways that we look: "the social world we study has 'always already' been constructed through the meaning-making process we call 'knowing'" (van Rensburg 2001: 8). The researcher shifts from finding or discovering a unitary reality 'out there' to presenting "the multiple meanings which research subjects make of reality" (van Rensburg 2001: 8). As Geertz argues in his support for ethnographic method, the analysis of culture is "not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (Geertz 1973: 5).

The other reason for media research shifting to qualitative research methods has been the influence of the cultural insights gained by anthropological and ethnographic research. Many media researchers have used qualitative — or interpretive — research methods in order to develop situated understandings of audiences and the meanings that they make of the media they consume (Ang 1996; Morley 1986; Radway, 1987 *inter alia*). This "ethnographic turn" (Moores 1993: 1) to media research via qualitative research methods, they argue, is the best means of obtaining the "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1973) necessary for thorough understandings of politically and socially situated audiences, and is also a way to "understand popular cultural practices as meaningful activities: as part of people's ongoing attempts to make sense of their lives and the specific class, gender, race, and other identities they inhabit" (Skovmand and Schroder 1992: 3). Qualitative research, I believe, best suits my research goal, which is to understand the ways in which South African Indian youth at Rhodes University incorporate Bollywood in their lives and use it to create a particular diasporic identity.

2.1 Young Indian students on Rhodes University campus: a case study

One way of obtaining these "thick descriptions" is through the case study. The case, an integrated and bounded system, distinguished by certain behavioural patterns, and the case study, "both a process of enquiry about the case and the product of that enquiry" (Stake 2003: 136), are well suited to such an endeavour. Case studies can be undertaken as being of intrinsic interest in themselves, or in order to illuminate a wider issue and provide insight into an external interest. I argue that Indian students form one such case: not only do they describe themselves as 'sticking together', but from observation it is

easy to deduct that Indian students on campus make up a bounded group defined largely by its choices of social activities, such as belonging to the Hindu Students' Society and jointly participating in organised activities such as the annual Culture Show and religious rituals. Regarding the former, intrinsic interest, the case sample that I chose from among the Indian students at Rhodes University allowed me to raise questions and points of interest concerning a selected subgroup within the diasporic Indian population, namely middle-class South African Indian youth. In the case of the latter, more instrumental interest, my case study helped me to articulate a specific South African instance to, and reflect on, the wider theory of the reception of Bollywood films by diasporic audiences.

Case studies are generally associated with a qualitative methodology, and have become a common way to conduct qualitative enquiry (Stake 2003, Eisenhardt 2002), despite certain criticisms aimed at its validity as a research method (Flyvbjerg 2001 and Stake 2003 for overviews of these criticisms). My aim, however, is not to arrive at a predictive theory or a universal statement (if these ever can be found in the study of human affairs) concerning Indian culture in South Africa and its relationship with Bollywood. My research interest is rather in exploring the ways in which my research subjects interact with, interpret and live through the meanings that they make of Bollywood in their everyday lives. I argue along with Bassey that the merit of a case study depends on its being able to create plausible interpretations for what is found, to construct a worthwhile storey or argument and to convey this convincingly to an audience (1999: 65). Case studies also allow the researcher to provide description, test theory and generate theory (Eisenhardt 2002: 9).

Similarly, Lindloff argues "In the final analysis, qualitative reports are all about perspectives of lived experience. The researcher must decide what kind of author he or she will be, and what sort of story to construct of the 'facts' of the case... Qualitative research involves the production of knowledge, not its discovery" (1995: 24–5). I place myself firmly in the position of a researcher who believes that predictive theory in the social sciences is far from being achieved. I believe that concrete, context-dependent knowledge is more valuable than a vain search for elusive generalisations, and have

chosen "to keep [my] eyes open and look carefully at individual cases – not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something"(Flyvbjerg 2001: 73).

3. Methods: data collection

I decided to interview the respondents from my sample selection with a *semi-structured interview schedule* within *focus group* and *individual interview* settings. I also used *participant observation* in order to collect my data. These are core tools and methods in qualitative research, as they are the means by which the researcher is able to gather the 'thick descriptions' necessary for descriptive and interpretive validity (Hansen *et al.* 1998; Schofield 2002; Schroder *et al.* 2003). Together, focus groups, individual interviews and participant observation act as a means of triangulating the research data: the combination of multiple sources of data is supposed to lend more validity to the qualitative study, by supporting its reliability (Schroder *et al.* 2003: 356).

3.1. Sample selection

Following Mazzarella, "'youth'... refers to young people roughly between the ages of twelve to twenty-four" (2003: 225). At the time of my research, this age group largely defines undergraduate Indian students at Rhodes University, who comprise roughly 5% of the total student population (numbers obtained from the Registrar's office, Rhodes University. See Appendix 1 for a summary table). This number is internally differentiated along country of origin, religious affiliation and language. After pilot focus groups, I decided to restrict my sample selection to Hindu respondents from South Africa, as although South African Muslim and Zimbabwean Hindu and Muslim students comprise a substantial proportion of the diasporic Indian student population resident on campus which enjoys Bollywood, their inclusion in the research would have led to too many variables in the data. The consumption of Bollywood by South African Indian Muslim youth, and youth of the Zimbabwean diaspora, are other areas of research in their own right.

Altogether, I interviewed 13 South African Indian undergraduate students, in two focus groups of two and four students, and seven individual interviews. I also collected

interview data from two 'mixed' focus groups of four and five students from South Africa and Zimbabwe and three interviews with individual Zimbabwean students, which although very useful for mapping the initial terrain of my research, were not included in my final data analysis except for a few brief quotations. A list of the respondents who appear in the Findings chapter is in Appendix 2. I used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling in order to collect respondents for my focus group and individual interviews. In purposive sampling, respondents are identified by their participation in researched activity (Schroder *et al.* 2003: 265). The respondents in one focus group and two individual interviews were audience members I met at Bollywood screenings.

Other respondents were collected through snowball sampling, where "an initial contact with an informant generates further contact" (Jensen 1982: 239; Schroder *et al.* 2003: 162, 265). Snowball sampling is "useful in informal social groupings, where the social knowledge and personal recommendations of the initial contacts are invaluable in opening up and mapping tight social networks" (Deacon *et al.* 1999: 53). Snowball sampling proved extremely useful in this case, putting me in touch with many students who are involved with the Bollywood 'scene' and the running of the Hindu Students' Society. These respondents formed three of my focus groups and all but two of my individual interviews.

3.2 Interview schedule

Partly through the understandings I gained from my theoretical readings, and with the help of my supervisor, Professor Strelitz, I generated as an interview guide a preliminary set of core questions which I hoped would elicit information concerning my respondents' feelings and understandings of their experiences as members of the diasporic Indian community at home and at Rhodes, and their consumption of Bollywood movies (reproduced in Appendix 3). A standard set of questions asked of all respondents allows for comparison across between groups (Hansen *et al.* 1998: 274). However, following Fielding I took care that my questioning within the interview setting itself should "be as open-ended as possible, in order to gain spontaneous information about attitudes and actions, rather than a rehearsed position ... the questioning techniques should encourage

respondents to communicate their underlying attitudes, beliefs and values" (1993: 138; Schroder *et al.* 2003: 264). My intention was to try to gain as holistic a picture of their lived cultural experience as possible, in order to contextualise their affective understandings and uses of Bollywood.

In addition, as I grew to understand the field in which I was working, I could modify the kinds of questions I would ask in the course of 'natural' conversations: the interviews and subsequent reflection together became a continually-refined loop. I found that it was necessary to tread carefully and to dispose of pre-conceived ideas concerning what I have previously known about Indian people, either through my research or through my often misleading contact with young Indian people as students on campus, where to an outsider like myself they blend in with what appears to be a generalised youth culture common to most middle-class students. Bryman advocates that "the formulation and testing of theories and concepts [should] proceed in tandem with data collection" (1988: 68), in order to prevent the imposition of pre-conceived ideas upon the data-collection process and the constraints that this might place upon both the interviewer and the interviewees. Being flexible allows the researcher to be sensitively attuned to a variety of responses, which in turn help to modify the research concepts or theories as they apply in the particular case.

3.3 Focus group interviews

Focus groups are a common means of collecting data in media research as "the hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in the group" (Morgan 1998 in Schroder *et al.* 2003: 153; Hansen *et al.* 1998). The drawback of focus group interviews is that they generate normative consensus (Schroder *et al.* 2003: 153). However, focus groups in media research are believed to be useful for the insight they provide into the ways in which "everyday media interpretations tend to be collectively constructed by people in social, familial... networks" (Deacon *et al.* 1999:56). I began my research by conducting a pilot focus group by which I was able to test the initial questionnaire and subsequently conducted two focus groups of two and four students. I found that these

were useful for mapping the initial terrain of my study, particularly concerning the presence of intra-group dynamics, which only became visible once I had gained some insight into the composition of the Indian community on campus and the ways in which they saw themselves as a group. In one case, the group generated much useful data. Ultimately, however, I felt (through the results from all focus groups, including those of mixed Zimbabwean and South African students) that group interviews tended to settle too quickly on consensus viewpoints and I decided that individual interviews were more productive in generating insightful and thoughtful responses to my questions.

3.4 Individual interviews

Another reason why I preferred the individual interviews over group interviews was that some of the topics I raised were — initially, unbeknownst to me — highly sensitive in groups comprised of students from different backgrounds, such as caste and religious observance. "The individual interview may thus be the best choice for the interviewer who wishes to illuminate an issue ... that is felt by the individual to be too sensitive to talk about in the presence of others" (Schroder *et al.* 2003: 153). In in-depth interviews, student respondents were free from group constraints and could express themselves naturally. In addition, individual interviews were generally far superior in describing the life-worlds of my respondents: "The meaning repertoire of any individual informant is a product of their lifelong immersion in multiple social discourses, which they bring with them to the interview, and which permeates and anchors anything they have to say about the media product and their use of it" (Schroder *et al.* 2003: 152).

3.5 Participant observation

Participant observation is the primary method of data collection for qualitative research (Bryman 1988: 45). The advantage of participant observation is that researchers are able "to assess what the people observed understand by what they are doing" (Deacon *et al.* 1999: 256) in their "natural settings" (Deacon *et al.* 1999: 258). My respondents often expressed curiosity about my research project and would spontaneously invite me to participate in their social and religious activities, and these of course included watching Bollywood movies. Thus 'sponsored' by members of the Indian community on campus,

opportunities for observation of student life 'in the round' were made available to me. I attended many of the regular screenings of Bollywood which the HSS put on during term time — as mentioned earlier, my coming across one such screening by chance was the primary motivation for my interest in conducting this research. I also took part in religious rituals, such as a small prayer ceremony before the beginning of exams, Diwali celebrations at the temple and local community hall, and the highlight of the year, the Hindu Students' Society Culture Show.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretive coherence

The interviews were tape-recorded after I had explained in more detail my research agenda, and had asked permission to record. I also assured respondents of the anonymity of the data. In addition, I made notes on my general impressions of the interview immediately after leaving, which proved of help when I needed to remind myself of particular details of the interview settings and tone. The interview tapes were transcribed in their entirety and initially coded according to the interview schedule. However, I found that on many subsequent re-readings and immersing myself in the material my understandings of the interviews grew more nuanced and I added new codes to take more mature and holistic understandings of my respondents' reported experiences into account. I found that my data analysis naturally followed the course advocated by Schroder *et al.*: "The analytic procedure should go inductively from the individual cases of each interview transcript, gradually develop conceptual categories and end up by identifying patterned relationships of media experiences" (2003: 168).

4. Research ethics: the interview technique

In order to ensure consistency, after preliminary research with two focus groups using a pilot interview schedule to establish the kinds of questions I should be asking, I modified the semi-structured interview. I then used this same guide to elicit all my respondents' answers, both in the focus groups and individual, face-to-face interviews (Deacon *et al.* 1999: 65). I also took care to hold the interviews in places that interviewees would find safe and supportive. For this reason, at the respondents' requests, most interviews took place in the respondents' own residence rooms. Three took place in an office setting. The

interviews conducted in the respondents' rooms proved very helpful to me, as the way in which their private space was organised and decorated added much to my understanding of their private lived experience, especially in the ways in which they had incorporated their lived culture from home and the media into their personal space on campus. I also made it clear that all information would be confidential, and I asked explicit permission to reproduce the interview material provided the respondent was protected by a pseudonym. All respondents' names have been changed to protect their identities.

4.1 Reflexivity

Writers in the ethnographic or qualitative method of research stress importance of acknowledging the place of the self in the research process (Collier 1998; Aull Davis 1999). Reflexivity as a researcher includes being aware of the implications of one's research methodology. I have already stated my methodological standpoint. In addition, I was aware that my socio-historical position as an educated, White, English-speaking middle-class woman has undoubtedly influenced not only my choice of research subject and my interpretations, but probably also the responses of my research participants. For example, some aspects of community life, such as tensions between language groups, may have been down played in order to create a 'good' impression on me as a White person who was also senior academically to my respondents. I, on the other hand, often hesitated to ask what I felt may be uncomfortable questions coming from an outsider.

Despite these limitations, I feel that most of my respondents enjoyed being able to talk about their experiences and many asked me questions about the nature of my research, which I did my best to elucidate. My reflexive engagement with my research material (interview transcripts and observational records) is hopefully a small step towards combining post-colonial critique with an interpretive approach to researching cultural identity, where "the goal of the researcher is to build understanding of how respondents come to do, or be, or know their cultural identities (Sachs 1984 in Collier 1998) while acknowledging the power structures of colonial discursive practices.

Chapter 8

Research findings and discussion

1. Introduction

In previous chapters, I have discussed the history of the South African Indian diasporic community and the recent development of Bollywood as a global medium. I have also looked at what other authors have said about how global media in general feed into the development of 'hybrid' diasporic consciousness. In this chapter, I return to my research focus, which is to understand the ways in which South African Indian youth at Rhodes University incorporate Bollywood in their lives and use it to create a particular diasporic identity. Here, I look at what young Indian students say about their lived experience as members of a diasporic community, both at home and within the University context. I argue that the consumption of Bollywood movies, their engagement with its related entertainment industries and the meanings that are made from these can only be understood by locating them within the nexus of interwoven strands of inter- and intra-community and personal beliefs, practices and values, which unavoidably reflect off and influence each other. Most importantly, these influences coalesce around personal and group identity and affiliation. My respondents relate how they incorporate Bollywood into their lives through imagination and re-enactment in various marked cultural contexts, in ways that suggest the development of a conscious engagement with a transnational community of diasporic Indians.

I begin the chapter by discussing why the question of identity is important for understanding the limitations of the influence of the media in minority ethnic groups. I then once again use Vertovec's (2000) three ways of understanding diaspora, in order to structure my material and argument. The first section, diaspora as social form, contains three sub-sections: students' understandings of their ancestral origins and settlement, their perceptions and experiences of the host country, and their connection to the homeland. The second section, diaspora as a type of consciousness or way of life, looks at how students understand the foundations of their lived culture, specifically family,

intra-community relations and caste, as they continue to develop ways of being and living as a diaspora within hegemonic White society. This section has been influenced by the emphasis placed on these aspects of lived culture by Ebr.-Vally (2001), and I look at how young Indian people reproduce these structures of community away from home at Rhodes University. The last section, diaspora as a mode of cultural production, examines how students' consumption of Bollywood and their engagement with its related industries has provoked an upsurge of self-reflective interest in 'authentic' cultural values, language and practices, connecting young South African Indians in imagination to a global transnational community of Indian diasporas. As I have mentioned before, however, these are by no means discrete categories, and are indeed dependent on each other for the sense one is to make of the whole. For instance, I will try to show how lived experience of contemporary family life is necessary for an understanding of the ways in which moral stories from Bollywood movies are understood, and the ways these two reinforce each other.

In addition, I must stress that while I use my respondents' words as much as I can in order to create a convincing description and narrative about their lives, my story is necessarily partial, and perhaps partisan. I have chosen those parts of their related lives that seem most compelling to me as researcher, and I am aware that, privileged as I have been to listen to their stories, as an outsider I can have only a clouded impression of their lived reality. As two women in a focus group interview said to me, in very frustrated tones, *"being Indian is definitely the high point of anyone's identity [but] there's more to it than what we've spoken about now"; "ja, there's a lot that you can't explain"; "it's very surface level, and I don't think you can actually get into the ... unless you ... unless you're Indian!"* This thesis does not pretend to have the depth of ethnography but it does, I hope, point the way to other potentially fruitful areas of research, both within the community I have so briefly touched on, and in interrelated fields of global media, minority audiences and lived culture.

In this chapter, I will explore the responses of my informants to questions about their experience of life at home and within their local home communities, their feelings about

campus life and what it means to be a young South African Indian at this time. How does Bollywood fit into this picture, and why is it popular (or not)? Within what aspects of their experience do the messages of Bollywood, its images and ideologies, find a home? The wide-ranging nature of these questions was in order to facilitate an exploration of the nuances of the subjectivities of lived experience, and the subtle constituents of personal and group identity within the South African Indian diasporic community. I hope to go beyond a simple causal explanation of the popularity of Bollywood movies amongst middle-class South African Indian youth at this time (i.e., that if you are Indian you probably like Bollywood movies), and to tease out the complexities of local Indian youth identity that resonate with, appropriate and re-enact the messages of a global Indian diasporan culture.

2. Diasporic youth, media and identity

2.1 Individual identity and minority group membership

In terms of personal development, youth is a stage during which much energy is directed at exploring, negotiating and establishing the parameters and character of one's personal identity (Bonfadelli 1993). The dynamics of such a process necessarily include the nature and boundaries of the social group to which the individual belongs. Minority or ethnic groups – both of which encompass diasporic communities – are defined not only by the wider society within which they are located, and by which they are more often than not subjected to stereotypical categorisation, but also by the dynamic, internal political process of the establishment of group boundaries and group membership. Previous chapters have discussed the unique nature of diasporic communities. Critics have argued that their struggles to negotiate their marginal status within their host nation, and their longings for, memories of and continued connections to the originary homeland may together lead to a flowering of hybrid cultural practices within the ethnic community or, as more postmodern readings would have it, within the 'spaces' between the host and diasporic societies (Bhabha 1990b).

The question remains, however, how it is that members of minority groups, or the ethnic minority as a whole, change or transform. What kinds of choices produce the 'hybridity'

(Hall *et al.* 1992), the 'new ethnicities' (Hall 1992), 'inter-culturism' (Nederveen Pieterse 1995) or 'cultural complexity' (Hannerz 1990) that is said to characterize such groups? We must bear in mind that these 'becomings' are not easy choices in the way that choosing to display ethnic characteristics is for people of western European origin. The desirability of the postmodern ideals of 'bricolage' and 'play', from which these ideas arise, and which are the result, and arguably the inescapable demand, of the contemporary global postmodern urban cultural ethos is perhaps not as readily available to members of minority groups as it is to members of Western culture (Smith 1990). Talking of ethnic minority groups in the United States, Song makes a salient point:

> Unlike the case of White ethnics such as Italian Americans, for whom ethnic identity is "private and voluntary, intermittent and undemanding," and for whom "such an ethnic identity is, in other words, a personal style, and not the manifestation of membership in an ethnic group" (Alba 1988: 153), individuals' membership in ethnic minority groups can be binding and entail much more than a "personal style." Indeed, in the case of non-White minorities, the ability to assert a personal style can be impinged upon not only by racial assignment in the wider society, but also by the norms and expectations of co-ethnics. (2003: 48)

Belonging or not belonging to a group is not simply a matter of individual choice. While members of dominant social groups, whose ethnicity is 'unmarked' (the invisible 'norm' of hegemonic culture), have some freedom to play with group affiliations from within the normative culture, members of minority groups have a limited freedom to transgress their boundaries. Adhering to certain 'scripts' of behaviour may be considered vital for the survival of the group in relation to the wider society: individuals within the ethnic group act within the constraints imposed by a collectively agreed upon, yet continuously contested, set of normative 'authentic' values and behaviours. However, even though individuals in ethnic groups may be constrained by group expectations, Song emphasises that this is neither necessarily negative, nor necessarily implies an homogeneity of individual experience (Song 2003: 42). On the contrary, adherence to group norms and

behaviours not only provides a satisfying sense of place, belonging, and ownership of group practices (especially in situations where the group is stigmatised by the wider society) but also a degree of material security. Secondly, all social groups are made up of a diversity of individual members who bring with them an array of values, perspectives and practices according to age, gender and socio-economic status, among others. It is these differences which lead to a contestation of group boundaries. However, boundaries are not completely porous, and the group can call into question an individual's right to group membership if these boundaries are too radically transgressed.

While individuals may "feel pressure to adhere to certain norms of [authentic] behaviour which are collectively upheld by their co-ethnics" (Song 2003: 49), Song warns that "Rather than conceiving of minority individuals as simply buffeted between the wider society and their co-ethnics, we need to see them as agents who actively negotiate their desired ethnic identities in relation to both insiders and outsiders in a multitude of contexts" (Song 2003: 43). In order to remain true to an authentic sense of the self (the needs of which may conflict with the demands of an authentic ethnic identity), individuals may "[subvert and manipulate] both dominant stereotypes and images attributed to them by the wider society, as well as the scripts of behaviour imposed by their co-ethnics" (Song 2003: 57). Such tactics include opting out of the group into the dominant or other group (rarely successful, as this relies upon group consensus); remaining within the group, but strategically performing, rather than willingly adhering to authentic cultural scripts as an alternative to the extremes of opting out or succumbing entirely to group norms; or claiming partial belonging both to the wider community and to the ethnic group. Song describes how young British people of Chinese origin "carve out an individualized ethnic identity... by claiming a *partial* identification" with both British and Chinese societies (Song 2003: 58). This "conditional belonging involves a belief in open formations of identity, such that, for example, what 'Chinese' means changes over time, and is not retraceable back to any sole origin. To espouse an open formation of Chineseness, or any other ethnicity for that matter, is to reject not only narrowly defined and racist definitions of British nationality, but also the legitimacy of any kind of fixed script of behaviour attached to any ethnic minority group" (Song 2003:

59). These young people choose to be both British and Chinese, but in their own way, contributing to the creation of the 'syncretic', 'hybrid' form of culture that Vertovec identifies as a hallmark of diasporic youth culture (Vertovec 2000: 153).

2.2 Media and the formation of diasporic youth identities: the Southall case

Familiar and respected cultural practices profoundly affect the ways in which we understand and conduct our social relationships. The implication of Song's theory is that however enticing and revolutionary media representations of other ways of life are, it is unlikely that on their own their influence can be unopposedly triumphant. I believe we must be careful of ascribing to media the unalloyed power to erode and re-shape cultural affiliations given it by media imperialism theorists. In a way, such prognostications are yet another form of (White) ethnocentricism, that 'our' culture is so much more alluring and powerful than that of 'others'. Media are nonetheless one important cultural resource available to members of ethnic minorities or diasporas, which allows them to engage in what Thompson (1995) calls "symbolic distancing". Thompson argues that global media allow consumers "to take some distance from the conditions of their day-to-day lives" (Thompson 1995: 175) and provide a resource for individuals to think critically about their own lives and lived conditions. Thompson's argument was originally written against a simplistic 'media effects' interpretation of global media consumption by local communities in Third World contexts — the media imperialism thesis (Schiller 1976; Boyd-Barrett 1977) — and it is useful to help understand media consumption by minority communities in First World countries, such as Gillespie's research in Southall, London.

Gillespie, working in London amongst diasporic Punjabi youth in the 1980s, writes of the ways in which they attempt to adapt to both their immediate family and community environments, and the pressure and pleasures of a wider society. She writes that they reject the more political and conservative stance of the older generation towards ethnic and group identity: instead, they seek to "transcend it in a mode of being described by Hannerz (1990) as 'cosmopolitan'" (Gillespie 1995: 21). This 'cosmopolitanism' consists of "general and specific competences", including the ability "to adapt flexibly to other cultures, and skill in manoeuvring in and between particular cultures" (Gillespie 1995:

21). Much of this adaptability comes from an intense interaction with local and Indian media content: "London Punjabi youth are engaged in constructing a viable culture through negotiations around the diverse resources available to them both in 'real life' and the screen" (Gillespie 1995: 28). Media content forms an important resource or 'repertoire' of meanings (Hermes 1995: 8), upon which youth draw in the ongoing construction of identity.

Thompson reiterates the idea that identity is an ongoing 'project' built in the context of 'real life' from the symbolic resources at hand: "the self is a symbolic project that the individual actively constructs ... out of the symbolic materials that are available to him or her, materials which the individual weaves into a coherent account of who he or she is, a narrative of self-identity. This is a narrative which for most people will change over time as they draw on new symbolic materials, encounter new experiences and gradually refine their identity in the course of a life trajectory" (1995: 210). Media are only one of an ongoing variety of symbolic resources available to members of minority groups in the quest for individual and group identity. Bollywood, an indigenous media, is a symbolic resource that forms an integral part of diasporan 'cultural capital', which in the case of my respondents is enjoyed and re-enacted in everyday life as a reflexive, ongoing means of imagining what it is to be young and Indian in contemporary South Africa.

2.3 A comparison with the Southall research: the South African case

Returning to the South African Indian diasporic youth whom I interviewed, my original research goal — to discover the role that Bollywood played in forming a diasporic identity, *a la* Gillespie — became problematic. Although the two diasporas seem to share many cultural characteristics at face value, it would be an injustice to both to equate them. In the first place, my respondents do not derive from a single geographic and language group, as do the Southall Punjabis, but are from a variety of original subcontinental language and caste backgrounds. In addition, my respondents are third, fourth or fifth generation citizens who, although a diaspora, feel themselves fully integrated into South Africa. There is an almost unequivocal identification with a South African national identity, despite recognition of a complicated relationship with

normative White culture and political pressure from both the previous White and current Black political mainstream. Many of these young people knew very little, or showed little curiosity, about the details of their ancestral origins, while recognising that their parents may know more than they had enquired about. Their concept of India as an originary homeland seems oblique; that is, it appears only in certain highly marked cultural contexts, and does not seem to be an obvious, ongoing source of reflection or node of intra-cultural or personal cultural affiliation, although it is not as far-removed as reported by Ebr.-Vally in her study (Ebr.-Vally 2001: 171). Nor do they seem aware of the influence of sub-continental nationalist Indian politics, which is said to influence diasporic identity (Gillespie 1995: 117).

There is, however, an awakening excitement in a sense of a global connectedness both to India and other Indian diasporas, mediated through Bollywood. Such a global consciousness is said to be characteristic of more recent diaspora (Vertovec 2000; Gillespie 1995). Despite the distance in time from the original settlements, the community as a whole remains, as I have argued in Chapter 3, one that is actively conscious of and retains a sense of pride in and connectedness to their diasporic identity. More importantly for this study, the media that Gillespie (1995) describes the youth as consuming concentrates to a large extent on globally-produced soap operas and local British television content, including advertising. Although she does look at the ways in which Indian cinema and television series are used as a platform for discussing changing social and gender roles, her research took place before the great upsurge of Bollywood as a global commercial medium. My research concentrates on Bollywood, and although I do touch on local and Western global media consumption, this is another area of reseach in its own right and I leave its place in the ongoing dialogue between diaspora, host and homeland posed as an unanswered yet pertinent question. To discover what Bollywood meant to my respondents became a process of learning what was most important in their perceptions of individual and group identity, and connected to this the ways in which they valued their Indian heritage and lived culture within the South African context.

3. Youth in the South African Indian diaspora

The following data analysis keeps to the categories mentioned in the chapter on diasporic forms in South Africa, and uses Vertovec's (2000) division of diapsora into aspects of emigration and settlement (form), as a way of seeing the world (consciousness), and as a creative way of living out a cultural heritage (cultural production). Limitations of thesis scope and length make it impossible to explore and describe these aspects in the depth they deserve; my account will probably seem cursory and rudimentary to any insider. I have selected a few of the aspects of each of Vertovec's categories, by means of what has seemed most important to my respondents.

3.1 Diaspora as social form

A basic definition of diaspora is its mode of emigration and its physical settlement and locality in the host country. The solidarity established between locally situated groups by a common experience of dispersal and settlement lays a foundation for the further characteristic aspects of diasporic identity and cultural production. In this section I talk about my respondents' perceptions of their ancestry and immigration, their relationship to the host country and their ongoing ties to the homeland.

3.1.1 Immigration and settlement

My respondents did not seem very interested in India as a country of origin *per se*. Most had only a vague idea of their ancestors' Indian origins, or could say at most a province or city. The answers to the question "what part of India did [various ancestors] come from?" implied a general marked lack of interest in ancestral origins, claiming that not even their parents knew, or naming at most a province. One focus group interview was particularly telling on this point. I asked what part of India their grandparents had come from, and there was long, sustained laughter, before the collective answer, *I have no idea!* This, however, is not surprising, considering the extent to which most seem to wish to emphasise and claim a South African identity first, before being Indian:

> *Radha: [I'm] a South African first. I feel like there's more sense of belonging [in South Africa], I don't know, I don't see things like my*

grandparents who originated [from India], and even when I heard that Indians were brought to South Africa, you're like, 'No!'

3.1.2 The relationship with the host country

The desire to claim a South African identity is informed by the current nationalist ideology of the 'rainbow nation', and is no doubt also shaped by a latent anxiety induced by the reported experiences of parents and grandparents in South Africa during the years of colonialism and apartheid (which, it is not redundant to re-emphasise here, covers the entire history of Indian settlement). Young people are most desirous of being able to claim the benefits of the current political dispensation. The same student continued:

Radha: I mean, you remember your grandparents or great-grandparents did come from [India] but it's just, ja, South African. I think it's multicultural, multiracial, multi everything, it's quite an amazing place, I think.

Despite the various forms of oppression that have dogged the Indian community since its arrival in South Africa, students whom I interviewed had a very strong sense of belonging to and solidarity with the country of their birth. Amongst these students, at least, there is no ambivalence about a national identity. This is in contrast to readings around belonging and identity which suggest that ambivalence about national belonging characterises the Indian communities in Britain (Song 2003; Gillespie 1995: 76): such an ambivalence is criticised by one of my respondents as being the attitude of 'other' Indians who, as a result of their slave history "don't feel any commitment to this country".

In a focus group interview, after one respondent said "But I would generally say I'm South African and proud of it", I remarked that in my theoretical readings, people of Indian origin living in Britain seemed to refer to themselves as "British Asians":

Rita: We've heard that too.

Rekha: Sometimes we hear it on the Indian channels, or MTV or something.
Sonali: I think maybe being with parents descended from India or something like that maybe that's why they feel they need to specify that.
Interviewer: But you don't feel the need to say that? (various 'no's')
Rekha: I mean, you've been living in this country; you've been brought up in this country; why not give back to this country and say you are South African? It's the right thing to do.
Sonali: Yeah, and we are proudly South African (laughter). We were brought up here, so there's nothing wrong to say that.
Rekha: I mean, we will always like India and we will always want to visit India...
Rita: But there's patriotism too!

These young women deliberately distance themselves from identifying with the need of Indians in Britain to qualify their national identity with a claim to their Indian roots, even though they or their parents were, at least at some stage in their lives, in the very same situation, as first or second generation settlers in a new country. Student R is a first generation South African (her parents immigrated some time before she was born) and D is a second generation South African. However, along with this sense of a personal right to claim a South African nationality, couched in the very words of the current "proudly South African" campaign slogan, goes a current of uneasiness: "there's nothing wrong to say that" hints at a past — and indeed a present — of not feeling free to say such words, a time when the legitimacy of such a claim was — and still may be — questioned. At the same time, there is a distinct pride in being able to claim an Indian ethnicity that intersects with or informs the consciousness of having a national identity. For young South African Indians, their South African-ness is consciously 'marked' by a visible ethnicity. In one focus group two female students had this exchange about what came first for them, an Indian or a South African identity:

Meena: For me, it's Indian.

Shilpa: Ja, I think for me as well.
Meena: Well, obviously, we're South African nationality, but I think I would say I'm Indian.
Shilpa: I hope they'd see it!

This ethnic visibility is not unproblematic. 'Indian' is not merely an ethnic category, but has for generations been an ascribed racial category. Students are conscious that for outsiders who come from, and are informed by, hegemonic culture, this assignation of group affiliation by racial stereotype can lead to problems or misunderstandings which students would rather avoid. Many of the students I interviewed mentioned some sense of having had to deal with racism, or at least cultural misunderstanding, for most of their lives. This was particularly apparent in accounts of memories of school experiences, as many of my respondents went to Model C schools, multi racial schools which were 'White' schools before independence. This tension came not only from having to negotiate around the prejudices of authority figures, but also from having to cope with the ignorance of schoolmates. All aspects of cultural and religious life, from dietary habits to religious ritual, are potential sources of misunderstanding and oppression.

Ashok: When I first went to a White *school, people – the first thing they ask you is about chillie bites and samoosas.*

Some respondents didn't hesitate to express their amused yet annoyed contempt for the unabashed ignorance of other (White) South Africans:

Parveen: When I was ill and I was admitted into the clinic and then there you go with stereotypes someone said 'oh you must bring us curry and you must bring us samoosas' then I told them 'we are a family in transition, don't just think because I'm Indian I must make curries all day' – it irritates me beyond you can imagine.

However, rather than resulting in a partial acceptance of national identity which Song (2003) reports, the underlying feeling evident in my respondent's words was of a need to balance the anger felt at being at the receiving end of intolerance and prejudice, and the desire – and right – to claim a place in the wider national society. This may come at the price of negating or playing down the importance of such prejudice as is experienced:

> *Sonali: A couple of times in assembly I got into trouble for not saying the Lord's Prayer with everyone else ... but I mean it never really bothered me all that much because at the end of the day I had my culture back home, so it wasn't like I was being forced into something else.*

The safety of the family and community as a haven from prejudice in the wider society is a feature of ethnic minority consciousness (Song 2003). Sonali downplays this experience and reassures me, the White interviewer, that it was not a serious incident, as she was able to claim the safety of her family environment. We will also see further down how student respondents play down the problems of fitting into White hegemonic culture at university.

However, not all students I interviewed reported negative experiences of misunderstanding or racism at school. Some experienced school as a very positive or liberating place, especially from a social aspect:

> *Sanjay: [My Model C school] was quite nice, I liked it. It was a co-ed school so you're exposed to girls, you're exposed to everything around you instead of like a college where you only interact with boys. I fitted in quite well cos I had friends that were there with me and I had quite a few* White *friends and they found our culture very fascinating ... I fitted in very well there so I didn't have any problems adapting to the change in culture from mine to Model C.*

It is not surprising that most of the respondents who reported negative experiences at school were female: as I will discuss further down, their relative lack of exposure to influences outside of the home and community relative to their male counterparts, as well as the disproportionate burden placed on them as "carriers of culture and tradition" (Gillespie 1995: 80), perhaps make young women feel the effects of prejudice more acutely than young men, who are allowed a far freer and more open lifestyle.

Not only individuals suffer prejudice: it is also the experience of whole communities. Interestingly, although I did not directly mention the indentured labour origins of most of the Indian community under colonial rule (my idea was that it would naturally come up in the course of discussing ancestry), very few spontaneously mentioned this aspect of the community's history. This may be because of the family backgrounds of the respondents: many were Gujarati (many of whom come to South Africa as traders, rather than as indentured labour), and most seemed to be from professional, well-to-do middle-class families. One Tamil-speaking student only mentioned the indentured labour system at my prompting (his ancestors — great grandparents on both sides — had come from Madras to work on the sugar-cane fields), and one Hindi-speaking student mentioned this history briefly:

> *Zeenat: I know that my mother's father came from India, he worked here in the fields.*

This 'forgetting' or downplaying of the indentured labour origins of the majority of South African Indians points again to the desire to belong, a desire to be authentically South African. After hearing one student say that he had no idea about his family's origins, or what part of India his ancestors had come from, I asked him whether ancestral origin was talked about in the wider community as something important.

> *Rakesh: Not in the community that I have experienced. Actually, I think a lot of New Age Indians tend not to think about the fact that we were brought here as slaves, more like we were born in this country. I think it's*

a trend now for people to be more forward thinking, so a lot of people, the majority of people I meet, it's just, you know, 'don't speak of the reality of the fact that we were brought here as slaves... but speak of the fact that we were born into this country, part of this country, are we making it in this country'.

For this student, a tension exists between those who seek to forget the past and be a part of South Africa, and those who will not forget and are only partially allied to the country:

Rakesh: A lot of people have this concept that they [are] not from this country and they were forced to be here, so I should not be involved in the politics of this country. They have the attitude that they are here because their great-grandparents were brought here, so they don't feel any commitments to this country as being their own. These backward ones feel that [how] the politics of this country affects us is not something we rise up and fight against, because we're brought here against our will.

Rakesh very heatedly divides the Indian community into two groups: those who forget their origins and fit in, or those who remember and opt out. What he is in fact articulating here is his own stance: that of remembering slave origins and being a part of, and claiming a legitimate place in, South Africa.

The history of the South African Indian diaspora as a form of immigration and settlement is not separable from a claim to South African belonging: the conscious choice that most indentured Indians exercised — to remain in South Africa despite the social and political problems they faced — and their opposition to the injustices of colonial and apartheid rule, is witness to their determination to inhabit a national identity other than that of their original homeland. However, the visibility of belonging to a minority ethnic group and the political and social repercussions of this under apartheid and also in the post-apartheid nation has nonetheless problematised this sense of belonging, making a purely South African identity a site of ambivalence:

Interviewer: Do you think it's an advantage being Indian in South Africa?
Parveen: No! I'm so into this, because in South Africa at the moment everything is Black and White *and Indian people unfortunately are just on the fringe. It feels as if we have no identity here in the country, that's how I feel. Most of the Indian community in South Africa are on the fringe because we're not African Black. We are classified as Black but we're not African Black and we're not* White *either, we fall into the category of other, Asian, but that's not our category too. And then again I've experienced this jobs are offered to you because you're Black, this scholarship is offered to a* White *female...there's absolutely nothing for Indian people that I've come across and the Indian community is trying to keep the Indian community alive, but in general no, I don't think its an advantage to be an Indian in South Africa at all.*

Another young woman, Nisha, described her sense of frustration in the perception that Indians are caught between two camps, neither 'White' enough for the past political history of the country, nor 'Black' enough for the present political and economic dispensation: yet despite these protestations and obvious feelings of frustration and resentment, not long after, she insisted that "I think Indians are quite happy in South Africa". These contradictory feelings of simultaneous belonging and marginalisation are characteristic aspects of diasporic and minority group culture (Song 2003) which are not necessarily able to be reconciled, but are held in tension with each other and form a part of both individual and group identity.

3.1.3 The relationship with the homeland

Few students whom I interviewed had visited India, and their ideas about their ancestral home are largely formed through the reports of visits by family members. Most students have at least one family member who has been to India, and some can remember having visited at a young age. Others have family members who travel there regularly on business or to maintain family connections. Opinions about India range from a curiosity

about the 'otherness' of its Indian populace to fantasies about its utopian qualities and 'pure' culture, to anxious concern or defensiveness about its 'negative' aspects, such as extreme poverty, and sometimes a mix of all three, as in the following interview:

> *Nisha: I mean my mom has been to India fourteen times and her sister's been there twenty five, but my aunt has a business, she imports stuff. But my mom just liked the place, she said they were very happy-go-lucky, and you know although the poverty's there you can still see the happiness there, the way the people live is for today, you live for today and tomorrow comes you find your way, and it's not like, 'ah I got to do this and I have this problem and I have that', if you sitting you talking you laughing. Even if you're in pain you laugh. It's a nice atmosphere, but she says depending where you go, like if you go to Bombay, it's very dirty and the poverty is there, but other than that its nice, ja. Actually, after last night [watching the Bollywood movie shown by the HSS] I'm just thinking '[Do] I really want to go India?' I'd like to go see places, see people, how they live there, their way of living, what's so different about those Indians and the Indians here.*
> *Interviewer: Do you suspect that much difference?*
> *Nisha: I don't know, I think we're more Westernised, where we do things a different way, like my mom says like here we offer tea in a mug, or offer it with a saucer, and there they don't offer you a mug, cos you drink so much tea and it must be warm, not too hot not too cold, and you drink it in a glass.*

India is the source of 'authentic' foodstuffs (Nisha's aunt imports Indian rice), clothing and other desirable consumer goods connected with various rituals, particularly marriage. Suraksha told me that she would think about going to India if she were to get married, a status-conferring visit that would give her marriage an 'authentic' touch that can't be purchased in South Africa, despite the fact that so many Indian goods are imported and easily available locally:

Nisha: It's a very big thing if you get something from India when you get married. I've noticed many people going to India and getting those invitation cards and things, it's more cultural in the way that they do it and everything, and the clothing. But I think recently they stopped the clothing cos *there's a lot of boutiques that opened up that sell Indian clothes, so whatever you get in India you can get here.*

However, there is no real desire to 'return', except insofar as one might return as a tourist. South Africa remains the primary place of allegiance:

Nisha: It's a lovely a wonderful country – we have like 'grasped' into South Africa, become part of it so many generations, you don't really feel that you not part of this... you feel more of a sense of belonging than in India if you go there.

4. Diaspora as type of consciousness

Diaspora is a way of seeing or organising the world, in other words the lived cultural practices which result in a particular worldview. This worldview is influenced by an ethnic heritage and lived culture originating from the Indian subcontinent, and it also claims a place within — and thereby influences — the host society of which it forms a part. This is evidently a self-reflexive process: the wider society which is inhabited and influenced by the diaspora becomes a source of influence and in turn 'inhabits' its citizens, even if unconsciously. In Vertovec's (2000) arrangement, he argues that diasporic consciousness is characterised by its dual or paradoxical nature, which is provoked by the diasporic community's necessary engagement with and negotiated accommodation of the demands of the host society. Essentially, it is the intra-communal relationships within the broader South African socio-political landscape which create the rich texture and layered nuances of a South African Indian identity, both on a personal and communal level.

In this section, I explore how young students perceive their culture in terms of family, communities and caste and also how they accommodate new ideas and preserve old values. Young Indian people are acutely aware of the importance of place and community as catalysts, or precipitates, for 'Indianness'. They are also aware and questioning of the cultural (including language, religion and caste) and economic strata that comprise the community as a whole. Communal values connected with family, community and place play a vital role in the continuation and maintenance of a feeling of authentic cultural practices. The individual's sense of place within this matrix is influenced by perceptions of what it means to be Indian within the South African Indian community (as opposed to a more reactive sense of being Indian in response to the ideas that 'outsiders' may have of them). However, each individual's perspective of the Indian community as a whole is further nuanced according to their own position within the matrix of place, language and caste which, according to my respondents, seem to determine their closeness or not to 'authentic' Indian culture. 'Authentic' cultural practices seem to reside in a sense of religion, the knowledge of how to perform key social rituals, such as marriage ceremonies, and the ability to speak a language from the subcontinent. These cultural knowledges are held in high esteem. Others, such as patriarchy and caste, are rapidly changing, under pressure from young people for more freedom to choose Westernised lifestyles.

4.1 Family life

My respondents demonstrated an acute awareness of the necessity of the local communal aspect of Indian cultural life for the maintenance and continuity of an ethnic Indian identity. The communal contains within it, as a necessary – but not sufficient – condition for 'being Indian', the many family relationships of which it is comprised. Community life is the origin and sustainer of the sense of 'being Indian': as I will argue through the words of my respondents, it is within the communal – and family – aspects of shared culture and identity that an individual's sense of ethnic belonging is most strongly marked and most feelingly engaged. This aspect of feeling is vital here: to 'be Indian' is a subjective, emotive experience, as much as an objective, ascribed status or category. The core of this emotion is the family, the primary source of a sense of belonging and

identity, a sacred space, safe from intrusions by the outside world. Recall the words of one student, who described her experience of being castigated for not complying with Christian religious rituals at school:

> *Sonali: I mean it never really bothered me all that much because at the end of the day I had my culture back home, so it wasn't like I was being forced into something else.*

Sonali describes her family as a haven from the misunderstandings of the outside world: she 'has her culture back home'. For many students I spoke to, the extended family comes across as the focus and source of both personal and group identity. Firstly, parents are held in high regard in Indian culture, and my respondents spoke of their parents in very respectful terms, mentioning their sense of filial obligation and their responsibility to their parents to do well at their studies and not betray their trust or bring the family name into disrepute by irresponsible behaviour:

> *Sanjay: In Indian culture our parents are our god. I think people shouldn't forget their parents, forget what their parents have done for them. At the end of the day they are the most influential person in your character.*

The following exchange took place between three female students in a focus group:

> *Sonali: The only reason why we wouldn't want [to behave irresponsibly] is because we don't want to disappoint our parents. You know it's in our culture – it's so strong.*
> *Rita: That's what is prevalent with us: you've gotta have a conscience, you have to know what's right and wrong, and I think our parents have the greatest fear with us being at university, because they're not here to [see] what we're doing, they're trusting us –*
> *Rekha: And that's a big thing: to lose it once is to lose it forever.*

Rita: And it's like that with all Indian parents, I think: once you lose their trust you have to work so hard to get it back (general agreement).

In addition, students told me of the influence of their grandparents in establishing a sense of family security, knowledge of Indian language(s), rituals and a sense of religious and social values:

Ashok: My dad's parent lived with us on the farm ... so it was a huge family because my grandparents and my grandfather's brothers all lived in the same area. My grandparents used to teach us Tamil and they used to speak to us in Tamil. When I was a child I used to spend like my entire day with them, so I would go to the temple and pray with them, come back, have breakfast, then when [my grandfather] took a stroll to the farm to see what's happening I used to go with him.

The family is the primary origin of an Indian identity — the presence of, and belonging to, a family is the *sine qua non* of Indian culture:

Sanjay: Even if was [only] two three families there'd still be culture there, even if it's [only] a family there'd still be culture, you'd still celebrate your festivals with other families coming to your family.

It may be for this reason that several students talked feelingly of their extended families which often live within the same neighbourhood or even within the same large household in family complexes or clusters of houses, and the sense of community and social and cultural continuity they engender. However, some commented on feeling sad that this way of life was beginning to disappear as younger generations move away to larger centres:

Nisha: We all live like in a complex, all my mom's family lives in one complex owned by the family ...so we have a lot of people. My

grandmother used to speak Hindi with all of us so we had to know a little bit of it. It's quite nice keeping up with everybody, but now there's only four families that are living there, that's sad, the rest is rented out because most of them have relocated to like Johannesburg or wherever they got a job.

4.1.1 Intergenerational differences: negotiating change within the family

Young people are very aware of the differences — and similarities — between the cultural values and practices of their parents' and grandparents' generations, and the demands and needs of their own. The changing political landscape has meant a general change in the possible range of social relationships that are available to all South Africans:

Sanjay: Socially, my mother and father used to mix a lot with everyone, they never used to restrict themselves to only having Indian friends. They used to have Blacks, Whites, *Coloureds, whoever ... and they also passed that on to me. I also mix around with everyone so I'm not restricted to my own cultural borders in a sense, but I've gone beyond that and being I've got a lot of* White *friends, I've got a lot of Black friends, I've got a lot of Coloured friends so I'm not restricting to my own culture of friends in that way.*

Broader social changes have precipitated or encouraged corresponding changes in cultural values and practises. Although I went into the interviews expecting there to be a marked rejection or impatience with traditional values, my respondents were quite clear that although things are changing, the resulting differences are not necessarily 'good', and there is a perceived need to accommodate the pressures of today's lifestyles at the same time as preserving what is of lasting worth within the traditions of the Indian community. Patriarchal values, religious beliefs and observances and the redundancy of caste are the three topics most spoken about concerning social and cultural change in my

interviews. In terms of personal relationships, young respondents agreed that things have changed a lot since their parents were young:

> *Parveen: Things have really changed in South Africa. Parents are so welcoming to boyfriends these days. Before, you would only know the man you're going to marry you know, a proposal would come to the house, but now it's different.*

Due to their exposure to Western lifestyles at school and at university, young Indians have much more freedom than their parents or grandparents ever did, in terms of the chance to meet and choose partners on their own terms. This is something that the older generation also recognises and accepts to a certain extent as a part of the way 'things are changing'. Parveen tells how changes in the way personal relationships are conducted are envied by her mother:

> *Parveen: As days go by, not even years, things are changing and I think this problem or situation [of intergenerational conflict] has become less. I mean, when I was younger I could tell that there was conflict between certain people, their school and their family but nowadays people are so exposed, Western, including parents, including older people. I can give you a classic example. Because my mom grew up with her grandparents, she also spent lots of time with her uncles and aunties who were married off. She would go to their homes and spend time. My mom was not allowed to go to her own Matric farewell. They were very strict about guys, you not seeing the guy, that's just it. Those same aunts allow their daughters today to go out and do whatever, and my mom tells me she can't believe this cos she's a mother herself now, but that doesn't mean she doesn't think about what she could've done. She just wanted to enjoy her schooldays and from what I can tell my mom had awesome guy friends, buddies, really cool buddies and those same aunties have just changed, and I often tell her, ' mommy, you got to let it go'.*

However, some change is not quite enough. Young women and men both have strong ideas about the place of patriarchal values in their and their families' lives. Young women in particular are 'looked after' carefully by parents, and their brothers are given much more freedom of movement and behaviour generally. The following comments came from a young man who has a very liberal and understanding mother, at whose home his and his sister's friends are welcome to relax and 'have a few beers' as well as use it as a base for more clandestine activities such as going to the nightclub:

> *Rakesh: Like if my sister's friend wants to go out to a club, that's not allowed, and also the way you dress as well is also monitored, so my sister's friends would come over to my house get dressed and go out from there, and we would be the brothers who took them, cos obviously we grew up in that kind of community very much restricted, very much constrained by the roof you live under – the father figure, patriarchy, the father has the final say, you know, the mom might be more compassionate to the daughter wanting to do something, but the dad would have the last say.*

This example of liberal accommodation of young people's desires to socialise more freely, and his own experience, does not particularly change his mind on the correctness of these traditional values, which he declares he will probably enforce in his own family one day:

> *Rakesh: You know as much as I appreciate the freedom that I have with my home, if I were one day to have children ... say a daughter and a son, I would definitely choose differently, I would give my son probably more privileges than I'd give my daughter, for all sorts of reasons, for safety reasons. I mean I think any community or race would value their daughters' safety more than the sons'. In my family personally I would try to give my son more privileges than my daughter.*

However, as seen above, young women are adept at circumventing these restrictions, and they manage to carry out clandestine relationships with young men of their choice. There is a growing pressure to accept the need to allow for more freedom of choice in a partner. Although arranged marriages still occur, and one respondent said she definitely wanted an arranged marriage for caste reasons, most young Indian people want to choose their own partners. However, their choices are still liable to be heavily censored by parents for various reasons, usually to do with caste or race. Several young women respondents told me that, without the knowledge of their parents, they were engaged to or had been going out for some time with men their parents would not approve of. This young woman's boyfriend of seven years is a Christian of mixed Indian and Coloured ancestry:

> *Nisha: They don't approve of anything about him, they still believe that we're friends and that I broke up with him 2 years ago. Since I got to University they don't know we're more than friends. My mom's like 'I don't think you should continue or think of marriage or anything with this guy', so I asked her why, [and] she said 'he's a wonderful person but you're going to have problems adapting cos you're so into [your] religion'. But then when I asked him he's like there's no problem, I can always keep clued up with my religion, so I don't know.*

Young Indian people would also like their religion to be a bit more accessible. Religious beliefs and practices are also under pressure to change, not in essentials but in terms of understandability and personal relevance. All the respondents whom I interviewed at their residence rooms had small shrines and pictures or small statues of one or more of the Hindu gods. All except one said they were religiously inclined and prayed regularly. One of the biggest felt discriminations and annoyances of university residence life is the ban on burning incense, a fundamental part of Hindu prayer. However, to 'just' pray is not enough, and students want to know the 'meaning' of what they are doing. This is cited as one of the main differences between their and their parents' generations:

Nisha: I think my parents are more reserved, more strict in their thoughts, they're very traditional. In our generation we ask questions, 'why are we doing it?' but they just do it. If they're doing a prayer they don't think why they're doing the prayers. If you ask them, [they reply] 'I've been doing this for the past 20 years, but why, I don't know'. With us, with the new generation, if we don't know what it is, we don't do it, that's what I've seen. So most of the time the priests have become accustomed to understanding their work and the parents have to understand, because most of the problems come when the children don't want to do their duties in their religion because they don't understand. But I think it's only fair cos you got to know why you're doing it, cos what if it's just like a lot of them believe like in those myths? You know a lot of things in our religion consist of myths and [superstitions].

Connected to the desire to have more freedom to choose a partner and a more understandable and accessible religion is the rejection of caste as a means of codifying and structuring social roles and relations. The young South African Indian people I interviewed seemed fairly ignorant about the workings of caste, although they are well aware of the various castes to which they and others belong, and caste is still used as a means of classifying strangers. Unlike Zimbabwean students, who are said to understand it and to whom I was referred for 'explanations', almost all my respondents dissociated themselves from caste. Caste is seen as something that belongs to 'the old generation', and almost all the respondents said they regarded caste as an anachronism in today's society, as something discriminatory and anti-egalitarian that works against principles of communality and religion. Like certain aspects of religion, it is rejected largely on the grounds that it is not easily 'explainable' and does not serve an obvious useful purpose in their daily lives. It is also considered to be communally divisive, and to restrict choice of potential partners:

Radha: I'm not sure why caste was there in the first place, but I think people now are a lot more open minded. They don't see why it makes a

difference. And why do we do it, why do I have to marry somebody from my caste? There is no decent explanation for it so we do away with it. And if I had to choose a husband from campus, I'd have to sift through all the Indians and then find someone in my caste, and they're so limited. There aren't any, probably a handful five or ten at most, so it restricts the younger generation a lot.

The social and religious values associated with family are fundamental to South African Indian culture. Despite pressure from young people for more freedom to choose their marriage partners — including the rejection of caste as a constraining factor — almost every student said they valued their family life, and would bring up their children the way they had been raised. Changes are accommodated within, rather than enforced against, core values.

4.2 Community and the importance of place

My interpretation of family as a necessary but not a sufficient condition for being Indian stems from the observation that family life, although the focus of an individual sense of security and belonging and the primary socialising influence, is not considered enough to sustain an 'authentic' Indianness on a larger scale. There seems to be, in the minds of some respondents, a certain level at which a 'critical mass' or quorum is arrived at, a necessary pre-condition for the constitution and performance of religious and social rituals. As one respondent, Meena, put it, "Indian prayers and festivals are very much community-oriented". These communally-performed and celebrated ceremonies, such as weddings, funerals or religious festivals, are the lifeblood of a communal life which is at its most vital during such activities. In addition, my respondents all in one way or another mentioned the importance of location to communal life. Their words recall how the historical processes of the indentured labour system and apartheid restrictions, which kept most Indians corralled within certain provinces, and zones within those provinces, have inadvertently contributed to a recognition of place as an important focus for the acting out of identity. Durban, in particular (and Johannesburg, to some extent), with the largest

Indian community, is cited as the place where South African Indian culture is most typical, vibrant and vital to the maintenance of an Indian identity.

A student from Kimberley reflected on the relative lack of cultural connection and support her family enjoyed, due to the small number of Indians living there (in the early years of immigration, Indian settlement in the Transvaal and Orange Free State was restricted fairly heavily):

> *Radha: Look, we're not in a place like Durban which has a strong Indian culture and a lot of Indians and I think Johannesburg as well. Kimberley isn't that in touch with the culture as [compared] to Johannesburg people. I suppose if I look at myself compared to cousins my age in Jo'burg, they know a lot more than I do, even cooking, and I think I've just been spoilt. I don't even know how to speak the language.*

This lack of cultural connectedness, a feeling of not being sufficiently enculturated, is seen as posing problems for Indian people in smaller communities such as Grahamstown (although there are contradictory reports that larger communities, such as those in Durban, pose a threat to the more conservative traditions preserved in smaller centres). Lack of sufficient numbers of people and the talents and knowledge that they bring to the communal sphere have a serious impact on the on the quality of communal culture. For example, the ritual aspects of communal religious life may suffer from the lack of qualified people:

> *Alpesh: I realise that in Grahamstown they make lots of mistakes with the religious festivals because they don't have a priest here. [The Grahamstown community is so small] you hardly have weddings or deaths, so if you have somebody [a priest] coming it's somebody from East London.*

The necessity of community is in its being a reservoir of cultural knowledge and practices: one person on their own is not able to fulfill all the duties that are necessary for the maintenance of daily rituals, or the more specialized rituals that mark specific rites of passage such as birth, coming of age, marriage and death. Not only are these in themselves complex and demanding, but they also differ from place to place and from group to group, not in their essential meaning, but in details of practice:

> *Radha: I think with Indian culture and religion, it's so rich in culture and tradition that there's no way I can say I know everything. My dad doesn't know all the reasons why they have to have certain ceremonies. It differs I think by custom, someone would do it differently maybe in Kimberly to Durban, but I think the [same] concept is there. There's no way you're going to know everything about it, there's so much to know, there's so much to learn.*

As was noted earlier, this same student from Kimberley expressed some anxiety about her lack of knowledge about cultural practices, and compared herself to her Johannesburg cousins, who have benefitted from being exposed to a much richer cultural environment. Later, she spoke about marriage as an example where individuals can feel overwhelmed by the demands of a complex ritual system, and rely on knowledgeable (often older) members of the community to ensure that the correct rituals are performed and thus taught and transmitted to the next generation:

> *Radha: There are still a lot of weddings performed, and because of the hundreds of little things that need to be done you won't find one person doing everything, there'll be so many people saying 'oh, you haven't done that'. A cousin got married in June and her mom said 'I don't know what to do', and she asked her mother and she asked the older ladies in the community and the grandparents told the mother and then the mother explained to the bride 'this is why you're doing what you're doing' and so*

it gets passed down – and hopefully by the time I get married, I would have learned enough to pass it down.

4.3 Locality or 'authenticity'?

Family, community and place are all important aspects of contemporary Indian culture in the opinions of my young respondents. Together, they contribute to a general sense of a South African Indian identity and the formation of local subjects (Appadurai 1996). That this is particularly *South African* Indian identity is reinforced by the acknowledged differences between South African and 'other' Indians, especially from Zimbabwe. The Indian community in Zimbabwe is an actively expanding diaspora: many Indians from the subcontinent are still arriving to take up trade and business opportunities, and in particular for purposes of marriage.

As a consequence of this closer tie with India, South African students say that the Zimbabwean community is oriented toward the 'authentic' culture of India to a greater extent than South African Indians, especially in aspects such as the ability to speak a sub-continental language, religious values — including caste observances — and 'cultural' activities such as music and dance. The changes within family, religious and caste values and practices discussed above, although spoken of as desirable by respondents, are ironically the means through which this 'slipping away' from an idealized authenticity is achieved. For both Zimbabwean and South African respondents, this lack of 'roots' or 'culture' is an indication that South African Indians have 'lost' an important aspect of 'being Indian'.

On the other hand, students are also aware of, and take pride in, the distinctive nature of their own local culture(s). In the following sections of this discussion, I will explore the ways in which students, far away from home at Rhodes University, are forced to reflect on the particular nature of their own lived local culture. We will see how they validate their identity as South African Indians, as they seek to re-engage with an idea of an 'authentic' India through Bollywood movies and involve themselves imaginatively with an international community of Indian diasporas.

4.4 Young Indians on Rhodes University campus

Living in a new place, Rhodes University campus, away from home, brings to the fore the sense of the centrality of community life in maintaining and expressing an authentic Indian identity, with its focus on a shared experience of its religious, ritual and aesthetic aspects. Leaving home and coming to Rhodes is in fact a radical departure from the culturally known to the unknown. We have already seen how important the family and local community is to the establishment and sustaining of a shared Indian identity. Arriving at Rhodes, far away from Durban, Johannesburg or East London — even Port Elizabeth, 120 km away is 'far' — young Indian students are suddenly without the benefit of this supportive network, with important implications for their personal and communal lives. The following extract from a focus group interview draws attention to the places where Indian students feel the loss of community life leaves them most vulnerable:

> *Meena: [Adherence to religious observances] depends how you carry on your life the way it was at home, because it's easy to stray away from it.*
> *Shilpa: Especially in a university.*
> *Meena: I don't know ... if you don't fast, your mother is not there to tell you to do it.*
> *Shilpa: If you don't pray in the morning, no-one's checking up on you to make sure you've done it or not ... you run your life.*
> *Meena: Ja, you don't go to temple as often as you would at home, and the whole food thing plays a big part as well.*
> *Shilpa: I can put it bluntly ... you're coming into a very 'White' area, Rhodes is very much a 'White' area. The food that you eat is not the same as the food at home, the lifestyle that you lead is not the same, the people that you are speaking with are speaking through their individuality and their backgrounds ... and the Indian community in Grahamstown is really small and you are influenced by the people around you, by your friends, by your new friends, by your new-found freedom, and it's up to the individual to decide whether to be a part of that or whether to be a part of*

it as well as keep your identity. Rhodes can take you away from your family, take you away from your culture and it's really easy to do it. Meena: It's not like we're babysat at home, it's just that at home you do it as a family.

Young Indian students feel that they arrive at Rhodes and are suddenly without the support and encouragement of a family environment (more will be said about family connections and Rhodes further below), where 'everybody' takes part in day-to-day religious observances. They find themselves in a place largely defined by hegemonic White culture, and faced with new challenges in the form of different ways of thinking and living, other students' 'individuality', new-found personal freedoms and their concomitant demands of self-responsibility. Cultural practices and religious observances are easily swallowed up by the temptations and distractions of another way of life, and also actively discouraged by the difficulties of finding the spaces and times in which to carry out particular cultural practices, such as preparing and eating Indian food (which is of particular significance to those following religiously-prescribed diets). The local Grahamstown community is not cited as a source of strength: rather, it is 'really small', and not seen to be able to compete with the influences of friends and freedom. The young Indian person is suddenly on her own, without the guidance of a mother or family to make sure that traditional observances are kept, lost into the dangerous yet seductive anonymity of a highly individualised Western hegemonic White culture.

For some students, the personal nature of each family's religious observances means that it is not even possible to help each other in matters such as prayer. Merely having a community with which to participate in religious observances and festivals is not enough: it has to feel right, with a rightness that comes from a sense of belonging and familiarity (in both senses of the word). The same students found it difficult to consciously articulate what is obviously a generalised and perhaps heretofore unspoken discomfort about religious practice away from home. In this conversation, it should be borne in mind that Meena comes from a Tamil home background and Shilpa is Gujarati:

Shipa: The observance of this [Grahamstown] Hindu temple is a Gujarati one.

Meena: Ja ... I mean prayer is prayer, but it's...

Shilpa: The language is different, the prayer is different, the ritual is different – the idea is the same, the notion is the same but actual practice. I think more than anything else it's in this university system where you've got a group of Indians coming from different backgrounds. I mean it's really difficult, I mean this Gujarati temple, I still go there and I still feel like sometimes I don't belong and that's understandable cos you're with a group of people who don't practice the way you do, or they do things a little different, you don't know them. At home if I go to a temple I'd know everybody there and it's a home feeling, it's a comfortable feeling.

Despite these internal group differences, faced with what may be initially overwhelming demands of campus life it is not surprising that Indian students tend to 'stick together'. While for some respondents this was a negative attribute that they felt a bit embarrassed about and thought needed to be justified, others explained their in-group cohesion straightforwardly as something that satisfies a need for mutual understanding in a comfortable social environment where certain ideas and behaviours feel natural and do not need to be explained:

Rakesh: In my res there are three Indians, one White *and 27 Blacks from all over Africa ... I only joined the two Indian guys in my res and they're all from Durban so we all have the same interests, we all understand what we just talked about, we are all able to talk at the same speed and be perfectly understood, and we're all able to use the same slang and be perfectly understood.*

Almost all of the students who I spoke to had some family connection with Rhodes or the Eastern Cape Indian community, and had specifically come to Rhodes because of a prior or existing connection:

Ashok: [When I arrived] my sister was here [at Rhodes] as well, it was her final year, so in that way I had that family connection.

Despite similar experiences in arriving and settling down to a new life on campus, my respondents revealed how they bring with them from home contexts and communities ways of subdividing and classifying the South African Indian community as a whole. What is more, these groups reproduce themselves on campus, to some extent. They are defined by subtle markers (recall the difficulty that Shilpa had in explaining the nuanced reactions she had to community prayer in a strange temple), and to an outsider like myself they are not visible. However, on broad level, as in the wider South African Indian community, differences revolve around place of family residence, religious practices, language and caste, and are very obvious to those whom they effect. Home language is the most common way of categorising members of the community. Although many students say that both they and their parents speak English at home, and that knowledge of the original language from the subcontinent is often sketchy, language group seems to be a convenient classification, as it subsumes within itself a subset of religious and ritual practices (Ebr.-Valley 2001: 139). The lifestyles of Indian students who come from different areas in South Africa and elsewhere are a source of interest and reflection on local cultural practices:

Interviewer: [What is it like], being able to meet Indian students here at Rhodes?
Sanjay: It's been very fascinating, cos Zimbabweans have a different culture to South Africans, they are so culture-orientated, you got Botswana where they tell you about their Indian life over there, so it is quite an experience for us to hear how other Indians around the world live, what their culture is.

Rhodes attracts a large number of Gujarati-speaking students, and a majority of my respondents turned out to be Gujarati. This may be because the Eastern Cape itself has a large Gujarati community, although this is probably not a sufficient reason, as most

Rhodes students come from larger urban centres within South Africa, or from Zimbabwe. However, it cannot be discounted that family and thereby wider community connections to the Eastern Cape may make Rhodes an attractive option for Gujarati students who want to enjoy a university experience away from home (students at university in Durban or Johannesburg reportedly mostly stay at home while studying). Another reason is that the Zimbabwean Indian students' Indian ancestry is largely Gujarati and some have family links to the Eastern Cape. One focus group, of whom three were Hindi and one Gujarati, laughed when I mentioned that many of my interviews seemed to have been with Gujarati students:

> *Sonali: Actually, there's a lot of Gujarati on campus.*
> *Interviewer: How do you find that?*
> *Sonali: A bit overwhelming! (group laughs) cause you know I grew up in Newcastle and the majority are Hindi-speaking or Tamil-speaking... and you come to Grahamstown and the majority of people here are Gujarati-speaking, there's just a few that I can speak [to].*
> *Rekha: But overall they're quite nice. I mean, they also have a few different rituals...*
> *Sonali: So we just exchange them (general laughter) so we have fun; it's not like there's any friction between [us].*

The laughter points to an underlying — but here, denied — tension between the various language groups within the Indian community both on campus and nationally. Many students referred to the 'cliques' within the wider Indian community, especially tensions between Gujaratis and Tamils, which are reproduced in the community structures on campus. However, the internal lines of division along language, religious practice and country of origin are subsumed under the wider boundaries of cohesion at the interface with other race groups on campus. One of the ways in which this is actively demonstrated is by individual participation in the Hindu Students' Society.

4.4.1 The Hindu Students' Society: making a home away from home

Many of the students I interviewed were active and committed members of the Hindu Students' Society, or HSS, a student organisation with a large following at Rhodes. It is headed by annually-elected representatives from the Hindu students on campus, and it has as its purpose the co-ordination and running of various social, religious and charitable functions, both on campus and within the wider Grahamstown community. At the start of each new academic year, the HSS committee, which is elected by a quorum of the members at the end of the previous year, organises a welcome for the new students, who arrive with their parents during the orientation week before lectures begin. It also hosts various social functions in the first term, such as a beach party, cricket matches and Bollywood video evenings. HSS members co-operate with the local Indian community in Grahamstown to celebrate important religious festivals, such as Diwali, the Hindu New Year, at the local temple.

Some students join under encouragement from parents, who see the society as providing a safe place for their children to socialise:

> *Ashok: The Hindu Student Society is a very active society compared to societies in other universities. Probably the main reason is that we're away from home so we tend to do a lot of things together. For example, there's a beach trip, there's a hockey match, there's a soccer match, there's a games day – and the movie nights that we show the Bollywoods, so it's like that whole togetherness. And then obviously when there's a prayer or religious function we go to the temple together.*

As described above, coming to Rhodes largely removes young Indian people from their networks of kin and community relations, and this feeling of cultural and social isolation invokes group memories of past racial abuses and current threats of cultural submersion. The HSS seems to provide a place to gain a temporary respite from these pressures. In effect, through its many activities, the HSS serves a vital function in providing the 'critical mass' necessary for a feeling of community in a place where there are few

Indians. Some students described the HSS as a "home away from home" or "a little community for ourselves", a "community in a place where that doesn't exist":

> *Sonali: At first I used to think 'Oh, so far away from home'. [But] on campus I guess we've made a little community of ourselves – you get that excitement, like with Diwali, I didn't want to be here, I thought 'I'm not gonna know a lot of Indians, you're not gonna feel your culture here'. But you do feel it because you have your little community here as well with all your friends and everything...*
> *Rekha: It becomes your own little family in a way (assents from others).*

In addition, the HSS has an official pedagogical mission, to encourage its members to think about and strengthen their allegiance to their culture, and to enlighten people from other cultures about the Hindu religion, Hindu festivals and values and ways of life:

> *Nisha: [The HSS is] about preserving your culture and trying to get people involved [in] understanding what we are, like Hinduism or anything related with our culture ... because we are living in South Africa where it's more like a Western, African type of place, so what we [are] trying to do is remember our roots and our origins so that we can continue it, because what everyone says back home is that the young generation is forgetting about our culture and the roots and everything, and as soon as these old people pass on – they're the ones that carry our culture, and if we don't preserve it, it's going to die.*

The HSS is simultaneously the means by which young people are able to represent to themselves the changes they are instrumental in effecting within their community and a symbolic boundary between their culture and 'Western, African type' values and influences. It has taken, perhaps not so ironically as it may at first seem, being away from home and its securities and given norms and values to prompt a participation in the objectives of older members of the community, to self-consciously preserve certain

aspects of communal life that may be under threat from the pressures of contemporary Western lifestyles. Young people in the HSS whom I spoke to seemed to have 'realised' that their Indian way of life and the social and cultural world view that it embodies is a precious resource which is up to individual, in concert with the community, to protect. A way of life is under threat as the older generation passes on and the old customs are left to be carried out by the younger, but perhaps not wiser, generation.

4.5 Changing community: modernity and tradition

In this chapter, I have briefly outlined the ways in which young Indian people perceive their lived culture, both at home and at Rhodes. I have discussed how important family, community and place are to a sense of Indian identity, and how their arrival at Rhodes brings to the fore anxieties about the tensions between Western lifestyles and cultural values. These tensions and the various pressures on communal cultural values over time to change or be preserved illustrate what Said calls the "contrapuntal" dimension of diaspora: "both the new and old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally" (Said 1984: 171–172). The contrast between the old and the new environments describes the fears and desires that arise at being exposed to new possibilities during the young people's sojourn at Rhodes, away from home. I find Said's use of the contrast between old and new *environments* very useful here to describe this change, which has proved slippery to grasp in connection with my young respondents. I found that their desire for more individual autonomy, to belong to South Africa, to have more choice in personal relationships, and at the same time to preserve what is felt to be worthwhile and valuable in their culture, not as simple as the stereotypical tussle between the binaries of 'tradition' and 'modernity' which colours popular thinking about diasporic communities residing in First World countries (Gillespie 1995: 206) and which is also a characteristic Bollywood theme.

Modernity and modernisation are ideologically loaded terms, usually used synonymously with 'Westernisation', which does not always represent a potentially desirable state of being and simultaneously connotes a recent social, cultural and technological 'backwardness'. The young respondents at Rhodes expressed ambivalent or defensive

feelings and attitudes about this subject when I ventured questions about modernity. On the one hand, they roundly resist the idea that they are in a 'transitionary' stage between 'tradition' and 'modernity', and are clear that they and their families are in fact already — though the latter have not always been — 'modern'. In this case, it is obvious that the modernity they are relating to is that of the general standard of living and amenities associated with a developed country and the professional and entrepreneurial careers that many of their parents and extended families follow. In terms of culture, however, the lines are more blurred. While they admit that their parents and grandparents are more 'traditional', they also argue that the whole community is slowly 'modernising': we recall how Parveen above described her mother's envy and regret at the way in which previously authoritarian relatives had changed with the times, and had adopted a more Western attitude towards some aspects of interpersonal relationships.

This is not to say that tensions do not exist between desire to maintain core cultural values and the lure of uninhibited Western lifestyles. The young people I spoke to have grown up in largely Westernised ('modern'), English-speaking environments, and at the same time have been taught the fundamental cultural and religious values by parents and grandparents. The young people argue that it is only natural the two should exist side by side, and are not inherently contradictory; it is just the way things are. Unlike the changes represented in the Indian movies, which are radical for that country, young South African Indians have always already been exposed to 'modernity' (Western ways of life):

> *Vikram: I think in our generation its difficult to say young modern Indian cos we don't know what it was like [before], [we've] just grown up with time. Morals, values and religion that was instilled at a young age have been maintained and have been constant and you sort of stick with that and the rest that you harmonise is with the Western world, so I don't think we can say we identify with the change in like the Bollywood scene.*

However, the tensions that came to the fore when this question was posed were at times more telling than words. Students exhibit a range of emotional responses when describing

the tensions that exist when desires to adhere to one or the other come into conflict. Often there was a hot denial that there is no contradiction, and that it is possible to be both 'modern' and 'traditional' at the same time. This reflects the anxiety that many feel at the threat of a loss of authentic cultural values and practices, especially in the face of the temptations of a new environment. The 'modernity' resisted here refers to Westernised values:

> *Meena: I agree that our parents and our grandparents follow a more traditional lifestyle but I don't think that you can say that we are modern. I mean really I can't take that, I don't like that, because it's not the fact that we're more modern, it's just that this is the age that we have been born into, where we have all these opportunities, so it doesn't mean that we're not traditional just because we are modern.*

Most students expressed uneasiness about the way that alternative Western lifestyles can tempt young people away from a willing adherence to core cultural norms, and the gradual erosion of culture that this implies. Some offered a pragmatic approach to 'balancing' the two, adapting to change yet retaining meaningful aspects of their culture:

> *Sanjay: In a sense you're choosing between two different worlds, so in that sense I think most of us have chosen the Western one over their traditional one, although Indian culture should be able to change in the world, it should adapt to how people live now compared to people living before, but to lose your culture to changing times, I don't think should happen, because the culture should always be there...*
> *Interviewer: So do you think that it's possible to be traditional and yet still be modern?*
> *Sanjay: Exactly, definitely, you should be able to be. I'm a very cultural person and at the same time I'm a very modern person, I adapt to change, [there] can be a 50/50 balance between the two.*

Some say it is possible to reject traditional values altogether, although this is seen as something 'other' Indians do, and is not contemplated as a desirable course of action for themselves. Many students suggested that the only way to prevent being lured away from cultural practices and values is to stay ensconced – insulated from the outside world – within local cultural communities. Yet even this is not entirely failsafe: ironically, Durban, which is seen to be the centre of South African Indian culture, is also a potentially threatening source of radical change within the Indian community as a whole:

> *Parveen: In East London the community is very small, you don't just go around showing affection [to] Indian people...*
> *Interviewer: Like holding hands?*
> *Parveen: If you go now and had to do that, 'ooh gosh don't do that', but when we go to Durban there are [Indian] people holding hands, holding each other kissing, and I am overwhelmed! I come from a small town, East London, and I'm overwhelmed when I see this. In a way I think you shouldn't do things like that in public, but then I think things are moving, times are changing, it's progressing, if you want to say it's progressing.*

In Section 4.1.1 of this chapter, I discussed some of the changes in family, religion and caste beliefs and practices which my young respondents desired. At Rhodes University, in the freedom of action and association which being away from home allows, students have the space to put these desires into practice. The implications of this freedom engender feelings of unease in some students, who seek to return in their own way to the sureties of their home traditions. In the case of religion, for example, almost every respondent showed me the small shrines which they have set up in their rooms, at which they said they pray regularly. Almost every respondent mentioned attending the local temple, trying to maintain religiously-prescribed diets and observing fasts and important festivals in the Hindu calendar. Their concerns reflect the observations made by Thompson that:

> For many people, the option of maintaining traditional ways or adopting modern lifestyles does not present itself as an either/or choice. On the contrary, they are able to organize their day-to-day lives in such a manner as to integrate elements of tradition with new styles of living. Tradition is not necessarily abandoned... but is, on the contrary, re-shaped, transformed, perhaps even strengthened and re-invigorated through the encounter with other ways of life. (1995: 192)

In the final section of this chapter, I will discuss how young Indian people at Rhodes University use Bollywood as a means of representing to themselves an acceptable 'traditional yet modern' lifestyle affiliated to an international community of similar diasporic communities which strive to combine, as so many students put it, "the best of both worlds".

5. Diaspora as a mode of cultural production: Bollywood and the (re)construction of a modern diasporic identity in young South African Indians

In Vertovec's (2000) schema, it is diasporic youth who, situated as part of transnational communities and in their openness to the influences of different cultures – through global media in particular – are in the vanguard of producing the "syncretic, creolized, translated or hybrid" forms of culture (Vertovec 2000: 153) that characterise diapsora. In Section 4 of this chapter, I talked about how the lives of my young respondents are challenged by new social circumstances when they arrive for the first time at university. I looked at the ways in which they seek to 'buffer' the discomforts and challenges of a life away from their homes and communities through participation in a student organisation, the Hindu Students' Society (HSS).

The HSS also provides a means to explore, reflect on and develop fresh insights into what it means to be Indian in South Africa. One of the ways in which this occurs is through the communal consumption of Bollywood movies and the reproduction of its dance and music in specific and culturally marked areas of their lives. In this chapter, I take a close look at how young people feel about Bollywood, at the pleasures and meanings that they

take from the genre. More importantly, I will examine the ways in which Bollywood representations of 'authentic' cultural practices enacted on a global stage prompt re-evaluations, or a re-visiting, of their own lived culture in South Africa. Finally I look at the way in which students perceive the recent global attention paid to Indian culture because of the growing interest in the Bollywood genre, and how this, together with the international shows and award ceremonies held in South Africa, has broadened the horizons of many young people concerning the importance of their own unique place in a global network of transnational Indian communities.

5.1 Bollywood in Southall and South Africa

Home as the primary context for Bollywood viewing is mentioned by Gillespie (1995: 79). A brief overview of her findings points to some interesting comparisons in the South African case, which will become apparent as I discuss my respondents' views. At the time Gillespie was conducting her research, in the 1980s, the interest in Bollywood shown by countries and communities other than Indian had yet to occur, and the 'traditional' Bombay-produced Hindi film she mentions comes from a time before the big international blockbusters in the mid-nineties propelled Bollywood into the public arena (Gillespie 1995: 80). Bollywood has since become attractive to a much wider global audience, reflecting an interest in the exotic that it represents, discussed below. In the case of the Punjabi youth in Gillespie's study, attitudes to this 'older' Hindi film were centred around production values (which were perceived negatively as 'old-fashioned' compared to high-tech Hollywood movies) and the content, a common theme of which was "the 'clash of tradition and modernity' in Indian society, which is often resolved at the expense of the latter" (Gillespie 1995: 80).

In Gillespie's study, youth interpretations of film content provoked discussions around this theme, especially in the face of what was seen to be resistance to change (especially in women's social roles) by elders (Gillespie 1995: 80). Furthermore, there was a marked difference in the ways in which Southall male and female youth interacted with the films: young women appeared to be more accepting and engaged, as they enjoyed the discussions about changing gender roles provoked by the films, within an intimate

domestic setting. Young Punjabi women also reported enjoying the affective qualities of romance, dance and song central to the genre (Gillespie 1995: 85). Young men, on the other hand, were more likely to be critical and dismissive, reflecting internalised Western film production values and, due to their wider experience of the world outside the home, they were defensive about the 'negative' image of India and Indians the films conveyed to a racist public (Gillespie 1995: 83). Both men and women took pleasure in the "non-linear narratives, and the intricate and convoluted nature of storytelling... driven less by a question of what will happen next, but how it will happen. It is not so much that an enigma must be solved, but rather that a moral disordering must be resolved" (Gillespie 1995: 84).

All of these themes came up in my conversations about Bollywood, but with slightly different emphases and additional qualifications. Three themes came up repeatedly in my conversations with South African Indian students: the contexts of viewing and the recent influx and availability of subtitled DVDs; 'improvements' in production values *versus* the pleasures and meanings of the generic content; and the simultaneous rise in popularity of Bollywood in South Africa, and an increased notice taken of Indian culture and Bollywood both locally and globally by White mainstream society. In their conversations about their consumption practices and contexts, these themes are seamlessly linked by respondents, suggesting a web of interrelated explanations common to the Indian community to do with changing viewing patterns, improvements in technology, the recent rise of Bollywood's global popularity and their own re-stimulated engagement with the genre and, ultimately, their culture.

5.2 Contexts of viewing: home

Most of my respondents mentioned watching Bollywood movies most frequently at home, in company with family or friends. Bollywood is essentially a family medium, which, as we will see below, has implications for the ways in which students use the films as permitted vehicles for cultural change:

Sonali: Back home my parents aren't really into Bollywood films, but my grandfather is, so I usually watch most of my Hindi movies back at his place. He lives just a few streets away from us, so I'm lucky my grandfather's there and they'll call me over, watch this new movie, maybe go somewhere and watch it together.
Rekha: For us, Bollywood movies play a big role in the house. If you have nothing else to do, you think 'Oh I don't feel like going out, let's watch a movie at home'. I mean you don't want to do the cinema thing, you just wanna have a homey thing. So we all – my friends always prefer Hindi movies to English movies. With an English movie we'll be like 'Ja, whatever'. You'll watch it and then never look at it again, you know? So it's like for us it's a big thing, we enjoy Bollywood movies hectically.

Ashok: If we're watching a movie, then everyone watches together and I think that's also the nice thing about Indian movies is that for example if we watch like an English movie we'll probably watch it once and then maybe six months or next year we'll be like 'oh, remember that movie?' And we'll watch it again. But there's something about Indian movies that we can watch nearly every weekend and not like get tired of it.
Interviewer: So you mean you watch the same movie several times?
Ashok: Ja, I mean there's a movie [Kabhie Kushi Kabhi Gham] *that I would probably [have] watched maybe 30 times.*

Learning to understand and speak Hindi was almost always mentioned in the context of home viewing. This originally happened in the context of "watching with mother (or grandmother)" as children:

Nisha: When my grandmother was still alive she used to love the Bollywood movies, so we used to watch it for a long time and that's how most of us at home even if we didn't go to Hindi school, [just] by watching the movies we got to know the language, how to speak it.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, DVD recordings of Bollywood movies have recently become commonly available in South Africa. The advantages they offer in terms of subtitling make DVD recording attractive to young people who are anxious about their perceived 'loss' of culture, particularly through loss of mother-tongue languages. Many students expressed an appreciation of the ways that DVDs and family viewing practices together contribute to a supportive environment for hearing and learning Hindi, despite the fact that a majority of my respondents were of Gujarati and some of Tamil background, Hindi being the Indian *lingua franca*. Some students mentioned being able to speak a language from the subcontinent as a prized accomplishment: such an ability is seen as a mark of being more in touch with 'authentic' Indian culture from the homeland (Zimbabwean students, as we saw in Section 4 above, are seen as more 'enculturated', and this is in part due to the ability to speak fluent Gujarati as well as Hindi).

Many of my respondents told me that they have recently been trying to 'catch up' with Hindi or Tamil through DVD recordings of Bollywood movies. English subtitling makes a far wider range of titles available for viewing than before, and the claim that it helps to learn Hindi is not as contradictory as it sounds, given the many repeat viewings that are said to occur of each film. Many respondents recall the change that occurred when DVDs and video recordings made spoken translations by parents and grandparents obsolete. Although older Hindi videos were nostalgically recalled by some as a valued way of learning the language in childhood, it seems that a parent or grandparent merely explaining what is happening in a movie (which is what happened before the advent of DVDs) is no substitute for hearing for oneself, and presumably it is less of an interruption to the pleasure of being immersed in the narrative:

> *Rakesh: [A lot of Bollywood movies are now subtitled] cos of its demand from outside, a lot of Indians just don't speak Hindi. Sometimes we'd watch the movies with no subtitle, my mom would explain to me what's going on, and the converse to that is me explaining to my mom in English movies ... but now with the onset of DVDs and a lot more Indian movies*

are available in subtitle, so we do watch a whole lot of Indian cinema at home.

Parveen: I'm Gujarati and the movies are all in Hindi – now I used to only watch them with subtitles but over the past couple of years I've watched series and movies and I've actually picked up Hindi. So now I'm watching movies and they'll say something and I'll immediately know what they're saying before the subtitles come up, it's just from [exposure].

Sanjay: Mainly we watch now since my father's got DVDs and all. Before, we didn't have the advantage of viewing Indian movies at the cinema, it came like once in every three months so it wasn't the way we got it right now. But now we've been able to get DVDs, I watch Indian movies whenever I go home. I watch Indian movies here at res whenever I can so it's teaching me a bit about my language, cos like it's a push for me to learn and so in that sense it does make me – it's an educational thing for me to learn my language through the movies.

Bollywood movies are made to appeal to the widest possible audience (Ganti 2004: 65), and provide enjoyable occasions for the whole family to be entertained. This is not surprising, given the importance of family life within Indian culture generally, and many respondents mentioned missing their family viewings.

5.3 Contexts of viewing: RhodesUniversity and the HSS Bollywood screenings

Students recalled feelings of anxiety, wondering how they were going to get a Bollywood 'fix' once they moved to Rhodes. Some students feel they watch a lot less at Rhodes, as access to DVDs or videos is more difficult without dedicated video rental outlets or family to pass on new acquisitions. The HSS, in this regard, has played a major role in providing access to Bollywood movies, and together with a few key individuals with good connections has also been instrumental in keeping the students up to date with the latest releases. Often this is dependent on family connections:

Meena: I think at home I watch much more than here, it's just because here we can't get our hands on the stuff so at home it's easier, every aunt or whoever has it.

One of the services performed by the HSS as part of its mission to keep students in touch with their culture is to put on public screenings of Bollywood movies at one of the campus lecture venues after hours. They began in 2002 with a semi-formal film festival organised by one of the HSS members, which was advertised both on campus and in town. It was attended by an enormous audience, largely but exclusively comprised of Indian students and townsfolk, who regularly filled one of the major lecture halls. I attended some of these and it was here that I watched my first Bollywood productions, *Devdas* and *Lagaan.*

The screenings continued the following year, but the audience attending was somewhat smaller. I went to many of them, and they usually followed the same format: tea and sandwiches would be served, organised by the HSS committee, while announcements concerning the society were given. A collection would be taken for the benefit of a local charity, and the show would begin, usually with an interval half-way if it was particularly long. Students would sit in pairs or groups of friends and you could hear them comment on the action or plotline as the film progressed. Stereotypical characterisations of stock figures such as older women or 'aunties' who try to be 'modern' or 'sexy' would meet with groans, shrieks and hoots of laughter; over-the-top action sequences would be ridiculed, and there were often red eyes at the end of sentimental films.

Interviewer: Have you been to any of the Hindi Student Society film shows? (several *ja*s and laughter) *Who do you go with?*
Zeenat: Well with friends, you go with a group of friends.
Rekha: And everyone sits together because everyone knows each other, everyone gets along with each other...
Zeenat: My parents were here in April and they don't really like watching movies, so I dragged them along and said 'No just come and see, you'll

see all my friends there, there's so many people who come' and they enjoyed it thoroughly.
Rita: I think it's fine, I think it did bring us all closer together, we'd all laugh together and...
Zeenat: Ja, you'd find a funny scene, or not even funny but you'd still be laughing...
Rekha: Ja, that's how we bond, that's how we get together. And then after the movie we'd be like 'No, why was he running with her?' and (all laugh) we'll talk about it, maybe one stupid part we all sit there and laugh about it, 'See that's why I don't like that movie and that movie'.

Students also watch movies with groups of friends in their residence rooms, a recreation made possible by DVD and PC technology, and listen to CDs of movie soundtracks and Bhangra bands. Some students showed me their enormous collections of recordings, bought by themselves or sent by parents or other family members. Watching Bollywood at Rhodes is for many of the students I interviewed a sure way to reconnect with home, as the representations of religious rituals and family problems are so similar to their own experiences, and viewing wards off feelings of loneliness and homesickness:

Ashok: I watch it because sometimes I miss my culture, especially being here. I mean I miss going to the family functions, I miss doing this with my family or getting involved or doing something. So for me, when I watch it's like always remembering, 'Aah, remember when we did this', that whole connection thing again.

5.4 Production values and generic pleasures: the affective use of Bollywood

Respondents believed that Bollywood films have recently 'advanced', as they incorporate Western production values and directors experiment with different film genres to move away from the typical 'masala' film (Ganti 2004: 139) and produce more diversity in content. 'Modern' film content, with its stricter adherence to Western film production values, is also thought of as positive because it attracts a wider, Western audience, and is

in turn a way that India is seen to be adapting to the West. My young respondents claimed that as a result of its more accessible storylines and sophisticated production values, many more young Indian people are engaging with the genre than previously:

> *Rakesh: Quality Indian cinema has definitely boomed in the past five years or maybe more, but it's definitely improved the quality of cinema, the substance of the stories is not [just] the same hierarchical problems of somebody in love with somebody from somewhere else, it's definitely grown in the action aspect...so I do watch Hindi movies if they are subtitled.*
>
> *Zeenat: I think that watching Bollywood movies, to an extent it's become a trend, because before teenagers they weren't into watching Hindi films as it is now. That's what I feel, because at first my other cousins were like, 'Oh, let's go watch an English film', but now especially at school it's like, 'Ay! This new movie's out, let's go watch it'.*
> *Interviewer: Why do you think that is?*
> *Zeenat:I think it's become more modernised.*
> *Rekha: It really has been modernised. We feel now we can watch it –*
> *Zeenat: And we can identify with it.*
> *Rita: Olden-day movies were so much more different.*

Not all changes are good, however. All the students I interviewed reported not liking the aping of Hollywood action sequences or plotlines, a feature that is becoming more prevalent in the big-budget releases (Ganti 2002; 2004: 76). In some of the public Bollywood screenings put on by the HSS that I attended, 'unrealistic' American-style action sequences were met with groans and hoots of derisive laughter. They are seen as interfering with the narrative flow of the story, and are regarded with amused or impatient irritation. Sometimes, this is enough to put a person off the genre altogether:

Vikram: I've seen a few Indian movies that try to follow action and they fail, they horribly fail.

Gillespie makes a similar observation and comments: "Western conventions of heightened realism are often contrasted with what are seen to be ludicrously unrealistic action and fight sequences in Hindi films ... However, the criteria of verisimilitude proper to Hindi cinema appear to be based primarily on the skill exercised in manipulating the rules of the film's moral universe" (Gillespie 1995: 86). The 'moral universe' of big-budget contemporary Bollywood movies centres around a disruption of traditional values, and deals with "multiple generations, family relationships, consequences of past actions, moral conflicts and sacrifice" (Ganti 2004: 138). These are interspersed with "a potpourri of elements — music, romance, comedy and drama" (Ganti 2004: 139). The young respondents were all very conscious of the conventions of the Bollywood genre, and all had strong feelings about what makes a good Bollywood movie. The storyline is quite typical and easily told:

Parveen: Indian people love romance. Typically an Indian movie will have heroes and heroines, so it'll have the lead actress, and there'll always be a villain or villains. The typical story is rich boy falls in love with poor girl or the other way around, more often than not the girl's family disapproves of the boy and then he goes through obstacles to win her over and there'll be fighting – maybe she's been proposed to [by] someone else – so there'll be your violence, action in other words. There'll always be romance and the songs are a form of escapism in a way.

However, it is the convolutions and the resolutions of the love story that are of central interest to the film viewer — how the narrative will be resolved this time round — and which, together with the affective aspects of the music and dance explain the intense enjoyment and emotional engagement with each film. These characteristics distinguish the Bollywood genre form from typically Hollywood productions, which are by and large seen as less complex and therefore not as emotionally compelling as the former:

Interviewer: What do you think the main differences are between the way of telling a story in Hollywood and Bollywood, if you can compare the two?
Ashok: Well, I'd like to call Bollywood very 'filmy'. It's over the top, but in a nice way. I mean, I mean sometimes it's completely not realistic but the way they do it, the twists they put in – but I enjoy that, watching it, I mean especially the sound track, watching the songs, watching the dances, the different locations.
Interviewer: And [Hollywood]?
Ashok: I think they follow a very strict format in that the story [goes] from beginning to end and that's it. They don't do like anything else in between. I mean they've got their mission, they've done their mission, and that's it. Whether there's a happy or sad ending, it's done, or keep you waiting like wait for a sequel or something, but there's like never a sequel in Bollywood because they've got three hours and they do everything they can in three hours which makes it more interesting.

Ironically, what makes Bollywood movies a recognisable genre and a source of pleasure — namely the films' predictable, yet convoluted storylines — is a characteristic that can also be a source of boredom and impatience. Like any other genre film, part of the pleasure derived from watching a Bollywood movie is to see how creatively the familiar narrative elements will be resolved this time. Hackneyed treatments of the narrative are met with disappointment:

Interviewer: Is there anything about Indian movies that you don't like?
Shalimar: I have to think about this one, I know there is because I've commented on it to myself before ... sometimes it'll be like the film will be very predictable and I suppose you could say lame in terms of the acting, or they'll try to make it a typical kind of 'filmy' kind of movie when you can see, 'ok this is going to happen, the boy is going to use this pick-up line, and the girl is going to fall in love'. That kind of thing is irritating,

cos sometimes I think you need to progress from there, you've done this kind of cinema, dancing around the trees, for all these years, go into a bit more meaningful cinema ... experiment, and that's why I was happy with films like Ashoka *and* Lagaan ...

Despite these dislikes, the students whom I spoke to were avid watchers of Bollywood; some even called themselves addicts. Part of the intrigue for me about students' watching of Bollywood was to try to understand their many repeat viewings. This seems to be connected with the intense emotional affect of the narrative content and style, and the characteristic music and colourful attire and dance, all of which are icons for "our culture" (Ganti 2004: 77). For the young women below, even the stylistically exaggerated parts of "our movies" are pursued with enthusiastic relish. It must be noted here that many of the conversations about Bollywood evoked laughter or even hilarity in my respondents. One possible reason for this is the self-consciousness provoked by explaining or revealing to me, an outsider, the familiar but suddenly strange nature of a non-Western media genre:

Rita: I know it does irritate some people, Indian song and dance and stuff like that, but at the end of the day that is what makes it our movie; it's all about the song and the dance and about the romance and – although it's so unrealistic with snowy mountains (drowned with laughter) *you know in real life they would freeze to death* (laughter)
Sonali: And the thing is people sit and people watch (shouting and laughing) *but they enjoy it so much! So Bollywood movies really are part of our rich culture – I know our culture is very rich and it's diverse in the sense that our culture's composed of so many things, it's not only about song and dance...*
Rekha: It's colourful...
Zeenat: And if you think about it, we don't write it down that they changed ten times or whatever; we still move to it. Ok sometimes we get a bit irritated (laughs of agreement). *But it's part of what we enjoy, we*

associate Hindi movies with the song and the dance and the colourful outfits, everything.

In an interesting contrast, one student of Tamil ancestry watches Tamil film because their "simple" style and representations of religious and family life in India remind him of life at his rural home in Natal, where life is "similar". In contrast, he highlights the "millennial" or global feel of the typical Bollywood movie:

Ashok: At home I'll probably watch more of the south Indian movies because now what you see on Eastern Mosaic *and Ster-Kinekor are more [Bollywood] films. At home we also watch those, but we watch more of the south Indian films.*
Interviewer: What's the difference?
Ashok: It's the language obviously. But I also think it's the storyline the movie's based on, because the south India ones tend to stay in India with the whole family, and it's shot very simply. It's very simple, it's not like the Hindi ones where they're dancing in London and then the next minute they're in Cape Town (laughs), *it's got the whole millennium 'Hollywood' look to it. I think that's why Bollywood or the Hindi ones have done so well. But the south Indian ones tend to stick in India which is nice because every time you're missing India or missing something Indian you put that in and it reminds you of [home] – we've been brought up on the farm and it's very similar to what we're watching on the south Indian films, because the south Indian ones are very old-fashioned, in the rural areas, things like that, which is like us, I meaning living on the farm, praying, they also have these family temples.*

Young Indian students watch Bollywood films to engage with the emotional affect they engender. Commenting on the way a film producer, Anjum Rajabali 'Indianises' Hollywood movies by 'adding emotions', Ganti describes what 'emotion' means to Bollywood filmmakers and audiences:

> [Rajabali] uses words that are transactional – love, hate, sacrifice – to define emotion, rather than those that denote states of being such as happiness, anger or sadness. Revenge and pangs of separation may seem unusual in a list of emotions, but their inclusion demonstrates that for Hindi film makers emotions are not about an individual but about his or her relationship with others... Therefore adding emotions to a film involves placing a character in a web of social relations of which kin are the most significant. (2002: 291)

These themes resonate strongly with my respondents' views about family and community life. Students also told of how watching Bollywood movies is not quite the same without being able to watch with family, and they get together with friends in order to re-create the feelings of community they miss. Watching a Bollywood movie at Rhodes is a sure way to re-connect imaginatively and emotionally with home.

5.5 Bollywood, cultural values, modernity and moral lessons for today's youth

In her overview of young Punjabi peoples' understandings of Bollywood, Gillespie (1995) mentions that young women are particularly attracted to the aspect of romance: "Some girls find the films provide a source of support and encouragement, affirming their ideology of romantic love" (Gillespie 1995: 86). The same is true for the young women I interviewed, who also speak of the plots, music and dance as being highly affective and romantic:

> *Shalimar: I suppose the idea of love, your first love is your purest love, and the whole thing is into marriage and you live happily ever after and you think, 'Oh, I wish that would happen to me,' and you think that it can actually happen when you watching the film. And then after that you come back to reality and you realise that it's not like that, so certain things like that you know, you do get caught up in the moment.*

In general, the youth in Gillespie's study use Hindi movies in order to "deconstruct 'traditional culture'" while their elders use them "to foster cultural and religious traditions" (1995: 87). This is not quite the case with young South African Indians. Two things have happened to invert the attitudes that Gillespie reports in her earlier study. The first is that recent Bollywood movies have become risqué — more Westernised — in terms of dress and socially acceptable public behaviour, and some parents find them embarrassing and don't like them at all: in a sense, Bollywood has left some of the older generation behind in its address to an implied youth audience. Some young people also find particular productions unwatchable in front of parents for the same reason:

> *Interviewer: Are there any aspects of Indian movies that you don't like?*
> *Rekha: Well, you don't expect Hindi cinema to go that far...*
> *Zeenat: And when your parents are watching it as well...*
> *Rekha: That's why what we do is we warn each other, we tell them 'Do not watch this with your parents!'* (all laugh) *You know we have DVDs at home because we all sit and watch TV at home you know?*

The other difference in the South African case is that instead of parents using Bollywood to teach youth about traditional values, the youth are doing this for themselves. We have already seen how most of the young people I spoke to believe it important to preserve their culture, and how students use Bollywood to teach themselves Hindi. In addition, Bollywood provides a means of representing and understanding desirable family values in contemporary globally-situated Indian society. Bollywood films are family films, and many students say that Bollywood teaches them "morals" concerning their lives as members of Indian families and communities. "Family values" was the phrase used many times as an example of these moral lessons:

> *Zeenat: I think they also impose on your thinking you know? Ok, you watch a movie and you see 'Ok, if you do that, then these are the consequences,' and you don't want those consequences so you are not going to do that, and in that way I think it affects our lives. Because we*

can identify with the morals that they are speaking about, because we have to we practice those same values in our lives. So I guess we also understand where they're coming from.

Ashok: I think the main theme in all of them is that they have strict family values attached to them. There's always a happy ending. Even if it's [violent] it's always teaching you something at the end. I think that's also what draws a lot of people to watch it because at the end of it, it teaches you something about [a moral about life].

Sanjay: The movies I like are family movies, they teach you family values like the movie Bagbhan... *it teaches you family values that should happen normally in Indian family lives, like "*K3G*"* [Kabhie Khushi Kabhi Gham] *those are very 'needy values' that Indian families should have, because to disown your parents in that way goes against what our God has set. To disown your family you [are] actually dis-banning God. And that's why I like watching movies like that, mainly movies with family values with which you can apply to your own life, it should be relevant in Indian family life.*

Bagbhan, which was a hit movie in 2003, the year when I conducted the majority of the interviews, was cited many times as a good example of the family values that pertain to Indian youth in contemporary Indian society. A young man, adopted by a couple with two other sons, returns, rich and successful from years abroad in London, in time to rescue his father and mother from cruel and unfilial treatment at the hands of their natural children. For the young South Africans I spoke to, the moral of the story is that it is possible for an Indian person to live in the West with all the appurtenances of modernity, yet to retain, even to a greater degree than undutiful Indians at home, a sense of what is 'right':

Sanjay: In like the movie of Bagbhan *that guy – I think he moves to London – he's adapting to modern [life], it's a new lifestyle it's a modern*

lifestyle for him, but yet he still prays every single day of his life. So although he's going through the modern age, he still has that cultural background within him, he still knows his religion, what all the festivals are, he celebrates all the festivals, he prays everyday, so in that sense he's got a 50/50 balanced life.

Bagbhan is a typical example of a Bollywood movie where the "emphasis is on Indian tradition and family values where young Westernised characters keep returning to the roots located in a traditional-yet-modern India" (Kaur 2002: 207). India remains the source of 'authentic' cultural values and although India is no longer a place of ultimate return, Bollywood movies represent an opportunity to re-connect with the homeland affectively and imaginatively.

5.5.1 Place and style: cosmopolitan settings for tradition with a modern twist

Discussions about the moral lessons that are to be learned from the films, concerning the need to fulfill one's duty to one's family and religion, are embedded within comments and observations about 'modernity'. Bollywood is an up-to-date source of information on contemporary — or what some respondents call 'modern' — fashions and romantic and family relationships. Exotic international locations, daring dress fashions for women and the breaking of cultural taboos, such as displays of public affection, are topics usually mentioned together, and seem to form a common theme in discussions about Bollywood content and 'modernity'.

Radha: [Bollywood films are] also modern ... the dress and the dancing, it's modern now, that's why I say our generation can relate to it.

Parveen: In Bollywood these days they are spending a lot more money and focusing on backdrops, they'll fly out for a week just to get a shot of Table Mountain, and this is appealing to young people because they are moving. For Indian people all over the world it's appealing. There's a lot of fresh

new talent out there and the types of music being produced are relevant for today's generation.
Interviewer: Can you elaborate on that?
Parveen: Relationships ... it's very Western, you actually don't find an Indian movie where they don't wear midriffs, or the guy won't show his chest – the women are still conservative but they still show leg and stuff, which was never done before, never, never!

'Modernity' is never spelled out by the respondents, but seems to be equated with the particular mix of Western romantic attachments, up-to-date Indian fashions and personal style associated with "today's generation". The freedom of individual expression that they connote resonates with the discussion in Section 4.5 concerning 'modernity' and 'tradition'. What these comments express is the savouring of a medium that is able to reflect the concerns and desires of young people, in that it represents a way of life which successfully combines being both 'modern' and 'traditional'.

Rajadhyaksha (2003) and Alessandrini (2001) argue that the 'modernity' of Bollywood is its unprecedented representation of middle-class consumerism. This aspect is never mentioned by students, and their silence on the subject — except for oblique references to India not being "how it used to be before" — suggests that middle-class consumerism is the norm from which the rest of the film is viewed, and thereby confirms the critique.

5.6 Bollywood in South Africa: a re-visioning of a diasporic identity

In the chapter on Bollywood, I suggested that it needed to be asked why it was that Bollywood films appeal *now* in South Africa, and go beyond seeing this response as merely part of a current global fashion. One possible reason is that as the youngest members of a progressively successful middle class in an 'exotic' country, the South African Indian youth whom I interviewed find that they now have more in common with — and more to offer to— Indians both in other diaspora and in India itself.

Bollywood as a global media has had, according to my respondents, an extraordinary impact on the imagination of local diasporic audiences in South Africa. Many of these are young people who display on the one hand a sense of confident belonging to a country of diverse peoples; on the other, they talk of an uneasy feeling of once again being marginalised as part-players on the fringes of contemporary and future political life in South Africa. With its instantly recognisable stars and style, its music, glamour and international appeal, Bollywood seems made for this time in their lives, inviting them out of the uncertainties of the local into a fantasy space of a global or transnational community of like-minded Indians. Bollywood gives young Indians in South Africa the means by which to participate in a unique construction of cosmopolitanism where exotic international locales (including South Africa) serve as backdrops to the complex dramas centred around family and cultural life. To paraphrase Hobson in her analysis of soap opera viewing, Bollywood is "a way of understanding and coping with problems which are recognised as 'shared' by other [Indians] both in the [films] and in real life" (Hobson 1982: 131).

Almost every student spontaneously spoke with enjoyment and enthusiasm of the flattering attention the South African Indian community has been given by being chosen as the host for international award ceremonies and concerts connected with Bollywood. In addition, South Africa is a favoured filming location, and many Bollywood movies are shot using the South African landscape as a backdrop. Some students also claim that part of the interest in South Africa shown by Bollywood stars and producers is due to the opening up of South Africa post 1994 and its sudden reinstatement as a 'visitable' country which was previously cloaked in an unfavourable light as developmentally backward and socially racist. South Africa has, through its past isolation, ironically become a place of mysterious 'otherness' to subcontinental Indians, who now want to come and see for themselves what life is like here. Students expressed feelings of vicarious pleasure at being able to 'offer' to esteemed visitors from the homeland the diverse cultural and natural riches of South Africa, which represent their country in a flattering light:

Parveen: Before about 10 years ago Bollywood stars would come to South Africa once in a blue moon or if there was a movie that was really a big hit in South Africa they would react after a show. Now it is huge, I mean we have concerts which are glamorous and a classic example was the Indian version of the Oscars. Now there's the Indian version called the IIFA awards International Indian Film Awards, which was held in South Africa, the entire industry, 99% of the industry was in the country. And I also believe that since '94, since we've become a democratic country, people are obsessed with the country. You get the ones who appreciate what we've gone through; they want to see the country, how it's developed, how Indian people live here, so they come. I can't even tell you how many Indian actors that I've read interviews with and heard them say they love this country, and many of them have established ties here, South Africa's really a big influence. I think Bollywood is a big influence on South African society and South Africa's a big influence on the industry.
Interviewer: What do you think they get out of being in touch with South Africa?
Parveen: Cultural diversity. I really think it's the living together in a reformation that's the most appealing thing. You can go anywhere in Africa and you'll see that no country in Africa is like South Africa ... its colourful people of every single nationality.

The business of Bollywood — the movies, music videos, award ceremonies and concert tours — is cited as a direct reason for the invigoration of interest taken by young people in local cultural practices and a renewed enthusiasm for learning Hindi:

Parveen: I think what's also important is that younger people, my generation, are becoming increasingly interested in the culture – this is mainly due to Bollywood. I think, if anything, Bollywood is the cause of that, worldwide.
Interviewer: It's having a revival effect?

Parveen: Absolutely! The world and the Indian community especially in South Africa is not what it used to be years ago, there's been like a culture shock, this big gigantic wave of Bollywood just swept through this country and has taken over, I mean it's humungous.

It is not only young people who take an interest in this aspect of Bollywood, however. In keeping with it as a family medium, the concerts and award ceremonies mentioned were obviously family affairs, and were attended by an enormous multi-generational fan base. One young woman mentioned the great excitement of attending with her extended family the *Now Or Never* concert, held at the ABSA stadium in Durban on 28 December 2002, for a audience of 50 000 people. This show was put on by South African film producer Anant Singh's company, Videovision Entertainment. It won an award for the best live production in 2003 (see http://www.videovision.co.za/Press/press42.html for a press release on the event). The excitement that Radha felt at the concert was re-lived by incorporating the closing Bollywood dance at the HSS culture show later the following year (see below).

Concomitant with the mutual interest in each other taken by South African Indians and the global Bollywood industry is the interest that is taken by global and local communities in Indian culture. One student remarked that in the past, Indians were popular for food, and now it's because people are interested in Bollywood. Indian culture in general has recently been marketed globally as an exotic consumer item that "present[s] an exotic and romantic view of India that is a legacy of Orientalism" (Moorti 2003b: 293). Moorti argues that the representation of the East through commodity culture "position[s] the Other within a discourse of being always, already different, condemning the other in perpetuity to the land of difference" (2003b: 307). The respondents I spoke to were very much aware of this trend and cited it as one of the reasons why Indian people themselves have taken a self-conscious interest in their own culture. However, the reasons given for the interest taken by the West are somewhat different to the conclusion drawn by Moorti:

Rakesh: The recognition of Indian cinema being just as good [as Western cinema], the religion, the clothing, the food, has been foregrounded so much in Durban. The Indian community is like that, the White *and Black communities all partake in that. You see everybody loving Indian food and everybody ranting about Indian food and how gorgeous Indian clothing is. And it's the hip thing to cook curry – I'm talking about non-Indians – it's the in thing to be able to wear saries and the make-up and to understand the religion to some extent.*

Interviewer: Why is that happening? Is that a recent phenomenon?

Rakesh: Things were starting 10 years ago, celebrating more cultures. But recently, I think, with Miss World being Miss India, and a lot of famous people picking up the Indian religion and ranting about it, a lot of Indian cinema being released in the States, the recognition of [Amitabh Bachchan] as the greatest actor of the century, the whole boom of Indianness through Indian cinema has been huge. When movies play in Durban it's just so crazy, it's like 50% White *and 50% Indian. It's just the enjoyment of the beautiful Indian culture. And a lot of Indian artists come to Durban, and at the concert you'll see the numbers of Black and White people there – they might not understand the words to the music but they're appreciating the whole Indian culture. You see even the HSS cultural show how many* White*s and Blacks come: they might not understand everything like me, but the whole celebration of something beautiful and gentle. I think generally the East is being celebrated a whole lot more.*

Interviewer: Where do you think that comes from though?

Rakesh: I think the West realising they have no culture, it's just something consumerist and capitalist. There's nothing inherent in being White other than the country you live in.

From the strength of an insider who is very proud of his culture, Rakesh argues that the interest taken by others (Whites) in Indian culture comes from the inherent lack of

anything 'cultural' in their lives: Indian food, clothing and religion — and Bollywood movies — are a foil for that 'lack'. In an attempt to redirect the enquiry into the impulse of hegemonic culture to appropriate the 'other' and make it "amenable to the economic, cultural and political transformations of imperialism", Ferguson asks "whether or not it is possible to interpret any forms of Orientalism as progressive rather than conservative or regressive in their intentions or outcomes" (Ferguson 2004: 128). Bollywood presents an image of the Orient to Indians in South Africa as much as it does to hegemonic White culture. All the students who I spoke to commented on the way in which Bollywood has popularised India and its particular ways of life, religion and fashions, for both Indians and other groups in South Africa. Separating these two aspects becomes a necessary but complex task.

5.7 Representations of India: resistance and desire

India is a source of fantasy, of extreme and ambivalent feelings, of anxiety and desire. Desire stems from a sentimental idealisation of India as homeland, a source of social and cultural plenitude, a utopia of "abundance, energy, intensity and community" (Dyer 1992):

> *Sanjay: Just to see India as a whole. I haven't been there, but people always say it's a good place, it's a brilliant place, life there is excellent. Although there's poverty you always get that in other countries. India is your home, it's where you've been born, your birthplace – South Africa is my birthplace, but I feel that India is my first home and South Africa is my second so I want to really experience India, go and see how they live, see India as a whole and experience life there for myself. My culture is there, my cultural origins are from there. I want to experience getting involved in their temple service, go to temple, just get involved tradition-wise – going back to my roots. In other words I feel that India is the first place I would want to go to before any other country in the world.*

Anxiety is born from the desire to maintain an image of an idyllic India that is not intruded upon by 'reality'. This is often avoided by partitioning off 'real' India from the fantasy space of Bollywood images, or stories of India brought back by family members. The fantasy of the idyllic homeland is protected by ideas of visiting India as a tourist and thereby removed from encountering the more disturbing aspects of life in the subcontinent:

> *Parveen: I would love to go and be in the villages. My mom tells me how it is so peaceful, really dusty roads, no cars and I'd love to do that. People talk about the poverty in India, but as a tourist you don't get to see that. I mean you do but you do it partly. I mean India has five-star hotels and restaurants, you don't have anyone in the middle, you're either rich or you're poor. You have upper class, lower class and that's it, there's not really a middle class. I mean you see in the Indian movies the mansions that they have, it's just rich with culture and colour and heritage.*

In the first part of this chapter, I described the ongoing yet oblique connections that young people have with India through parents and extended family, and the way in which its products of clothing, ritual items and food are a valued part of social life in the local Indian community. As one of the products, Bollywood is a means of showing an 'essential' Indianness, which both nourishes a sense of belonging to a wider, perhaps global Indian identity: yet at the same time, it ironically speaks to and informs a particular way of being an Indian in South Africa. Through the minute differences that are apparent to Indian community insiders, the details of 'authentic' Indian life in India as they are represented on film reaffirms the essential Indianness of Indian communal life in South Africa, as South Africans:

> *Ashok: I like to see myself as South African but with obviously Indian origin because when I watch TV and see stuff in India, they do it the same. For example, take a prayer now: they would do it how you would like to do it properly – we would do it the same way but we would probably do it*

on our own South African kind of way. My sister who's in London at the moment says that she goes for the prayers and she misses it the way we do it because they've got their way of doing it as well.

In the same way that the young people I spoke to accommodate themselves to the differences in religious rituals and practice, language and caste within their home and campus communities, so they are able to see and compare these to the differences that are apparent in Bollywood movies. Bollywood representations of an essentialised Hindu Indian culture provide a window onto a world that, as Thompson (1995: 175) says, allows a vicarious experience of an alternative reality, a reality that is tantalizingly similar to yet ultimately remote from the day-to-day lives of those who watch and relate to those images. Although these Bollywood representations of Indian culture may be seen as more 'authentic' — "they do it how you would like to do it properly" — I would argue that the end result is not to foster a more essentialised South African Indian culture. Rather, these representations lead viewers to reflect on their own ways of doing, their own ways of being in the world, and to acknowledge their contextual validity. For Ashok, although the Indian way from the subcontinent is more 'authentic', it is only recognisable as such because it is contrasted with local practice: "we would probably do it on our own South African kind of way".

The representation of 'authentic Indianness' serves as a foil for local cultural practice, highlighting both its differences and its similarities. Thompson (1995) argues that it is unhelpful to conceptualise global media products as monolithic forces leading to a simplistic cultural imperialism or the globalisation of Western culture – or, as here, the possibility of a global diasporic Indian culture. Instead, global media products need to be understood within the complex contexts and conditions of their local reception. I argue that Bollywood, far from provoking a desire for a simplistic re-enactment of an essentialised Indian Hindu culture within its South African diasporic communities, rather reinforces a sense of local distinctiveness in which its young members take comfort and pride. This localisation of culture – although, as Ebr.-Vally (2001) reminds us, and as the students repeatedly demonstrated, Indian culture is not monolithic but consists of a web

of interconnecting traditions and practices – can be seen as an example of the emergence of "cultures of hybridity" (Hall 1992: 310) or what Bhabha calls "translation" (Bhabha 1990b).

Nisha, who is a fluent Hindi speaker and a qualified Hindi teacher, commented on the image of India as she sees it in the media. She uses this reflection to evaluate her relative advantages to being a Hindi speaker in South Africa: in India, her talents would be worthless.

> *Nisha: If you look through TV and movies and things, they look so different from what we are here, you know, I don't know in what way but there is some difference, I think a big difference. I think if I go there I'll really not feel a sense of belonging, it'll just be a place I'm just visiting or going on holiday. It won't be as much advantage [to know Hindi] over there – over there everyone speaks Hindi, and when they hear it they're like, 'Oh, whatever'.*

For Nisha, the representations of India that she sees on TV and in Bollywood movies embody an inarticulatable "difference" to her experience of being a South African Indian. A part of her sense of identity as a South African Indian derives from her ability to speak Hindi: that is, it lies in her difference to the majority of other young, non-Hindi speaking South African Indians. She defines herself by her difference — a more 'authentic' Indianness marked by her ability to speak an Indian language — but a difference that would be lost in the homeland. This homeland, the origin of Indian identity, ironically has the potential to erase part of her identity as an Indian. Thus, India becomes a place of ambivalence for her. This ambivalence is further complicated by her adherence to the idea of a South African Indian culture under threat from Westernising influences, and in need of the rejuvenating connection with authentic Indian homeland culture. India is both needed and resisted.

5.8 Reproducing Bollywood

In her study of Southall youth, Gillespie describes an interesting occasion where the young people, rebelling against the strict cultural policing of their behaviour by their headmaster, reproduce a dance from a hit Hollywood movie, *Dirty Dancing*, at the local school's Diwali festival (Gillespie 1995: 108). Gillespie remarks that "This appropriation of a Western popular film was both unusually planned and unusually confrontational, setting out to challenge the culture of authoritative elders through a public performance and celebration of allegiance to the values of an idealized version of 'Western youth'" (Gillespie 1995: 108) (in a fascinating way, this popular musical, starring Patrick Swayze, reproduces many of the elements of what make a popular Bollywood movie: one could compare *Kabhie Khushi Kabhi Gham*, for example). In contrast, the young South Africans I have interviewed seem to be far more interested in reproducing Bollywood movies, not altogether for the same reasons, although there is some overlap. Bollywood has become a rich cultural resource that is reproduced at important rituals and social occasions. Three such occasions mentioned are performing dances from popular Bollywood films at weddings, playing love songs from the movies at prayers at temple services and, importantly for this study, reproducing dance sequences at the HSS culture show.

Several women respondents mentioned reproducing particular dances – which are known by the song they accompany – from popular Bollywood films at family weddings:

> *Radha: One part of the wedding ceremony is a dance, so the family and friends of the bride would probably stay for a few dances, and if the groom has sisters or [relatives], they will stage a few dances for him. Often the songs that are used are from the latest Bollywood movies. Whoever's dancing comes up with their own moves, or copies things from the video. I've just done one in June at a family's wedding. I got down two days before that ceremony and two cousins did it and the girl's husband, and on the day of the ceremony, somebody said we need an extra girl,*

please will you do it with her. So it was myself, the sister, her brother and her husband and the four of us did one...
Interviewer: Which movie did you use?
Radha: We used Devdas

In the later part of each year, the HSS organises a lavish and elaborate 'cultural show' as the highlight of the year's activities, performed by the student body for the benefit of various local charities. The show is put on at the Monument theatre, a large auditorium which is sold out to students and their families and friends who visit for the occasion from all over the Eastern Cape, and as far afield as Stellenbosch, Johannesburg and Durban – one respondent mentioned family arriving form Nairobi. Before the show begins, a dinner is served by the HSS and members of the Grahamstown community. The actual performances are preceded by a prayer ceremony on stage, and then begins a variety show of songs, dances, skits and a fashion parade, all performed by the HSS members themselves, dance troupes from other universities, or private classical — or in one case Bollywood — dance academies invited for the occasion. Each year is organised around a theme: in 2003, the year of the HSS 20th anniversary, it was *Bollywood through theTimes*. An extract from the programme notes shows how young Indian students imaginatively link the formation of the HSS and its local success directly to Bollywood:

Scene 1: Grahamstown. It's 1983; a small group of Rhodes students meet with the dream and vision of starting a cultural society that would celebrate and share its rich history and many aspects with other people.
Scene 2: Meanwhile, in hot Mumbai, a little-known actor, Amitabh Bachchan, makes his name in Shalay.
Scene 3: As Amitabh's career takes off, so too does the HSS. 1994 sees the launch of SA's most successful student productions. While Bachchan goes into overdrive in the new millennium with the BBC pronouncing him the 'Superstar of the Millenium' as well as being involved with major blockbusters like Kabhi Kushi Kabhie Gham, *and* Kante, *the HSS proudly celebrates its 20th anniversary.*

The superstar, Amitabh Bachchan, metonymically represents the gradual rise to international interest of Bollywood. As Bollywood gains recognition, so too does the community of Indian students, whose wish to 'share' their cultural riches is increasingly realised by association with Indian cinema.

In 2005 the theme was *Sapna, Once upon a Time in India*, interestingly a metaphor for diaspora: Sapna, a bride (in herself a metaphor for India), leaves her home village to go abroad to be with her husband. A quote from the HSS chairperson's opening speech reflects many of the themes mentioned by respondents, concerning their time at Rhodes, the importance of the continuity of culture both at home and at Rhodes, and the incorporation of the idea of India into contemporary South African life:

> *When I came here in first year, my biggest worry was whether there would be many people like me – people who would understand my way of thinking, people with a similar background to mine ... fellow Indians. I arrived – and there my worries ended [with the HSS].*
> *Throughout the year, we have held various events – beach trips, braais, cricket and hockey nights, Bhangras, Hindi movie every Saturday... which ultimately ends with the Cultural Show.*
> *This year the theme is* Sapna, Once Upon a time in India *... a promise of dreams and mystery – a whisper of the true India. To many, a trip to India consists of seeing the Taj Mahal, eating hot curries and subsequently getting diarrhea ... what we fail to realize is that to many, India is home – and how better to portray this than to visualise a beautiful Indian bride Sapna, about to leave her home – a little village in the heart of India.*

Regardless of the theme, the shows to a large degree consist of dance routines derived from Bollywood movies, interspersed with classical temple dances or variations of modern and Indian dance. The fashion show clothing is sponsored by companies in Johannesburg and consists mostly of formal Indian evening wear for men and women, heavily brocaded and beaded punjabi outfits and saris for women and suits for men.

There are also formal speeches made by the HSS committee, and an address by a University representative.

The tone of the occasion is one of excited enthusiasm. Everyone in the audience dresses formally: women dress in gorgeous saries or punjabi outfits with elaborate make-up and jewelry, and men wear suits. Both men and women students join in the dances, and popular individuals — especially young men — are cheered by name. The dance routines, with their colourful and stylish — sometimes provocative — outfits are met with noisy hoots, whistles and catcalls: popular songs are recognised and clapped, and particularly good renderings of well-known dance routines from the movies are cheered. There are occasional attempts at staged displays of flirtation which bring the house down. The shows are invariably long, between three and four hours, but are sat through with general enjoyment by the audience untill the end, when they can move on to photographs and a party.

The HSS culture show presents in miniature the complex forces dealt with by young Indians as they engage in forging individual identities on the edges — but within the boundaries — of South African diaspora culture. The importance of community to the feeling of belonging and the maintenance of cultural values makes the HSS a particularly effective force for engaging the imagination and energy of large numbers of young people away from home. These young people are in turn entitled to call upon and marshal the resources of an entire community — one young man told me that only an unexpected duty had kept the Indian High Commissioner from attending and addressing the show in 2003 — and are visibly proud of their achievement, in which a large cross-section of the community participates and which they have no hesitation in displaying to their families. What is interesting to this research is of course the use of Bollywood as the major medium through which this staging of independence and symbolic demonstration of loyalty and adherence to core cultural values is made.

6. Conclusion

In my discussion of the development of a diasporic South African Indian youth identity, I have tried to avoid seeing young South African Indians' behaviours, ideas and sense of self compelled solely by internalised cultural or external socio-political forces. The picture of the process of identity-building that emerges from the conversations that I have had with my respondents is one that reflects Song's argument that minority identity is always the result of the interplay of tensions between the needs of the group and the needs of the individual. Song (2003) rejects a strongly constructivist approach to identity formation, where a person is "always propelled by their 'subject position' within the social situation in which they find themselves" (Holland *et al.* 1998: 3). She endeavours to show how individual agency operates within a range of communal and wider social strictures, and how people negotiate identities of their own choosing, and the meanings of those identities.

As Holland *et al.* (1998) argue, "persons [are] composites of many, often contradictory, self-understandings and identities, whose loci are not confined to the body but 'spread over the material and social environment', and few of which are completely durable" (Holland *et al.* 1998: 8). While not ignoring the power of cultural forms to shape subjectivities, Holland *et al.* argue that the "development of self-understandings (identities)... [is] an outcome of living in, through and around the cultural forms practiced in social life" (Holland *et al.* 1998: 8). I have argued through the words of my respondents that the identity fostered and desired by young Indians in South Africa comes as a result of this interplay of "cultural forms": those from home informing and informed by not only the wider society of South Africa, but also by India and its representations of itself.

The cultural forms which are produced and reproduced locally, through family, community and place, serve as the overarching background and foundation for the re-visioning of a way of life that is able to meet the social and affective needs of what so many respondents call "our generation". Bollywood plays an important role in this dynamic process, by making available for reflection and re-incorporation into lived

culture representations of an 'authentic Indianness' in harmony with contemporary notions of modernity. Storey argues that "Culture is not something already made which we 'consume'; culture is what we *make* in the varied practices of cultural consumption. Consumption is the *making* of culture; this is why it matters ... making culture is complex and contradictory, and cannot be explained by simple notions of determination, false consciousness... co-option and manipulation" (Storey 1999: 168, italics in original). Diasporic Indian youth in South Africa are actively engaged in making a culture which is able to encompass both their South African and Indian identities. The time is propitious, in the sense that visible ethnic or cultural difference has become a fashionable accessory at an international level at a period in South Africa's history when such difference is also being promoted as part of a national identity. Bollywood representations of middle-class lovers who negotiate their way through the hazards of tempting but culturally destructive Western lifestyles on the one hand, and rigid internal social rules on the other, offer a particular kind of Indian identity as subject position to young viewers to occupy as they negotiate their own way through similar hazards of group belonging and individual identity in the local South African context.

In his discussion about the explosion of the popularity of Bollywood in South Africa after the screening of the blockbuster *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, Hansen (2004) argued that the film's success depended on its representation of an acceptable and potentially liberating image of 'Indianness'. Hansen's argument is that the idealised images of modern Indian youth in international settings represented Indians to themselves — but also, more importantly, to Whites — in ways that did not invite censure or shame. This thesis argues that this is a useful but limited interpretation, as it only allows for a negatively invoked or reactionary response to media representation and consumption. Although young Indian students do undoubtedly experience the marginalisation of racism and an ambivalent political place in post-independence South Africa, as the discussion in Section 2 of this chapter reveals, I argue that these circumstances are not the most important feature of their lives. The robust and self-reliant attitude which I encountered in the course of my interviews convinced me that such a theory prolongs into the present a subjectivity

historically dependent on White hegemonic culture for its definition, and restricts the agency of the Indian community to mere reaction rather than an autonomous creativity.

That is not to dismiss the dialectical relationship that is obviously part and parcel of the Bollywood phenomenon, especially for diasporic Indians, who need to establish their cultural identity in relation to other, sometimes Western, cultural communities. That it is itself an entirely modern, high-technology medium, that derives some of its own force from a relation to traditional Hollywood, only makes it the more effective for this purpose, the innate diversity of its origins better fitting it to shape a complex response to diversity in a wider arena. Lacan may talk of placating the "desire of the Other" as a primary motive in all human affairs, so that in a sense the glamour or 'desirability' of Indianness is better marketed (both to foreigners, and hence, by a kind of reflected gaze, to themselves) by the sheer success and effectiveness of Bollywood — an extra commodity, packaged subliminally alongside every production, in the fine print.

Nonetheless, to over-emphasise this circumspect relation is, I believe, to diminish the fact that it is real home-grown creativity that is being presented here, a fully active, not passive, means by which Indians may interpret themselves and reflect themselves back to the remainder of the media-connected world, conceived in a way as a vast audience, defined only by its power of collective gaze. It is the element of agency here, the sense of freely grasping a modern medium and using it for one's own expressive needs, that must not be underplayed. The recognition is that, in a modern setting, full acceptability both to oneself and others means taking one's place in a 'virtual', media-dominated global environment. Doing so, whether by the means of secondary identification or not, can provide South African Indians with an internationalising power which even the White-dominated local cinema has not been able to claim for its clientele.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

A particular youth identity in the South African Indian diaspora is being forged in a nexus of local and global forces. The globalisation of Bollywood and its popularity as a global media and the international commodification of the Indian exotic have occurred at the same time as the valorisation of 'difference' in the local political landscape. Indian youth, as young members of the South African Indian diaspora, are inheritors both of a conservative — yet adaptable — home culture and the marginalised identities of apartheid. However, the tensions between their desire to be recognised as both 'modern' South Africans and as 'traditional' Indians create a space in which they are able to (re)create for themselves an identity that can encompass both their home cultures and the desires of a Westernised modernity through the tropes of Bollywood. Bollywood speaks to its diasporic audiences through representations of an idealised 'traditional yet modern' India. Although India is not a place of return for this young generation, Bollywood representations of successful diasporic Indian culture and participation in the globalised Bollywood industry through concerts and international award ceremonies has provided an opportunity for young Indians in South Africa to re-examine their local Indian identities and feel invited to re-identify with the global diasporas of India.

Using a modified version of Vertovec's (2000) schema of diasporic types, I have argued that the South African Indian community remains a diaspora, not only by virtue of its settlement history and ongoing — though interrupted — ties with the homeland, but through its characteristic culture, forged both from its experiences of discrimination and exclusion and from its positive identification with its cultural heritage from India. This means, however, that 21st century Indian South Africa is not India, nor, apparently, does it strive to be so. As a demonstration of this truth, I was driven to explore how a novel, locally situated, hybrid cultural construct has resulted from the way an Indian media product, Bollywood movies, is utilised and interpreted in and for local circumstances. Such cinematic enterprises, so closely identified with a modern, technically skilled, and

artistically and materially extravagant portrayal of contemporary Indian concerns (frequently, and significantly, concerns with modernisation itself), was found often to have a distinctly different symbolic meaning, social function and efficacy when transplanted to a new, South African, geopolitical and historical setting.

In pursuing this quest, I looked at the characteristics of Bollywood movies, and answered some of the criticisms that have been raised concerning their Hindu nationalist socio-political agenda as a product of a global media industry aimed at a middle-class diasporic market. But my focus increasingly became that of young South African Indians and their responses. Indian youth culture is, indeed, particularly interesting in this scenario: not only does Vertovec (2000) ascribe to the youth a particular agency in transforming diasporic culture via their use of transnational media, but Bollywood itself is marketed to its diasporic youth (Ray and Mukherjee 2002).

Young South African Indians are one such diasporic market, and my research was an attempt to understand the meanings that young South African Indians at Rhodes University make of Bollywood. I have argued through the words of my respondents that through Bollywood, South African Indian youth affirm their identity as local South African diasporic subjects and imaginatively reconnect with a transnational community of Indian diasporas by incorporating Bollywood's dance, music and fashions into lived local culture. They are thus able, at one and the same time, both to draw affirmation from participation in a common cultural pool and to respond to international interest in, and acceptance of, this entertainment phenomenon, as empowering their own status and identity as modern citizens of a local and distinctive community, but seen anew in a global perspective and under a global gaze. In a political context that ostensibly emphasises 'rainbow nation' diversity, Bollywood serves to provide definition and colour to the specific Indian role in this mix, and is clearly gratefully and enthusiastically grasped towards this end.

This glare of publicity reflected back upon South African Indians themselves by the success of Bollywood is, of course, a virtual light. That it is in a sense imaginary, and

derives its strength from an entirely spectral 'media plane' of being that has no physical location, does nothing to mitigate the reality of its social power or the strength of identification it inspires. As Cohen asserts: "diasporas can be constituted by acts of the imagination... in the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or recreated through the mind, through cultural artifacts and through a shared imagination" (Cohen 1996: 275).

Hence, for all its connection to matters of tradition and cultural continuity, the response to the Bollywood phenomenon, both in its local South African guise and, probably, in a more general sense as well, displays all the hybridity and the irresolvable contrariness that mark it off as a thoroughly contemporary, and, indeed, even postmodern, aspect of our world: one where the part played by media and media awareness is not simply participatory but constitutive and fundamental.

Appendix 1

Statistics provided by Rhodes University Data Management Unit. Figures are provided for first-year intakes over the period 2003–2005.

INDIAN FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS AT RHODES UNIVERSITY FROM 2003 TO 2005

2003	INDIAN PERCENT OF TOTAL	INDIAN COUNT	TOTAL COUNT
TOTAL	4.48	45	1 004
NATIONALITY			
SOUTH AFRICAN	3.98	33	829
ZIMBABWEAN	6.86	12	175
PROVINCE			
UNKNOWN	6.95	13	187
EASTERN CAPE	1.99	7	352
GAUTENG	3.87	6	155
KWAZULU-NATAL	9.38	18	192
WESTERN CAPE	1.72	1	58
AGE			
20	10.69	14	131
21	4.57	25	547
22	2.54	5	197
25	16.67	1	6
RELIGION			
MUSLIM	100	19	19
HINDU	100	26	26
HOME LANGUAGE			
ENGLISH	6.17	45	729

2004	INDIAN PERCENT OF TOTAL	INDIAN COUNT	TOTAL COUNT
TOTAL	5.44	52	956
NATIONALITY			
SOUTH AFRICAN	5.07	37	730
ZIMBABWEAN	6.64	15	226
PROVINCE			
UNKNOWN	6.15	15	244
EASTERN CAPE	3.38	9	266
FREE STATE	7.14	1	14

GAUTENG	2.33	4	172
KWAZULU-NATAL	12.79	22	172
NORTH-WEST	25	1	4

AGE

19	16.67	18	108
20	5.15	27	524
21	2.59	6	232
22	1.67	1	60

RELIGION

MUSLIM	100	21	21
HINDU	100	31	31

HOME LANGUAGE

ENGLISH	7.28	51	701
OTHER LANGUAGE	50	1	2

2005	INDIAN PERCENT OF TOTAL	INDIAN COUNT	TOTAL COUNT
TOTAL	3.45	35	1 014

NATIONALITY

SOUTH AFRICAN	2.62	21	802
ZIMBABWEAN	6.6	14	212

PROVINCE

UNKNOWN	6.87	16	233
EASTERN CAPE	1.42	4	282
GAUTENG	1.55	3	194
KWAZULU-NATAL	5.74	12	209
NORTHERN PROVINCE	14.29	2	14

AGE

18	10.22	14	137
19	2.78	15	540
20	2.31	5	216
21	1.41	1	71

RELIGION

MUSLIM	100	15	15
HINDU	100	20	20

HOME LANGUAGE

ENGLISH	5.2	35	673

Appendix 2

List of respondents

Name	Age	M/F	Language	Place
Rakesh	23	M	Hindi	Durban
Nisha	21	F	Hindi	Durban
Meena	21	F	Tamil	Durban
Shilpa	21	F	Gujarati	Bulawayo
Radha	22	F	Gujarati	Kimberley
Ashok	21	M	Tamil	Durban
Rita	19	F	Gujarati	Grahamstown
Zeenat	18	F	Hindi	Pietermaritzburg
Rekha	18	F	Hindi	Botswana
Sonali	19	F	Hindi	Newcastle
Sanjay	20	M	Gujarati	East London
Vikram	24	M	Gujarati	Kimberley
Parveen	20	F	Gujarati	East London
Alpesh	19	M	Gujarati	Harare
Shalimar	19	F	Gujarati	Johannesburg

Appendix 3

Focus Group Interview Schedule

Name
Year
Degree
Age
Family backgrounds- particular family and cultural values, /relationships/ religion

Why Rhodes? How was it for you coming to Rhodes? What are the kinds of things you can do here that are different to home?

How is life on Rhodes campus or in digs different to home?

Do they see, or define themselves as a particular community on Rhodes campus?

How do they experience Rhodes in contrast to the norm of white middle class culture?

In the context of the wider South African Society, in what ways/contexts do you feel more Indian? Or more South African? Do they feel a strong South African Identity?

What does it mean to be a young South African Indian person today, post 1994, given the feeling that there was some alienation from the liberation process? How does this differ from their parents' generation? Their grandparents'? Has the transformation process been different for them, compared to their parents?

TV and film viewing habits at home. And Rhodes: where, when, how often, what company?

How do Hindi film viewing habits differ here to habits at home? Describe/discuss the differences.

Compare Hindi movies with local programmes.

Compare Hindi movies to Western (Hollywood) films (production values, narrative structure)

Why do they like watching Hindi movies?

How about parents, siblings, grandparents?
What kinds of local programmes do they watch?

Where do they watch Hindi movies?

Is the group they have formed recent? Why watch together?

How important is it to them? Relevance? Significance?

Does watching Hindi movies in such a group entrench a sense of difference? Or, thinking back to the question of their "community" here at Rhodes, how do the Hindi movies impact on their perceptions of themselves as Indian students? Do they entrench a sense of a shared culture?

What kinds of perceptions do they have of India from the films?
What images from the Hindi movies resonate with South African Indian culture?

Are there things they don't like about Hindi movies? (eg, depiction of poverty, conservative family and social values, place of women in society). Do they think the images they see in Hindi films feed into Western stereotypes of Indian people? How does this problematise their positions as South African Indians?

Many Hindi movies deal with themes that are structured the following binaries:

Tradition/ modernity
Village/rural / city/urban
Poverty / wealth
Communality / individualism
Morality / vice

Are these themes relevant to them as young South African Indians? (pick up on reasons given for why they watch Hindi movies). These themes are also a part of the public political discourse on South African society. Do they think that Hindi movies have any relevance for South Africa? How do these binaries speak to them as modern subjects in a state of cultural transition?

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