

"This is inappropriate! I'm your daughter, not your friend!":  
South Asian American Daughters' Roles as Reluctant Confidant  
and Parental Mediator in Emerging Adult Child-Parent Relationships

by

Geeta Khurana Nemmers

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved November 2012 by the  
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Janet K. Alberts, Chair  
Benjamin Broome  
F. Scott Christopher

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2012

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores South Asian American (SAA) emerging adult daughters' roles as their parents' reluctant confidants and mediators of conflict. Using Petronio's (2002) communication privacy management theory (CPM) as a framework, this dissertation investigates daughters' communicative strategies when engaged in familial roles.

Findings from 15 respondent interviews with SAA women between the ages of 18 and 29 reveal daughters' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for role-playing within their families, such as inherent satisfaction and parental expectations, respectively. Additionally, findings highlight daughters' use of coping and thwarting strategies after they become the recipients of their parents' unsolicited private information. Namely, daughters engaged in coping strategies (e.g., giving advice) to help their parents manage private information. Likewise, they enacted thwarting strategies (e.g., erecting territorial markers) to restore boundaries after their parents (the disclosers) violated them.

Consequently, serving as parental confidants and mediators contributed to parent-child boundary dissolution and adversely affected daughters' well-being as well as their progression toward adulthood. This study provides theoretical contributions by extending CPM theory regarding reluctant confidants within the contexts of emerging adult child-parent relationships and ethnic minority groups in America. Practically, this study offers emerging adult children insight into how they might renegotiate boundaries when their parents change the relationship by disclosing personal information. Information gleaned from this study provides

SAA emerging adult daughters with an understanding of the ramifications of prioritizing their familial roles and being a reluctant confidant, in addition to potential avenues for remediation.

## DEDICATION

To the second generation of South Asian American daughters. Thank you to all of my participants who have graciously donated their time to serve as interviewees. I am forever grateful that you shared aspects of your life with me. There would be no dissertation without your presence, and there would be no understanding of second-generation South Asian American daughters without your voices. Thank you for those voices, and I am honored to be in such a fantastic cohort of women who are so incredibly giving.

To my parents and sister: Darcy said it best: “Surely, you must know that I did all this for you.” I hope I have made you proud. I set out on this journey of communication -- especially communication in South Asian American families -- with the desire to improve *our* lives and relationships. I smile when typing this because I know that we have grown much closer these past years. We have gone from involuntary family members to treasured friends. Thank you for encouraging me and supporting me even if you did not always know what I was doing.

To Max: I am grateful to have you in my life. Your optimism combated my negativity, your positivity encouraged my productivity, and your patience allowed me to put things into perspective. Thank you for being my best friend and that voice inside my head that keeps me going. I am the lucky one, my dear. I know that being married to a graduate student is not the easiest thing, but your love and support never wavered. On the contrary, you always went out of your way to try to make my life easier.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Dr. Alberts: You have been absolutely fantastic. I will never be able to express my gratitude for all that you have done for me personally and professionally. Your guidance, support, and reassuring smiles have meant so much to me. I remember in my frustration during comprehensive exams when I wrote an email to you saying, "*I understand now why people choose to quit the program. I'm praying I don't wake up one day, decide to just drive back to California, and stay there indefinitely.*" You responded by saying, "*If you start to feel like heading to California, please call me (first – not when you are headed out of town!).*" I am at this finish line because of you. You, my amazing advisor, mean so very much to me.

To Dr. Broome: You are my Yoda. You remind me to slow down and to be aware of myself and my surroundings. That lesson is something that will grow in appreciation. Four years ago, you gave me the freedom to find my interest in facilitation within South Asian American families. You helped me to understand the difference between communication and dialogue. Every time I come across an astrology-related article or if the moon is particularly breath-taking, I shall think of you. I will also make a conscious effort to experience nature and be present in my surroundings.

To Dr. Christopher: Thank you for being my Defibrillator. When I was on the verge of hysterics, you helped jumpstart me back into reality with inspiration and a purpose. Your class taught me to be a better student and teacher and for that, I am grateful. You taught me to expect more of myself and that quantity in

college does not overtake the quality that a person should produce. Any time I hear a hearty laugh or if a bird flies close to me, I shall think of you. And I shall contact you if I ever have an intervention for my obsessive note-taking.

To my FIFI girls Kristin and Shawna: I love you . . . for reasons. You are the reason I did not just throw my hands up in the air and drive to California to manage a Subway. Kristin -- every smirk, sarcastic remark, hyperlink, emoticon, word of encouragement, and verbal slap to knock some sense into me when I was being hysterical has been appreciated. Shawna -- I am grateful for your copy editing magic, your affinity for donuts, your unwavering assistance, and our shared dream of being domestic goddesses. Online and offline, I treasure us. You two are the reason I am able to look back fondly on my time in Arizona. Thank you for being there in the classroom, in a chatbox on my monitor, at my wedding(s), and in my life.

To my second set of parents: Thank you for taking care of me while I was in Arizona and away from my own family. You warmly welcomed me into your family and you treated me like your daughter even before I was your daughter-in-law. You were there for my highs and lows making sure that I had hugs, care packages, nutritious meals, and a never-ending supply of parental love.

To Dr. Geeta Khurana Nemmers: Let this document serve as a reminder that it always seems impossible until it is done. You probably do not remember the madness attached to this project or the plea-bargains you tried to initiate to make it all stop. This self-inflicted thing that your past self did. And for that selective amnesia, I am thankful.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Preview of Dissertation .....	5
2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	7
Intergenerational Relationships.....	7
The Parent-Emerging Adult Child Context .....	9
South Asian Culture.....	14
Summary .....	18
3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: COMMUNICATION PRIVACY	
MANAGEMENT.....	19
CPM Principles: Assumption Maxims.....	21
Cultural Criteria .....	22
Family relational culture .....	23
Family communication patterns.....	24
Family privacy boundary orientation .....	27
CPM and Reluctant Confidants.....	28
CPM Principles: Interaction Maxims.....	35
Summary .....	41
4 METHODOLOGY.....	42
Positionality .....	43
Participants.....	44

CHAPTER	Page
Data Collection Procedures .....	46
Recruitment Techniques .....	46
Semi-Structured/Respondent Interviews .....	49
Analytical Procedures .....	51
Summary .....	52
5 INTERPRETATION: DAUGHTERS' FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION .....	53
Daughters' Perceptions of Their Mother-Daughter Relationships ..	54
Conversation-Oriented Communication Patterns .....	54
Conformity-Oriented Communication Patterns.....	58
Daughters' Perceptions of Their Father-Daughter Relationships ....	66
Conversation-Oriented Communication Patterns .....	66
Conformity-Oriented Communication Patterns.....	71
Summary .....	75
6 INTERPRETATION: DAUGHTERS' FAMILIAL ROLES .....	78
Daughters' Role as Reluctant Confidant within the Mother-Daughter Dyad.....	79
Daughters' Roles within the Parents-Child Triad .....	85
Daughters' Roles within their Sibling Relationships .....	93
Summary .....	97
7 INTERPRETATION: DAUGHTERS' EXPLANATIONS FOR ROLE- PLAYING .....	100



CHAPTER	Page
Daughters' Role as Parental Confidant.....	100
Intrinsic Reasons for Daughters' Role as Parental Confidant...	101
Extrinsic Reasons for Daughters' Role as Parental Confidant .	103
Daughters' Role as Parental Mediator.....	105
Intrinsic Reasons for Daughters' Role as Parental Mediator....	106
Extrinsic Reasons for Daughters' Role as Parental Mediator...	108
Summary .....	113
<b>8 INTERPRETATION: DAUGHTERS' COMMUNICATION</b>	
<b>STRATEGIES DURING ROLE ENACTMENT .....</b>	<b>115</b>
Daughters' Coping Strategies .....	116
Providing Comfort and Support .....	117
Giving Advice.....	123
Daughters' Thwarting Strategies .....	125
Erecting Territorial Markers.....	125
Indicating Discomfort of Embarrassment .....	130
Blending Coping and Thwarting Strategies.....	131
Establishing Separate Parental Relationships .....	131
Summary .....	134
<b>9 INTERPRETATIONS: DAUGHTERS AFFECTED BY ROLE-</b>	
<b>PLAYING .....</b>	<b>135</b>
Daughters' Individualism-Related Characteristics of Adulthood..	136

CHAPTER	Page
Daughters' Interdependence-Related Characteristics of Adulthood.....	137
Prioritization of Parents' Emotional Well-Being .....	138
Daughters' Role Transition-Related Characteristics of Adulthood.....	144
Completing Education .....	145
Establishing Career .....	147
Getting Married.....	149
Summary .....	159
<b>10 CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS.....</b>	<b>161</b>
Summary of Dissertation Findings.....	161
Daughters' Familial Relationships and Communication .....	161
Daughters' Familial Roles .....	163
Daughters' Explanations for Role-Playing.....	165
Daughters' Communication Strategies During Role Enactment .....	167
Daughters Affected by Role-Playing .....	169
Theoretical Contributions: Extending Research on Reluctant Confidants .....	170
Emerging Adult-Child Parent Relationships .....	171
Ethnic Minority Groups.....	173

	Page
Practical Contributions .....	175
Limitations and Future Directions.....	177
References .....	183
 APPENDIX	
A INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL .....	200
B INFORMATION LETTER.....	202
C CONTACT LETTER .....	205
D INTERVIEW GUIDE .....	207
E PARTICIPANT INFORMATION .....	209

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

I feel like your parents should be your parents . . . I think between the two of my parents, my dad is the one I'm more connected to as a friend. But, if he talks to me in that type of friendship tone about his relationship with my mom, I just don't want to hear it. I just don't want to know what's going on between them.

-- Layla discussing her role as a reluctant confidant

I don't like being put in the middle especially with my parents and I don't always know if I'm doing it right . . . because I'm 21 and not exactly experienced at mediating conflicts. It's kind of weird to come in between both of my parents.

-- Zahra discussing her role as a parental mediator

Within interpersonal relationships, individuals grapple with managing their privacy by creating boundaries to grant or deny others' access to private information (Caughlin & Petronio, 2004; Petronio, 2000a, 2002, 2006, 2010; Petronio & Durham, 2008). Believing that they are the sole owners of their private information, individuals seek to regulate the concealment or revelation of that information. Depending on their objective, individuals choose to conceal information to protect themselves and/or others. They also choose to reveal information with the intention of co-owning that private information with others. Communication scholars have addressed various questions involving why people manage their privacy, how individuals choose whom to disclose their information,

and under what conditions individuals enact boundaries to ensure that only some individuals are privy to their information. Understanding individuals' engagement in privacy management allows scholars to develop a theoretical framework that assists individuals in discerning "different ways to coordinate privacy boundaries, redefine privacy rules, and make choices about third party disclosures" (Petronio, 2007, p. 221) to manage privacy and disclosure such that they can maintain a sense of self and their relationships with others.

Petronio's (2002) communication privacy management theory (CPM) is one such theoretical framework, which argues that individuals face the dilemma of revealing or concealing private information that they own or co-own. Unlike public information, private information is not readily accessible to others; individuals grant access by sharing that information with others (Petronio, 2002). An individual who reveals private information risks relational consequences (e.g., hurting another person's feelings; embarrassing one's self or others) and concealing private information could lead to distress (Vangelisti, Caughlin, & Timmerman, 2001).

In an effort to balance their needs to share information and to minimize the negative effect of sharing it, individuals erect boundaries to control such information and manage which information they want to keep or share depending on their motivations, the qualities of the other person(s), and various conditional factors such as the context and their family-of-origin's view of privacy. Controlling and managing information by erecting boundaries in interpersonal relationships can be especially difficult if those relationships are among family

members, such as parents and emerging adult children (Hammonds, 2009; Petronio, 2010).

Much of the research regarding emerging adulthood and privacy management has focused on children's desire to reveal or conceal information from their parents as the children move towards individuation and seek to differentiate themselves from their parents (e.g., Hammonds, 2009). In particular, Mazur and Hubbard (2004) discussed how children experience a desire for individuation as they become older, so they refrain from disclosing personal information to their parents. Other scholars (Derlega, Winstead, Greene, Serovich, & Elwood, 2002, 2004; Petronio, Reeder, Hecht, & Ros-Mendoza, 1996) also have focused on children's desire to withhold information from their parents for various reasons (e.g., stigma and negative perception). However, studies have not focused on how those emerging adult children become, instead, the recipients of their parents' disclosures and how they subsequently must renegotiate the communication boundaries in this relationship. Moreover, studies have not focused on emerging adulthood and privacy management within a minority context to understand the additional cultural and familial considerations that can affect privacy management.

To further the research regarding boundary management and renegotiation within the parent-child relationship, in the present study, I address the following question: How do South Asian American (SAA) emerging adult daughters manage their boundaries with their parents once their parents disclose unsolicited information that the daughters perceive as private and/or unwanted? Focusing on

SAA emerging adult daughters is of particular interest for this study because daughters' renegotiation of boundaries with their parents within this context can cause additional stress as daughters undertake two new roles: their parents' confidant and an autonomous emerging adult.

The primary purpose of this study is to understand how parents' private disclosures affect their emerging adult daughters' communicative behaviors within familial and non-familial relationships. To accomplish this, I interviewed 15 SAA emerging adult daughters to understand their relationships and communication with their parents. Researching this area is fruitful because it expands scholars' understanding of communication privacy management within families. Exploring how emerging adult children serve as recipients of their parents' disclosures contributes to previous research regarding children who serve as recipients of their divorced and non-divorced parents' disclosures (Koerner, Wallace, Lehman, Lee, & Escalante, 2004; McManus & Donovan, 2012). Additionally, delving into the context of minority emerging adulthood is valuable because it expands current research regarding children's communication behaviors as recipients of unwanted disclosures that historically has focused on the behaviors of white U. S. Americans.

From a practical standpoint, this study provides emerging adult children with insight into how they might renegotiate their boundaries once their parents attempt to change the relationship by disclosing personal information. More specifically, insight gleaned from this study provides SAA emerging adult

daughters (and others) with an understanding of the ramifications of being a reluctant confidant as well as potential avenues for remediation.

Exploring this research topic advances theoretical understanding of communication privacy management and provides additional insight into emerging adulthood within minority populations. Specifically, identifying the topics respondents believe to be unwanted allows a comparison of their responses to previous studies regarding taboo topics (i.e., disparaging comments about another parent) (e.g., Roloff & Ifert, 2000). Moreover, the study explores how a daughter's role as a reluctant confidant affects her communication within her familial relationships (e.g., parents, siblings) and non-familial relationships (e.g., romantic relationships). Thus, engaging in interviews with SAA emerging adult daughters provides insight into an area of research that is worthy of investigation due to its practical and theoretical contributions, and its ability to extend previous research.

### **Preview of Dissertation**

First, this dissertation provides a review of literature pertaining to intergenerational relationships, parent-emerging adult relationships, and SAA culture. Second, I discuss the study's theoretical framework, Petronio's communication privacy management (CPM), and propose five specific research questions regarding SAA emerging adult daughters' relationships and roles within their families. Third, I provide an overview of the research methods used to explore the study's research questions. Also within this section, I describe my research design and explain how a qualitative study of SAA emerging adult



daughters contributes to communication studies. Fourth, I present five chapters of theoretical interpretations based on interviewees' responses, which address the study's research questions. Finally, I offer conclusions, contributions, and potential areas for future research.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following section, I discuss intergenerational relationships, focusing specifically on the context of parent-emerging adult child relationships.

Subsequently, I provide a brief overview of South Asian culture as it relates to the topic at hand. Because individuals of South Asian descent who reside in America are participants in this study, I focus primarily on characteristics of second-generation South Asian Americans (SAAs). Furthermore, I explain why second-generation SAA daughters are of particular interest for this study.

#### **Intergenerational Relationships**

Scholars have focused on the complexity of intergenerational relationships across the lifespan (e.g., Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry, & Silverstein, 2002; Birditt, Fingerman, & Zarit, 2010). Whereas many scholars have addressed the conflicts that occur between parents and children during adolescence, other scholars have discussed issues of role-reversal and caregiving between older adult children and their elderly parents (e.g., East, 2010; Roberto & Jarrott, 2008). However, it is also important to understand how the transition periods in life (e.g., adolescence to adulthood) might cause uncertainty, conflict, and stress as individuals within intergenerational relationships renegotiate their boundaries and roles. Recently, scholars have studied the population of children who are engaging in emerging adulthood to explain how that distinct period affects intergenerational relationships (Johnson, Gans, Kerr, & LaValle, 2010). During this time, as children are attempting to transition from adolescence to adulthood, they face the

need to meet the expectations for what it means to be an adult within a society (e.g., leaving their parents' home to begin college) while also managing new responsibilities that arise within their intergenerational relationships (e.g., providing financial support to their parents).

Although scholars have applied communication theories to the study of emerging adulthood (e.g., Hammonds, 2009), only a few studies have focused on emerging adulthood within minority contexts (Syed & Azmitia, 2008) and provided insight into the additional pressures that second-generation emerging adults face when they enact culturally-prescribed roles (Arnett & Galambos, 2003; Phinney, 2006). Arnett (2012) argued that emerging adulthood is a new life stage and that ethnic and cultural considerations need more attention because individuals experience emerging adulthood differently worldwide. For instance, emerging adults in Northern Europe typically leave home "after the completion of secondary school, due to a cultural tradition of establishing independence" (Arnett, 2012, p. 240). However, emerging adults in southern Europe typically "remain in their parents' household until marriage, and cohabitation is still taboo" (Arnett, 2012, p. 240). Cohabitation among emerging adulthood, however, is commonplace in northern Europe. In addition to Europe, Arnett (2012) said that women in South Korea and Japan face strong pressure "to marry by about age 30 in order to be considered fully adult by others" (p. 240). In his discussion of India, Arnett (2012) suggested that further investigation into emerging adulthood in India and other countries is promising and warranted.

This study offers an initial response to Arnett's (2012) call and focuses on the population of emerging adult daughters who are the children of South Asian immigrants. A challenge these individuals face is the need to negotiate their roles as daughter and confidant within their families while attempting to fulfill the role of a female adult in South Asian and American cultures. Specifically, being an adult in American culture might entail the daughter leaving home to pursue college and being financially independent. However, being an adult in South Asian culture might involve staying with family and taking care of them until she is married (Arnett, 2012). Understanding how these individuals negotiate their boundaries sheds light on emerging adulthood within a minority context and suggests the implications these daughters' communicative interactions can have on their relationships, especially their relationship with their parents.

### **The Parent-Emerging Adult Child Context**

Emerging adulthood is the transition period for individuals who are between adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, Kloep, Hendry, & Tanner, 2011). The age range for emerging adulthood varies; however, this study uses the age range of 18 to 29 (Arnett, 2003; Arnett et al., 2011). Arnett (2012) subsequently refined the age group for emerging adulthood as 18 to 24 and young adulthood as 30 to 45. He indicated that the 25 to 29 period is difficult to characterize and can be seen as a transition point into young adulthood. However, he acknowledged that the 18 to 29 range can still be used to characterize emerging adulthood. Arnett (2012) stated that using the 18 to 29 range might be more representative of

industrialized countries (e.g., Asia) outside of the United States whose marrying age is closer to 30 than 25.

Reaching a certain age or getting married does not guarantee that individuals will feel like adults. Arnett et al. (2011) found that Americans in their late teens and early twenties perceived themselves to be adults in some respects, yet not adults in other respects. Their ability to categorize themselves depended on their perceived expectations for adulthood. Scholars (e.g., Shanahan, 2000) have discussed that individuals may perceive themselves as adults once they have reached the following markers of adulthood: leave home, complete university, get married, establish financial independence, and have a child. However, compared to previous generations, individuals today are delaying these milestones by entering into marriage and parenthood later in life (Arnett, 2000). Moreover, many individuals are choosing not to enter those stages at all, valuing self-sufficiency over commitments (Arnett et al., 2011). Thus, individuals might find themselves in a prolonged adolescence due to their lack of desire to attain the suggested milestones for adulthood (e.g., marriage or parenthood) or certain impediments such as postsecondary education lasting longer, which can result in individuals taking a job to pay for educational attainment rather than being in a stable career (Arnett, 2012).

Accordingly, the timeline for adulthood has changed, and this unprecedented delay or incomplete achievement of adulthood markers can affect familial relationships (Arnett, 2012). Furthermore, an important part of the transition to adulthood is role transitions in which individuals' maturation and

psychological well-being are associated with transitioning into the role of spouse, full-time employee, and/or college graduate (Arnett, 1997). However, individuals from early teens to late twenties rarely mentioned role transitions when responding to questions about markers of adulthood (Arnett, 1998; Greene, Wheatley, & Aldava, 1992). Instead, among this group, individualism-related qualities of character such as accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and financial independence were rated as higher criteria for achieving adulthood (Arnett, 1998, 2003).

Furthermore, most emerging adult children restructure their boundaries during this transition as their demands for autonomy and individuation grow stronger. For this reason, the relationship between emerging adult children and their parents is of particular interest as privacy boundaries are redrawn, which causes tension within the parent-child relationship. Previously, scholars (e.g., Mazur & Hubbard, 2004) have focused on how emerging adult children manage their privacy and how they might engage in more topic avoidance as they move toward independence. Other scholars (e.g., Kloep & Hendry, 2010) have focused on how parents perceive their relationship with their emerging adult children and parents' difficulties in letting their children become independent adults. However, studies have not focused on other perspectives such as how emerging adult children attempt to separate from their families, and how they may find this process difficult, especially if their parents make them a reluctant confidant. Such interactions could make it difficult for these children to perceive themselves as adults because their interactions with their parents effectively keep their role as

children in the forefront. Arnett (1997) argued that establishing a relationship with parents as an equal adult serves as one criterion that signifies adulthood; however, when parents interfere with this process, the transition to adulthood can be incomplete or delayed (Aquilino, 2006).

Certainly, individuals' perceptions of equality and individualism reflect their cultural perspectives. For this reason, scholars (e.g., Phinney, 2006) believe that it is useful to explore children's transition into adulthood in minority cultures within American society. Specifically, participants in previous studies were situated in the American majority culture (Arnett, 2003). However, because individuals from minority backgrounds face challenges above and beyond those of their American peers (Arnett & Galambos, 2003), it is fruitful to explore the cultural considerations of emerging adulthood in non-dominant U. S. American cultures. Indeed, Arnett (2003) found that emerging adults in American ethnic minority groups supported criteria for adulthood reflecting individualism (e.g., accepting responsibility for one's self and being self-sufficient) like their White American peers. They both rated role transitions (e.g., marriage) as being less salient of a criterion for adulthood compared to independence-related criteria. However, unlike their White American peers, they also embraced criteria for adulthood representing interdependence (e.g., fulfilling family roles and taking care of their families) which reflect cultural values of familial obligations and concern for others (East, 2010).

Emerging adulthood is not universally perceived across cultures (Badger, Nelson, & Barry, 2006). Indeed, postponing the transition to adulthood is

encouraged in highly industrialized countries (e.g., United States), because these populations stress education, training, and delaying marriage and parenthood until after one's schooling is finished (Arnett, 2000). However, in economically developing countries (e.g., India) it is important to focus on the distinctions between rural and urban populations. Rural populations receive minimal schooling and are exposed to a small range of occupational opportunities. They are also expected to marry earlier, and to earn money for the family's survival. Accordingly, there is the expectation that they will have a shorter transition into adulthood. However, younger, urban populations in developing countries feel the effects of globalization and the need for higher education to satisfy the requirements of their preferred occupations. As a result, they are granted a longer transition period into adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Considering how emerging adulthood is enacted in various cultures provides a context for understanding the added tension that individuals might face due to their parents' and their own cultural adherence.

Moreover, it is especially fruitful to explore emerging adulthood among second-generation individuals who are bicultural and experience different standards for each culture. In his discussion of individuals from ethnic minority groups, Arnett (2003) indicated that they have "a bicultural conception of the transition to adulthood, combining the individualistic transitions of the majority culture with a greater emphasis on obligations toward others drawn from the values of their ethnic minority cultures" (p. 74). As such, I present a brief



discussion of South Asian culture to demonstrate the added pressure that SAA emerging adult daughters experience.

### **South Asian Culture**

South Asian culture is often described as a collectivistic culture that stresses the importance of familial relationships (Dugsin, 2001; Purkayastha, 2005). South Asians have high levels of educational attainment, marital rates, and high-skill occupations in the labor force (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, 2009). The first generation of South Asians who migrated to the United States in the 1960s and 1970s typically had arranged marriages in which their families played important roles in the mate selection process (Manohar, 2008; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Their children are the first generation of South Asians to have been reared in a culture that differs from their parents. Consequently, this generation is strikingly different from the generation before it having been raised in a culture in which dating, choosing less-skilled occupations, delaying marriage, engaging in interethnic romantic relationships, and not having children are viable options.

Because of these differences, children of post-1965 immigrants must negotiate conflicting values of “Americanness” and South “Asianness.” In addition, parents and children often have conflicting views on what it means to be American and South Asian (Purkayastha, 2005). As a result, children create a third space for themselves (Khan, 1998) by blending their American culture (first space) and South Asian culture (second space) to create a South Asian American culture (third space). It is in this space that they develop their identity and merge

portions of cultures to form something new. For instance, they might blend the American concept of dating and the South Asian concept of arranged marriages to form semi-arranged or assisted marriages in which they allow their parents to choose potential mates for them, yet the children are able to court their potential spouses and ultimately make the selection. Scholars' (e.g., Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002; Salam, 2010) studies of how second-generation SAAs manage assimilation, acculturation, and identity development as they attempt to become members of both cultures reveal that these individuals find themselves in a double bind. On the one hand, they are exposed to Western (e.g., American) culture's primary emphasis on individuality, and on the other, they experience pressure from South Asian communities to adhere to traditional values (Gupta, 1999) such as not dating, being obedient to parents' wishes, and maintaining relationships with immediate and extended family members (Dasgupta, 1998).

Second-generation individuals who were raised in the United States experience intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergenerational tensions as they attempt to fulfill cultural expectations and manage conflicting cultural values (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998; Salam, 2010). The second-generation can actually be broken up into two generations: the 1.5 generation (Kim, Brenner, Liang & Asay, 2003) and the second generation. The 1.5 generation refers to individuals who immigrated to a new country when they were young (i.e., before their early teenage years). The second generation involves individuals who were born and raised in the new country. It is useful to make this distinction because the 1.5 generation is more likely to identify more strongly with their native cultural

values and which can result in additional problems embracing the new culture. Thus, sibling conflict can occur if second-generation children decide to engage in behaviors that are more befitting of their surrounding culture (e.g., conversing openly with parents about marital problems) whereas the 1.5-generation siblings believes that children should not get involved and that parents should not reveal their private information.

In addition to generational differences, gender differences emerge as parents view their second-generation daughters as the keepers of South Asian culture who are responsible for maintaining South Asian values and traditions. Therefore, daughters are monitored more strictly than sons (Dasgupta, 1998). Indeed, Dasgupta suggested that the gender imbalance regarding expectations reaches its climax as the daughters approach adulthood. Within SAA families, daughters and sons often experience differing levels of pressure due to distinct parental expectations (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Specifically, parents might be more lenient regarding their sons' attainment of marriage than they are for their daughters. An expectation also might exist that daughters need to maintain familial ties and provide care to the family by being a kinkeeper (Brown & DeRycke, 2010; Gerstel & Gallagher, 1993; Leach & Braithwaite, 1996; Rosenthal, 1985; Treas & Mazumdar, 2004), whereas sons have more freedom to venture into the world to fulfill educational and career aspirations (Salam, 2010). The pressure for women to marry and have children at a younger age might mean that daughters are expected to reach adulthood at a faster rate than their male counterparts. If parents disapprove of daughters' lifestyles (e.g., dating a non-

South Asian) yet still expect them to fulfill the role of kinkeeper, tension can occur as boundaries and roles are negotiated.

Studying this second-generation provides insight into how these individuals mediate intergenerational conflict and renegotiate privacy boundaries (Replogle, 2005). Additionally, Portes and MacLeod (1999) suggested that it was important to study immigrant second-generation children because that generation often predicts the long-term success of the group depending on their ability to assimilate and adjust to their cultural surroundings. Indeed, first and second generations have differing levels of assimilation and acculturation; the second generation is more assimilated than the immigrant one (Replogle, 2005). For instance, children typically guide themselves in American culture without using their parents as a template. Presently, these children are at (or past) the ages that their parents were when they entered marriage, parenthood, and the United States.

Thus, parents might make comparisons between their status at the same age and their children without taking into account the bicultural nature of their children and the general delay in adult milestones in the United States. Replogle (2005) stated that "a key source of conflict among first- and second-generation South Asian women is often the duty to family versus the need or desire for independence" (p. 24). Parents who do not treat their children as emerging adults who desire independence might unintentionally violate the child's privacy boundaries and cause conflict. If those parents believe that their children must place the family's needs over individual needs, they might contribute to their

children's delay or incomplete transitions to adulthood in addition to parent-emerging adult child conflict.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented information on the intergenerational relationship of parent-emerging adult child. Subsequently, I provided a brief overview on South Asian culture and explained why second-generation SAA emerging adult daughters were of particular interest for this study. Within the chapter, I discussed the need for exploration of emerging adulthood among minority cultures within the American population. In the next chapter, I detail the theoretical framework of communication privacy management that I used for this study and propose five research questions that frame this dissertation.

## Chapter 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: COMMUNICATION PRIVACY MANAGEMENT

The present study uses the theoretical framework of communication privacy management. This chapter offers a description of the theory, which includes six principles divided into two categories: assumption maxims and interaction maxims. Subsequently, I provide an explanation of types of confidants and delineate the study's five research questions.

Petronio's (2002) communication privacy management (CPM) theory explains the transactional nature of privacy management between disclosers and confidants (Petronio & Caughlin, 2006; Petronio & Durham, 2008). Using the metaphor of boundaries, Petronio examined how individuals manage their private information and the various considerations they take into account when deciding whether to reveal or conceal information. Specifically, these considerations include the context, channels of communication, and characteristics or expectations of the confidant (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Caughlin & Petronio, 2004; Petronio & Reiersen, 2009; Rosenfeld, 2000; Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997).

Communication privacy management has been used to explore numerous contexts. In particular, scholars have used CPM to study family privacy management in stepfamilies (Afifi, 2003), parent-child relationships (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Petronio, 1994), voluntary child-free couples (Durham, 2008; Durham & Braithwaite, 2009), adoptive parents and adopted children (Skinner-Drawz, Wrobel, Grotevant, & Korff, 2011), and parental privacy invasions

(Kanter, Afifi, & Robbins, 2012; Ledbetter et al., 2010). The theory also has been used to explore emerging adult children's renegotiation of their privacy boundaries with their parents as they move toward individuation (Hammonds, 2009). The present study will further extend our understanding of CPM within families by applying it to boundary management among emerging adults in the United States who are the children of immigrants.

Much of the CPM literature that does focus on children's experiences as recipients of their parents' disclosures centers on parents who are divorced (e.g., Afifi, 2003). For instance, scholars have focused on divorced parents' disclosures and children's perceptions regarding whether their parents disclosed too much information (Koerner et al., 2004). Children who serve as their divorced parents' confidant tend to feel like mediators in their parents' relationship (Afifi 2003; Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991). Afifi, Afifi, Morse, and Hamrick (2008), however, argued that such experiences are not relegated only to the children of divorced parents. In fact, non-divorced parents can triangulate their children into their marital conflicts as well, especially if those parents engage in destructive conflict patterns such as verbal aggression or demand/withdrawal patterns (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003). Indeed, children who are exposed to their non-divorced parents' conflict can be more negatively affected in the long run compared to their counterparts whose parents have divorced (Afifi, 2003; Afifi, McManus, Hutchinson, & Baker, 2007; Schrodt & Afifi, 2007).

To understand how daughters are affected by unsolicited disclosures from their non-divorced or divorced parents, it is useful to explore the principles of

CPM. Specifically, CPM features six principles divided into two categories: assumption maxims and interaction maxims (Petronio & Durham, 2008). Subsequently, I explore both categories and criteria that are relevant to this study within each category.

### **CPM Principles: Assumption Maxims**

Three of the CPM assumption maxims refer to individuals' assumptions regarding privacy management (Petronio & Durham, 2008); they include: (a) public-private dialectical tension, (b) conceptualization of private information, and (c) privacy rules. This study does not focus on the first two maxims of public-private tension and the conceptualization of private information because my focus is not on how individuals who experience tension decide whether to keep information public or private. Instead, I am interested in the recipients' responses to violations in privacy rules once they become reluctant confidants. This study, then, focuses on the third assumption involving privacy rules, which are the rules that individuals embrace regarding whether to reveal or conceal private information.

Regarding privacy rules, Petronio (2000a, 2002) suggests that there are four possible criteria that individuals consider in making decisions regarding whether or not to disclose private information: (a) cultural criteria, (b) contextual criteria, (c) gender criteria, and (d) motivational criteria. For the present study, I discuss the first criteria of culture and its subcriteria. The other criteria focus on the context, gender, and motivations of individuals who choose to disclose information. Because I am focusing on recipients for this study, the cultural



condition is the only criterion applicable. Here, it is used to explain the impact of the shared culture of parents who disclose private information and the daughters who serve as recipients of that information.

### **Cultural Criteria**

The cultural criterion examines the influence culture has on individuals' decisions to reveal or conceal private information. Although I am not focusing on whether respondents are choosing to reveal or conceal information, this criterion is essential to understand why recipients believe that their parents should not discuss certain topics or reveal specific information. Beliefs about disclosure typically are based on the family's culture and established rules regarding privacy management. In this case, family culture refers to the one that the family has maintained while the children were younger and dwelling in the parents' household. During their youth, children are socialized into understanding the family's explicit and implicit privacy rules.

Petronio (2002) suggested that individuals' notions of privacy vary by ethnic culture as well as family culture. Consequently, individuals within a particular culture vary in their degree of privacy and how they regulate that privacy. For instance, people who adhere to the norms of individualistic cultures (e.g., United States) tend to value privacy and perceive private information as a tangible possession that individuals can own (Benn & Gaus, 1983). Conversely, individuals who adhere to the norms of collectivistic cultures focus on the communal nature of privacy and have more implicit rules regarding ownership of boundaries and information (Roberts & Gregor, 1971). Altman (1977) provided

an example of an individual's door to indicate cultural regulations involving privacy. Individuals from Western cultures might close their doors to indicate that they request and expect privacy. However, individuals adhering to other cultures (e.g., Javanese) do not have individual doors or even fences around their homes, so outsiders are free to wander into rooms unannounced, thus displaying a low level of individual privacy. To further understand how families regulate privacy, below I discuss the sub-criterion of culture involving the family's relational culture.

**Family relational culture.** Petronio (2002) suggests that children understand the meaning of privacy, how to control private information, and the consequences of disclosing private information through their family experiences. As a result, children engage in family privacy rule socialization to instruct them in privacy management (Petronio, 2002; Petronio & Durham, 2008; Vangelisti et al., 2001). As such, children's preferences for privacy management within and outside of the family are influenced by how their families-of-origin established the climate for revealing and disclosing private information (Morr, 2002; Petronio, 2002; Vangelisti et al., 2001). Because children's learned ways of managing private information are carried over into their adult relationships with parents and others, it is valuable to examine individuals' family communication patterns and environments as well as family privacy boundary orientation.

***Family communication patterns.*** Exploring family communication patterns allows scholars to identify a family's relational culture (Petronio, 2002). Ritchie and Fitzpatrick's (1990) revised family communication patterns scale

features two general orientations: conformity and conversation. The conformity orientation involves parents' desires for their children to conform to their expectations and wishes (Koerner & Cvancara, 2002). In terms of privacy, individuals with a conformity orientation are more likely to refrain from sharing private information because they believe that such a disclosure will result in confrontation (Afifi & Olson, 2005).

Conversation orientation, on the other hand, is illustrated by the family stressing the diversity of attitudes, individuality, and unconstrained communication (Schrodt, Witt, & Messersmith, 2008; Zhang, 2007). Within the conversation orientation, parents encourage their children to be open, and they engage in confirmation by endorsing and acknowledging their children's disclosures. Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) discussed four family types depending on the presence of high or low conformity and conversation: *pluralistic*, *laissez-faire*, *consensual*, and *protective*. A *pluralistic* family (i.e., high conversation and low conformity) features open, unconstrained communication about topics between parents and children (Zhang, 2007). A *laissez-faire* family (i.e., low conversation and low conformity) is characterized by sparse contact between parents and children on selective topics (Zhang, 2007). Indeed, children might conceal particular topics (e.g., dating) because they know that their parents do not approve of that behavior. *Consensual* families (i.e., high conversation and high conformity) feature individuals openly discussing topics, but children still feel pressured to agree with their parents' attitudes (Zhang, 2007). *Protective* (i.e., low conversation and high conformity), the final family type, features children who

feel pressured to agree with their parents and are unable to openly discuss controversial topics with their parents such as interracial dating (Zhang, 2007).

The degree of conformity and conversation present in a family allows scholars to place families in one of these four categories and helps explain people's decision to manage private information. Similar to other scholars (e.g., Hammonds, 2009), I assess family communication patterns as varying degrees of conformity and conversation rather than as four family types. Specifically, I conceptualize degrees of conformity and conversation on continuums with the purpose of understanding daughters' perceptions of their familial roles and relationships. I am interested in using family communication patterns to indicate the family's relational culture rather than focusing on the family's interactions for the purpose of categorization and comparisons among the four patterns. For instance, daughters who perceive their families to subscribe more to the conformity orientation rather than the conversation orientation might be more inclined to control their private information with their parents because they understand that disclosing private information (e.g., their involvement in interracial dating) might have negative consequences. Conversely, daughters who perceive their families to subscribe more to the conversation orientation might feel as though they are able to talk openly with their parents about topics such as dating without feeling pressured to agree with their parents' wishes. Thus, daughters' relationships with their parents are dependent on daughters' perception of conversation (e.g., openness) and conformity (e.g., closedness) regarding information and how individuals should manage their private information.

Understanding communication within South Asian American families is valuable because in addition to explicating how adult children's experiences within their family-of-origin have shaped their communicative behaviors regarding privacy regulation, there are also cultural considerations present. Specifically, SAA daughters have been exposed to Western (e.g., American) culture's primary emphasis on individuality; however, that emphasis conflicts with South Asian culture's value of conforming to tradition (Gupta, 1999) by not dating, being obedient to parents' wishes, and maintaining relationships with immediate and extended family members (Dasgupta, 1998). Thus, openness and individuality befit the conversation orientation, whereas being obedient to parental wishes that run counter to daughters' wishes (e.g., dating) is more illustrative of the conformity orientation. Therefore, it is useful to explore daughters' relationships and communication with their parents because if daughters subscribe to the conversation orientation and want to express their individuality, they might face tension with parents who expect conformity. With the goal to understand how daughters perceive the relational culture of their families and how that perception affects daughters' familial relationships and communication, I ask the following research question:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: How do SAA emerging adult daughters describe their familial relationships and communication?

***Family privacy boundary orientation.*** In addition to family communication patterns, family privacy boundary orientation is a second indicator of family relational culture that allows researchers to understand how

privacy management is created and maintained within the family's relational culture (Caughlin & Petronio, 2004; Morr Serewicz, Dickson, Morrison, & Poole, 2007; Petronio & Caughlin, 2006). Petronio (2002) suggested that families use interior and exterior privacy boundaries to regulate private information. The interior boundary involves private information within the family, whereas the exterior boundary involves private information management to those outside of the family. Families with highly permeable interior privacy boundaries have members who discuss private information frequently and in depth. Conversely, families with impermeable interior privacy boundaries engage in communication avoidance, disclose little private information within the family, and categorize certain topics as taboo.

As they become older, children generally develop their own privacy management standards and move away from adhering to their family-of-origin's privacy orientation (Child, Pearson, & Petronio, 2009; Hawk, Keijsers, Hale, & Meeus, 2009). For example, newlyweds who began their own families experienced tension if one spouse had been socialized in the low-permeable boundary family while the other spouse had a more permeable boundary (Morr, 2002). As did Hammonds (2009), I assess the nature of families' interior boundary orientation to understand their relational culture and how they manage shared information as a result.

### **CPM and Reluctant Confidants**

One of the hallmarks of CPM is that it focuses not only on the individuals who grapple with disclosing and keeping private information, but also the

recipients of private information. Individuals who are the recipients of disclosures become co-owners of the information and must negotiate any rules regarding further disclosure to third parties (Petronio, 2004). Regarding the recipients of disclosure, Petronio (2002) stated that three types of confidants exist: deliberate, inferential, and reluctant.

The deliberate confidant solicits disclosure, such as a therapist would with a client. The inferential confidant can solicit or not solicit disclosure; however, being the recipient of a disclosure is an expectation of the relationship, such as marital couples. Finally, the reluctant confidant does not expect or desire to be the recipient of someone's private information. Petronio (2002) suggested that reluctant confidants do not solicit disclosive information; however, their boundaries involuntarily become linked to that of the discloser's. Scholars have typically explored reluctant confidants within impersonal relationships such as acquaintances or strangers who typically provide a service (e.g., bartenders, hairdressers) (Petronio, 2000b; Petronio & Jones, 2006). However, studies regarding reluctant confidants within interpersonal or family contexts have been few (McBride & Bergen, 2008). Understanding how unsolicited disclosures affect confidants and their familial relationships is useful because it provides insight into the dilemmas that family members face and the potential ramifications of serving as a confidant (Petronio, 2000b).

Acting as a reluctant confidant can pose a dilemma within the family because individuals are torn between protecting a family member's private disclosure and violating that family member's privacy by acting on that

information (e.g., telling another family member) (Petronio, 2010; Petronio, Jones, & Morr, 2003). Indeed, individuals who become recipients of a family member's private disclosure struggle with maintaining their own personal privacy boundaries while preserving family relationships. Such a situation is especially apparent when divorced parents turn to their children for support. Wright and Maxwell (1991) found that divorced parents who wanted social support approached their adult children differently; they sought socioemotional aid (e.g., affection and understanding) from their daughters and instrumental aid (e.g., information and financial aid) from their sons. Daughters who served as the recipients of their parents' divorce-related issues were perceived as being more emotionally supportive to their post-divorce parents than sons (Wright & Maxwell, 1991). Moreover, parents believed that their unmarried daughters had fewer responsibilities compared to their married counterparts, so they were able to be of more assistance to their parents. Daughters even felt that their parents expected them to provide support, which can affect daughters' ability to preserve family relationships and autonomy by maintaining their own boundaries (Thorson, 2009).

Ramifications for reluctant confidants vary, depending on whether they reject the imposed role or whether they actively seek to execute the role of confidant that others expect of them (Petronio, 2000b). As a result, the ramifications that confidants experience depend on how they perceive and approach the undesired role (Petronio, 2000b). For instance, some individuals feel qualified to play the confidant role believing that they are prepared to meet the



demands. Others, however, do not feel prepared for the role of confidant and, as a result, experience negative ramifications such as distress or the feeling of inadequacy at being unable to provide support.

Accordingly, daughters find themselves playing additional roles once their parents place them in the role of reluctant confidant. For instance, if daughters feel they are expected to provide emotional support to their parents, they could feel as though they were taking on the role of friend, instead of child. Moreover, daughters can take on additional roles such as mediator or peacemaker if their parents disclose marital frustrations and expect daughters to act on those disclosures. To further understand daughters' enactment of particular roles (e.g., friend or mediator), it is useful to understand why daughters take on specific roles. For example, daughters can play the role of mediator if they feel as though their parents expect them to act on parental disclosures by helping to alleviate marital conflict (Afifi, 2003). Daughters can also perform the role of friend if their parents explicitly ask the daughters for their assistance and support. Furthermore, daughters might take on certain roles (e.g., mother's friend or peacekeeper within the family) because they would feel guilty if they did not try to help their parents. As a result, the roles that daughters play and the reasoning for performing those roles in their families are intertwined.

It is important to explore daughters' roles and motivations for performing them because those roles (e.g., friend or mediator) are optional. Indeed, those roles only become apparent once parents place their daughters in the role of confidant by sharing unsolicited information. This investigation provides insight

into the daughters' own expectations for role-playing in addition to their perceptions regarding their parents' expectations for those roles. The roles and reasoning provide scholars with an understanding of how emerging adult children's approaches to roles within their families might cause a dilemma as daughters attempt to preserve their family relationships once their own boundaries have been violated.

As mentioned previously, parents monitor their daughters more strictly than sons in South Asian culture (Dasgupta, 1998), and they have different expectations for their daughters (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Specifically, there is the expectation that daughters need to maintain familial ties and provide care to the family by playing the role of kinkeeper (Brown & DeRycke, 2010; Treas & Mazumdar, 2004), whereas sons have more freedom to venture into the world to fulfill educational and career aspirations (Salam, 2010). Thus, daughters might feel as though they must play the role of kinkeeper or caregiver because that is what their parents expect them to do. Conversely, daughters might play such roles simply of their own accord. However, as research is unclear about the motivations for these role performances, further exploration is necessary to understand how daughters' enactment of roles is affected by their expectations and others' expectations. As such, I pose the following research questions:

RQ<sub>2</sub>: What roles do SAA emerging adult daughters play within their families?

RQ<sub>3</sub>: What explanations do SAA emerging adult daughters offer for why they play particular roles within their familial relationships?

Addressing the aforementioned questions will provide additional insight into the roles that emerging adult daughters play in their families and the reasons for playing particular roles. However, it is not enough to know why daughters play particular roles; understanding how they respond to parental disclosures and subsequent placement into the role of confidant is also important (Koerner et al., 2004). Specifically, identifying daughters' communicative responses to particular roles will contribute to knowledge regarding reluctant confidants' communicative behaviors by providing insight into this behavior in familial contexts. Current research has focused primarily on disclosers and receivers in friendships or impersonal contexts (e.g., Kennedy-Lightsey, Martin, Thompson, Himes, Clingerman, 2012).

Within the friendship context, McBride and Bergen (2008) found that reluctant confidants used eight communicative behaviors after a close friend disclosed personal information to them: (a) changing the topic/stopping the conversation, (b) indicating that they did not want to hear this private information, (c) laughing, (d) not doing/saying anything, (e) expressing disapproval (f) questioning, (g) providing comfort/support, and (h) giving advice. The first five behaviors can be classified as thwarting strategies and the last three behaviors are illustrative of coping strategies (Petronio, 2000b). Knowing these friend behaviors is applicable to familial contexts because they both reflect interpersonal relationships.

First, thwarting strategies involve reluctant confidants attempting to protect themselves by minimizing unwanted disclosure. Burgoon et al. (1989)

discussed individuals' use of methods to restore boundaries after a privacy violation such as the following: (a) confrontation (e.g., erecting territorial markers by saying “I don’t want to hear about that”), (b) distancing behaviors, (c) switching the topic, and (d) interaction control (e.g., indicating embarrassment or discomfort). The researchers found that service people (e.g., manicurists, bartenders) and other acquaintances often enacted these thwarting behaviors when confronted with unsolicited information (Petronio, 2000b).

Second, coping strategies describe reluctant confidants’ attempts to help the discloser cope with the information and includes questioning, providing comfort or support, and giving advice. In this instance, reluctant confidants do not solicit the information; however, now that they are co-owners of the information, they attempt to help the discloser. These strategies are more apparent in interpersonal contexts such as friendships rather than impersonal contexts (McBride & Bergen, 2008). Within interpersonal contexts, the reluctant confidant might be more inclined to engage in coping strategies to maintain the friendship rather than engage in thwarting behaviors, which can indirectly communicate a lack of support and inflict pain on the discloser.

Regardless of the interpersonal or impersonal context, in some cases a confidant might not know how to respond to the information. For instance, McManus and Nussbaum (2011a) found that divorcing parents disclosed private information to their children in more indirect and implicit means by engaging in strategic ambiguity. Typically, parents only revealed partial information, which left the child confidant to assign meaning to the cryptic disclosure. This action

resulted in the child confidant not knowing how the parent discloser meant for the information to be interpreted and further, what the child should do with it. Related to the present study, even if SAA daughters know what is expected of them (e.g., providing advice or comfort to their parents), daughters who are placed in the role of reluctant confidant might feel more comfortable engaging in the *impersonal* strategies of thwarting behaviors rather than the *interpersonal* strategies of coping behaviors. Such behavior might be apparent if daughters perceive that their family relational culture is more illustrative of conformity (e.g., topic avoidance) rather than conversation (e.g., openness). Accordingly, daughters' responses to their parents' disclosures can affect the parent-child relationship if the daughter does not engage in the particular coping behavior (e.g., giving advice) that the parents seek and instead engage in thwarting behavior (e.g., distancing herself). Given that recipients' responses can range from thwarting to coping, I ask the following research question:

RQ<sub>4</sub>: What communication strategies do SAA emerging adult daughters use as they enact their familial roles?

This study provides additional insight into the communicative patterns that emerging adults engage in when their parents place them in the role of reluctant confidant. Once an individual is a confidant, whether reluctant or deliberate, the interactions between the discloser and the confidant are affected (Petronio, 2000a). More specifically, when parents disclose unwanted information to their children, breaking previously established boundaries, the need for privacy

renegotiation emerges. Therefore, it is fruitful to explore CPM's interaction maxims involving boundary negotiation.

### **CPM Principles: Interaction Maxims**

In addition to the assumption maxims of privacy rules, cultural conditions, and family relational culture, CPM features interaction maxims, which depict how individuals communicate with one another and negotiate their boundaries when revealing or concealing private information (Petronio & Durham, 2008). These interaction maxims include: (a) shared boundaries, (b) boundary coordination, and (c) boundary turbulence.

The concept of shared boundaries implies that when an individual shares information with another individual, they are both shareholders of that information. As such, they create a mutual boundary around that information and coordinate efforts to protect that boundary. Individuals engage in boundary coordination by negotiating the ownership of private information and the rules for revelation and concealment (Afifi, 2003; Petronio, 2000a). Both individuals become responsible for the shared information because of their boundary linkage, in which the discloser and the recipient form an alliance to protect the information they share. Such coordination can become disrupted and result in boundary turbulence if one of the individuals chooses to disclose private information to someone outside of the boundary.

Boundary turbulence occurs when individuals experience unexpected mishaps in their boundary coordination (Petronio, 2002), for instance, when one partner shares collectively held information to someone outside of the boundary

thus intentionally violating the boundary rules. As a result, the pair must renegotiate the rules (Child et al., 2009; Petronio & Caughlin, 2006), and they may even create new privacy rules (Petronio, 2002). This occurs in types of interpersonal relationships, including spousal dyads. For example, in a study of infertility, Steuber and Solomon (2011) explored privacy boundary turbulence between couples who had discrepancies regarding their disclosures of infertility. Individuals within the dyad co-own the infertility-related information. Discrepancies occurred when one individual wanted to share information with others outside of the dyad to receive support, whereas the other individual wanted to conceal infertility information from others and maintain the dyad's privacy. Such discrepancies resulted in boundary turbulence (e.g. interpersonal conflict) until the partner coordinated their boundary preferences regarding their private information. Thus, boundary turbulence is caused by unclear boundaries or privacy dilemmas about who has the right to know and disclose information (Steuber & Solomon, 2011).

In addition to spousal dyads, parent-child dyads also can feature unclear boundaries and privacy dilemmas that contribute to boundary turbulence. For instance, McManus and Nussbaum (2011b) examined the experiences of divorced parents who shared private information with their children. Parents expressed difficulty in knowing what and how much information to reveal to their children regarding divorce-related stressors (e.g., interparental conflict, their former spouse's negativity, and financial concerns) (Afifi, 2003; Afifi et al., 2007). Although such disclosure helped the parents manage stress (Afifi & Nussbaum,

2006) and cope with their situations (Miller, Smerglia, Gaudet, & Kitson, 1998), children did not always want to be the recipients of sensitive information, especially involving topics of stressors and bitterness toward the child's other parent (Afifi et al., 2007; Afifi & Schrodt, 2003). For instance, parents sometimes engage in inappropriate disclosures to their children regarding their new spouses or their ex-spouses (Afifi, 2003). As a result, children who felt caught between their divorced parents tended to engage in avoidance. Moreover, these children avoided discussing one parent when they were in the presence of their other parent to protect their own boundaries and regulate their own privacy management because those were the only privacy boundaries that they had control over in those situations.

Furthermore, children seek to protect themselves, their parents, and their relationship with their parents (Afifi et al., 2008). As a result, they might refrain from talking about one parent in front of the other or the parents' relationship if they believe that such talk will elicit anger or conflict. Children may even declare such topics as being taboo (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Roloff & Ifert, 1998, 2000) to indicate that they want to avoid topics such as listening to their parents' negative comments about one another. Indeed, children who feel caught between their conflicting parents feel as though they must choose loyalties between parents especially when the parents berate one another in the child's presence (Afifi, 2003; Buchanan et al., 1991). That pressure to choose between parents subsequently affects the child and the child's relationship with each parent.



What makes CPM a valuable theory for the current study is that scholars can gain insight into how disclosure of private information affects the recipient and the recipient's relationship with the discloser. By studying privacy from the recipient's perspective rather than the discloser, communication scholars can focus on the ramifications that occur when individuals become reluctant confidants as a result of unwillingly having their boundaries pushed too far (McBride & Bergen, 2008; Petronio, 2000b).

Recipients engage in a variety of responses once they are reluctant confidants, including feeling burden, privilege, or a combination of both (Afifi, 2003; Petronio & Reiersen, 2009). Although looking at the role of confidant is useful, it is intriguing to add an additional layer of complexity by having the confidant be a family member who might feel obligated to act on the disclosed information (Petronio, Sargent, Andea, Reganis, & Cichocki, 2004). Indeed, Petronio (2010) calls for more research to understand how the recipient is impacted positively, negatively, or both, especially if he or she is a family member who does not solicit or expect the information (Petronio & Jones, 2006).

Disclosure recipients face a dilemma because of their connection with the discloser and the perceived obligation to act on the disclosed information. However, as suggested above, not all disclosures produce negative ramifications. In some instances, parents' communication with their children actually benefitted parent-child relationships (Afifi & McManus, 2010). Although uncomfortable, subsequent discussions could result in a transformation of privacy boundaries within families that have the potential to improve family relational culture.

Conversely, daughters who already feel pressured to be family kinkeepers could experience additional stress in trying to serve as parental mediators after they become the recipient of private disclosures. It is important to understand how serving as confidant affects daughters, their familial relationships, and their non-familial relationships because experiences within the family could spill over into other aspects of their lives. To understand how SAA daughters who become confidants experience their role, the following question is offered:

RQ<sub>5</sub>: How is SAA emerging adult daughters' progression toward adulthood affected by their role-playing within familial relationships?

It is imperative to focus on how boundaries are affected once a family member becomes a reluctant confidant because of the implications it has on boundary dissolution in which clear boundaries between parents and children become blurred. Specifically, parents' inappropriate disclosures potentially result in role reversals where parents treat their child as a peer or as a co-parent (Afifi, 2003; Alexander, Teti, & Anderson, 2000). Additionally, parents can inappropriately rely on family members as mediators or messengers. Clear boundaries allow people to appropriately act and emotionally develop within a given role. However, diffuse boundaries involve confusion of interpersonal roles (Kerig, 2005) and disintegration of appropriate boundaries as parents assign adult-like responsibilities to children that are beyond the realm of the child's capabilities (Shaffer & Egeland, 2011; Shaffer & Sroufe, 2005).

Issues involving boundaries become important to the extent that children feel that their parents are over-stepping boundaries and becoming intrusive in

their lives. Parents may not be able or willing to acknowledge that their emerging adult children are distinct beings. Failure to acknowledge the child's distinctiveness can result in generational boundary dissolution in which the child is unable to develop an autonomous sense of self during the transition period of emerging adulthood. Moreover, parents' intrusion of their own emotional needs into the relationship may hinder their children's emotional development (Shaffer & Sroufe, 2005).

Furthermore, the presence of marital conflict and dissatisfaction increases children's likelihood of being triangulated into their parents' lives (Cummings & Davies, 2002), which can blur the boundaries and roles for the children. Thus, scholars suggest that it is useful to provide attention to boundary dissolution for children who mediate parental disputes or support their parents by listening to their marital problems (Bradford & Barber, 2005; Buchanan et al., 1991).

Specific to the present study, SAA parents who are unhappy in their marriages might turn to their adult daughters and expect them to play the role of friend or confidant. These interactions not only blur the boundaries of parent and child, but can also result in role corruption as the parents expect the child to play a role that is potentially harmful to intergenerational relationships. As such, it is crucial to explore the contexts of SAA emerging adult daughters who are the reluctant confidants because they are the recipients of their parents' unwanted disclosures. Such an interaction affects previously established privacy boundaries and results in the emerging adult child having to renegotiate the boundaries with

her parents as her current familial and non-familial relationships also become affected.

### **Summary**

This chapter reviewed research on communication privacy management and presented its theoretical principles involving assumption maxims and interaction maxims. Additionally, I explored several components of the theory (e.g., cultural criterion, family relational culture, and reluctant confidants). Throughout the chapter, I posed five research questions regarding SAA emerging adult daughters. These questions focused on daughters' relationships, communication, and roles within their families. Additional research questions asked the daughters' motivations for role-playing, their communicative strategies for playing roles, and the influence that such role-playing has on their progression toward adulthood. The next chapter details the methods that I used to address these research questions, in addition to data collection and analysis procedures.

## Chapter 4

### METHODOLOGY

This dissertation uses the theoretical framework of communication privacy management to explore South Asian American emerging adult daughters' communicative behaviors within their familial roles. To undertake such an exploration, I employed the qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews. In this chapter, I discuss my rationalization for a qualitative approach. Subsequently, I provide information regarding my data collection and analysis procedures.

The primary purpose of this study is to understand how being a reluctant confidant affects an emerging adult's communicative behavior within familial and non-familial relationships. To do this, I interviewed 15 SAA emerging adult daughters to understand their experiences as second-generation SAA daughters. I engaged in a qualitative approach in investigating my research questions because it enabled me to gain the desired level of understanding. Specifically, a qualitative approach is essential when a researcher seeks to understand individuals' social realities based on their distinctive experiences (Parker, 2004). In particular, individuals socially construct their realities, and it is useful to explore how they assign meaning to their actions and interactions through in-depth conversation (Flick, 2002; Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). As such, I sought to incorporate participants' views (i.e., insider or emic views) and my theoretical understandings as a researcher (i.e., outsider or etic views) (Onwuegbuzie, Bustamante, &

Nelson, 2010) to understand how SAA emerging adult daughters enacted the role of reluctant confidant within their families.

### **Positionality**

I recognize that as a SAA emerging adult daughter I have my own socially constructed reality based on experiences within my family. Consequently, I served as a subjective participant in the research process when observing, reflecting on communicative processes, and forming interpretations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Recognizing the influence of that subjectivity, I took the stance of a participator rather than an objective, detached researcher (Heshusius, 1994; Morrow, 2007). An interpretive approach enabled me to gain an understanding of daughters' communicative behaviors by conducting interviews in which participants discussed their experiences with a credible researcher who is in a similar position.

Indeed, having participants tell their own stories was useful for this study. As Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggested, discourse is crucial if researchers want to capture participants' interpretations of their social realities. Therefore, I include exact dialogue from the participants (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007) in the subsequent results chapters. Moreover, I acknowledge that ethical implications are inherent in qualitative research because researchers immerse themselves within a population (Bloor & Wood, 2006). For that reason, I developed the researcher-participant relationship based on rapport, trust, and confidentiality. Additionally, I used pseudonyms in the final analysis to ensure confidentiality for my participants. To understand how daughters' role of reluctant confidant affected

their renegotiation of boundaries and their interpersonal relationships, it was important to design a study that included a specific target population through recruitment procedures with the aim of conducting interviews.

### **Participants**

South Asian American emerging adult daughters who fit specific criteria served as participants for this study. To participate, individuals had to fit the primary criteria of being an unmarried SAA emerging adult daughter between the ages of 18 and 29 who has previously been or is currently the recipient of their parents' unwanted or unsolicited disclosures. I selected these criteria because they enabled me to interview participants and receive useful responses that answered my research questions regarding the roles that daughters played in their families, their reasons for playing those roles, their communicative responses to the roles, and how playing those roles have affected their relationships.

First, unmarried daughters were solicited as they experience unique parental pressure and stress that differs from their married counterparts including interference regarding potential suitors, dating behaviors, and decisions about marriage and children. Second, SAA emerging adult daughters include individuals with South Asian ancestry who are either the 1.5 generation or the second generation. These individuals were either born abroad and moved to the United States before their teenage years (i.e., 1.5 generation) or they were born and raised in the United States (i.e., second generation). I chose to include 1.5 and second generation SAA adult daughters because their responses could provide

insight into generational and cultural differences regarding their approach to being a reluctant confidant.

Third, for this study daughters had to be between the ages of 18 and 29. I chose this age group strategically based on Arnett et al.'s (2011) research regarding emerging adulthood and the suggested markers for adulthood. Arnett et al. (2011) suggested that emerging adulthood occurs between the ages of 18 and 29. Thus, eligible participants were those who satisfied the requirements by being classified as unmarried SAA emerging adult daughters who were between the ages of 18 and 29 and were in contact with one or both of their parents.

Lastly, these daughters must have experienced or be currently experiencing interactions with one or both parents that resulted in the daughters feeling that they were the recipients of unwanted disclosure. I understand that perceptions of interactions between the daughters and the parents vary. Indeed, children and parents often have different perceptions of parents' communication (e.g., Afifi et al., 2007; Sillars, Koerner, & Fitzpatrick, 2005). However, the purpose of this study is not to identify who is correct in the situation. Rather, I am focused on the daughter's perceptions of the experience of being a reluctant confidant and how her renegotiation of privacy boundaries affects communication within her relationships.

I was able to attain a variety of SAA emerging adult daughters as participants, which contributed to my desire for multivocality. Multivocality involves the inclusion of varied voices and "multivocality emerges, in part, from the verstehen practice of analyzing social action from the participants' point of



view" (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). Including daughters with differing experiences provided a more holistic understanding of how they engage in role performance based on their experiences. To reach these participants, I engaged in purposive sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling, each of which is discussed in the following section.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Upon receiving institutional review board approval (see Appendix D), I collected data for this study between the months of November 2011 and June 2012. The data resulted in 250 single spaced pages of transcribed audio-recorded interviews from 15 participants. In the section that follows, I discuss the recruitment techniques that I employed in this study.

### **Recruitment Techniques**

Similar to other studies regarding SAA women (e.g., Singh, Hays, Chung, & Watson, 2010), I engaged in purposive sampling procedures to recruit participants who met specific criteria (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Purposive sampling was useful for this study because my goal was to understand how specific individuals (i.e., SAA emerging adult daughters) who met specific criteria (e.g., recipient of parents' disclosure) renegotiated their privacy boundaries. Focusing on this specific population helped me understand their roles from their perspective. To locate participants, I engaged in the recruitment strategies of convenience sampling and snowball sampling.

I engaged in convenience sampling by contacting SAA individuals who served as participants for a previous study regarding second-generation SAA's use

of openness and closedness within their families. That project featured five males and five females. I contacted the five males, sent them my information letter (see Appendix B), and asked them to send it to SAA females who were eligible for this study. Interested individuals who were eligible contacted me directly. Of the five women of the earlier project, only one was eligible to serve as a participant for this study because three women, although single, were over the age of 29 and one woman was married. The remaining woman served as a participant for this project, and I sent the other four women my information letter for them to send to qualified individuals.

Subsequently, I engaged in snowball sampling which involves asking each of the interviewees either to refer other individuals who might qualify for the study or to provide others with my contact information and information letter. It is useful that I contacted members within my social network who served as interviewees for a previous project because I had an established rapport with them. They had shared information with me regarding their family dynamics and how being a reluctant confidant within their families caused them to renegotiate their privacy boundaries. As such, this preliminary understanding allowed me to ask probing questions that were more tailored to their experiences. Snowball sampling was preferred because individuals were more inclined to serve as interviewees if they knew that someone in their social network also served as an interviewee or suggested them for this research (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997; Rankin & Bhopal, 2001). In this instance, the new referrals who served as interviewees recruited others for me as well (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Once the snowball sampling approach stopped offering fruitful avenues to gather participants, I searched online for organizations that target SAA women. SAWNET (South Asian Women's NETwork) was one such organization that I contacted. Specifically, I posted my information letter and contact letter (see Appendix C) on the forum and requested interested individuals to contact me or for individuals to send my information along to qualified and interested individuals. The contact letter was a modified version of the information letter that elaborated on the term *South Asian* after I received feedback from individuals who were not sure if they qualified for the study. As such, I referred to the United Nations website for geographical regions (United Nations Statistics Division, 2011). In the contact letter, I included the following: "For this study, *South Asian* refers to individuals who are of the following ancestry: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka." I recognize that individuals who are a part of South Asian organizations might view their South Asian culture as being salient. However, that salience did not affect the aim of this research because I was interested in understanding SAA emerging adult daughters' role as reluctant confidant, not their ethnic and cultural salience or acculturation levels.

Several studies have taken qualitative approaches through interviewing to understand the social realities of SAA females. In this context, scholars have examined perceptions of teasing, body dissatisfaction, and cultural conflict (Reddy & Crowther, 2007), parental sexual communication (Kim & Ward, 2007), and sexual abuse (Singh et al., 2010). Compelling research has also investigated

topics including widowhood (Weerasinghe & Numer, 2010), illicit drug use (Hunt, Moloney, & Evans, 2010), engagement in sex-selection technologies to produce sons (Puri, Adams, Ivey, & Nachtigall, 2011), and mothers' perceptions of their daughters (Raghavan, Harkness & Super, 2010). This study adds to this growing body of research regarding SAA women and their families; it also uses interviewing as the method for collecting data.

### **Semi-Structured/Respondent Interviews**

I conducted respondent interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) with 15 SAA emerging adult daughters. My goal for each interview was to have a guided conversation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), so interviews involved open-ended questions regarding three major categories: (1) daughters' communication and relationship with their parent(s), (2) daughters' perceptions of their parents' communication, and (3) daughters' perception of adulthood and their non-familial relationships (see Appendix D for the interview guide). The interviews were semi-structured in that I had flexibility in the questions that I asked (Berg, 2007). For instance, when asking about daughters' communication and relationship with their parents, I first asked about the topics that the daughters discussed with their mothers, the topics they did not discuss, and any tensions that they had experienced in that relationship. I then asked similar questions for the father, siblings, and extended family. I engaged in probing questions based on their responses. Although individuals were encouraged to provide details and anecdotes when applicable, I steered the conversation back to the topic if they engaged in peripheral subjects (Brewerton & Millward, 2001).

I gave potential interviewees the option of how they wanted the interview conducted. As such, I conducted one interview in person in an on-campus office and 14 interviews via telephone. The length of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 90 minutes with most of the interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes. Furthermore, I engaged in member checking, or respondent validation, with participants during the interview to add a level of trustworthiness to my study. Specifically, to ensure that I was correctly interpreting my participants' responses and understanding their social reality, I would often paraphrase and summarize their responses and ask for confirmation. Participants then agreed and/or offered additional information to clarify their responses. I chose not to engage in post-interview member checking because "the experience of the interview process itself may have had an impact on their original assessment, or new experiences may have intervened" (Angen, 2000, p. 383).

Although the age range for eligible participation was 18 to 29, daughters who were aged 20 and 29 did not participate in this study. Such a broad range of experiences, and subsequent family dynamics, added to the multivocal account that I was hoping for with this project. Supplemental information regarding the study's participants (e.g., ages, occupations) is presented in Appendix E to provide a context for participants' responses. I recruited participants while simultaneously analyzing the transcribed interviews until I reached the point of saturation in which no new themes emerged from the data (Weerasinghe & Numer, 2010).

## **Analytical Procedures**

I audio recorded and transcribed each interview. Subsequently, I conducted a thematic analysis of the transcribed texts (e.g., interview responses) by open coding interviewees' responses (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). I attend to Charmaz's (2001) assertion that the data do not leap out at the researcher to form ready-made categories. Instead, the categories are a reflection of the observer's interaction with the observed and how the observer's worldview, theoretical frameworks, and research interests influence the creation of particular categories (Charmaz, 2001).

To open code, I located patterns in participants' meanings and words and chunked this information into categories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). This primary coding involved me reading each line of the transcripts to understand what was happening (Charmaz, 2001). Subsequently, I engaged in focused coding by selecting earlier codes that continually reappeared in my initial coding of the data. I used those codes to sift through the various data that I continued to collect (Charmaz, 2001). Focused coding allowed me to hone in on the categories or patterns that I deemed salient based on repetition or intensity (Owen, 1984) and connection to theoretical concepts. Consequently, I revised my codes to see which ones had overriding significance that could be linked together (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Accordingly, I identified patterns in meanings, words, and processes among the respondents and categorized them into themes (Seidman, 2006). Upon categorization of transcribed texts, I was able to locate patterns and themes that addressed my research questions by providing insight into SAA

emerging adult daughters' communication, roles, and relationships within their families.

### **Summary**

The next five chapters explore these themes in detail. Each chapter focuses on the interpretations of one research question and includes theoretical interpretations. In chapter 5, I describe SAA daughters' familial relationships, which include particular topics and tensions. In chapter six, I highlight the roles that daughters play in their familial relationships. In chapter 7, I present daughters' explanations for playing particular roles within their families. In chapter 8, I discuss the daughters' responses to roles that the daughters play within their relationships with their parents. Finally, in chapter 9, I highlight the ways in which daughters feel they are affected by their role-playing within their family and the implications that such role-playing has on their progression toward adulthood. Holistically, these chapters illustrate the complexity of SAA emerging adult daughters' roles within their familial relationships. Moreover, they highlight the daughters' renegotiation of boundaries and communication within their relationships.

## Chapter 5

### INTERPRETATION: DAUGHTERS' FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

In this chapter, I explore South Asian American emerging adult daughters' familial relationships and communication by focusing on daughters' perceptions of their family relational culture. To understand how those perceptions affect daughters' familial relationships and communication, I provide answers to the following research question:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: How do SAA emerging adult daughters describe their familial relationships and communication?

To answer this question, I analyzed daughters' descriptions of their relationships and communication with their parents to ascertain how daughters perceived their family relational culture. Two indicators of family relational culture are family communication patterns (e.g., degree of conversation and conformity) and interior privacy boundary orientation (e.g., extent to which privacy boundaries are permeable). Conversation and conformity describe the degree of openness and closedness, respectively, that exist within a family (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Interior privacy boundary orientation refers to the extent to which participants' families reveal or conceal information (Morr Serewicz et al., 2007; Petronio & Caughlin, 2006).

Participants' responses revealed that their perceptions of parental relationships were influenced by the communication patterns and interior privacy boundary orientation experienced in the family. Specifically, daughters who



indicated having good relationships with their parents said they engaged in openness (i.e., high degree of conversation) and discussed private information (i.e., permeable interior privacy boundary). Conversely, daughters who indicated having difficult or nonexistent relationships with their parents said they engaged in minimal communication and topic avoidance (i.e., high degree of conformity) because they knew their parents would not agree with or understand certain aspects of their private information such as dating (i.e., impermeable privacy boundary). Understanding daughters' communication and relationships with their parents is useful because they affect daughters' performance of particular roles within their family-of-origin. Therefore, I present daughters' communication patterns with their mothers and their fathers to illustrate daughters' perceived family relational culture.

### **Daughters' Perceptions of Their Mother-Daughter Relationships**

When describing their relationships with their mothers, daughters discussed the degree of conversation and conformity they shared as well as discussion topics and taboo topics.

### **Conversation-Oriented Communication Patterns**

Parents who illustrate the conversation-orientation communication pattern encourage their children to be open, and they engage in confirmation by endorsing and acknowledging their children's disclosures (Schrodt, Ledbetter, & Ohrt, 2007). Daughters in this study who perceived their families to subscribe more to the conversation orientation felt they were able to talk openly with their mothers without feeling pressured to conform to their mothers' wishes. They

depicted feeling able to express their opinions freely and receive confirmation, which resulted in daughters' positive perception of the mother-daughter relationship.

Daughters described their mother-daughter relationship as “good,” “open,” or “close” because they featured unconstrained communication about topics (Zhang, 2007). Such a description is representative of the pluralistic family communication pattern that involves high conversation and low conformity. For instance, Maya, 24, said, "I love my mother, and she definitely loves me. And the way she loves me is definitely by . . . providing me with a lot of support socially and taking care of me as one of her daughters." Similarly, Veena, 22, stated that the two women engaged in "very open-minded communication" and recognized its uniqueness because "I don't know how many of my other South Asian Indian friends have that kind of relationship with their mom." Although she indicated that such a close relationship with her mother was atypical because of their open communication, Veena explained that there were still topics that she did not discuss with her mother because her mother believed that certain topics were more appropriate for friendships rather than mother-daughter relationships:

How things with my mom has always been is that “I’m not your friend, I’m your mom” and there’s a really big difference . . . When we talk about other people’s children like if they’re dating, my mom would always say, “You can’t be your kid’s friend. You have to be their parent.”

In Veena's illustration, her mother clearly delineated that being a mother to her daughter was not compatible with being a friend to her daughter. By voicing her

opinion regarding other people's children, Veena's mother had implicitly communicated to Veena that topics such as dating were not ones that she would entertain because she was her mother, not her friend.

Daughters' responses illustrated the dichotomy of having a close relationship with openness even if they lacked conversation regarding particular topics (e.g., dating). For instance, Bhavna, 25, suggested that she was close with her mother, "but I don't tell her a lot of things about my life just because I can feel like she couldn't relate to them." Natasha, 18, said, "I come to her for some things, but . . . if I have any problems I don't really go to her that much. I haven't developed that . . . but we're pretty close." Maya, 24, described her mother-daughter relationship as being "for the most part, good, but it is limited in communication." She did not "really share a whole lot about things" and stated that she had to "think twice before sharing a part of my life with her because she has a range of emotions." One of the parts of her life she could not share was her friends' negative events (e.g., breaking up with their romantic partners). Her mother attributed the cause of those events to the friends not being South Asian, saying, "it's because she's White" and then suggested that her daughter terminate the friendship. Consequently, Maya felt compelled to put a "second layer or second filter on" when sharing information because she recognized the cultural differences between her mother and herself:

Growing up here, we had a heightened experience in terms of interacting equally across the genders and . . . races. Whereas she grew up in India, and it very much differs with how she grew up and what kind of

perspective it took on with her . . . Even though she's lived here for 30 years, it's still different and new, so it's interesting.

Maya's response illustrated how her socialization experiences differed from her mother's experiences. Even though her mother had spent more time in the United States than she did in South Asia, growing up surrounded by South Asian culture explains why those values were more salient to her than the Western culture that had surrounded her more in her adult life (Gudykunst & Lee, 2001; Maiter & George, 2003). As a bicultural individual, Maya negotiated values of their surrounding Western culture (e.g., dating is the cultural norm) and their ancestral culture (e.g., dating is taboo) (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). However, she was mindful that her mother was not accustomed to certain aspects of Western culture (e.g., dating), so she regulated her private information regarding those topics.

Maya's experiences depicted the impermeable interior privacy boundary orientation as illustrated by communication avoidance and disclosing little private information within the family (Petronio, 2002). Maya would not share with her mother what she and her friends discussed saying, "It's my friends. It's what I want to know about them. It's not what they want you to know about them." She found it humorous that her mother took an interest in her friendships even though she did not approve of their behaviors (e.g., dating) and suggested that Maya not be friends with them.

In sum, individuals who perceived their mother-daughter relationships as being positive engaged in a higher degree of conversation regarding personal topics; however, daughters still concealed certain topics from their mothers

regardless of the relationship quality. Participants discussed how their mothers had particular expectations (e.g., not dating) and how they wanted their daughters to conform to those wishes. Knowing that their mothers would respond negatively to certain topics based on previous experiences, participants managed their private information by minimizing private disclosures. Thus, daughters recognized that certain topics within their mother-daughter relationship illustrated a lower degree of conversation and a higher degree of conformity.

### **Conformity-Oriented Communication Patterns**

Daughters who perceived that their families subscribed to a conformity orientation rather than a conversation orientation were more inclined to control their private information when communicating with their parents, because disclosures regarding private information could have negative consequences, such as confrontation (Afifi & Olson, 2005). That desire to manage private information is reflective of an impermeable interior privacy boundary orientation in which family members do not discuss many topics openly (Koerner & Cvancara, 2002; Morr Serewicz et al., 2007).

Daughters' desire to engage in topic avoidance illustrated the impermeable privacy boundary orientation (Petronio, 2002) and the understanding that certain topics (e.g., dating) were not to be discussed because it would lead to confrontation. Zahra, 21, did not mention romantic relationships because "That's just like a taboo in my family. It's just understood that that's something that we don't talk about . . . so I just understood that we don't talk about it. It wasn't like 'why?'" Taboo topics are topics that are seen as being "off limits" to one or both

individuals within a relationship (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Roloff & Ifert, 1998, 2000). People avoid taboo topics if they anticipate negative outcomes from its discussion. Taboo topics mentioned by the daughters involved their romantic relationships and sexual history. For instance, Bhavna, 25, stated, "I think we're close, but I don't like tell her a lot of things about my life." Priya, 19, also understood that she was not to mention the topic of romantic relationships after a previous one-minute conversation resulted in her parents explicitly stating that they would not discuss such a topic.

Sex was another taboo topic within the mother-daughter relationship as Bhavna said, "I can't really tell her anything about my sexual life. That would just blow her mind." Bhavna's mother "grew up in Sri Lanka and she grew up in this culture where you have very strict interactions with men until you were at a certain age and then usually you just kind of got married." Because of that cultural difference, Bhavna felt as though her mother would not understand Western culture's notion of dating and sex. Similarly, Layla, 27, felt as though her mother would not understand Western culture's notion of dating. Layla said, "I wouldn't even say a different understanding; it's just they don't get what dating is at all . . . They're like, 'Oh, this is like a pre-engagement, and then there will be an engagement and marriage.'" Similar to other participants' experiences, Layla's parents did not engage in dating as portrayed by Western culture's view of courtship:

Growing up in 1970s [South Asia], you didn't date. You didn't hang out with the opposite sex unless you intended to marry them some day. And if

you didn't, you were really messing around and were a bad person . . .

"And why would there be a reason to date?" I can like feel their minds imploding in itself when I tried to explain this to them. It was just like, "Does not compute." And I tried. I tried really hard. But it doesn't [make sense] -- the idea of spending time, getting to know someone in a romantic manner without having the direct intention of marrying that person some day. To them that's like screwing around and wasting everyone's time.

Layla perceived that her parents viewed dating as "wasting everyone's time" unless it was a "pre-engagement" that would lead to marriage. Layla's sentiments regarding her parents' lack of knowledge regarding dating resonated with other participants. For instance, Sunny, 26, described her parents as "really traditional like most Indian parents are," so her mother would not understand what dating was, having not experienced it herself. Sunny was reluctant to discuss dating because her mother criticized her previous partner's appearance and then said, "I don't like it. Inappropriate." These examples depict conflicting cultural considerations of the mothers and daughters having a different understanding of Western culture's concept of dating due to South Asian's cultural norm of arranged marriage (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000) and how that difference negatively affected daughters' desire to engage in a higher degree of conversation regarding the topic of dating.

Differing perceptions of dating resulted in daughters restricting their private information. For instance, not wanting to receive negative feedback from her mother, Maya, 24, said, "when it comes to boys . . . it's completely off the

table. I don't want to talk about it (laughs) because I'm not allowed to date until I'm married." At first glance, Maya's statement of not dating until she was married might be perplexing. However, Maya's statement echoed Layla's statements about how dating someone without an intention to marry them was perceived as being a waste of time. Maya had watched her mother interrogate her older sister regarding potential husbands and why certain men she had seen Maya's sister with her no longer in the picture:

"Oh, they didn't call? Oh, you didn't call them? What was wrong with them? What did you do? Why don't they like you?" . . . It's negative feedback like, "Mooommm, just let it go. I don't want to talk about this (laughs)."

Maya felt as though her mother was more vocal about her sister's dating behavior because the mother's worry that the daughter was not finding suitable marriage prospects in her late-twenties superseded her disapproval in her daughter's dating behavior. However, daughters no longer wanted to discuss their dating behavior because they felt that their mothers still did not understand Western culture's mate selection process and the connection between dating and marriage. Instead, the mothers were operating from South Asian culture's view of marriage and wanted their daughters to marry instead of date (Salam, 2010; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Faced with their mothers' intrusive behavior regarding romantic relationships, daughters intentionally concealed private information.

Highlighting the importance of marriage for her mother, Maya recognized the double standard that existed between her and her married sister regarding



topics. For instance, Maya said she also did not discuss things that she knew her mother would be disapproving of such as alcohol. However, her married sister drank alcohol, "but it's almost okay she drinks because she's married . . . It's like, "Oh, she's married. She doesn't have to worry about anything anymore, so fine, drink (laughs)." Because she has a husband, it makes it okay." In this instance, Maya illustrated that it would be acceptable to talk about certain behaviors (e.g., drinking alcohol) if she were married. Furthermore, Maya's example illustrated a present level of conformity as her mother expected Maya to conform to her wishes (e.g., not dating or drinking); however, the mother had different expectations for unmarried and married daughters.

Children can still feel pressured to agree with their parents' attitudes even if they openly discuss topics. Such an experience is depicted in consensual family types in which there is high conversation and high conformity (Zhang, 2007). For instance, Neha, 25, mentioned that she and her mother had "constant communication" (e.g., high degree of conversation) and said, "I do have a good relationship with her, and I see it as close. But there's also expectations that [my parents] tell me that I'm not meeting, and my mom reminds me of those often." The major parental expectation was that she should terminate her romantic relationship with her non-South Asian boyfriend (e.g., high degree of conformity). Neha was frustrated by this expectation because she thought her mother would have a "better understanding" of her situation since the mother's adolescence was in the United States:

Most of my family teases her like she's the Englishman of the family. But for some reason in this aspect of my life she seems to be overly traditional [saying] . . . "That shouldn't make a difference because you are Indian and this is what you should do." . . . It's just really disappointing to me that they feel that they can come to me openly, but I feel like I have to be very censored on what I share.

Neha's mother had lived in the United States since she was 14, and "she herself has told me she feels a little out of place when she is back home because she's spent so much time here." Even though she felt out of place in South Asia, her mother still wanted a man with South Asian ancestry for her daughter. Neha felt disappointment in her mother's response because Neha was taking steps to be inclusive and open rather than leading a "kind of double life" in which she dated her boyfriend and kept that hidden from her parents. Instead, she tried to be honest with her mother and even indicated that her mother's disapproval was affecting their mother-daughter relationship. Illustrative of a high degree of conversation, she questioned her mother regarding her mother's reasoning:

"Why have you never been happy that I found somebody that respects you and is embracing of my culture?" . . . She had nothing to say. She kind of just looked at me and kind of ignored me and went back to cooking.

Neha attempted to break through conversational boundaries with her mother; however, when she tried discussing her non-South Asian boyfriend, her mother "just kind of brushes it off because whenever I bring up something that she doesn't necessarily have a comment for she'll just kind of ignore it and move on

to the next subject.” Neha's mother's response to her daughter's conversational attempts implicitly communicated that the mother expected Neha to conform to her wishes by terminating her romantic relationship. Consequently, Neha regulated her privacy by concealing her private information. Neha's example is representative of SAA parents who attempt to monitor their daughters' behaviors strictly to preserve their cultural traditions (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). However, daughters challenge their parents' control through dissent and avoidance.

Such dissent and avoidance is especially characteristic of the protective family type in which daughters felt pressured to agree with their mothers and were unable to openly discuss controversial topics (e.g., parents' divorce) (Zhang, 2007). Two participants (i.e., Sheila and Manisha) depicted communication with their mothers as being minimal or nonexistent. As such, these daughters engaged in closedness (rather than openness) by intentionally limiting conversations with their mothers to avoid feeling pressure to conform to the mothers' preferences. For instance, Sheila, 23, described how her parents' divorce was a turning point that triggered additional closedness within the mother-daughter relationship. After the divorce, Sheila moved in with her father and intentionally limited her communication and interactions with her mother. However, Sheila said, "I would love if we were able to talk like normal human beings and have a good mother-daughter relationship.” Similarly, Manisha, 26, explained that she wanted a stronger relationship in which she could have open conversations with her mother without feeling frustrated or angry:

I definitely would love to get advice about my relationships . . . because as a woman she has the ability to understand certain things that women go through. But I'm very hesitant to do that. So in a perfect world I would like to have that mother-daughter relationship.

Manisha said that her mother "doesn't agree with most of my values and morals. And I don't agree with some of her actions and what she believes in. So, there's just conflict in a lot of those areas which separates us as two people." Manisha's conflict within the mother-daughter relationship was due to differing cultural values such as Manisha's desire for individual freedom (representative of Western culture) and Manisha's mother's desire for parental control (representative of South Asian culture).

Manisha explained her mother's response to her suggestion that the two women seek the help of a mediator to improve their relationship:

She doesn't really listen. She just keeps quiet, or she'll go to my dad and say, "Look! You're going to let her talk to me like that? She's younger than me and look at what she's saying!" . . . Sometimes he'll ask me just to keep quiet nicely. Other times he'll yell at my mom and just be like, "I don't know!" or he'll yell at me and say, "What is going on? Why are you involving me? This is between you and your mom! You guys fight way too much!"

Manisha acknowledged the conflict within her relationship with her mother, yet she also knew that such a conflict would not disappear on its own. Although she tried to make suggestions for them to improve their relationship (e.g., seeing a

mediator), her mother did not seem as willing to participate in those suggestions. Instead, she triangulated her husband into the conflict. In summing up her relationship with her mother, Manisha said, "She definitely brings out the worst in me." Although Manisha experienced a high degree of conformity with her mother, her relationship with her father was the complete opposite. As such, looking at other familial relationships can provide additional insight into daughters' familial relationships and communication. I elaborate on the participants' relationships with their fathers in the following section.

### **Daughters' Perceptions of Their Father-Daughter Relationships**

In describing relationships with their fathers, daughters discussed their degree of conversation and conformity in addition to the topics that they discussed and avoided. Overall, daughters' relationships with their fathers differed from their mothers in degrees of conversation and conformity.

### **Conversation-Oriented Communication Patterns**

When talking about their fathers, daughters described relationships that featured a lower degree of conversation than the typically close relationships shared with mothers, even taking tensions into account. Most of them indicated that their father-daughter relationships were not as open as with their mothers. For instance, Zahra, 21, stated that she was "close to him, not as close to him as my mom. But, I mean, it's still like a very positive relationship." In another instance, Karina, 21, compared her relationship with her father to the one she shared with her mother:

I would definitely call it more closed off than with my mother. We're just not as close than I am to my mom . . . My dad and I have a good relationship, but it's definitely more superficial than the one I have with my mom.

In this instance, Karina made three comparisons to her relationship with her mother when describing her relationship with her father. As such, Karina wanted her father to make much more of an effort in her life, so that they could have a relationship that was good without being superficial.

Most of the topics that the daughters discussed with their fathers were superficial in nature. For example, Natasha, 18, said that, "We only basically talk about schoolwork and every now and then little conversation about what's going on in the world or something like that. Unlike Natasha, Zahra, 21, avoided talking about education because her father was not involved in her academics. Instead, they mostly talked about his family.

Daughters experienced more of the laissez-faire family type with their fathers because of the low degrees of conversation and conformity (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) and sparse contact (Zhang, 2007). For instance, Rani, 27, said, "it's just really hard to communicate with him because he goes the emotional route really quickly." Natasha, 18, indicated that she did not have a close relationship with her father because "I don't communicate enough with him and . . . he doesn't communicate enough with me." Communication did not seem to be the hallmark of the relationship for some participants. As stated by Sunny, 26, "my dad and I get along, but we never really talk. I don't talk." She indicated that

she did not bother him, and he did not bother her, so they never really talked about anything. In this instance, lower volume of conversation did not translate into negative relationships with their fathers. Rather, daughters discussed more surface-level topics with their fathers compared to the more in-depth topics (e.g., friendships) with their mothers.

The notable exceptions to closed-off relationships with fathers were a few participants who cited their mother-daughter relationship as being difficult. These daughters felt that their mothers subscribed to a higher degree of conformity (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) and that they were unable to talk with their mothers about particular topics (e.g., dating). Conversely, these daughters engaged in a higher degree of conversation with their fathers who they felt were more receptive to daughters' disclosures because the fathers subscribed to a lower degree of conformity. This preference to engage in more conversation with their fathers due to the mothers' critical nature was especially true for the two participants who described their relationships with their mothers as negative and undesirable.

For instance, Manisha, 26, stated that her relationship with her father was the "total opposite" of the one she shared with her mother because they engaged in "fairly open communication." Manisha indicated that she was open with her father as she talked to him about "school, employment, my relationships, if I'm interested in someone, if I drink one night when I did. So my communication is very open with him." He even gave her advice after her romantic relationship terminated by telling her that she was a "strong girl" and that he knew it was hard but she could move on from it. Although Manisha experienced a closer

relationship with her father than her mother, she still chose not to bring up certain issues with her father. For instance, when she and her brother got into an argument, she avoided bringing her father into the argument because "he gets very upset about it and tries to rectify it, and it ends up blowing up in our faces even more." She concluded by saying, "I mean, obviously, I don't talk about any details/information when it comes to like my love life." Thus, Manisha's example illustrated that, similar to mother-daughter relationships, taboo topics (e.g., love life) still existed in the father-daughter relationship even if the relationship featured a high degree of conversation.

When asked what topics she did not discuss with her father, Karina, 21, said, "I wouldn't talk to him about very personal issues like anything having to do with like personal relationships [or] anything that is somewhat emotional." Likewise, Priya, 19, refrained from mentioning boys or going out. When it comes to dating, Sunny, 26, said, "We never really talk about ... it's just 'What did you do today?' and 'Okay, that's good' and then (laughs) he goes back to watching tv." Although Neha, 25, viewed her relationship with her father as being close, "there's obviously things that I feel more comfortable talking to my mom about more than my dad . . . But, my dad has always been very supportive."

In addition to not talking about romantic relationships, Zahra, 21, did not talk about school with her father. She said that, "If I had a serious academic crisis, change my major or studying, applying to law school, like that would go over his head, and so I don't talk to him about that." Although she tried to discuss her school with her father, she subsequently refrained from doing so because "he gets



this glazed look in his eyes, and I know it's not going anywhere (laughs)."

Conversely, Natasha, 18, only shared school with her father and nothing regarding her personal life. She explained that, "He doesn't know anything so much about me, because you know, we don't talk that much." Natasha was not the only one to refrain from sharing aspects of her daily life with her father. Layla, 27, for instance, boasted a similar claim saying, "I don't talk about relationships with him or like any of the day-to-day stressors in my life."

Sheila, 23, also mentioned that she refrained from discussing her love life or sex life. She said that her father "knows that I do have a boyfriend and he knows that we're intimate with each other, but he doesn't know anything more than that . . . But other than that we're pretty open with each other." Therefore, even in the father-daughter relationships with high degrees of conversation, daughters still feel inclined to conceal private information regarding particular topics (e.g., sex life) much like their relationship with their mothers.

Recognizing that open communication-based relationship with her father was unique, Maya, 24, said, "my relationship with my dad is actually not typical in terms of what my friends experience." Unable to talk openly with her mother about her private life, Maya restricted her information and subsequently became "much more giving with information when my dad asks versus when my mom asks because it's not coming from such a negative place." Maya discussed her work and religion with her father because she felt that he was more receptive to her disclosures than her mother, whom she considered "negative" and "critical."

She stated that she, in addition to her sisters, discussed "a lot of things with him about what we're experiencing in our life and have honest opinions out of him."

Unlike their mother-daughter relationships, daughters concealed their private information, not out of fear of confrontation, but due to the belief that discussing certain topics (e.g., health issues) would result in awkwardness between them and their fathers. Indeed, daughters' responses are indicative of the implicit impermeable interior privacy boundary in which daughters felt that certain topics were inappropriate to discuss with their fathers as compared to their mothers (Caughlin & Petronio, 2004; Morr Serewicz et al., 2007). Furthermore, there were only a few instances in which daughters felt that they had to control their private information because they knew that certain viewpoints did not resonate with their fathers' beliefs.

### **Conformity-Orientation Communication Pattern**

Participants who perceived that their fathers illustrated higher degrees of conformity concealed certain information from their fathers because of potential consequences such as confrontation (Afifi & Olson, 2005). For instance, Maya, 24, did not mention expectations that she had for her marriage because of her father's reaction:

He is totally under the assumption that if you marry a guy you will move ... everything about your life to where he is. Not the other way around. And it's not that I'm opposed to moving, I'm okay with moving, but it's more so, "Why is he expecting that I move? Why can't they want to move to LA?" (laughs) . . . I know he's going to say, "No, you're the girl. You

are the one to move," and I'm just like, "Argh. Whatever." So that's definitely one thing that I don't bring up anymore (laughs).

Maya laughed off her father's cultural expectations for her prospective marriage, namely that Maya would have to be accommodating to her spouse's life and not the other way around. Such an expectation is illustrative of South Asian culture's concept of female subordination, yet it is contrary to Western culture's notion of equality among marriage partners (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000).

Asha's, 28, father also attempted to exercise his control by expecting his wife and children to accommodate to his wishes:

He was also like "This is how you have to do something" . . . If it's praying or religion he would get impatient right away if we didn't do stuff that way . . . We just didn't really want to be around him . . . I remember he was pretty mean with my mom. He was really like bossy and disrespectful, and she was always unhappy.

Asha stated that her brothers dealt with the tension by wanting to get married so they could move out of the house. Initially, Asha described her relationship with her father as being "really close" and she discussed how he spoiled her. However, once she started talking about her parents' relationship, her tone regarding her father changed, and she indicated that she felt "resentful" towards him because of his dominance and absence during her childhood. Consequently, Asha's perception of her father-daughter relationship was affected by her parents' relationship and how she perceived her father treated her mother.

Layla, 27, also discussed how her parents' relationship affected her father-daughter relationship. Specifically, Layla's relationship with her father went from positive to negative once she felt that her father crossed certain lines when he befriended Layla's friend:

That's what led to a lot of conflict during those months because I never really fought with my dad like that or had any kind of conflict with that with him . . . And I just felt so weird on so many levels like as a woman, as a daughter, like you know the daughter of his wife, so it was so strange. And I feel like I was confrontational, and I wasn't quiet about it. That almost, in his eyes, that even made it worse. Like he didn't accept that I was so confrontational or vocal about what I thought of the situation. And I feel like he really felt like I was betraying him or something somehow, so it was a lot of really convoluted things.

She indicated that her father was "very confrontational about something he doesn't like . . . He's very stubborn about things. So if I try to point out things like, 'Hey, this is inappropriate. I'm your daughter, not your friend' . . . it's like weird." Subsequently, Layla restricted the topics that she shared with her father and engaged in a lower degree of conversation because she "didn't know how to deal with him because . . . it kind of made me see him in an icky light. And he's not like an icky person at all. He's a morally outstanding person in every way." Thus, she changed her high degree of conversation and permeable privacy boundary by engaging in a low degree of conversation and displaying an

impermeable privacy boundary, which negatively affected her relationship with her father.

Neha's, 25, tension with her father was due to her father's disapproval in Neha's romantic relationship with a non-South Asian man:

If he has an issue with . . . me going out on a date with [my boyfriend] then he would tell my mother that he disapproves of it, and then she'll in turn come to me saying, "Well, your dad is disapproving of this, so ..." He won't directly initiate the conversation. If he does initiate it, it'll be after months and months of build up when he's extremely frustrated ... It's often a very negative experience because it'll be him telling me about the many ways that I'm disappointing him by continuing this relationship and that . . . frustrates the both of us because I often get into a shut down mode where . . . I'm tired of hearing the same things and he gets frustrated because I'm not answering his questions.

What further frustrated Neha was that she tried to engage in a higher degree of conversation; however, her parents were not receptive. In one instance, she had invited her boyfriend to attend a South Asian dancing event that the parents were also attending. When she told her parents, they said, "Oh, okay. That's cool. You can take him . . ." and I'm like, 'I'm not necessarily asking permission, but that's cool (laughs).'" However, "right before we left my dad told me, 'I'm happy to take him to [this event]. I'm happy to have him experience this. But in no way should this be perceived as approval of your relationship.'" Noteworthy in Neha's situation was that her father gave his permission for Neha to bring her significant

other, yet that permission was unsolicited. Thus, her father was operating from the South Asian cultural norm of parental decision-making, especially regarding daughters' mate selection (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000) rather than Western culture's norm of individual freedom (Lalonde, Hynie, Pannu, & Tatla, 2004).

Layla and Neha's examples represented extreme tensions that daughters faced with their fathers, most likely because both participants had indicated that they had a good relationship with their father. Specifically, they enjoyed a high degree of conversation regarding topics and a low degree of conformity (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Their boundaries were more permeable, but their relationship changed once their father expressed their unhappiness with the daughters not adhering to their wishes. However, other participants did not have as much tension with their fathers simply because they did not have as strong of a relationship with their fathers in the first place. For instance, as stated by Zahra, 21, "we didn't fight, but just distance [was there] because he wasn't around when I was younger."

### **Summary**

Within this chapter, I answered the question, "How do SAA emerging adult daughters describe their familial relationships and communication?" I presented the daughters' descriptions of their relationships and communication with their mothers and fathers to analyze the daughters' perceived family relational culture (i.e., family communication patterns and interior privacy boundary orientation). Daughters' perceptions of their relationships with their

parents depended on their assessment of their communication patterns and interior privacy boundary orientation with their parents.

Daughters who described good relationships with their parents engaged in openness (i.e., high degree of conversation) and discussed private information (i.e., permeable interior privacy boundary). Conversely, daughters who indicated difficult or nonexistent relationship with their parents said that they engaged in minimal communication and topic avoidance (i.e., high degree of conformity) because they knew that their parents would not agree with or understand certain aspects of their daughters' private information such as dating (i.e., impermeable privacy boundary). Therefore, the daughters' communication patterns with their mothers and fathers illustrated the daughters' perceived family relational culture.

Understanding daughters' communication and relationships with their parents is useful because they affect daughters' performance of particular roles within their family-of-origin. For instance, daughters who are on the receiving end of their parents' private disclosures are placed in the role of confidant. Subsequently, they can take on the role of mediator for their parents' conflicts. Daughters' enactment of particular roles is tied to daughters' perceptions of their relationship and communication with their parents. For example, if the daughter has a positive relationship with her mother based on openness (e.g., high degree of conversation), she might be more willing to serve as her mother's confidant and listen to her mother's frustrations with her husband. However, if the daughter has a negative relationship with her mother and conceals private information from her controlling mother (e.g., high degree of conformity), she might attempt to avoid

playing the role of confidant for her mother. Thus, daughters' perceptions of their communication and relationship with their parents affect the daughters' role-playing. In the next chapter, I explore the daughters' enactment of particular roles within their families.



## Chapter 6

### INTERPRETATION: DAUGHTERS' FAMILIAL ROLES

Having discussed the communication that daughters experienced within their familial relationships in the previous chapter, in this chapter, I explore South Asian American emerging adult daughters' perceived roles within their families by answering the following research question:

RQ<sub>2</sub>: What roles do SAA emerging adult daughters play within their families?

To answer this question, I analyzed the roles that the participants performed with their mothers, parents, and siblings. Participants' responses revealed that daughters performed the role of reluctant confidant in mother-daughter relationships. A reluctant confidant is one who does not expect or desire to be the recipient of another's private information; however, the recipient's boundaries involuntarily become linked to that of the discloser's (Petronio, 2002). Only a couple of participants (i.e., Sheila and Manisha) who had tension-filled relationships with their mothers (i.e., low degrees of conversation and high degrees of conformity) indicated that they played the roles of listener or sounding board for their fathers instead of their mothers.

While serving as a reluctant confidant within the mother-daughter dyad, daughters often enacted additional roles within their parents-child triad (e.g., mediator for interparental conflicts). Finally, daughters' roles of reluctant confidant and mediator affected daughters' roles within their sibling relationships as participants served as protective buffers who sought to protect younger siblings from parental conflict (Afifi & McManus, 2006; Joseph & Afifi, 2010). The

presence of these roles illustrates how daughters who are involuntarily assigned the role of reluctant confidant in their mother-daughter dyad may act on that information by voluntarily taking on additional roles in their relationships with their parents (e.g., parental mediator) and their siblings (e.g., protective buffer).

### **Daughters' Role as Reluctant Confidant within the Mother-Daughter Dyad**

Participants indicated that their mothers shared private disclosures with them. As recipients of their mothers' unsolicited private disclosures, daughters were placed in the role of reluctant confidant. By playing this role, daughters served as a friend, girlfriend, sounding board, and outlet to their mothers. Specifically, the communicative behaviors of the confidant role involved the daughters providing support and comfort to their mothers regarding their worries and family members.

When reflecting on her mother's comments about family member, Veena, 22, said that her mother shared "complaints about my dad's sisters, and it's something I get, and I'm never asking for. We'll be talking about something totally unrelated and that will come up." In addition to listening, Veena questioned her mother about the negative feelings because Veena's married brother had children. She realized that in regard to her nieces and nephews, "I'm their dad's side of the family . . . It's made me kind of question things that I've heard from my mom's perspective because . . . I could potentially be on the receiving end of that." For Veena, serving as her mother's reluctant confidant made her aware of the parallels between her mother and Veena's sister-in-law. For instance, if Veena's sister-in-law complained about her husband's family members

to her children, just as Veena's mother had done, then Veena's nieces and nephews might view Veena negatively. Recognizing the bias that existed in her mother's disclosures, Veena remained her mother's confidant but was wary of her mother's subjectivity.

Similar to Veena, Neha, 25, felt like her "mom's confidant, for sure." In that role, Neha experienced disappointment when her mother did not reciprocate such a role for her. For instance, Neha listened to her mother's worries and frustrations; however, her mother would not listen to Neha's disclosures regarding her non-South Asian boyfriend. Such discrepancies in openness are unfortunate because "the mother-daughter bond has the potential to intensify as daughters transition from adolescence into adulthood, providing both women with a lifelong means of emotional support" (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006, p. 5). Daughters (e.g., Manisha, 26) indicated that they would love to have conversations with their mothers so that they could get advice because "as a woman she has the ability to understand certain things that women go through." To that end, daughters' responses represented disproportionate disclosures as one individual (i.e., the mother) was able to vent her frustrations to another individual (i.e., daughter) who was unable to do the same (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006). These disproportionate disclosures could be detrimental for the mother-adult daughter bond, especially if daughters begin to feel resentful in their role of reluctant confidants because the supportive listening behaviors they provided their mothers were not reciprocated.

In another example, Sunny, 26, was placed in the role of reluctant confidant by her mother who said Sunny would understand her financial concerns

regarding her husband's (Sunny's father) unemployment more than Sunny's brother would:

My mom actually told me like "You know, I'm telling you and not your brother because you understand how hard dad works and sometimes like he doesn't care." (laughs) I'll just think to myself like "What are you talking about?" (laughs) "Of course he cares. You're just not telling him."

The mother's preference to disclose to her daughter instead of her son illustrated the double standard between SAA daughters and sons regarding parental expectations of daughters to serve as kinkeepers who maintain family relationships (Brown & DeRycke, 2010; Leach & Braithwaite, 1996; Treas & Mazumdar, 2004). Although Sunny's mother believed that Sunny would be more understanding than her brother, Sunny said, "I'm not sure I understand. I think I'm just the one who listens." Sunny further minimized the importance of her role as her mother's confidant:

My mom treats me like a little kid, so I feel like when I'm home . . . I'm this little kid, whatever. I don't feel like I really have a role as far as being someone . . . my mom wants to tell her about her worries. But other than that, I feel like I'm the little girl (laughs).

Being the recipient of her mother's worries is representative of a more adult-like role rather than that of a "little girl." Sunny viewed herself more as a "little kid" rather than an adult recipient of private disclosures even though Sunny's perception that her mother "treats me like a little kid" was not compatible with the mother's behavior of disclosing her worries to her daughter.

Participants felt that disclosures changed the nature of their relationships with parents. More than just being the recipient of information, Zahra, 21, stated that she felt like her mother's friend at times, instead of a daughter. Zahra said, "If we're really open we'll talk about anything . . . things that [my friends] don't talk to their parents about or their moms about. That's why I feel a little bit closer to her. Like a friend." In some instances, daughters provided more than just emotional support to their mothers. Similar to Zahra, Karina, 21, stated that she felt like she was more than just her mother's daughter:

I'm also the oldest child, and I'm older in general, and I'm also a woman, so I think she really comes to me from all those angles . . . I'd say I'm one of her closest friends, too. So I definitely fulfill that kind of role.

Akin to Karina's positive perception of her relationship with her mother, Bhavna, 25, indicated that her situation was atypical because her widowed mother lived with her own mother, Bhavna's grandmother. As such, Bhavna discussed the need for her to provide financial support for the mortgage; however, she did not feel like that was beyond the role of a daughter because of her observations:

I just feel like all this is part of being a daughter . . . I just feel like you are kind of supposed to think about your parents . . . My grandma and grandpa came to live with us when I was 12 . . . right before my dad passed away. And I know they came to take care of my mom, and I see that my mom takes care of her mom now. That's not weird to me, so I don't think it's weird that at some point I'll have to take care of my mom.

Bhavna's perception of what it meant to be a daughter was that she should listen to her mother's worries because "part of being a daughter" was to "think about your parents." Financially contributing to her mother was how she could "take care of my mom" and enact caregiving behaviors (East, 2010; Roberto & Jarrott, 2008).

Similar to Bhavna, Payal, 21, experienced a close relationship with her mother. After Payal's mother's best friend passed away, her mother confided in Payal more about family "and like what she thought of everyone and what they thought of her." Although Payal was a reluctant confidant because she did not solicit her mother's disclosure, Payal did not view the information as necessarily unwanted. Instead, she positively viewed her role of confidant by saying, "The nice thing about being my mom's confidant is that I never judge her. My mom carries a lot of . . . weight that I can't help her relieve, but I can definitely listen to." Payal recognized the importance of her role as her mother's confidant. She was also quick to suggest that the relationship she shared with her parents was atypical compared to her friends because her parents were more liberal and progressive. Additionally, her parents openly discussed information, thus illustrating a high degree of conversation-orientation (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) and a permeable interior privacy boundary (Petronio, 2002).

For a variety of reasons, participants (e.g., Payal) believed that it was useful for them to play the role of confidant. They even indicated that they formed friendships with their mothers when listening to worries and concerns. Although such openness can be positive and bring mothers and daughters closer together

(Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006), it can also be detrimental to the mother-daughter relationship. Specifically, boundaries are blurred or dissolved when mothers talk to their daughters regarding their personal issues as they would a friend (Afifi & MacManus, 2010). A power dynamic still exists within the mother-daughter dyad so friendship equality is unattainable (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006). For example, boundaries are rigid when mothers exert their authoritative power by instructing their daughters to end their romantic relationships (e.g., Neha's example); however, boundaries are blurred when mothers confide in their daughters as they would their friends. This simultaneous rigidity and blurring of boundaries illustrates an inconsistent enmeshed relationship (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006). Such enmeshment can affect emerging adult daughters' progression toward adulthood and individuation because of their emotionally inconsistent connection with their mothers and uncertainty about how to perform their role as daughter.

When such dissolution of boundaries occurs, roles become corrupted, which results in the children taking on more adult-like functions for their parents (Kerig, 2005). One type of role corruption is emotional parentification in which children attempt to fulfill an emotional void for their parents by providing support and serving as a confidant (Goglia, Jurkovic, Burt, & Burge-callaway, 1992; Hooper, 2008; Johnston, 1990; Jurkovic, Thirkield, & Morrell, 2001). When engaging in emotional parentification, children provide emotional caregiving to their parents and prioritize their parents' needs over their own.

Thus, although mothers' disclosures to their daughters can be positive and result in closeness, such disclosures can also disrupt role boundaries between

them. Participants' responses illustrated that the content of the disclosures affected daughters differently (Petronio, 2002). Consistent with previous research (Koerner et al., 2004), daughters described experiencing more discomfort when listening to their mothers' private disclosures regarding their marital conflict (e.g., Layla, 27) than the mothers' financial worries (e.g., Sunny, 26). In essence, daughters became triangulated into their parents' relationship after they served as their mothers' reluctant confidant and became privy to their mothers' disparaging comments about their fathers. In the following section, I explain the roles that daughters played within their parents' relationship.

### **Daughters' Roles within the Parents-Child Triad**

The role of reluctant confidant within the mother-daughter dyad affected the daughters' roles within the parents-child triad. Mothers often disclosed negatively valenced information regarding their spouses and marriage (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003). Once triangulated into the parents' conflict, children felt like they had to act as mediators in their parents' relationships (Afifi 2003; Buchanan et al., 1991). Unlike the involuntary role of reluctant confidant in which daughters were their mothers' captive audience (Petronio 2002), daughters' enactment of roles within the parents-child triad was voluntary as they chose to act on the disclosures. Participants stated that they played the following roles in the presence of parental conflict: mediator, focal point, distracter, parent, positive source, caretaker, and peacemaker. In these instances, daughters attempted to provide perspective taking for their parents to help alleviate marital conflict. They also



helped explain one parent's communication style to the other parent and tried to distract the parents from their conflict.

In addition to emotional parentification with their mothers, participants also engaged in parentification by taking on the role of parent for their own parents during marital conflict (Jurkovic et al., 2001). Specifically, these daughters engaged in emotional parentification by serving as a mediator for their parents (Jurkovic et al., 2001) and trying to help them through their issues. Participants indicated that they played the role of mediator for their parents by helping to alleviate their parents' conflicts. Moreover, they indicated that they felt like they were the parents taking care of their parents who were acting like children during their marital conflicts. Although daughters described voluntarily taking on the role of mediator, this active role involved intervening in their parents' marriage.

For instance, Zahra, 21, stated that she played the mediator role for her parents and sometimes she would get involved, whereas other times she would "just listen to what both of them will have to say . . . like a passive audience." Similarly, Karina, 21, said that she definitely served as "the mediator, calmer personality. I see things more grey from different perspectives rather than black and white." Natasha, 18, said, "I do have to step in. And when they're fighting I do definitely come in and fix that." In this instance, Natasha implied that she did not have a choice because she had to step in to "fix" her parents' fighting. Thus, although they had the freedom to volunteer to take on such a role, they emotionally felt compelled to enact the role.

Daughters depicted playing the role of mediator for other family members as well as their parents. Neha, 25, even felt like she played the role of parent, especially when she was mediating between her parents and between her parents and brother. Specifically, she explained that, “when it comes to mediation between my brother and my parents, I think everybody’s become a lot more immature, and I’ve kind of become the mediator. Definitely.” Feeling like a parent, Neha said that playing mediator during family conflicts “can be frustrating, and more often than not, no one is really happy with what my opinion is, but I can see it from like the third person point-of-view.” Resultantly, Neha was frustrated in performing the mediator role, yet she still tried to offer her parents with perspective-taking.

Neha was not alone in feeling like a parent within her family as Rani, 27 said that, in addition to feeling like a mediator, she felt like a parent with her parents:

I would definitely feel like I got placed in the middle a lot. So instead of trying to mediate two parties together, I would mediate them individually, and go to my mom and say, “Mom, this is how dad is. You just have to understand that you can’t talk to him like that. It affects him in this way.” And then I’ll go to my dad and try to get him into a conversation . . . It was easier to mediate the conversation that way and just kind of teach my mom that she’s just going to have to be the bigger person right now.

Rani's approach to her parents' conflict varied. For instance, Rani attempted to explain her father's personality to her mother. However, instead of explaining her

mother's personality to her father, she tried to "teach" her mother to be the "bigger person" by not furthering the conflict. Rani's actions reinforced the South Asian cultural concept of male domination and female subordination (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000) in addition to the use of emotion coaching to help their mothers work through their negative feelings (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996; Young, 2009).

Akin to Rani, Asha, 28, felt like she had to take on a parent role with her own parents. She said, "I actually feel like a parent with my parents. . . . My mom especially just needs a lot of attention, and I feel like a parent. It's like, 'Oh, what are you doing? Where are you?'" In addition to helping them with their marital conflict, Asha felt like she had to nudge her parents when it came to being a part of society and attending parties. She stated that she had to "encourage them to go and . . . be positive about it . . . [by saying] 'No, it'll be fun. We like these people.' I do feel like a parent; it's weird." She further stated that she brought positivity when she visited her parents. She said, "I'm happy and positive and I bring energy and kind of . . . companionship. I'll just sit and listen and like, 'Okay, you guys want to talk, so I'll just sit.'" Consistent with previous literature regarding children who were exposed to interparental conflict, Asha remarked that she took on the role of message carrier because she brought "information back and forth" among family members (Afifi, 2003).

Especially in the presence of marital conflict, daughters assumed the role of parent and took on the responsibility for their parents' emotional well-being. This role-taking has considerable ramifications for daughters' well-being.

Initially, these daughters may be supportive with their parents; however, they may eventually become resentful of the increased demands of caring for their parents in this way. As a result of their parents' pressures, daughters may sacrifice their needs by taking on the role of mediator and nurturer. Emerging adult daughters' sacrifice of their own needs for the sake of their parents' needs could be detrimental and impede daughters' progression toward adulthood (Arnett et al., 2011).

However, parentification can be beneficial if parents acknowledge children's contributions to the family, if the children perceive the process as being fair, and if siblings share the parental responsibilities (Kerig, 2005). In an example of shared parental responsibilities, Sheila, 23, talked about how she and her brother served as mediators during their parents' crises and eventual divorce:

We kind of did take the brunt of a lot of their issues. . . . It kind of did help that we were there because it [made] . . . them not really think about it. I don't know if that's really a good thing or a bad thing. When it comes to mediation and things like that, I know that it kind of helped lighten the mood, the fact that my older brother and I were there. But I don't know if we really like helped with anything.

Here, Sheila went from saying that having her and her brother present "did kind of help" to "knowing" that their presence "kind of helped" to "not knowing" if it helped their parents. As a result, Sheila's experiences demonstrated the complexity and uncertainty of not knowing if mediating parents' conflicts was beneficial or appreciated by their parents.

Participants described feeling pressured by parental expectations.

Manisha, 26, echoed Sheila's sentiments and indicated that she also felt like she served as a "peacemaker for sure, that's without a doubt. . . My brother and I can feel like we are the parents, and they are the children and we have to take care of them." Similar to other participants, Manisha's use of the phrase "we have to take care of them" implied that she had little choice in the matter. Upon reflection of her roles and her emotional support to her parents, Manisha sighed:

I do believe, oh gosh, sometimes I have to make decisions because they're just both very argumentative and irrational and are not able to make decisions . . . It's more than just a daughter. I feel like I'm definitely doing more than I should be doing as a child. I guess I don't know how to define it.

Manisha's inability to explain how she felt like she was doing more than a child should be doing implied that her expectations for the role of daughter might not be compatible with her parents' expectations. Moreover, Manisha's reflection that she played the role of peacemaker was one that resonated with other participants. For instance, Layla, 27, discussed how she was a peacemaker because she was the baby of the family. She said, "I'm like the thing that everyone can like focus on in intense moments like, 'Oh, [Layla] she, you know, she's my baby. She's really hungry. Let's get her something to eat.'" As such, she felt like a focal point and distracter for her family especially when there was a lot of tension:

I was kind of like the peaceful point that everyone could agree on, sort of like an unintentional peacemaker. I mean, I didn't actively sit and make

people apologize to each other, but I think I was sort of like put in that position, or made that focal point when things got tense like, "Let's see what [Layla's] doing. Let's see what she wants to do."

Layla struggled with her family placing her in the unintentional peacemaker position. Initially, she would try to offer advice to her parents; however, she eventually refrained from doing so because she did not want to be the recipient of her parents' private disclosures.

Participants struggled with playing the role of mediator and listening to their parents, while some actively tried to avoid it. Similar to Layla, Karina, 21, knew how it felt to have her parents wanting to talk to her about their problems. She made suggestions like telling them to see a therapist to help them with their relationship, which they had done in the past. However, she said that she was "kind of at a loss of what to do. . . . The feeling I have is individual relationships with them rather than a full complete structure. Our family dynamic has progressed toward that." Karina, like other participants, felt like she had to establish separate relationships with her parents. Doing so, she said, "minimizes stuff I do" in some ways because she could engage in the role of listener with one parent at a time rather than a mediator with both parents simultaneously, and thus, try to avoid the mediator role. Maya, 24, shied away from the mediator role, as well:

I don't like to get in the middle of that. I have played that role but not by my own choice. I played that because . . . my mom will just come into the room and start talking at me. So I do listen, but I don't try to mediate

because it's hard to do that when emotions are running high and one party or another will always see it as you taking a side. So I try to shy away from that at this point.

Daughters' role-playing as mediators can place them in a paradox because whether or not they play the role of mediator they can disappoint their parents or cause loyalty conflicts. Even though Neha, 25, tried to shy away from the role of mediator like Maya, she felt like she was unable to. She believed that she performed the mediator role because she was seen as the more reliable child, a role that annoyed her because "I think my brother has played it like 'Oh, I don't know how to do it' then they just go to [me] and say, 'Okay, well Neha can do it.'" Neha's experiences highlighted previous literature that divorced parents who want social support approach their adult children differently, seeking socioemotional aid (e.g., affection and understanding) from daughters and instrumental aid (e.g., information) from sons (Wright & Maxwell, 1991). Indeed, daughters, especially unmarried daughters, who served as the recipient of their parents' divorce-related issues were perceived as being more emotionally supportive to their post-divorce parents than sons (Wright & Maxwell, 1991). Parents believed that their unmarried daughters had fewer responsibilities compared to their married counterparts, so they were able to be of more assistance to the parents.

Parents who engaged in conflict and turned to their unmarried daughters was also reflective of Layla's experience. Layla, 27, simultaneously felt like a child and a marriage counselor especially because her sister was in a serious relationship. She believed that her parents considered Layla's older sister, and

"They're like 'Oh, she's got more important things to do. But [Layla's] not married or . . . getting married, so she doesn't have anything to do. So we should talk to her about our problems.'" These participants' responses highlighted the interconnectedness of daughters' familial roles. Specifically, after being placed in the role of reluctant confidant and being privy to private disclosures, daughters acted on that information by taking on additional roles (e.g., parental mediator) within the parents-child triad.

### **Daughters' Roles within Their Sibling Relationships**

In addition to the parent-child dyad and the triadic relationship, daughters played important roles within their sibling relationships. Specifically, daughters mediated their parents' conflict and protected their younger siblings from the conflict while serving as a parent-like figure. Twelve of the participants in this study were the oldest daughter, and eight of those had one younger brother. Daughters' roles as reluctant confidant and mediator during parental conflict resulted in older daughters wanting to save their younger siblings from having to manage their parents' disclosures and conflicts. To that end, daughters enacted the roles of parent and advocate for their younger siblings. These daughters engaged in protective buffering by playing the role of mediator, so their siblings would not have to (Afifi & McManus, 2006). Consequently, they attempted to shield their siblings from the parents' conflict and individually absorbed the subsequent stress. Engaging in protective buffering and shielding others from potentially stressful information, however, can result in daughters experiencing higher levels of stress (Joseph & Afifi, 2010).



Daughters depicted parenting and providing emotional support for siblings. When Sheila, 23, lived with her parents before their divorce, her younger brother had just been born. She said, "I had taken care of him and I was kind of like a mother to him. He was a lot more closer to me than my mom so I kind of played the mother, like caretaker role when it comes to my little brother." After the divorce, Sheila listened to her brother as he discussed the tensions that he felt with their mother. As such, she could empathize with him "because my older brother and I went through the same stuff. So we kind of help him with moral support, emotional support, and try to give him advice on how to deal with things." Sheila's motherly role was one that resonated with participants who were the oldest child in the family.

Manisha, 26, described her relationship with her brother saying, "If I have any type of problem he's the first person I would go to because I didn't want to stress out my parents. And I am that person for him as well." Her brother listened to the mother's issues more than Manisha did which caused some issues between the brother and sister:

We've definitely discussed, and even sometimes argued, over the fact that I favor my father over my mother ... If my mom and I really want to make things work, like I've told her we need to go to therapy for it because I don't have the patience to sit and listen to her problems without yelling.

Participants described actively advocating for siblings in order to protect them. Manisha served as an advocate for her brother by encouraging him to go

out-of-state for college, so he would not have to deal with their parents' marital conflict:

They were insisting that he stay to help, near them and I was insisting that he just needs to just get away because there's just so much conflict and a lot of tension in the family that I felt that it was best for him to move outside that to grow. And I was definitely an advocate for him.

Other participants echoed this act of taking on a protective, motherly role toward siblings, even to their own personal detriment. In one instance, Bhavna, 25, discussed how she wanted her younger brother to leave home because their mother could be "volatile" and intrusive into his personal life:

He does want to leave and I think he should leave because . . . he's still there. He wants to do something and like go abroad and stuff, so it makes me feel that still at some point I have to come home.

Bhavna indicated that her brother would feel guilty for leaving his widowed mother and grandmother. Wanting her brother to "go abroad," Bhavna felt like she would "have to come home" to take care of her mother and grandmother so her younger brother would be free to pursue his interests. Payal, 21, indicated that she had a close relationship with her younger brother saying, "If he has a problem he'll come to me before he goes to my mom and dad. And if he needs something, anything, he comes to me." Similarly, Neha indicated that she and her younger brother talked often and she said, "I miss him incredibly, but (laughs) we're very close. We've always been close." Her brother was supportive of her relationship with her non-South Asian significant other, and she suggested

that having that support was “very important! It’s nice to know that at least one out of three people is on my team kind of thing (laughs).” For Asha, 28, even though her younger brother was married and had a child, she still indicated that she was “very protective of him.”

In some instances, participants indicated that their parents had wanted them to take more of a parental relationship when it came to helping their younger brothers. For instance, Bhavna, 25, reflected on her mother's and grandmother's expectations for her role as oldest sibling:

I guess because I’m the oldest, I kind of am supposed to be in charge of my brother, but I’m not really. But they expect me to know what’s going on with him and . . . they used to really expect me to keep him on track but the only person who can keep him on track is himself.

Bhavna was reluctant to be in charge of her brother, but she did help him whenever he had a conflict with their mother. As such, Bhavna called them both over the phone and helped them maintain their relationship by reconciling. Similar to Bhavna, Neha's parents suggested that Neha, 25, should give her younger brother advice:

[They will say] “Why don’t you give him some advice?” and . . . I tell them that “I have given him advice. He’s not listening to me. He’s not listening to you (laughs). And I’m not the parent in this situation, so I can only do so much.”

In this instance, Neha dictated that giving her brother advice was more befitting of the parent role, not the sibling role. However, her parents were implying that their

expectation for her role as the oldest sibling in the collectivistic South Asian culture was to provide the younger sibling with advice.

Priya, 19, the oldest of three girls, indicated that she and her sisters provided each other with support. She said that their relationship was "definitely more open; we tell each other secrets and make sure not to tell our parents if it comes to that." However, Priya pointed out the positive and negative aspects of being the oldest child:

I am definitely the person that helps pass down advice and helps out my sisters. . . . It sucks sometimes . . . just being the oldest. . . I was the first so . . . that makes me feel better because I didn't have any advice, so it was kind of me doing things on my own.

Rani, 27, the oldest child with a younger sister and a younger brother, said, "I think to my siblings I feel like a parent more so maybe with my brother than my sister." She also indicated that she encouraged her brother and sister to talk with their father because they were better at understanding him than she was. Thus, Rani summed up the complexity of her roles with her parents and her siblings by saying, "I sometimes feel like I'm the parent. Definitely the caretaker sometimes, and I'm a sister. I'm a friend, an ally, an advocate. I'm a teacher, definitely. I keep the peace sometimes."

### **Summary**

Within this chapter, I answered the question, "What roles do SAA emerging adult daughters play within their families?" In particular, I presented the roles that the participants performed with their mothers, parents, and siblings.

Specifically, daughter performed the role of reluctant confidant within the mother-daughter dyad by listening to their mothers' private disclosures regarding the mothers' concerns, worries, and family members. Although some participants indicated that such disclosures strengthened their mother-daughter relationships, others indicated that certain topics (e.g., interparental conflict or mothers' frustrations with their husbands) caused them to be triangulated into their parents' relationship. Triangulating the daughters into the parents' relationship could be detrimental because it causes boundaries to become blurred, which can cause confusion for daughters' perceived expectations regarding familial role-playing.

In addition to the role of reluctant confidant, daughters performed the role of parental mediator within the parents-child triad by helping to alleviate marital conflict. While performing these roles, daughters also took on roles within their sibling relationships. Namely, daughters who were the oldest daughter took on maternal, protective roles by trying to shield their younger siblings from the parents' conflict and private disclosures.

To gain a holistic understanding of daughters' familial role-playing (e.g., parents' confidant or mediator), it is useful to understand why these daughters take on specific roles. Specifically, daughters might play the role of mediator if they feel as though their parents expect them to act on parental disclosures by helping to alleviate marital conflict. Daughters might also perform the role of friend if their parents explicitly ask the daughters for their assistance and support. Furthermore, daughters might take on certain roles (e.g., mother's friend or peacekeeper within the family) because they would feel guilty if they did not try

to help their parents. To that end, the roles that daughters play and the reasoning for performing those roles in their families are intertwined.

In the next chapter, I explore daughters' motivations for enacting particular roles within their families. Highlighting the reasoning behind role-playing will provide scholars with an understanding of how SAA emerging adult daughters' approaches to roles within their families might cause a dilemma as daughters attempt to preserve their family relationships once their own boundaries have been breached after their parents divulge their disclosures.

## Chapter 7

### INTERPRETATION: DAUGHTERS' EXPLANATIONS FOR ROLE-PLAYING

Building on Chapter Six's exploration of South Asian American emerging adult daughters' familial roles, in this chapter, I explore daughters' reasons for performing certain roles within their families to answer the following research: RQ<sub>3</sub>: What explanations do SAA emerging adult daughters offer for why they play particular roles within their familial relationships?

To answer this question, I analyzed respondents' reasons for continuing to serve as their mothers' confidant and their parents' mediator. Specifically, daughters performed the role of reluctant confidant within their mother-daughter relationship. In doing so, they served as recipients of their mothers' unsolicited disclosures. Despite their discomfort with some aspect of that role, daughters continued to serve as a confidant by listening to their mothers' disclosures for both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. Similarly, daughters also cited intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for enacting the role of parental mediator.

#### **Daughters' Role as Parental Confidant**

Daughters revealed intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for serving as their mothers' confidant. Intrinsically motivated individuals do "an activity for its inherent satisfactions" rather than because of "external, prods, pressures, or rewards" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). Conversely, individuals are extrinsically motivated if they feel "externally propelled into action" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). Individuals may perform "actions with the feeling of pressure in order to avoid guilt or anxiety" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 62). In the following sections, I

address each of these types of reasons regarding daughters' motivations to serve as their mothers' confidant.

### **Intrinsic Reasons for Daughters' Role as Parental Confidant**

Participants continued to serve as their mothers' confidant for intrinsic reasons such as wanting to fulfill such a role because they felt that their mothers were looking for support and a listener. For instance, Neha, 25, served as a sounding board for her mother because she believed her mother did not have any close friends. Payal, 21, also noticed that her mother lacked a confidant. After the death of Payal's mother's best friend (who was also Payal's aunt), Payal stepped in to fulfill that role. She said that her mother “confided in me more about family and like what she thought of everyone and what they thought of her.” Accordingly, Payal's mother's insistence on sharing more information with her was the mother's way of having Payal fulfill that friend role.

Participants demonstrated sensitivity to the contexts in which they became confidants. For instance, Layla, 27, understood the circumstances surrounding why her mother treated her as more of a confidant than a daughter:

I feel like those few times that I have been put in that position by her it's out of desperation because she feels like she can't talk to her own friends about [the marital conflict and the husband's abuse] because, you know, she wants to keep up appearances. She doesn't want people to know.

Layla's acknowledgement of her mother's desire not to tell anyone outside of the family about her issues illustrated an impermeable exterior privacy family boundary in which members do not openly share private matters with individuals



outside of the family (Caughlin & Petronio, 2004; Morr Serewicz et al., 2007). Even though Layla's mother did have friends, Layla believed that those friends could not serve as confidants regarding certain matters (e.g., marital crisis and husband's negative behavior) because her mother "wants to keep up appearances." To that end, Layla said:

She thinks I'm the only person she can turn to, and I can tell she feels bad doing it. And I know there are plenty of times where she keeps things to herself even though it's hard for her because she doesn't want to put me in that awkward position.

Layla perceived that her mother understood the "awkward position" Layla was in as confidant. However, Layla serving as her mother's confidant was the only option if the mother wanted to engage in private disclosures and keep the information within the family. Accordingly, Layla took it upon herself to perform the confidant role for her mother.

The need to keep certain family information private emerged in other participant interviews. For example, Sunny, 26, discussed the need to keep issues (e.g., financial concerns) within the family to keep up appearances. She performed the role of confidant because she said that keeping information within the immediate family was "just kind of assumed because they actually don't tell. The rest of the family doesn't even know what's going on. So [my parents] are just kind of to themselves like, 'It's our worry, so we'll keep it amongst ourselves.'" Feeling that they were the only ones their mothers could turn to was the primary reason daughters played the confidant role. Moreover, respondents

stated that they felt "guilty" when they did not talk with and listen to their mothers (e.g., Bhavna) which implies that taking care of their parents was something that they felt they should be doing due to cultural and socialization expectations (Davies & Lindsay, 2004). Those expectations and feelings that they should be performing the role of confidant illustrated daughters' extrinsic reasons for role-playing.

### **Extrinsic Reasons for Daughters' Role as Parental Confidant**

South Asian parents have different expectations for their daughters than their sons (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). There is the expectation that daughters will maintain familial ties and provide care to the family by playing the role of kinkeeper (Brown & DeRycke, 2010; Leach & Braithwaite, 1996; Treas & Mazumdar, 2004). This was certainly true of participants in this study; their responses indicated that they played the role of kinkeeper or confidant because that was what their parents expected them to do. For example, Bhavna, 25, said, "I kind of feel like that's what I'm supposed to do and . . . I don't want her to be upset." Bhavna's feeling that serving as her mother's confidant was what she was "supposed to be doing" and her implicit assertion that not serving as her mother's confidant would cause her mother to be upset depicted the presence of extrinsic reasons (e.g., mother's expectations) for performing the confidant role.

Participants recounted their extrinsic reasons for performing the role of confidant. Namely, they felt prodded into playing roles by their parents and their need to ease their own guilt (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For example, Layla, 27, reflected on her mother's expectations and stated, "When she and my father have

had problems it gets into a weird territory where I'm like confidant-girlfriend in the way that she expects me to play a role in her life." Daughters' perceived expectations to serve as confidants could reflect their perception that they were inferential confidants instead of reluctant confidants (Petronio, 2002). Unlike reluctant confidants who do expect to be the recipients of private disclosures, inferential confidants expect to be the recipients of disclosures because they believe that serving as the other person's recipient is an expectation of their relationship, as between marital couples. To that end, daughters (e.g., Layla) felt that their mothers viewed listening to disclosures as an extrinsic expectation of the parent-child relationship.

Daughters perceived that their mothers had different expectations for their siblings in regards to performing the confidant role. For instance, Sunny, 26, explained how her mother shared her financial woes with her rather than Sunny's older brother. Hearing the financial issues caused stress for Sunny:

They tell my brother every now and then but he has his own worries. He has a house that he's paying for, a wife, so they don't really bug him too much. A lot of the time my mom just tells me" (laughs) . . . [My brother is] constantly working a lot, so he has issues to worry about. At the same time, I do, too, but I don't think they . . . I think they just see "Oh, school."

Sunny's statement illustrated the frustration that daughters felt when their parents expected them to serve as kinkeepers while their brothers and married sisters were not the recipients of those same expectations. Noteworthy in Sunny's case was that her parents talked to her brother regarding finances because they saw that as

an "adult matter" in which his opinion was valued more than Sunny's. However, her parents shared their worry about their finances with her because they believed their son was too busy to listen to them. Sunny's response regarding how her parents saw school as not being work was one that other participants mentioned. Indeed, participants were pursuing higher education in the form of graduate school (e.g., Neha), medical school (e.g., Layla), pharmacy school (e.g., Sunny), law school (e.g., Anisa) and MBAs (e.g., Rani), yet they felt as though their parents viewed them as just being students who think, "Oh, school." In their parents' minds, students were children rather than adults with time-consuming jobs. To that end, daughters felt as though they were expected to serve as recipients of their parents' private disclosures.

The expectation to listen to parental disclosures was even more pronounced for daughters who resided with their parents. Maya, 24, believed that her parents looked to her to do certain things (e.g., listen to parental disclosures) because she was in close proximity; she stated, "A lot of my current roles have to do with the fact that I am the only one at home." Daughters' ability to preserve their family relationships while also attempting to maintain their own boundaries and become an autonomous adult may become difficult (Thorson, 2009). Boundaries become even more blurred when daughters take on additional roles such as their parents' mediator based on intrinsic and extrinsic reasons.

### **Daughters' Role as Parental Mediator**

Daughters revealed intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for serving as their parents' mediator for their parental conflict. In the following sections, I address

each of these types of reasons regarding daughters' motivations to serve as parental mediators.

### **Intrinsic Reasons for Daughters' Role as Parental Mediator**

Participants had various intrinsic reasons for playing the role of their parents' mediator during their parents' conflicts in which they performed the role based on their own accord. For example, Karina, 21, discussed how she adopted the role of mediator for her parents' conflicts because "they don't necessarily prod me into that role like . . . 'Go talk to your father about [this].' I sometimes need to do it on my own when I do." She saw herself as the "calmer personality" who saw things as "more grey from different perspectives rather than black and white" and that there would "definitely be more conflict" if she did not take on the mediator role. Zahra, 21, also chose to play the role of mediator:

My parents are too proud to say anything to one another. So for me it's easier to just -- like I know I'm not exactly being like a therapist -- but I'll talk to them. They never actually told me to mediate the conflict like, "Tell your dad this. Tell your mom this." It's just easier for me to [do it].

For Karina and Zahra, actively mediating their parents' conflicts by talking to their parents individually was something that they did because it was "easier" for them to try to help their parents than be surrounded by their parents' continued conflict. When reflecting on the role of being a parent-like figure to her parents, Asha, 28, said, "I feel like I need to. Like I want to, kind of. Or when it's like really needed. Like they need somebody. They're like alone."

Similarly, Rani, 27, explained that she played the role of the person who fixed familial issues especially at the end of high school and early college. She said that, "Anytime something was wrong I took it upon myself to say, 'Okay, what's going on? What can I do to fix it? What happened? Did this happen and that happen?'" However, Rani noticed a change in herself once she got older:

One, I started recognizing when my mom actually needed help fixing [my father], [and] when she actually just wanted to vent. And two, I think I just realized that there were certain battles that it's not my battle to fight. As much as I would love to fix it, I can only offer support, and it's not mine to fix at that point. But early in life I felt a lot of obligation to try to fix it because I didn't know who else would. I didn't know if they would fix it themselves, if my siblings would try to step in and try to do something; it wasn't in them to do that. And so I took it upon myself, and yeah I definitely felt responsible for trying to make sure things were okay.

Rani mentioned the importance of how her reasons for playing certain roles changed as she progressed through emerging adulthood from high school to college. In particular, Rani viewed her role as helping her mother "fix" her father, being the person her mother vented to, "fighting" certain battles, offering support, and trying to make sure things were okay. She "took it upon herself" to fix her familial issues. Rani's role enactment emerged from her uncertainty regarding her family members (e.g., younger siblings) and whether they would do something to help the situation even though she did not believe it was "in them to do that." In essence, Rani took on the roles because she did not know who else would. Rani's

indication that she "definitely felt responsible" for making sure things were okay and her "obligation to try to fix" her parents' conflict were indicative not of intrinsic motivations, but extrinsic motivations in which she felt indirectly prodded into those roles.

### **Extrinsic Reasons for Daughters' Role as Parental Mediator**

Daughters enacted the familial role of mediator when their parents disclosed marital frustrations to them and expected specific action as a result. Consequently, daughters cited extrinsic reasons for performing the mediator role. For instance, Neha, 25, indicated that she had "played the role often without being asked to. . . . It's expected of me to be the mediator in my family." Although she did not look forward to playing the mediator role, she said, "I'd rather be the mediator than the person in the argument (laughs). I think it really depends on what the argument's about." Neha knew that her parents expected her to provide them with support and assistance by mediating their conflicts; however, she discussed the obligation she felt. Neha stated that, "They think that I should be obligated, I am obligated, to do whatever I need to do for my family," which included helping her parents with their marital conflict. Similarly, Zahra, 21, stated, "I kind of feel obligated to do it just because sometimes I feel like my parents are too proud to say anything to one another."

Additionally, daughters discussed how being expected and obligated to fix the situation between their parents resulted in parent-child tension. In essence, they were placed in a role that they did not ask to be in (i.e., reluctant confidant), and they were expected to play additional roles (e.g., mediator) by trying to

mediate their parents' conflicts. However, attempting to mediate parents' conflict resulted in parent-child tension. For instance, Manisha, 26, talked about how her mother "definitely made comments about" the fact that she was closer to her father than her mother. Manisha reflected on the comments her mother would make:

"Oh, why don't you just go ask for advice from your second wife?" referring to me. She says it out of anger, and so there's a lot of bitterness and jealousy on that end . . . I don't [feel like a second wife]. I just feel like I know how to provide support for my dad in a way that my mom probably doesn't know how to do that or I feel like she doesn't know how to do that.

Manisha's mother felt as though Manisha's ability to provide support for her father and understand him was characteristic of a wife's role rather than a daughter's role. As such, Manisha's mother created a new role of "second wife" to characterize the supportive behavior that Manisha illustrated with her father. Although Manisha offered support to her father because she perceived that her mother did not know how to, she did so at the expense of creating more tension within the mother-daughter relationship.

Similar to Manisha, Sheila, 23, felt a closer connection to her father than her mother. She discussed how she definitely played the role of sounding board for her father during the marital conflict and divorce. As she said, "my older brother and I were always there . . . when there was an issue . . . We always heard everything. But with my mom . . . she was always subdued; she never really said



anything.” Lacking communication from her mother regarding the situation, Sheila embraced her father's communication efforts that offered a more transparent approach and that let her know what was happening in her parents' relationship. However, such openness did produce a negative effect for Sheila as her father mentioned his expectations for loyalty:

My dad did open up to my older brother and I a lot, so I kind of didn't like choosing sides . . . But then when they did get divorce, we didn't really choose sides. So he felt kind of hurt and betrayed like, “Well? Why are you choosing sides? You should be on my side and not on your mom's.” And it wasn't really about choosing sides. It was just about, “Well, you guys are both my parents. I'm not going to really choose.”

In Sheila's situation, fulfilling the role of sounding board for her father resulted in her father expecting that such openness should result in Sheila taking his side rather than her mother's side. He expected his children to be loyal to him because he communicated more openly with them than his wife did before and during the divorce. Indeed, such loyalty conflicts result in children feeling torn between their parents, especially their divorced parents, and forced to defend their loyalty to each parent (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003). To that end, daughters might feel as though they are being disloyal to their parents by taking sides or showing more agreement or support to one parent over another.

When reflecting on why she found herself playing the mediator role between her parents, Layla, 27, responded that “I absolutely do feel an obligation to help, but I have no idea how because it's such an awkward position -- to say the

least -- to be put in." Upon further reflection, Layla stated that, "they never said 'No.' and put their foot down." Essentially, her parents never stopped themselves or each other from letting the parental relational issues affect the parent-child issues. Similar to Layla, Karina, 21, felt somewhat obligated to play the mediator role for her parents:

It's not something I enjoy when it comes to my parents' relationship but other aspects it's fine, the person who sees things a little differently. But when it comes to that . . . I'm not a fan. But I would rather do it and hopefully with the idea of lessening the conflict . . . than not do it. So kind of an obligation, just a little bit.

Similar to other participants, Karina did not enjoy performing the mediator role, especially when it involved her parents' relationship.

Participants with brothers or married sisters felt that their parents unfairly looked to them to perform the mediator role because their parents did not want to bother the other siblings. Accordingly, unmarried daughters were expected to play the role of kinkeeper because they were perceived as having more time to devote to the family-of-origin as compared to married daughters. Furthermore, daughters who serve as the recipients of their parents' divorce-related issues are perceived as being more supportive to their post-divorce parents than sons (Wright & Maxwell, 1991). Impersonating her parents to indicate how she believed they perceived the situation, Layla, 27, compared her older sister Anni and Layla:

"[Anni] has a boyfriend, therefore she has more important obligations. But [Layla] doesn't have a boyfriend. She has no life, so she can do whatever

we want her to do." I feel like when crap like that goes down I get annoyed with [Anni] indirectly because it's not her fault that they think that way. Because it's like why is that the get out of jail free card? Why can't the fact that I'm a medical student and involved in lots of different organizations -- why can't I use those obligations as excuses to not spend every minute of every holiday with them? If I had some other man attached to me then that would be enough of an excuse.

Layla's role-taking represented the potential ramifications for daughters' well-being. Specifically, daughters can become resentful of their parents' increased demands for them to provide them with care, especially if parental expectations are unfair among siblings.

Although she did not serve as a parental mediator, Veena, 22, stated her resentment toward her brother and how his absence resulted in her taking on more adult-like roles within her family:

I think having to take on some of these more adult roles and sometimes I worry about things the way that I do because my parents being older, [I have] a little bit resentment for my oldest brother who I feel got married kind of young and left the house and moved on to his own life. I feel like [he] unfairly left the responsibility on everyone else's shoulders.

Veena's questions of "If I don't do it, who's going to? Or if I could do it, why wouldn't I?" represented the connectedness of extrinsic and intrinsic reasons for role-playing within families. By asking "If I don't do it, who's going to?" Veena represented indirect expectations of someone needing to take on additional roles

and having to do it because she was the only one of her siblings within the home. However, Veena's question of "If I could do it, why wouldn't I?" illustrated more of an intrinsic motivation for performing the role. Veena further reflected on her intrinsic reasons for taking on the adult roles by:

I'm kind of the type of person that takes the weight of the world on my shoulders so I feel like it's my responsibility even though nobody had specifically laid out for me, or expects for it to be my responsibility. I think it's just something I've taken upon myself.

Similar to other daughters, Veena intrinsically took on roles with her family by taking them upon herself; however, she also performed roles because extrinsically she felt that her siblings would not perform the roles so they became her responsibility. To that end, Veena's example depicted the complexity and interconnectedness of daughters' intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for performing roles within their families.

### **Summary**

Within this chapter, I answered the question, "What explanations do SAA emerging adult daughters offer for why they play particular roles within their familial relationships?" In particular, I analyzed daughters' intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for serving as their mothers' confidant and their parents' mediator. Participants' responses revealed that daughters performed the role of their mothers' confidant because such a role was vacant in the mother's life. In the instances in which the mothers had close friends, daughters believed that their mothers wanted to maintain an impermeable exterior privacy boundary by not

discussing her familial issues with non-family members. Moreover, daughters felt as though their mothers expected them to play the role of confidant.

Daughters described performing the role of their parents' mediator because they felt it was their responsibility to fix the situation. Additionally, they were unsure if other family member (e.g., siblings) would intercede to alleviate the conflict. Moreover, daughters admitted to feeling obligated to playing the role of mediator because they perceived that their parents did not want to trouble the daughters' brothers or married sisters. Thus, even though it led to awkwardness and parent-child tension, participants performed the role of confidant and parental mediator.

Understanding why daughters performed particular familial roles is useful because parents expected their daughters to not only listen to the disclosures but also to act on them (Dolgin, 1996). In the next chapter, I explore how daughters acted on those disclosures and performed their roles by analyzing the communicative strategies daughters used when engaged in familial roles.

## Chapter 8

### INTERPRETATION: DAUGHTERS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES DURING ROLE ENACTMENT

The previous chapter explored why South Asian American emerging adult daughters played the roles of reluctant confidant and parental mediator. This chapter provides an understanding of the communication strategies daughters used when engaged in those roles. To that end, I sought to answer the following question:

RQ<sub>4</sub>: What communication strategies do SAA emerging adult daughters use as they enact their familial roles?

Daughters responded to their roles as reluctant confidants and parental mediators in two primary ways depending on their goals. First, daughters enacted coping strategies to help their parents (the disclosers) manage the information they shared (McBride & Bergen, 2008; Petronio, 2000b). Second, daughters engaged in thwarting strategies to restore their personal boundaries after parents violated them by disclosing unsolicited private information (McBride & Bergen, 2008; Petronio, 2000b). Daughters who were recipients of their parents' unsolicited disclosures became reluctant confidants, which resulted in a blurring of boundaries between parents and daughters. Those boundaries were further blurred when parents expected daughters to act on their parents' private disclosures by serving as mediators during parental conflicts. Therefore, daughters took steps to help their parents cope with their disclosures by engaging in coping strategies. They also attempted to restore their privacy boundary and

minimize any further boundary disruption by engaging in thwarting strategies. Daughters responded to their roles of reluctant confidant and parental mediator by using a multitude of coping and thwarting strategies and engaging in different strategies with their parents depending on the relationship that they shared.

### **Daughters' Coping Strategies**

Coping strategies refer to reluctant confidants' attempts to help disclosers manage their private information. Although participants did not solicit their parents' private disclosures, they became co-owners of that information (Petronio, 2002). As such, daughters responded to disclosures by engaging in coping strategies to help their disclosive parents manage that private information. Existing research illustrates that recipients of private disclosures engage in various coping strategies to help disclosers handle their private information: (a) provide comfort and support, (b) give advice, and (c) question the discloser (McBride & Berge, 2008; Petronio, 2000b). The participants in this study favored the first two coping strategies of *providing comfort and support* and *giving advice*, but not the third strategy of *questioning*. This could be because, as indicated by Karina, 21, "I'm basically there to listen to it, but I don't necessarily want to ask questions." Indeed, reluctant confidants might refrain from asking questions because they do not feel that they are capable of providing useful answers (McManus & Nussbaum, 2011b) or they might have wanted to avoid further opening themselves up to unsolicited information. In the following section, I discuss the coping strategies daughters used to help their parents cope with the parents' marital conflict.

## **Providing Comfort and Support**

When acting as reluctant confidants, daughters provided comfort and support to their parents by listening to frustrations about spouses and validating their feelings. Daughters engaged in this coping strategy even if they found the reluctant confidant role to be undesirable or felt uncertain how to provide comfort and support. For instance, Asha, 28, provided her mother with comfort by listening to her as she said, "My mom complains about my dad . . . I do let her vent and let her talk about it a little." Conversely, Manisha, 26, experienced a tension-filled relationship with her mother and instead validated her father's feelings during marital conflict:

He'll threaten to leave . . . He'll talk about how he's upset with the relationship, and how my mother is very difficult to control. Or, he'll ask me to resolve an issue. A lot of it is very heightened, and he's very upset: "Oh, your mother's crazy!" . . . A lot of times I just listen to him, and I say, "I know it's very difficult. She is controlling" . . . so I try to . . . validate his feelings so he knows that he has the floor . . . I don't think they have the ability to stop fighting unless obviously they go to counseling, but that's a whole other issue.

Manisha viewed her parents' arguments as being childish, and said she felt more mature and like a parent as a result. She responded differently to her parents because she viewed her mother as being responsible for her parents' conflict.

Manisha acknowledged how her favoritism towards her father was probably perceived:



This is going to sound really bad (laughs) because I see a lot of conflict as my mom's fault. I used to tell my dad, "Oh, why don't you just separate? I don't understand why you're together!" . . . But now I just leave it as . . . because I know that they're older, and that's something more difficult. I leave it as, "You know how mom is . . . you can't change her. Just let it go. Let it go." So I mean there's a lot of bias. There's a lot of distaste towards my mom, and I'm not proud of it, but it does exist.

Similar to other participants (e.g., Layla, 27) Manisha acknowledged that she responded to her role of confidant and mediator differently depending on her relationship with each parent. Manisha's preference for her father over her mother transferred into her responses during their conflict as she provided her father with comfort and support. Specifically, she listened to him, validated his feelings "so he knows he has the floor" by derogating her mother (e.g., "I know it's very difficult. She is controlling"), implied that her father should separate from her mother, and then encouraged him to "just let it go."

Openly providing her father with comfort and support caused further tension in Manisha's relationship with her mother and illustrated loyalty conflicts within the family (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003; Schrodt & Afifi, 2007). Children who are placed in the uncomfortable role of parental mediator (Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992) can experience unhealthy alliances within their families (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003). Manisha's father triangulated Manisha into the parental relationship by asking her to resolve their marital conflict. In fact, after a marital conflict, Manisha's father often turned to her for support while her mother turned

to Manisha's brother. By having parents turn to a child for support, boundaries become even more blurred as children perform the role of supportive peer-like confidant to their parents and potentially unite with one parent against the other (Schrodt & Afifi, 2007). Additionally, familial relationships became strained when Manisha and her brother experienced tension within their sibling relationship because of their differing parental alliances. For instance, Manisha's mother sought support from Manisha's brother and said, "Why don't you tell him [Manisha's father] that it's his fault here or there or whatnot?" Because Manisha served as her father's support system and her brother served that role for their mother, the two siblings experienced tension when discussing their parents' conflict and actions.

When reflecting on the attributions she made regarding her parents' chronic conflict, Manisha said, "I see it as, it is what it is. It's part of an arranged marriage. It's part of moving to a new country. It's part of bringing up kids who don't have the same views as you do." As a result, Manisha suggested three cultural attributions for her parents' conflict. First, like other participants (e.g., Maya, 24) Manisha believed that her parents' arranged marriage, while a cultural norm in South Asia, was not useful in matching spouses based on personality because her parents were not complementary and had more dissimilarities than similarities. Second, Manisha acknowledged the stress that her parents must have experienced as immigrants in a new country and the additional pressure it must have placed on their marriage. Third, Manisha recognized the difficulty that her parents faced when trying to raise children in a country and culture that differed

from their own. Because of these attributions, Manisha decided to provide comfort and support to her father rather than advise him to separate from her mother because "they're older and that's something more difficult." Even though engaging in this coping strategy might help her father with his frustrations and marital conflict, Manisha's continued involvement affected her family relationships as she experienced some tension with her mother by serving as her father's confidant and tension with her brother who served as the mother's confidant.

Unlike Manisha, Sunny, 26, served as her mother's reluctant confidant for the mother's concerns and worries. She recounted an especially poignant conversation:

All of a sudden, she was like looking at the magazine, and she's like, "Ohhh, dad doesn't have a job. What are we going to do? I'm so worried." And I was like, "Oh God!" (laughs) You know? I'm like, "I know." And the thing is I can't do anything at this point. I don't have any way of helping at home (laughs). I'm still at school. I mean, all I have is loans (laughs). That's all I have.

Sunny listened to her mother's concerns and tried to provide support by saying, "I know" instead of what she thought (i.e., "Oh God!"). She recognized that her father's unemployment and the subsequent financial concerns were stressful for her mother. Even though she did not want to hear this information, Sunny tried to help her mother cope with the information. Subsequently, Sunny prioritized her mother's well-being over her own by refraining from discussing anything that

might cause her mother additional stress. For instance, Sunny's parents wanted her to return home after she graduated from college, and assumed that she would; however, Sunny was hesitant to admit her uncertainty about moving back home with them. Her parents even told Sunny that they were redoing her childhood room and said, "Oh, after you graduate, and when you come back, it'll look nice.' You know? (laughs) And I was just like, 'Ohhh, dearr' (laughs)." Sunny felt like she could not help her parents financially because she was still in school and had loans. However, she could assist her parents by at least letting them hope that she would live with them after she graduated.

Similar to other participants, Sunny felt like she had to provide comfort or support to her mother but she did not know what to say, "because I can't do anything. And I sit there and listen. And I think that's my way of showing her comfort -- to just sit and listen to her, whenever she wants to say it." In Sunny's example, she did not know how to play the role of her mother's confidant and felt like she could not enact change, yet she believed that at least listening to her mother and not discussing anything that would cause additional stress was purposeful. Thus, Sunny engaged in the coping strategy of comfort-giving to make her mother feel better even though it was at the expense of Sunny feeling uncertain, stressed, and worried about her family's well-being and her future.

Reflecting on her relationship with her mother, Layla, 27, said that she felt like she was in unusual territory of confidant-girlfriend when her mother was dealing with spousal abuse and asked a then 10-year-old Layla to stay with her and protect her. As such, Layla stated, "I feel a little weird, and I'm not sure how

to approach her and help her with the things she wants me to help her with when I'm put in that position." Layla's uncertainty of how to provide comfort and support to her mother when she was placed in the role of reluctant confidant resonated with other participants. Only a teenager herself, Natasha, 18, indicated that her father put her mother "down a lot," yet she did not always provide her mother with support regarding her spousal frustrations. Natasha said, "If I had just fought with her I wouldn't have much to say." However, she would provide comfort and say something to her mother only if they were on "good terms."

Although she wanted to provide support, Karina, 21, felt that being placed in the role of reluctant confidant and mediator was futile because she could not enact change:

I think she's definitely more aware of where I'm coming from on that. So I feel like the few times that she does, I won't feel the need to say, I mean I do sometimes say something like, "Go see a therapist," but it's not because I don't want to listen . . . I just feel like the situation isn't improving by talking to me about it. There's not like a lot I can do.

Unsure of how to help, Karina listened to her mother's private disclosures, but refrained from asking questions because she did not feel that she was capable of providing useful answers by giving advice (McManus & Nussbaum, 2011b). Indeed, other participants who were placed in the roles of reluctant confidant and mediator went beyond the coping strategy of comfort and support-giving by providing advice to their parents as a way to help their parents cope with the private information and marital conflict.

## **Giving Advice**

When placed in the roles of reluctant confidant and parents' mediator, daughters tried to help their parents by providing advice and an understanding of the other parent's perspective. For instance, Manisha, 25, gave suggestions to her father when he asked her to resolve his marital conflict. Although she blamed her mother for the conflict, Manisha said she had been "trying really, really hard to just stay neutral when speaking to her as opposed to saying, "he's right and you're wrong." Instead of defending her father, she gave her mother advice saying, "I know it's difficult. I know. I know. It's okay. Just let it go. I know." But at the end of the day we all know that I favor my dad above my mom, and she's very much aware of that." Manisha provided both of her parents with suggestions and advice after parental arguments, yet she favored advice-giving to her father because "he is very, very good about taking my suggestions for the most part."

Zahra, 21, said her mother talked to her about frustrations with Zahra's father. As a result, Zahra responded by acknowledging the frustration and telling her mother, "This is what you should do in this situation." She validated her mother's feelings and tried to give advice, but she felt a little "weird" mediating her parents' marital issues because "I'm not an unbiased, objective third party. I'm their kid." At the same time, she understood her father and felt that she was able to provide her mother with advice for approaching him regarding her frustrations. Like other participants, Zahra talked to her mother and attempted to explain her father's perspective. She then went to her father and said, "Hey, you know, when mom says this, this is what it means. Be careful. This is what you should do in

this situation." As a result, she blended the coping strategies of providing comfort and support by explaining the parents to each other and providing advice (Petronio, 2002).

Similarly, Rani, 27, tried to help her mother by sharing a different perspective and "at least open my mom's eyes a little bit to understand why my dad was acting that way so in the future she could approach it differently." Here, Rani tried to explain her father's behavior to her mother so that her mother could approach her father differently. She felt that she understood where her parents were coming from and that she could provide valuable advice by explaining things from a different perspective. Likewise, Layla, 27, also understood her parents' conflict. Although she preferred not to be triangulated into her parents' conflict, she said that "sometimes I do try to give advice because I feel that when [my mother] talks to me about stuff [it's] because she's at a breaking point and honestly doesn't know what to do." Layla's assertion highlighted Afifi and Nussbaum's (2006) finding that disclosures can help parents manage stress and cope with their situations (Miller et al., 1998).

These examples of daughters who serve as reluctant confidants and are unsure of how to provide comfort to their parents depict role insufficiency (Meleis, 1975). Namely, they believe that they do not possess the adequate resources to fulfill the discloser's role expectations. To that end, even if they knew what was expected of them (e.g., providing advice or comfort to their parents), daughters who were placed in the role of reluctant confidant felt more comfortable engaging in thwarting strategies rather than coping strategies.

## **Daughters' Thwarting Behaviors**

Thwarting strategies encompass reluctant confidants' attempts to protect themselves by minimizing further unwanted disclosure to restore their boundaries after privacy invasions (Petronio, 2000b). Existing research illustrates that recipients of private disclosures engage in thwarting strategies to help restore their boundaries after a discloser shared private information with them: (a) erecting territorial markers, (b) indicating discomfort or embarrassment, (c) distancing behaviors (e.g., expressing disapproval), and (d) switching topics (Burgoon et al., 1989). Daughters described engaging in the first two thwarting strategies of *erecting territorial markers* and *indicating discomfort or embarrassment* in an effort to minimize being the recipient of further disclosures.

### **Erecting Territorial Markers**

Participants who erected territorial markers employed responses such as saying, "I don't want to hear about this," not saying anything, or stopping the conversation completely (McBride & Bergen, 2008). As a result, daughters renegotiated their privacy boundaries by restricting their role as reluctant confidant and parents' mediator.

For example, Sheila, 23, had a tumultuous relationship with her mother, especially after her parents' divorce. Sheila's father discussed parental arguments with Sheila; however, she did not view that information as unwanted because she shared a closer relationship with her father. However, Sheila rejected her mother's attempts to place her in the role of her mother's reluctant confidant because Sheila felt that her mothers' lack of openness implied that she indirectly blamed Sheila



and her brother for the parents' divorce. Sheila recounted her actions whenever her mother mentioned the divorce:

I used to cut her off, and now I just listen, and I'll say, "Okay" and then I'll say, "I have to leave" . . . whether it is if I visit her or if I have to get off the phone. I'll just say, "Okay, I got to go" and then she'll usually say, "Don't leave!" or "Don't hang up the phone!" And then usually I will hang up if she keeps talking, and she doesn't stop it.

Sheila renegotiated her boundaries and the communication that she shared with her mother by stopping the conversation and indicating that she did not want to hear that information by leaving or terminating the phone call.

Sheila's responses to her roles of reluctant confidant and mediator were consistent with research regarding adult children's responses to their divorced parents' disclosures (Greenwood, 2012). Specifically, like adult children of divorce (ACD), Sheila went through a period of not speaking with her mother because she felt like she was placed in the middle of her parents' divorce and that her mother might have blamed Sheila for the subsequent divorce. Sheila's response of threatening to leave and subsequently hanging up the phone illustrated the shift in power between mother and daughter. In particular, Sheila was financially independent and she chose to live with her father after the divorce. Sheila's responses highlighted the voluntary nature of the ACD-parent relationship and Sheila's subsequent control over the strained relationship (Greenwood, 2012). Recognizing that she held more power in the relationship, Sheila set guidelines for her mother that she would terminate phone calls and

visitations if her mother engaged in any divorce-related talk, especially regarding her father.

Similar to Sheila, Layla, 27, shared a close relationship with her father. However, she did not understand how she factored into her parents' relationship because she was not a therapist. She did not want to hear her parents' private disclosures or serve as her parents' mediator; however, she felt selfish for telling them to talk to a therapist instead of talking to her:

I feel like your parents should be your parents . . . I think between the two of my parents, my dad is the one I'm more connected to as a friend. But, if he talks to me in that type of friendship tone about his relationship with my mom, I just don't want to hear it. I just don't want to know what's going on between them.

Layla further discussed her lack of understanding as to how she factored into her parents' marriage and why they looked to her for help:

It sounds selfish, but it's a very like Western thing, which is probably why I feel bad saying it, but their marriage is between the two of them. If they have a problem, I don't see – especially at this point when I'm like grown up – like I don't see how I figure into it at all. They're having communication issues, issues concerning their relationship and possible fidelity and infidelity. I don't figure into that picture at all. That's just with them. I have no idea what my role is supposed to be in that conversation.

Layla's reflection regarding her parents' relationship was noteworthy because it explained why she engaged in thwarting behavior. In essence, she did not

understand what her "role" was because she did not "figure into" their marriage. She especially did not understand why she, as a "grown up" was getting triangulated into their marital issues. Furthermore, Layla believed that her perception that her parents' marriage was just "between the two of them" was reflective of a Western (i.e., American) mindset and made her "feel bad" saying that because not wanting to help her parents sounded "selfish."

In another instance, Maya, 24, was the recipient of both of her parents' frustrations about each other. She laughed when saying, "It's always kind of the same fight . . . and honestly I attribute it primarily to the fact that they are in an arranged marriage because they didn't know if they would like each other before they got married." Maya subsequently attempted to explain her parents to each other and the fact that she would not be able to mediate their conflicts for them forever:

You guys need to just understand that you are not going to change each other after 30 years (laughs) . . . When I tell my mom that I don't want to hear about it, because I don't want to get involved, I just say, "Mommy, you know this about him. Dad, you know this about her. It's just how it is." . . . When I move out, they're just left with each other! Unless we visit them on the weekends. And that kind of like . . . "You guys have to figure this out! You have 30 years ahead of you!"

Although Maya told her parents that she did not "want to hear about it because I don't want to get involved," her actions contradicted her assertion because she did get involved by trying to explain her parents to each other. She

remained triangulated in her parents' conflict, and she served as a mediator until she could no longer tolerate it:

They have good weeks and bad weeks. So when they have a cluster of fighting, then I'll hear a lot of it because I'm the only daughter that is home. So when I hear those things, usually I'm able to mediate it. Usually I've learned to just listen and have very neutral responses, but when it comes to a point where I have an opinion about it . . . I have to say, "I don't want to get involved because this is making me not want to get married" (laughs). So at that point they kind of tone it down, and they're like, "Okay, fine we'll work it out. Fine, we love each other. Fine, it will be okay." . . . So, that's part of the argument that I'll tell my parents about like, "Your relationship, no matter how much you love each other, it definitely tells me that I need to find someone that I like because I don't want to be stuck with someone who doesn't like the things that I like."

Maya's statement illustrated the complexity of daughters' responses. She recognized that her parents' fighting was cyclic and somewhat repetitive. She also attributed their conflicts to the lack of similarity, exacerbated by their arranged marriage. Maya believed that her parents wanted her to engage in coping strategies of advice-giving to help them mediate their conflicts. Although she did engage in those responses, she did so reluctantly because she wanted to engage in thwarting strategies by not being triangulated into her parents' marital conflict. Moreover, Maya emphasized that being a part of her parents' conflict was causing

her not to want to be married. Like other participants, Maya wanted to restore her boundaries because it caused her discomfort.

### **Indicating Discomfort or Embarrassment**

Daughters attempted to restore their boundaries by indicating that playing the roles of reluctant confidant and parental mediator caused them discomfort.

Although uncomfortable as a reluctant confidant and mediator, Layla, 27, provided her mother with advice to help her cope with her frustration. However, she said, "with my dad I take that avoidance, and I'm going to keep quiet and hope he overlooks this and goes to someone else and talks to someone else."

Layla indicated that she hoped her parents understood "the fact that I'm not saying anything that I'm uncomfortable and will stop talking. But that usually doesn't happen." Like Layla, Zahra, 21, felt uncomfortable in the roles of reluctant confidant and mediator. She discussed why she felt "weird" when she was placed in the role of her parents' confidant:

I don't like being put in the middle especially with my parents, and I don't always know if I'm doing it right . . . because I'm 21 and not exactly experienced at mediating conflicts. It's kind of weird to come in between both of my parents. They said that they'd try [to not] put me in that role because it just sort of comes out on accident as they're talking.

Zahra vocalized her discomfort and her parents tried to take that into account.

Zahra's discomfort came from the fact that she did not enjoy being triangulated into her parents' conflict. Moreover, she recognized that she did not know if she was performing the undesired roles of reluctant confidant and mediator correctly.

Thus, Zahra not only found herself playing roles she did not want to play, but she also experienced role insufficiency because she did not know if she possessed the adequate resources to fulfill her parents' role expectations (Meleis, 1975). As a result, Zahra, like other participants, renegotiated her boundaries by blending the goals of coping and thwarting strategies to create a new strategy: establishing separate parental relationships.

### **Blending Coping and Thwarting Strategies**

Daughters' responses highlighted an additional way that they renegotiated their boundaries after boundary dissolution: establishing separate parental relationships. After enacting coping strategies (e.g., offering support) and thwarting strategies (e.g., avoiding/erecting territorial markers), they blended both strategies by establishing separate parental relationships.

### **Establishing Separate Parental Relationships**

Daughters attempted to establish separate relationships with their parents by talking with their parents individually to try to explain one parent's communication style to the other parent. In doing so, they were able to provide comfort to their parents (i.e., coping strategy) while minimizing their placement in the mediator role by both parents simultaneously (i.e., thwarting strategy).

Daughters seemed to create this strategy after trying a multitude of coping and thwarting techniques. For instance, Karina, 21, felt uncomfortable being on the receiving end of her parents' marital woes. Although she listened and tried to help them engage in perspective taking (i.e., coping strategy), sometimes she engaged in avoidance because she felt like she could not accomplish anything (i.e.,

thwarting strategy). She tried to fix their conflicts, but it never really worked. After trying several strategies to restore her boundaries, Karina said, "they don't like each other, so I mean I really have to establish separate relationships with them rather than one of a family unit." Accordingly, she treated her relationship with her parents as being separate and tried to approach them individually by explaining one parent to the other parent.

Similarly, Rani, 27, stated, "instead of trying to mediate two parties, I would mediate them individually." She did that by approaching her parents differently:

[I would] go to my mom and say, "Mom, this is how dad is. You just have to understand that you can't talk to him like that. It affects him this way. And then I'll go to my dad and try to get him into a conversation . . . and then it's me avoiding my dad and just kind of talking my mom down a bit and just saying, "Okay, this is how you can adjust" because I knew my mom was capable of adjusting whereas my dad would focus on the thought of what went wrong. And I know that it was easier to mediate the conversation that way and just kind of teach my mom that she's going to have to be the bigger person right now.

By approaching her parents separately, Rani believed that she was able to help her parents effectively manage their conflict. Of course, her strategy placed more of the effort on her mother as she expected her mother to be the one to make adjustments in her communication conflict rather than her father. By expecting her mother to adjust to her father, Rani reinforced the notion that South Asian

women have more expectations and pressure placed on them than South Asian men (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Specifically, South Asian women are looked to as the kinkeepers of the family who are expected to provide care, maintain communication (Brown & DeRycke, 2010; Pinquart & Sörensen, 2005), and even mediate conflicts among family members (Treas & Mazumdar, 2004).

In another example, Sunny, 26, also approached her parents differently. Her father expressed his frustrations after Sunny's mother "nags about . . . everything he does wrong":

That's when it triggers him, and he'll say, "Your mom is doing this, and I don't like it!" And even though when he's doing something wrong, I don't say anything. And I don't know why. I think I'm still more afraid of my mom than him, but I never say anything to him.

Sunny, like Rani, illustrated different expectations for her parents and more leniency for her father than her mother. By not confronting her father even "when he's doing something wrong," she communicated that she had established different relationships with her parents. Accordingly, by not saying anything to her father, he might view that as her support for him (i.e., coping strategy). By not getting involved, she was also able to minimize being triangulated into her parents' conflict (e.g., thwarting strategy). Therefore, by establishing separate relationships with their parents and approaching their expectations for their parents differently, daughters felt that they were able to help their parents cope with their conflict while simultaneously minimizing direct confrontation between the parents.



## Summary

In this chapter, I answered the question, "What communication strategies do SAA emerging adult daughters' use as they enact their familial roles?" I analyzed the strategies that daughters used once they had been placed in the roles of reluctant confidant and parents' mediator. Participants' responses revealed that daughters enacted the coping strategies of *providing comfort and support* and *giving advice* to help the disclosive parent cope with the private information. Moreover, daughters enacted the thwarting strategies of *erecting territorial markers* and *expressing discomfort or embarrassment* to restore their privacy boundaries and minimize further boundary disruption. In addition to engaging in multiple coping and thwarting strategies, daughters also blended the strategies by establishing separate relationships with their parents.

Understanding daughters' responses to their roles of reluctant confidant and parental mediator is useful because the ramifications that confidants experience depend on how they perceive and approach the undesired role (Petronio, 2000b). For instance, some individuals might feel qualified to play the mediator role believing that they are prepared to meet the demands; others, however, might not feel prepared for the role of mediator and, as a result, experience negative ramifications such as distress or the feeling of inadequacy at being unable to provide support. In the next chapter, I detail exactly how these daughters were affected by their role-playing with their families.

## Chapter 9

### INTERPRETATION: DAUGHTERS AFFECTED BY ROLE-PLAYING

The previous chapter explored the communicative strategies that South Asian American emerging adult daughters enacted when engaged in their familial roles of reluctant confidant and parental mediator. This chapter provides an understanding of how SAA daughters are affected by the enactment of those roles. To that end, I sought to answer the following question:

RQ<sub>5</sub>: How is SAA emerging adult daughters' progression toward adulthood affected by their role-playing within their familial relationships?

Participants' responses supported Arnett's (2003) finding that emerging adults in American ethnic minority groups embraced criteria for adulthood reflecting individualism (e.g., accepting responsibility for one's self) similar to their White American peers. However, emerging adults in American ethnic minority groups also embraced criteria for adulthood reflecting interdependence (e.g., fulfilling family roles and taking care of their families) which illustrate cultural values of familial obligations and concern for others. Embracing both criteria is reflective of daughters' bicultural South Asian American identity.

Arnett (2003) stated that "young people in ethnic minority groups appear to have a bicultural conception of the transition to adulthood, combining the individualistic transitions of the majority culture with a greater emphasis on obligations toward others drawn from the values of their ethnic minority cultures" (p. 74). Daughters' responses illustrated how the interdependence-related prioritization of their familial roles (e.g., parental mediator) negatively affected

their individuation and progression into adulthood. Moreover, daughters believed that their parents primarily valued role transitions (e.g., establish career and get married) despite their own behavior which interfered with this. Specifically, participants believed that their parents would not view them as adults until they were married. However, being triangulated into their parents' marital conflict negatively affected participants' views of relationships and marriage.

In the following section, I present daughters' individualism-related characteristics, interdependence-related characteristics, and role transitions regarding their perception of adulthood. I use this data to illustrate how daughters' enactment of familial roles affected their perceived progression toward adulthood.

### **Daughters' Individualism-Related Characteristics of Adulthood**

Daughters reflected on their perceptions of adulthood by focusing on whether they had achieved or lacked independence-related characteristics of adulthood such as being financially independent from parents and no longer residing in their parents' household (Arnett, 2003). Consistent with previous literature, daughters rated individualism-related qualities of character such as accepting responsibility for one's self, not residing with their parents, and being financially independent as higher criteria for achieving adulthood than role transitions such as marriage (Arnett, 1998). Participants (e.g., Priya, 19; Manisha, 26; and Asha, 28) indicated that adulthood meant accepting responsibility for one's actions (Arnett, 1998). Additionally, daughters (e.g., Priya, 19; Zahra, 21; Payal, 21; Neha, 25; Sunny, 26) saw themselves as adults because of their individualism-related qualities such as being self-reliant and living on their own.

For example, Neha stated that she felt like "more of an adult in the last six months than I have ever in my life. I think just moving far away has helped. I'm not just an hour drive away."

Daughters (e.g., Manisha, 21; Karina, 21) described feeling like adults because they were financially independent of their parents. In one instance, Neha, 25, discussed the pride she felt in being financially independent and not relying on her parents to pay for her graduate school. To that end, she said, "I feel like I'm more of an adult than I've been in my life." Conversely, other daughters (e.g., Natasha, 18; Zahra, 21; Layla, 27) did not perceive themselves to be adults because they were financially dependent on their parents.

Although daughters mentioned individualism-related characteristics, it was evident that they viewed their adulthood based on their interactions with others as well as their parents' expectations. As such, daughters discussed salient interdependence-related characteristics of adulthood and how engaging in other-oriented behaviors (e.g., taking care of their families) affected their progression toward adulthood.

### **Daughters' Interdependence-Related Characteristics of Adulthood**

Daughters reflected on their perception of adulthood by focusing on their interdependence-related criteria for adulthood such as being other-oriented and prioritizing their family's needs over their own (Arnett, 2003). Daughters (e.g., Payal, 21; Bhavna, 25) believed that taking care of their family members was something that, according to Payal, "already makes you more of an adult" regardless of one's age. Daughters' responses suggested that they perceived their

kinkeeping and caregiving behaviors as being important. However, by putting their parents' needs over their own, participants likely find it difficult to fully break away and engage in the type of self-exploration and individuality that are characteristic of emerging adulthood. Rather than prioritizing self-exploration and individuation in which they focus on differentiating from their families, emerging adult daughters enacted caregiving behaviors in their roles of reluctant confidant and parental mediator. Consequently, they felt the need to stay closer to their families, provide financial support, and help their parents' with their emotional needs even if doing so negatively affected their own well-being.

### **Prioritization of Parents' Emotional Well-Being**

Daughters' prioritization of their parents' emotional needs over their own needs affected daughters' progression into adulthood. Consistent with previous literature, participants illustrated that being their parents' reluctant confidant and mediator negatively influenced their mental well-being (Petronio & Jones, 2006; Petronio, 2010). As their parents' reluctant confidant and mediator, daughters became distressed, frustrated, and burdened, which was consistent with previous literature regarding children's experiences as the recipients of parental disclosures (Afifi & McManus, 2010; Amato & Afifi, 2006). To that end, Arnett (2003) stated that a criterion of adulthood was children's lack of an emotional tie to their parents. Daughters' prioritization of their parents' emotional needs illustrated that being deeply tied to their parents emotionally may serve as an impediment to daughters' progression toward adulthood.

Neha, 25, indicated that serving as her parents' reluctant confidant negatively impacted her and created pressure for her. She tried to explain to her parents the pressure she felt from them; however, her parents "don't see it as pressure or they think it's an irrelevant concern on my behalf." As such, Neha felt obligated to serve as her parents' confidant:

They think that I should be obligated – I am obligated – to do whatever I need to do for my family . . . In their mind they do everything possible for their children, so in return we should respect our parents to give them what they want. So that's kind of where that ends (laughs).

Reflective of South Asian culture, Neha felt that she should take care of her family's needs (Talbani & Hasalani, 2000). She believed that her parents did not acknowledge her statements about the pressure she felt serving as their confidant because they felt that she should be obligated to reciprocate their gestures of providing care. Specifically, her parents "do everything possible for their children" and Neha's response illustrated that her parents viewed listening to their problems was a way for her to reciprocate the parents' gestures and illustrate respect. Recognizing that further discussion was futile (i.e., "that's kind of where that ends"), Neha, like other participants (e.g., Layla), refrained from further explaining the stress and pressure she felt.

Similar to Neha, Layla, 27, said that serving as her parents' confidant negatively affected her because she saw it as a burden, felt responsible to fix their relationship, and felt obligated to be there for her parents. She discussed the toll

that serving as their confidant during their marital conflict took on her and how she felt "very lost and alone":

My parents have been my rock and support. If all else fails I know they are the people that I can go to . . . but during that time period I did not feel that way . . . I felt really bad. I felt like the rug was just pulled out from under me to be like, "That isn't there for me anymore? I can't just blindly depend on that?"

Layla's once-stable relationship with her parents caused her uncertainty by making her question the dependability of her current and future relationships. Accordingly, Layla became more introverted by keeping her opinions "bottled up inside":

I try to do what I think I should be doing because it's expected of me by the people who gave me life and all the duties I have. I think I end up feeling . . . very frustrated and torn and just stressed out imposing these things on myself.

Layla's parents were preoccupied with their own marital conflict and expected Layla to listen to their private disclosures without attending to her emotional needs; they failed to recognize that being the recipient of those disclosures and expectations caused her stress (Bradford & Barber, 2005). She even referred to her parents as "the people who gave me life" and said that it was her duty to serve as her parents' confidant, a sentiment that resonated with other participants (e.g., Neha).

Moreover, Layla intentionally tried to have her parents see her more as a child than an adult by acting child-like because she figured they would be less apt to triangulate her into their marital conflicts:

I never really thought about it until just now, but . . . Maybe that's the reason I try to keep things really light and happy when I do try to communicate with them, and why I'm less apt to talk about more serious things because . . . I want to, on some subconscious level, reinforce the fact that "I'm a kid! I'm a child! You take care of me! Don't talk to me about your personal issues!" . . . I don't really tell them about anything that indicates that I'm an adult capable of complex stuff and giving opinions on things outside of very simple and mundane topics.

The fact that Layla was trying to depict more child-like behaviors instead of adult-like behaviors was worrisome because as a 27-year-old medical student, Layla's insistence on moving away from adult interactions with her parents can result in negative ramifications (e.g., stunted emotional growth).

Similar to Layla, Asha, 28, did not want to be triangulated into her parents' conflict. She sighed when she reflected on the pressure she experienced and said she was "the one that has to be positive and mature. . . I am very anxious. I don't like people depending on me like that." Asha felt responsible to help her parents resolve their conflict because they demonstrated permeable boundaries between interparental conflict and parent-child subsystems (Fosco & Grych, 2010). Accordingly, Asha felt that they looked to her to alleviate their marital conflict. Even though Asha had been vocal about the pressure she felt from her parents



"depending" on her to serve as their mediator, she eventually stopped communicating that pressure to them because she did not want them to feel guilty:

They feel bad, and they're like, "Okay, we'll work on it" or whatever . . .

But now I don't really want to say too much anymore because I feel awkward. . . . I realize they're actually really sensitive, so I try not to say that stuff as much as I used to. But I did used to be very honest about it, and [say] "You did this!" and "You're doing this!"

At a time when emerging adults typically break away from their parents and focus on individuation, Asha was more concerned with her parents' psychological well-being than her own. She sighed when saying that she had become "almost like a people-pleaser." Indeed, the personality characteristic of people-pleasing is often depicted by children who took on caretaker characteristics for their parents (Hooper, 2008) and can be one that children may enact in later relationships.

Furthermore, Asha explained that the stress she felt turned into "a lot of pressure and anxiety. But I've heard that people say that when your parents get old and they start acting like kids, the roles start reversing, so I guess we're at that stage (sighs)." Asha's perception that she needed to engage in caregiving and kinkeeping behaviors for her parents was notable because familial caregivers are typically middle-aged or older women who care for elderly parents as well as their own children (Roberto & Jarrott, 2008). As an unmarried woman in her twenties, Asha's belief that she needed to care for her parents' emotional well-

being could be detrimental as caregivers often neglect their own well-being and self-care (Pinquart & Sörensen, 2005; Roberto & Jarrott, 2008).

Many participants described prioritizing their parents' well-being over their own, much to their own detriment. As a parental mediator, Manisha, 26, felt obligated to be physically close to her parents because of her parents' constant arguing:

Sometimes it's got to a really extreme level . . . where I need to physically be there, so in that sense I do feel obligated that I am confined to a certain location in terms of where I get a career or where I want to live.

Sacrificing career opportunities to focus on her role as a daughter who mediated her parents' interactions might negatively affect Manisha because emerging adulthood is a time for individuation and autonomy and career development (Arnett, 2012). Manisha did not discuss her perceived obligation to be "confined to a certain location." Instead, she said, "I avoid it because the last thing I want to do is make them feel guilty about it." Manisha's belief that she was "forced to mature and grow faster than I possibly ideally wanted to" is illustrative of one effect of emotional parentification (Hooper, 2008).

Emotional parentification occurs when children serve as confidants and mediators to their parents by providing their parents with support (Hooper, 2008). Because of this parentification, children may become more self-reliant and independent at an earlier age; however, it might take the form of pseudo-maturity (East, 2012). They also feel responsible for the well-being for their family members as evidenced by Karina's, 21, assertion that she felt "like it's my

responsibility to make things better . . . I think their stress manifests itself into my own stress like in that way." Thus, emotional parentification is helpful for the parents, but it can be detrimental for the children who feel pressured to care for their parents' emotional needs.

Participants' role-playing as mediator caused stress for participants. For instance, Rani, 27, felt pressured to be that "perfect daughter or that perfect person that can fix everything. . . It would frustrate me and affect my life, and . . . I couldn't get my stuff done because I was constantly fixing their battles." Rani's response illustrated daughters' preference to help their parents by "fixing their battles" even if it was at the expense of their own psychological well-being (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003). Rani's desire to help her parents at the expense of her not getting "stuff done" illustrated how daughters' enactment of familial roles can serve as impediments to their own progression toward adulthood.

In sum, daughters' responses demonstrated the salience of interdependence-related characteristics that lead them to prioritize their parents' well-being over their own. As a consequence, they invested time into taking care of their parents' emotional needs. However, they perceived that their parents would not view them as adults until certain role transition characteristics (e.g., marriage) were achieved.

### **Daughters' Role Transition-Related Characteristics of Adulthood**

Daughters reflected on their perception of adulthood by focusing on role transition-related characteristics of adulthood such as completing education, establishing a career, and getting married (Arnett, 2003). Daughters felt pressured

to achieve role transitions because they believed that their parents would only view them as adults once they established a career and were married. However, spending time engaged in interdependence-related behaviors by serving in familial roles caused pressure for children who were trying to finish their education. Moreover, being triangulated into their parents' marital conflict made them cautious in forming relationships, and it adversely influenced their views of marriage. Thus, daughters felt pressured to take care of their parents' needs (i.e., interdependence-related characteristics) while at the same time attaining certain role transitions (e.g., career and marriage) even though their role-playing sometimes sabotaged their ability or desire to attain role transitions.

### **Completing Education**

Participants described feeling like they were in a prolonged adolescence instead of adulthood because they were still in school, even though most pursued postsecondary education (e.g., MBA, pharmacy school, medical school) (Arnett, 2012). Bhavna, 25, felt like "school has just continued my adolescence indefinitely." In fact, she said, "it's hard because I'm a student, so much of the time I don't really feel like an adult." In another example, Rani, 27, felt like she was living life backwards instead of progressing into adulthood because she stopped working full-time and returned to college to pursue an MBA.

Participants described how their assumed roles made it difficult to achieve career and education goals. Sunny, 26, explained how being her mother's reluctant confidant was stressful and made it difficult for her to concentrate on finishing her

education. She understood that her parents wanted her to finish her graduate studies so that she could start working and help her family financially:

They keep praying that next year comes quicker, so I can help them out, which I will . . . I really don't want to hear it because I'm trying so hard to focus on school. And I hate that worry because it adds an extra stress that I don't need.

Although Sunny became "discouraged" and found it difficult to concentrate on her studies, she refrained from telling her mother how her mother's stress regarding her father's unemployment was negatively influencing her. She did not communicate her perceived obligation to assist her parents financially because she did not want to hurt their feelings:

I think I've conditioned myself (laughs) for it to not affect me as much as it did before . . . Now that I'm so busy with rotations . . . It goes to the back of my mind, and I'm like, "Okay, push it back there, and I'm going to keep going" (laughs).

As a reluctant confidant to her mother's worries, Sunny coped with the stress she felt by trying to engage in positive reframing by viewing her parents' situation as motivation to "keep going" and finish her studies. She engaged in positive self-talk by saying, "Okay, I have to finish. I have to go study. I have to go help them." However, concentrating on her studies was difficult because hearing her mother's worries made Sunny worry. Additionally, the pressure to assist her family by finishing her education so she could establish a career and offer financial support while still serving as her mother's confidant was overwhelming.

## **Establishing Career**

Participants (i.e., Veena, 22; Maya, 24; Sunny, 26; Layla, 27) indicated that they felt like adults because they had jobs and were working towards careers. However, other participants (i.e., Natasha, 18; Priya, 19) did not feel like adults because they were unemployed.

Most, however, felt that their parents wanted them to have a career before they were married. Veena's, 22, parents wanted her to be an "independent woman who earns on her own" before she was married. She described how adamant her parents were regarding her completion of medical school before marriage:

If there is any talk of that topic [marriage] at all that conversation becomes very much like a parent and a child like very quickly. Like "That is not a conversation that we are even going to entertain right now." . . . I'll bring it up and like nobody wants to be having that conversation right now . . . It's been a little bit frustrating, but I see the wisdom behind that advice. I think emotionally I get upset about it, but logically it's my future and I see why that is the right step to take.

Although being told the order of her life events irritated Veena initially, she saw the logic behind it when she was older. She said that her parents' advice "is for my own safety and security because if I am not earning and I am in a relationship and married, I have no way of supporting myself. I have no independence." Veena even recounted her mother's story about how her parents had given her gold bangles on her wedding day. Those bangles served as safety and security so that "if something happened and she had to run away from her

husband she could sell that gold that was on her body and she could go where she needed to go." Reflecting on her parents' importance of establishing a career, Veena said, "I think my parents were trying to give me that gold, figuratively speaking, by finishing medical school. By giving me something to hold on to that's my own so I'm not depending on someone else."

Similarly, Zahra, 21, knew that her parents wanted her to have a career before she was married; however, she implicitly knew that her mother would not consider her an adult until she was married *and* had children. When talking about her future, Zahra focused on career goals whereas her parents wanted to express their preferences for her marriage:

It was a little uncomfortable because . . . we weren't all on the same page in terms of what was expected for my future. So when they started talking about it, I thought they were talking about my career goals . . . At the time I was in between applying to law school, and so I started talking about that. And they were more about the future like kids [and] marriage . . . eventually we all got on the same page which was basically like, "We're not going to talk about this anymore" (laughs).

Zahra indicated how she was focused on her career, and how she felt "a little uncomfortable" when her parents started discussing her future relationship rather than her future employment. Her parents shared that feeling of discomfort as they, and Zahra, decided to discuss her future in terms of career instead of marriage.

Participants stated that their parents had expectations regarding their daughters' spouses and age at the time of marriage. Although participants stated

that they felt their parents would finally view them as adults when they were married, daughters complied with their parents' wishes to fulfill the prerequisites of marriage. Specifically, parents wanted their daughters to establish their career first. Indeed, only after their career was established were daughters allowed to date. However, parents viewed dating as only being purposeful for marriage and that daughters should know the marriage potential of a man early into the courtship period (Dugsin, 2001; Gordon, 2003).

### **Getting Married**

Daughters felt pressured to achieve the role transition of marriage to meet their parents' expectations. However, their roles as reluctant confidant and parental mediator negatively affected their psychological well-being and their views of marriage, thus delaying that role transition. Daughters also discussed how their parents' marital expectations and directives affected them. Specifically, while simultaneously pursuing a career, daughters felt pressured to marry before their thirties and to help their family members emotionally and materially. Thus, during the emerging adulthood time period, daughters attempted to balance familial roles with their progression toward adulthood; however, prioritizing those family roles could be detrimental to daughters' individuation and adulthood.

Participants (e.g., Maya, 24; Asha, 28) felt that their parents would view them as adults once they were married. Asha, 28, indicated that marriage was a big component of her parents' perception of adulthood, especially marrying in her twenties. She reflected on her parents' preferences, saying that "They seem to think there is a blueprint like . . . you have to be married by like 25 or something .



. . Where does it say that? (laughs). It's like someone gave them the rules. It's so funny." At the age of 25, Neha also discussed the important connection between marriage and adulthood, in addition to the age of marriage. Specifically, her parents would say, "'When you grow up and you're married' not just 'When you grow up,'" thus implying that marriage was seen in combination with adulthood.

Extended family members also contribute to pressure for daughters to get married at certain ages. Similar to other participants (e.g., Priya, 19), Neha's extended family offered to help find Neha a husband:

My cousin is now 32, and they see her like the lost cause. So now all the pressure is on me, like "Neha is 25, so let's focus on her. We're interested in her biodata." And I am like, "Do not!" (laughs). . . My brother is like, "I'm glad you're going through this, so I don't have to." But, it's a double standard, so it wouldn't even matter.

In addition to the pressure she faced to be married before she was perceived as being a "lost cause," Neha also mentioned the double standards that existed for her brother. Specifically, South Asian culture is more strict regarding daughters marrying at a younger age than sons (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000).

The interesting aspect of Neha's situation was that she was already in a romantic relationship that her parents were aware of. However, Neha's parents disapproved of her relationship with a non-South Asian man and refrained from telling their extended family members about her relationship. Instead, they preferred having more control regarding her mate selection. In particular, if Neha had someone in mind, they would have wanted Neha to "first and foremost ask

them if it's okay to date this person and then give them the whole background on them and then go ahead with the relationship." Neha's assertions illustrate parents' desire for control over children's decisions and levels of autonomy (Bradford & Barber, 2005). Indeed, such control is illustrative of parental intrusion in which the parents overstep their boundaries by interfering with their daughters' individualism. Furthermore, Neha's parents wanted to exercise their control by terminating her romantic relationship:

[My mother will] ask me if I would like for her to break up with him for me. I told her that's not a relevant question to ask because I can handle this on my own and they have no reason to break up with him in my mind.

In this instance, Neha's mother was intrusively over-stepping boundaries by offering to terminate her daughter's romantic relationship. Such intrusion is interesting because the mother also blurred boundaries by making her daughter a reluctant confidant. Thus, Neha believed that her mother wanted her daughter to provide her with support for her emotional needs by serving as a confidant, yet the mother did not reciprocate that support for her daughter regarding mate selection.

Participants reflected on parental expectations of marriage now that they were in their later twenties. For instance, Sunny, 26, said that she did not like when her parents mentioned marriage:

I know I'll get married eventually, but (pause) it feels like this pressure, like now that I'm getting older it's something that has to happen. Like I

have to get married next year (laughs), you know? . . . It feels weird actually. I feel really awkward (laughs) whenever they bring it up.

Sunny's perception that she had to marry next year made her feel "weird," "awkward," and "pressured." Indeed, Sunny already felt pressured to finish her education so she could contribute financially to her family. Being her parents' reluctant confidant and listening to her mother's financial concerns created stress, which spilled over into Sunny's education. Having her parents pressure her to get married added an additional layer of stress.

Pressure to marry consistently emerged from participants' speech. Like Sunny, Manisha, 26, felt pressured to get married. In fact, Manisha's father often remarked, "You'll always be under our control until you get married." Manisha indicated that she understood that "coming from a South Asian background that it's an expectation for people to get married, especially a daughter because . . . for a father it has a lot of pride in that, so I respect it." Manisha's father told her to start looking for a potential husband since she was completing her graduate studies, otherwise "We're going to start looking." Manisha discussed her response to her father's assertion that he would actively take part in finding her a husband:

I understand because I am 26, and that is kind of old for an Indian girl in my parents' eyes . . . At the same time I am also not willing to settle for just anybody, and they get that. They're just putting a little pressure on me to encourage me to look more actively.

Manisha indicated that 26 was old for an Indian girl to be unmarried and that they would start searching for a potential match for her, but such an idea was laughable

for Manisha. Growing up in the United States, arranged marriages in which the parents choose someone for the daughter were not as culturally accepted as they were in South Asia. She understood that her father wanted her to be married, but simultaneously she did not want to settle or be in an arranged marriage especially after her experiences with her parents' marriage as their mediator. She said that she did not think that her parents understood "how much their arguments between them two affect my brother and I." She recounted what she told her parents:

I have said . . . "I wasn't going to settle for any guy because I don't want a relationship like you guys. I don't want to be fighting at the age of 40-50, whatever it is." . . . Sometimes they're quiet, and my parents will say, "No, it's not that we fight. We still love each other" . . . but I personally find that hard to believe.

Here, Manisha directly told her parents that she did not want a romantic relationship that resembled her parents' relationship because of their constant fighting. Although they attempted to mask the intensity of their conflict, Manisha was skeptical because of her experiences mediating their conflict. Thus, Manisha's role as parental mediator affected her perception of marriage.

Similar to Manisha, Veena, 22, reflected on the South Asian and American differences regarding marriage in terms of joint and extended families:

Culturally we have a very unique situation of how we deal with extended families . . . We tend to be a little bit more close-knit . . . My Indian friends have grandparents living with them and aunts and uncles . . . That's kind of like unique territory to navigate. Maybe when I'm a

newlywed I'll find out what it means to have in-laws and how to deal with the situation when some cultural expectations from back home are a little bit different than what I, growing up in America, and consider myself first and foremost to be a young American woman, will be visualizing for my future.

Within this assertion, Veena said, "when I'm a newlywed" rather than "if I am a newlywed" implying that marriage was seen as a certainty instead of a possibility. Furthermore, Veena highlighted the complexity of navigating her bicultural identity involving her South Asian and American cultural expectations (Salam, 2010). Although she considered herself "first and foremost" a "young American woman," she understood that her South Asian culture was something she would have to take into account when visualizing her future with extended, and possibly, joint families.

In another example of South Asian cultural differences, Maya, 24, mentioned the role that dating had within South Asian culture. Although Maya's parents never explicitly said it, she knew that her parents believed that "when you get to marrying age, you should be dating so you know what it is that you want in your life." Maya, still younger than her parents' preferred marrying age of 25 to 30, discussed the prerequisites for the topic of dating to no longer be considered taboo (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Roloff & Ifert, 1998, 2000):

My older sister got married when she was 29, so it's still a little bit of a later dating range than the rest of the South Asian community . . . Until you're actually looking to get married within the next year or two, you

start to date. . . . Like "Now that you have a career, if you want to meet someone, then tell me. Or, if you have someone in mind, then tell me"

because then it was kind of like, "Oh, we're allowed to talk about it."

Maya's assertion was noteworthy for a few reasons. First, it illustrated parents' preference for their daughters having a career before marriage. Indeed, having a career was a prerequisite to dating. Second, Maya's indication that her parents wanted to be told when their daughters were ready to meet someone or had someone in mind illustrated parental intrusion and control regarding children's level of autonomy and decisions (Bradford & Barber, 2005). Finally, dating was something that served a purpose for marriage and that dating during the early twenties when marriage was prohibited because it was not purposeful.

When her sister turned 29, Maya's parents were more forceful and said, "No. You seriously need to get married (laughs) . . . You need to find someone . . . You need to let us look for someone for you." Maya stated that the discussions were uncomfortable and placed a lot of pressure on the daughters. However, she recognized that her parents had good intentions for their persistence:

They want you to find someone because they don't want you to be alone.

But, at the same time, the way that they would ask is like, "Did you date anyone? Is it going anywhere?" and it was only the first date. So it's a very limited scope of time that they would expect you to know whether you wanted to be with that person or not.

Maya's experiences illustrated that her parents had a set timeline for their daughters' milestones. Once their career was firmly established in their mid-

twenties, then daughters had "a limited scope of time" in which they were allowed to date but only for the purposes of finding a husband.

Like Maya, Sheila, 23, indicated that her father preferred her to have a career before marriage; however, her father was aware that her bicultural identity factored into her marriage decisions:

[My father] makes jokes that I should marry a White American guy because -- the cultural aspects -- like Indian men are more dominant . . . We do have some family in India that will voice an opinion of how they do want to marry me and my dad will just . . . laugh to them over the phone in India saying, "She's too dominant for any Indian guy." . . . When you've grown up here and you're a dominant and strong woman . . . you don't want to take orders from someone.

Interestingly, Sheila indicated that "Indian men are more dominant" and that her father insisted that "she's too dominant for any Indian guy," thus reinforcing South Asian culture's preference of female subordination which is contrary to Western culture's notion of equality among marriage partners (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Sheila's father viewed her in the same way as another participant (i.e., Veena, 22) described herself: "a young American woman." After his own divorce and subsequent remarriage, Sheila's father implicitly suggested that it was more important for Sheila to consider her personality in relation to her future husband rather than marrying a man because he was South Asian. Instead, he understood that Sheila was South Asian American, and as such, possessed bicultural characteristics.

Furthermore, Sheila indicated that her parents' marriage and subsequent divorce had altered her perception of marriage. Although she agreed with having a "lifelong partner," she did not want to get married. She especially did not want an arranged marriage because she stated that "I think it works for people, but I think more so in an Indian community in India, not really in America anymore." Sheila's response highlighted the differences between cultural and ethnic identity (Gudykunst & Lee, 2001). Namely, South Asians in America and South Asians in South Asia share the same ethnic identity (i.e., South Asian); however, they share different cultural identities depending on their surrounding culture (i.e., Western culture versus South Asian culture). They also have different cultural norms (e.g., Western culture's acceptance of individual mate selection versus South Asian culture's norm of arranged marriage).

Sheila's interactions with her parents affected her views of marriage and communication within relationships:

If I didn't really see what my mom and my dad went through before I wouldn't be as open and trying to get my point across about things . . .

They always pushed things off till the last minute, and then it blew up into an argument.

Sheila indicated that it was better to be open and "get it on the table right away." She discussed her preference for the conversation-oriented open communication rather than the conformity-oriented closed communication that her parents engaged in (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990). For example, she said that she and her boyfriend listened to each other; however, she also stated that she felt the need to



exercise control because she did not have any control during her parents' inappropriate divorce disclosures (Afifi et al., 2007). Sheila said, "I have to be in control because before I never really had any, so I always just kind of dealt with it, and kind of listened to what they were going through." Thus, even though Sheila tried to use her parents' relationship to improve her current relationships with her boyfriend by being more open, she also realized that her experiences within her family have shaped her need for control.

Daughters explained how their experiences with their parents had affected their relationships. For instance, Layla, 27, said that "it feels weird to have that relationship that like growing up I thought to be the strongest in my life to have it kind of like weirdly shattered in a way." She had seen her parents' relationship as "an unbreakable thing":

It's just something that I never thought would happen . . . and it did. And it's fine, I've like recovered, but I think as a result of that I've just become all the more cautious in terms of forming new relationships or how much I let people in who aren't like lifelong friends.

No longer considering her relationship with her parents to be stable, Layla was hesitant to form new relationships. Although she claimed that she "recovered" from her parents' marital conflict, she subsequently internalized their conflict and took it on as a weight on her shoulders:

Even though I think my parents should try to solve their marriage problems outside of me, that's not to say that I don't want them to have a

good marriage. I do. And I feel bad when they are not happy in their relationship . . . But I don't like being that point person for them.

Layla felt "bad" when her parents were unhappy in their marriage, yet she also did not want to serve the mediator role to help them fix their relationship because doing so negatively affected her and her ability to form relationships.

In sum, daughters believed that their parents expected them to achieve role transitions (e.g., marriage) in order for them to be considered an adult. For example, Sunny felt that she could not "grow like a woman" in her mother's eyes until she was married. Until then, Sunny felt that her mother nurtured her like a baby by sending cooked food with her. In Sunny's case though, her mother saw her as a baby that needed to be cared for, but she also shared her financial worries with her like a confidant. As such, Sunny found it "really awkward and very weird" to be treated like a child and an adult by her mother. Accordingly, Sunny's example illustrated that daughters' familial roles (e.g., reluctant confidant) affected their progression toward adulthood. Additionally, being treated inconsistently as a child and an adult by their parents could also affect daughters' well-being because it results in a confusion of interpersonal roles.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I answered the question, "How is SAA emerging adult daughters' progression toward adulthood affected by their role-playing within familial relationships?" I presented daughters' individualism-related characteristics, interdependence-related characteristics, and role transitions regarding their perception of adulthood to illustrate how daughters' enactment of

familial roles affected their perceived progression toward adulthood. Participants' responses supported Arnett's (2003) finding that emerging adults in American ethnic minority groups embraced characteristics of adulthood reflecting interdependence (e.g., fulfilling family roles and taking care of their families) which illustrate cultural values of familial obligations and concern for others. Daughters' responses illustrate how their interdependence-related prioritization of their familial roles (e.g., parental mediator) negatively affected their individuation and progression into adulthood (Poulsen, 2009). Moreover, daughters believed that their parents primarily valued role transitions (e.g., establish career and get married) even though such role transitions were difficult for daughters to attain because of their continued familial role-playing.

In the next chapter, I reflect on the importance of these findings by offering concluding commentary on SAA emerging adult daughters, discussing theoretical and practical contributions, and providing directions for future research.

## Chapter 10

### CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The purpose of this study was to understand South Asian American emerging adult daughters' communicative strategies when they engage in familial roles and how their role-playing affects their progression into adulthood. To accomplish this goal, I interviewed SAA emerging adult daughters and analyzed their responses based on the study's five research questions. In this chapter, I summarize relevant findings for each research question. Subsequently, I discuss this study's theoretical and practical contributions. Lastly, I present the study's limitations in conjunction with avenues for future research.

#### **Summary of Dissertation Findings**

##### **Daughters' Familial Relationships and Communication**

The goal of the first research question posed in this study was to provide a foundational understanding of SAA daughters' perceptions of their families' relational culture. Of particular interest were daughters' communication patterns with their mothers and fathers. Given this, I posed the following research question:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: How do SAA emerging adult daughters describe their familial relationships and communication?

Daughters' perceptions of their relationships with their parents depended on how they assessed family communication patterns (i.e., conversation orientation and conformity orientation) (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990), in addition to the degree of permeability within the family's interior privacy boundary

orientation (Petronio, 2002). Daughters who indicated that having good relationships with their parents said that they engaged in openness (i.e., experienced high degree of conversation) and discussed private information (i.e., possessed a permeable interior privacy boundary). Those who perceived that their families subscribed more to a conversation orientation felt as though they were able to talk openly with their mothers without feeling pressured to conform to their mothers' wishes. They felt able to express their opinions freely and receive confirmation (rather than experiencing confrontation), which resulted in daughters' positive perception of the mother-daughter relationship. In contrast, these daughters perceived that their father-daughter relationships featured lower degrees of conversation than was typical of the close relationships the daughters shared with their mothers, even after acknowledging that tensions existed within those relationships. The notable exceptions included two participants who were unable to get along with their mothers, and who indicated having more open relationships with their fathers.

Daughters who indicated having difficult or nonexistent relationships with their parents said that they engaged in minimal communication and topic avoidance (i.e., high degree of conformity) because they knew that their parents would not agree with or understand certain aspects of their private information, such as dating (i.e., impermeable privacy boundary). Daughters who perceived that their families subscribed to a conformity orientation were more inclined to control private information when communicating with parents, because they believed that the consequences of disclosing private information (e.g., their

involvement in interracial dating) would be negative and result in confrontation (Afifi & Olson, 2005).

Taken together, these findings indicate that daughters' enactment of particular roles was tied to their perceptions of the relationship and communication with their parents. For example, daughters who had a positive relationship with their mothers based on openness (e.g., high degree of conversation) were more willing to listen to their mothers' frustrations. However, daughters who had a negative relationship with their mothers viewed them as controlling (i.e., expressed a higher degree of conformity) and were more apt to limit their conversations.

### **Daughters' Familial Roles**

The goal of the second research question was to identify the roles that SAA emerging adult daughters enacted in their families to understand why daughters played those roles (RQ 2), what communicative strategies daughters employed when performing those roles (RQ 3), and how such role-playing affected daughter's transition to adulthood (RQ 5). To that end, I posed the following research question:

RQ<sub>2</sub>: What roles do SAA emerging adult daughters play within their families?

Daughters performed the role of reluctant confidant within the mother-daughter dyad by listening to their mothers' private disclosures regarding the mothers' financial worries and frustrations with family members. Daughters experienced their confidant role as a reluctant one because they did not solicit information or expect to be the recipient of their mothers' private information

(Petronio, 2002). Daughters who played this role felt that they served as friends, girlfriends, sounding boards, and outlets for their mothers by providing support and comfort. Only a couple of participants (i.e., Sheila and Manisha) who had tension-filled relationships with their mothers (i.e., low degrees of conversation and high degrees of conformity) indicated that they played the roles of listener or sounding board for their fathers instead of their mothers.

Mothers often disclosed negatively valenced information regarding their spouses and marriage, which served to triangulate their daughters into parental conflict (Afifi & Schrodt, 2003). Although mothers' disclosures to their daughters can be positive and result in closeness, such disclosures can also disrupt the boundaries between daughters and mothers, and affect the parent-child triad (Petronio, 2000a). Serving as parental confidants and mediators contributed to parent-child boundary dissolution, which resulted in a loss of psychological distinctiveness between parents and children, in addition to confusion regarding interpersonal roles (Kerig, 2005).

When boundary disruption occurs, roles become corrupted, which can result in daughters taking on more adult-like roles for their parents. One type of role corruption is emotional parentification in which children attempt to fulfill an emotional void for their parents by providing support and serving as a confidant (Hooper, 2008; Jurkovic et al., 2001). When engaging in emotional parentification, children provided emotional caregiving to their parents and prioritized their parents' needs over their own.

In addition to serving as reluctant confidants within the mother-daughter dyad, daughters often enacted additional roles within the parent-child triad such as mediator for interparental conflicts. Once triangulated into parental conflict, many daughters felt they had to be mediators in their parents' relationship (Afifi 2003; Buchanan et al., 1991; Golish & Caughlin, 2002). Daughters felt responsible for their parents' well-being and subsequently sacrificed their wishes (e.g., moving away from home) by taking on the role of mediator and nurturer (Hooper, 2008; West & Keller, 1991). In addition to nurturing parents, daughters also enacted similar caretaking behaviors for their siblings. Specifically, daughters provided protective buffering for siblings by shielding them from parental conflict and individually absorbing the subsequent stress (Afifi & McManus, 2006).

These findings regarding daughters' roles as reluctant confidants and parental mediators are important because of the negative effects that such role-playing can have on daughters' psychological well-being and progression toward adulthood (as detailed in Chapter 9). With the potential consequences in mind, the next research question focused on daughters' reasons for serving as parental confidants and mediators, especially if doing so was primarily detrimental to the fulfillment of their own needs.

### **Daughters' Explanations for Role-Playing**

After identifying daughters' roles within their families (RQ 2), the goal for the third research question was to understand why daughters played particular roles. To that end, I posed the following question:



RQ<sub>3</sub>: What explanations do SAA emerging adult daughters offer for why they play particular roles within their familial relationships?

Participants had intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for serving as their mothers' confidants and parental mediators. Intrinsically, daughters performed the role of maternal confidant because they recognized that such a role was vacant in their mother's life. They also indicated that their mothers did not want to discuss familial issues with non-family members, which is illustrative of the impermeable exterior privacy boundary (Petronio, 2002). Extrinsically, daughters felt that their mothers expected them to play the role of confidant. Daughters' perceived expectations to serve as confidants likely reflects their perceptions that they were inferential confidants instead of reluctant confidants (Petronio, 2002). Unlike reluctant confidants who do not expect to be the recipients of private disclosures, inferential confidants expect to be the recipients of disclosures because they believe that serving as the other person's recipient is an expectation of their relationship, as between marital couples. Respondents described feeling guilty for not trying to help their mothers, which implies that taking care of their parents was something they felt obligated to do due to cultural and socialization expectations (Davies & Lindsay, 2004; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000).

Participants articulated intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for serving as their parents' mediator. Intrinsically, daughters performed the role of parental mediator because they felt it was their responsibility to fix the situation. Additionally, they were unsure if other family members (e.g., siblings) would intercede to alleviate the conflict. Extrinsically, daughters felt obligated to serve as mediators because

their parents did not want to burden the daughters' brothers or married sisters. Indeed, participants with brothers or married sisters felt that their parents unfairly looked to them to serve as kinkeepers (Brown & DeRycke, 2010; Leach & Braithwaite, 1996; Treas & Mazumdar, 2004) and felt that they were expected to devote a disproportionate share of time to maintaining family relationships.

Being integrated into parental conflict resulted in parent-child tension because daughters were not only placed in undesired roles (i.e., reluctant confidant), but they were also expected to play additional roles (e.g., mediator) for their family. Consequently, daughters' ability to preserve family relationships while also attempting to maintain their own boundaries and become an autonomous adult became difficult (Dolgin, 1996). Therefore, daughters engaged in communication strategies in an attempt to restore their boundaries.

### **Daughters' Communication Strategies During Role Enactment**

To understand how daughters responded to their roles as reluctant confidants and parental mediators, I posed the following research question:  
RQ<sub>4</sub>: What communication strategies do SAA emerging adult daughters use as they enact their familial roles?

Daughters responded to their roles of reluctant confidants and parental mediators by enacting coping and thwarting strategies (McBride & Bergen, 2008; Petronio, 2000b). Daughters enacted the two coping strategies of *providing comfort and support* and *giving advice* to help their parents manage private information and negotiate marital conflict. These coping strategies are used primarily in interpersonal contexts (e.g., friendships) in which the reluctant

confidant's goal is to maintain the relationship (McBride & Bergen, 2008).

Although daughters did not solicit private disclosures from parents, their priorities were to validate their parents' feelings and to assist in managing marital conflict.

Daughters engaged in these coping strategies even if they found the reluctant confidant and mediator roles to be undesirable or if they felt that they were uncertain how to provide comfort and support.

Daughters engaged in the two thwarting strategies of *erecting territorial markers* and *indicating discomfort or embarrassment* in order to minimize further disclosures and to restore boundaries between them and their parents (Burgoon et al., 1989). Participants who erected territorial markers engaged in responses such as saying, "I don't want to hear about this," not saying anything, or stopping the conversation completely (McBride & Bergen, 2008). These thwarting strategies are used primarily in impersonal contexts (e.g., interactions with service people like bartenders) in which reluctant confidants prioritize their own goals (e.g., minimize further boundary intrusion) rather than helping the disclosers cope with their disclosures (McBride & Bergen, 2008).

Daughters' enactment of communication strategies is salient because it illustrates daughters' use of interpersonal-oriented strategies (i.e., coping strategies) and impersonal strategies (i.e., thwarting strategies). Daughters who experienced positive, open relationships with their parents (e.g., high degree of conversation) tended to use coping strategies; whereas daughters who experienced negative, closed relationships with their parents (e.g., high degree of conformity) tended to use thwarting strategies. Of particular interest is that daughters blended

the strategies to form a new strategy of *establishing separate relationships with their parents* in which they talked with their parents individually to try to explain one parent's communication style to the other parent. In doing so, they were able to provide comfort to their parents (i.e., coping strategy) while minimizing their placement in the mediator role by both parents simultaneously (i.e., thwarting strategy). Such a strategy is unaccounted for in coping and thwarting literature, and performance of this strategy depicts reluctant confidants' ability to offer assistance while managing their privacy boundaries.

### **Daughters Affected by Role-Playing**

The final research question sought to gain an understanding of how the daughters were affected by their familial role-playing (RQ 2), parental expectations (RQ 3), and communicative responses to their roles (RQ 4). Given this, the following research question was posed:

RQ<sub>5</sub>: How is SAA emerging adult daughters' progression toward adulthood affected by their role-playing within familial relationships?

To answer this question, I presented daughters' individualism-related characteristics, interdependence-related characteristics, and role transitions regarding their perception of adulthood to illustrate how daughters' enactment of familial roles affected their perceived progression toward adulthood. Participants' responses supported Arnett's (2003) finding that emerging adults in American ethnic minority groups embraced characteristics of adulthood reflecting interdependence (e.g., fulfilling family roles and taking care of their families) which illustrate cultural values of familial obligations and concern for others.

Embracing both criteria was reflective of daughters' bicultural South Asian American identity.

Daughters' responses illustrate how their interdependence-related prioritization of familial roles (e.g., parental mediator) adversely affected their individuation and progression into adulthood. Daughters' prioritization of their parents' emotional needs illustrated that being deeply tied to their parents emotionally may impede their progression toward adulthood. Moreover, daughters believed that their parents primarily valued role transitions (e.g., establish career and get married) even though such role transitions were difficult to attain because of their continued familial role-playing. For instance, participants believed that their parents would not view them as adults until they were married. However, being triangulated into their parents' marital conflict negatively affected participants' views of relationships and marriage.

#### **Theoretical Contributions: Extending Research on Reluctant Confidants**

By examining SAA emerging adult daughters, this study provides significant theoretical contributions to literature regarding privacy management and reluctant confidants. For instance, a current limitation of Petronio's (2002) communication privacy management theory (CPM) is that "not enough is known about actual reactions of family members when they are told another family member's private information" (Caughlin & Petronio, 2006, p. 395). Instead, most of the CPM literature has focused on "the perceptions of individuals who reveal information" (Caughlin & Petronio, 2006, p. 395). This study not only answers the call for more research about reluctant confidants within families, but it also

addresses Petronio's (2004) request to apply communication privacy management (CPM) to "as many circumstances as possible" (p. 206). Findings from this dissertation on second-generation SAA emerging adult daughters extend CPM's literature regarding reluctant confidants within the contexts of emerging adult-parent relationships and ethnic minority groups in America.

### **Emerging Adult Child-Parent Relationships**

One of the hallmarks of CPM is that although it focuses on the individuals who reveal and conceal private information, it also includes the recipients of private information (Petronio, 2004). Findings from this study provide insight into reluctant confidants, the involuntary recipients of private disclosures (Petronio, 2000b), by focusing on emerging adult children who are reluctant confidants of their parents' private disclosures.

Much of the CPM literature regarding reluctant confidants has focused on impersonal settings (e.g., service people such a bartenders) rather than interpersonal settings (e.g., family relationships) (Petronio, 2002). Studies that have focused on reluctant confidants within families have primarily centered on children's experiences as recipients of their parents' divorce disclosures (Afifi, 2003). Indeed, these recipients of divorce disclosures are often young children or adolescents who reside in their parents' home (Afifi et al., 2008). Young adults, however, may move from their parents' home and thus, experience less exposure to interparental conflict (Amato & Afifi, 2006). Although understudied, young adult reluctant confidants is a relevant population due to recent demographic

trends of adult children returning to their parents' homes and still depending on them (e.g., financially) (Amato & Afifi, 2006).

Additionally, this study helps advance understandings of how adult children might respond to their role as reluctant confidant in ways that differ from their younger peers. Specifically, this study found that daughters engaged in multiple coping and thwarting strategies to restore their privacy boundaries (McBride & Bergen, 2008). Moreover, daughters also blended the strategies to form a new strategy of *establishing separate relationships with their parents* in which they talked with their parents individually to try to explain one parent's communication style to the other parent. In doing so, they were able to provide comfort to their parents (i.e., coping strategy) as a friend would within an interpersonal context (McBride & Bergen, 2008). Simultaneously, they were able to minimize their placement in the mediator role by telling their parents "I don't want to hear this!" during interparental conflict (i.e., thwarting strategy). Future research should investigate additional strategies that emerging adult children use to stop the discloser from further disclosing and thus, restore their boundaries.

This study is unique in that it not only applies CPM to the context of emerging adult children, but it also focuses on emerging adults as their parents' reluctant confidants. Indeed, Hammonds' (2009) study explored CPM and emerging adult children; however, the focus was the children's revelation and concealment of information as they moved toward individuation. Conversely, this study focused on emerging adult children who were reluctant confidants that felt obligated to act on their parents' disclosures (Petronio, 2010), yet they also

wanted to take steps toward individuation by being independent of their families-of-origin (Arnett, 1998). To this end, this study is valuable because it provides an understanding of how serving as a reluctant confidant affects adult children's conflicting desires to help but also distance themselves from their parents. Like their younger counterparts, emerging adult children who are reluctant confidants are affected by their parents' disclosures (Afifi et al., 2008); however, emerging adult children have the added pressure of trying to engage in individuation while simultaneously being triangulated into their parents' marital issues. As demonstrated in this dissertation, the pressure that these emerging adult reluctant confidants experienced was influenced by their status as ethnic minority group members.

### **Ethnic Minority Groups**

Only a few studies have focused on emerging adulthood within minority contexts and provided insight into the additional pressures that second-generation emerging adults face when they enact culturally-prescribed roles (Phinney, 2006). This study goes one step further by focusing on how ethnic minority emerging adults are affected once they become their parents' reluctant confidants.

In addition to dealing with similar issues as their White peers, minority young people face added challenges, which influence their progression to adulthood (Phinney, 2006). For instance, as part of their cultural heritage, their parents may look to them to perform more adult-like responsibilities (e.g., contributing financially) and to maintain familial relationships. When expected to put their family's needs before their own, these bicultural individuals can become



stressed because they try to embrace both their American value of independence and their non-American culture's (e.g., South Asian) value of interdependence (Phinney, 2006). Parental demands can affect the child's academic achievement and well-being. Indeed, parental demands of expecting their children to serve as reluctant confidants and parental mediators affect children's progression into adulthood.

Although this study serves as a stepping-stone, there needs to be more understanding of how certain concepts (e.g., guilt) are apparent in ethnic minority groups and could have an effect on how they approach and perform their reluctant confidant role. For instance, although guilt is perceived negatively in the United States, in Asia "feeling guilty toward one's parents is considered natural because the parents provided unconditional devotion, indulgence, sacrifice, and affection" (Kim, Park, & Park, 2000, p. 68). Indeed, guilt encourages filial piety in which children respect their parents and take care of them. To demonstrate that respect, daughters served as their parents' confidant and placed their parents' emotional needs over their own by engaging in coping strategies (e.g., providing support). Attending to parents' emotional needs negatively affected daughters, yet they continued to try to help their parents because they believed that such behavior was expected of them. As a result, they felt obligated to help and felt guilty if they engaged in thwarting strategies (e.g., stopping the conversation). Thus, further understanding of how concepts such as guilt can affect reluctant confidants' enactment of strategies would extend CPM's literature regarding reluctant confidants.

## **Practical Contributions**

From a practical standpoint, this study provides emerging adult children with insight into how they might renegotiate their boundaries once their parents attempt to change the relationship by disclosing personal information. Insight gleaned from this study provides SAA emerging adult daughters (and others) with an understanding of the ramifications of being a reluctant confidant as well as potential avenues for remediation. Specifically, based on this dissertation's findings, daughters can do two things to cope with being placed in the reluctant role and serving as a parental figure to their parents.

First, daughters can identify whether the boundary dissolution was parent- or daughter-driven (Kerig, 2005). Specifically, if parents are driving the process by expecting their daughters to take on additional roles (e.g., mediator), daughters might experience resentment. If boundary dissolution is parent-driven, daughters can be vocal with their parents about their filial anxiety about providing care to their parents (Gans & Silverstein, 2006) and how they are affected by the boundary dissolution. They can also ask their parents what they expect from them within the role of confidant and mediator to avoid ambiguity (Aquilino, 2006) because parents have different reasons for disclosing their personal information to their children (Dolgin, 1996).

Conversely, if the daughters are driving the boundary dissolution by taking on roles (e.g., mediator) themselves, then they might embrace caretaking behaviors within the family. However, caretaking behaviors might leave them feeling burdened (Afifi, 2003; Petronio & Reiersen, 2009) and obligated to

provide assistance due to their perceived filial responsibility (Lee, Netzer, & Coward, 1994). If boundary dissolution is daughter-driven, daughters can be vocal with their parents about how they are attempting to balance their parents' well-being with their own well-being. As such, daughters can indicate what actions they are willing to do (e.g., listen to their parents) and what actions they are unwilling to do (e.g., pass messages between parents) in an attempt to regulate their boundaries. Because "communication is essential in creating mutual expectations about family obligations" (Aquilino, 2006, p. 209), daughters can potentially alleviate the pressure that they feel in their role as a reluctant confident by vocalizing their expectations and asking about their parents' expectations.

Second, daughters can assess their levels of filial maturity, which occurs when adult children accept that their parents have weaknesses and a history apart from the parent-child relationship (Aquilino, 2006; Birditt et al., 2008). Daughters might also benefit from recognizing that although they want to help their parents, it might be important for them to separate from their parents by concentrating on their own lives (Fredricksen & Sharlach, 1996). They can still be empathetic to their parents and provide assistance; however, they do not need to provide the type of emotional caregiving that elderly parents expect from their older adult children (East, 2010; Kuperminc, Jurkovic, & Casey, 2009; Roberto & Jarrott, 2008). In essence, daughters might consider recognizing that their parents are adults and that daughters are not responsible for fixing their parents' marital issues.

Serving as participants for this study provided daughters with a space to consider why they played their familial roles and how they were affected by such role-playing. Indeed, participants indicated that topics raised in the interviews were ones that they had not thought and were ones that were not openly discussed in South Asian culture. Participating in these interviews allowed daughters to engage in self-reflection, as evidenced by Bhavna's assertion when asked how listening to her mother affected her:

I'm not sure. I never thought about that. I guess I'm used to listening to people. I don't know (laughs) I guess, I mean I don't . . . there are times when I would prefer to talk to other people than to [my mother] because I know that it will be a lot of work to talk to her. So, there's that (pause)  
This conversation is really making me feel like I need to call my mom (laughs).

Similar to Bhavna, participants were appreciative of the opportunity to have a conversation about these salient issues because it allowed them to realize that others were in similar positions and that being in these situations affected them more than they realized. Daughters can continue the conversation by reflecting on how their familial role-playing affects them and vocalizing their reflections with their parents with the hope that such vocalizations serve as catalysts for dialogue between emerging adult daughters and their parents.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The findings from this study illustrate the abundance of avenues that scholars can take when researching SAA emerging adult daughters' role as their

parents' reluctant confidant. Although a fruitful endeavor, this study features limitations, which can serve as areas for future directions.

One of the primary limitations of this study is that it only offers the child's voice of the emerging adult child-parent relationship. Indeed, we only get a glimpse of the parents' voices through the daughters' perceptions of their parents' expectations. Interviewing SAA first-generation parents would prove to be a useful extension of this research. Incorporating parents' voices would allow for a more holistic understanding of daughters' discussions of their parents' implicit and explicit expectations for their daughters. Various questions would be addressed in a study that features SAA parents who disclose their private information to their daughters: Why do SAA parents share their private disclosures with their daughters? Do they expect their daughters to listen and act on that information? If so, how do they respond if daughters violate their expectations? Do SAA parents perceive their unmarried daughters to be adults? Do they expect their unmarried daughters to enact more kinkeeping and caregiving behaviors than their brothers or married sisters? Answering these questions would provide a holistic account of daughters' experiences when performing her familial roles.

A second limitation of the study is that the SAA emerging adult daughters have primarily experienced South Asian American culture, not South Asian culture. Specifically, "while the first-generation of South Asian female immigrants faced conflicts around *maintaining* their culture, the second generation faced an added challenge of *learning* and maintaining their culture, usually second-hand through their parents" (Banerjee-Stevens, 2009, p. 4). This

study, then, represents South Asian Americans and not South Asians. Although participants discussed South Asian culture, it is important to note that South Asian culture within America differs from South Asian culture within South Asia.

Similar to Arnett (2012), I believe that an investigation into emerging adulthood in India would be promising and warranted. In a previous study, individuals in India ranging from ages 18 to 26 believed that they had reached adulthood (Seiter & Nelson, 2011). Like their South Asian American counterparts, they believed that their adulthood status was achieved based on individualism-related criteria (e.g., accept responsibility for your actions) and interdependence-related criteria (e.g., prioritizing family members' well-being). Interviewing South Asian emerging adult daughters regarding their familial roles would be fruitful. Unlike their South Asian American counterparts, they would share the same ethnic and cultural identity (i.e., South Asian) with their parents. As such, there would be generational challenges, but not the cultural challenges that second-generation SAA daughters experience as they attempt to negotiate their ethnic (e.g., South Asian) and cultural (e.g., American) identities (Inman, 2006; Salam, 2010). Moreover, East (2010) claimed that it is normal for children in non-Western societies to take on adult-like responsibilities within their families because such responsibility can prepare them for adulthood.

A comparative analysis could highlight SAA and SA emerging adult daughters' similarities and differences regarding South Asian values (Dasgupta, 1998) and their perceptions of emerging adulthood (Kenyon, Rankin, Koerner, & Dennison, 2007). Moreover, Repologle (2005) stated that "a key source of

conflict among first- and second-generation South Asian women is often the duty to family versus the need or desire for independence" (p. 24). It would be interesting to see if mothers and daughters in South Asia experienced that same conflict and the communicative interactions that such conflict entails.

A third limitation involves the age range for emerging adult daughters. This study used Arnett et al.'s (2010) age range for emerging adulthood as 18 to 29. However, Arnett (2012) subsequently refined the age group for emerging adulthood as 18 to 24, stating that the 18 to 29 range might be more representative of industrialized countries (e.g., Asia) outside of the United States whose marrying age is closer to 30 than 25. He indicated that the 25 to 29 period was difficult to characterize and can be seen as a transition point into young adulthood, which he characterized as being roughly between the ages of 30 and 45. People feel that they have reached adulthood by age 30 as they have stable jobs and enter into marriage and/or parenthood (Arnett, 2012).

The findings of this study indicate that individuals between the ages of 18 to 24 did not view marriage as an indicator of adulthood. Instead, they felt that their parents expected them to establish a career first. However, daughters in their late twenties (e.g., 28), were expected to be married in order for them to be perceived as adults. Although daughters in both groups had similarities of wanting to take care of their families, it would have been useful to separate the studies by focusing on daughters between the ages of 18 to 24 and daughters between the ages of 25 to 29. Doing so would highlight their distinctions based on their indicators of adulthood and their perceptions of their parents' expectations for

adulthood. Future studies should continue to explore how daughters between the ages of 25 to 29 face additional pressure to establish a career, get married, and offer assistance to their parents because participants within this age range indicated that they felt that they had a small window of opportunity to achieve these goals.

Moreover, future research would benefit from longitudinal studies of these second-generation SAA daughters. Portes and MacLeod (1999) suggested that it was important to study immigrant second-generation children because that generation often predicts the long-term success of the group depending on their ability to assimilate and adjust to their cultural surroundings. It would be fruitful to see if the daughters from their ethnic minority groups perceived themselves to be adults when they reached the age of 30. Would they engage in more independence-related behaviors (e.g., moving away from home)? Would they engage in more interdependence-related behaviors (e.g., caregiving) for their parents? Addressing these questions would provide continued insight into how emerging adults' relationships and communication with their parents are affected once they enter young adulthood at the age of 30 (Arnett, 2010).

In conclusion, this dissertation study provides insight into the challenges that individuals within an ethnic minority group face once their parents made them a reluctant confidant. The findings highlight the complexity of children serving as their parents' reluctant confidant by focusing on how daughters responded to having their boundaries disrupted and how they were affected when involuntarily placed in that role. This study serves as an initial response for



scholars to continue focusing on the intersections between emerging adulthood, communication privacy management, and ethnic minority groups. Perhaps most importantly, this study extends our understanding of reluctant confidants within emerging adult child-parent relationships and the importance of taking contextual elements such as ethnic minority groups into account.

## REFERENCES

- Afifi, T. D. (2003). 'Feeling caught' in stepfamilies: Managing boundary turbulence through appropriate communication privacy rules. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 20*, 729-755. doi: 10.1177/0265407503206002
- Afifi, T. D., Afifi, W. A., Morse, C. R., & Hamrick, K. (2008). Adolescents' avoidance tendencies and physiological reactions to discussions about their parents' relationship: Implications for postdivorce and nondivorced families. *Communication Monographs, 75*(3), 290-317. doi: 10.1080/03637750802342308
- Afifi, T. D., & McManus, T. (2006). Investigating privacy boundaries: Communication in post-divorce families. In K. Floyd & M. T. Morman (Eds.), *Widening the family circle: New research on family communication* (pp. 171-187). London: Sage Publications.
- Afifi, T. D., & McManus, T. (2010). Divorce disclosures and adolescents' physical and mental health and parental relationship quality. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, 51*(2), 83-107. doi: 10.1080/10502550903455141
- Afifi, T. D., McManus, T., Hutchinson, S., & Baker, B. (2007). Inappropriate parental divorce disclosures, the factors that prompt them, and their impact on parents' and adolescents' wellbeing. *Communication Monographs, 74*(1), 78-102. doi: 10.1080/03637750701196870
- Afifi, T. D., & Nussbaum, J. (2006). Stress and adaptation theories: Families across the lifespan. In D. O. Braithwaite & L. A. Baxter (Eds.), *Engaging theories in family communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 276-292). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Afifi, T. D., & Olson, L. (2005). The chilling effect in families and the pressure to conceal secrets. *Communication Monographs, 72*(2), 192-216. doi: 10.1080/03637750500111906
- Afifi, T. D., & Schrodt, P. (2003). "Feeling caught" as a mediator of adolescents' and young adults' avoidance and satisfaction with their parents in divorced and non-divorced households. *Communication Monographs, 70*(2), 142-173. doi: 10.1080/0363775032000133791
- Afifi, W. A., & Guerrero, L. K. (2000). Motivations underlying topic avoidance in close relationships. In S. Petronio (Ed.), *Balancing the secrets of private disclosures* (pp. 165-179). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Alexander, P. C., Teti, L., & Anderson, C. L. (2000). Childhood sexual abuse history and role reversal in parenting. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 24(6), 829-838. doi: 10.1016/S0145-2134(00)00142-3
- Altman, I. (1977). Privacy regulation: Culturally universal or culturally specific? *Journal of Social Issues*, 33(3), 66-84. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.1977.tb01883.x
- Amato, P. R., & Afifi, T. D. (2006). Feeling caught between parents: Adult children's relations with parents and subjective well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(1), 222-235. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2006.00243.x
- Angen, M. J. (2000). Evaluating interpretive inquiry: Reviewing the validity debate and opening the dialogue. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(3), 378-395. doi: 10.1177/104973230001000308
- Aquilino, W. S. (2006). Family relationships and support systems in emerging adulthood. In J. J. Arnett & J. L. Tanner (Eds.), *Emerging adults in America: Coming of age in the 21st century* (pp. 193-217). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. doi: 10.1037/11381-008
- Arnett, J. J. (1997). Young people's conceptions of the transition to adulthood. *Youth and Society*, 29(1), 3-23. doi: 10.1177/0044118X97029001001
- Arnett, J. J. (1998). Learning to stand alone: The contemporary American transition to adulthood in cultural and historical context. *Human Development*, 41, 295-315. doi: 10.1159/000022591
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469-480. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469
- Arnett, J.J. (2003). Conceptions of the transition to adulthood among emerging adults in American ethnic groups. In J. Arnett & N. Galambos (Eds.), *New directions for child and adolescent development: Cultural conceptions of the transition to adulthood* (pp. 63-75). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Arnett, J. J. (2012). New horizons in research on emerging and young adulthood. In A. Booth, S. L. Brown, N. S. Landale, W. D. Manning, & S. M. McHale (Eds.), *Early adulthood in a family context* (pp. 231-244). New York: Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-1-4614-1436-0\_15
- Arnett, J. J., & Galambos, N. L. (2003). Culture and conceptions of adulthood. In

- J. J. Arnett & N. L. Galambos (Eds.), *New directions for child and adolescent development: Exploring cultural conceptions of the transition to adulthood* (pp. 91-98). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. doi: 10.1002/cd.77
- Arnett, J. J., Kloep, M., Hendry, L. B., & Tanner, J. L. (Eds.). (2011). *Debating emerging adulthood: Stage or process?* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Badger, S., Nelson, L. J., & Barry, C. M. (2006). Perceptions of the transition to adulthood among Chinese and American emerging adults. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 30*(1), 84-93. doi: 10.1177/0165025406062128
- Banerjee-Stevens, D. (2009). *Critical incidents in the identity development of second-generation South Asian women*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (304932370)
- Baxter, L. A., & Wilmot, W. W. (1985). Taboo topics in close relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 2*(3), 253-269. doi: 10.1177/0265407585023002
- Bengtson, V., Giarrusso, R., Mabry, J. B., & Silverstein, M. (2002). Solidarity, conflict, and ambivalence: Complementary or competing perspectives on intergenerational relationships? *Journal of Marriage and Family, 64*(3), 568-576. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2002.00568.x
- Benn, S. I., & Gaus, G. F. (1983). The public and private: Concepts and action. In S. I. Benn & G. F. (Eds.), *Public and private in social life*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Berg, B. L. (2007). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Birditt, K. S., Fingerman, K. L., & Zarit, S. H. (2010). Adult children's problems and successes: Implications for intergenerational ambivalence. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences, 65*(2), 145-153. doi: 10.1093/geronb/gbp125
- Bloor, M., & Wood, F. (2006). *Keywords in qualitative methods: A vocabulary of research concepts*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bradford, K., & Barber, B. K. (2005). Interparental conflict as intrusive family process. *Journal of Emotional Abuse, 5*(2/3), 143-167. doi: 10.1300/J135v05n02\_07

- Brewerton, P., & Millward, L. (2001). *Organizational research methods: A guide for students and researchers*. London: Sage Publications.
- Brown, L. H., & DeRycke, S. B. (2010) The kinkeeping connection: Continuity, crisis and connection. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 8(4), 338-353. doi: 10.1080/15350770.2010.520616
- Buchanan, C. M., Maccoby, E. E., & Dornbusch, S. M. (1991). Caught between parents: Adolescents' experience in divorced homes. *Child Development*, 62(5), 1008–1029. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.1991.tb01586.x
- Burgoon, J. K., Parrott, R., Le Poire, B. A., Kelley, D. L., Walther, J. B., & Perry, D. (1989). Maintaining and restoring privacy through communication in different types of relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 6(2), 131-158. doi: 10.1177/026540758900600201
- Caughlin, J. P., & Petronio, S. (2004). Privacy in families. In A. L. Vangelisti (Ed.), *Handbook of family communication* (pp. 379-412). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Charmaz, K. (2001). Grounded theory. In R. M. Emerson (Ed). *Contemporary Field research* (pp. 335-352). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Child, J. T., Pearson, J. C., & Petronio, S. (2009). Blogging, communication, and privacy management: Development of the blogging privacy management measure. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 60(10), 2079-2094. doi: 10.1002/asi.21122
- Cummings, E. M., & Davies, P. T. (2002). Effects of marital conflict on children: Recent advances and emerging themes in process-oriented research. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 43(1), 31-63. doi: 10.1111/1469-7610.00003
- Dasgupta, S. D. (1998). Gender roles and cultural continuity in the Asian Indian immigrant community in the U.S. *Sex Roles*, 38(11/12), 953-974. doi: 10.1023/A:1018822525427
- Davies, P. T., & Lindsay, L. L. (2004). Interparental conflict and adolescent adjustment: Why does gender moderate early adolescent vulnerability? *Journal of Family Psychology*, 18(1), 160-170. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.18.1.160
- Derlega, V. J., Winstead, B. A., Greene, K., Serovich, J., & Elwood, W. N. (2002). Perceived HIV-related stigma and HIV disclosure to relationship partners after finding out about the seropositive diagnosis. *Journal of*

*Health Psychology*, 7(4), 415-432. doi: 10.1177/1359105302007004330

- Derlega, V. J., Winstead, B. A., Greene, K., Serovich, J., & Elwood, W. N. (2004). Reasons for HIV disclosure/nondisclosure in close relationships: Testing a model of HIV-disclosure decision making. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(6), 747-767. doi: 10.1521/jscp.23.6.747.54804
- Dolgin, K. G. (1996). Parents' disclosure of their own concerns to their adolescent children. *Personal Relationships*, 3(2), 159-169. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.1996.tb00109.x
- Dugsin, R. (2001). Conflict and healing in family experience of second-generation emigrants from India living in North America. *Family Process*, 40(2), 233-241. doi: 10.1111/j.1545-5300.2001.4020100233.x
- Durham, W. T. (2008). The rules-based process of revealing/concealing the family planning decisions of voluntarily child-free couples: A communication privacy perspective. *Communication Studies*, 59(2), 132-147. doi: 10.1080/10510970802062451
- Durham, W., & Braithwaite, D. O. (2009). Communication privacy management within the family planning trajectories of voluntarily child-free couples. *Journal of Family Communication*, 9(1), 43-65. doi: 10.1080/15267430802561600
- East, P. L. (2010). Children's provision of family caregiving: Benefit or burden? *Child Development Perspectives*, 4(1), 55-61. doi: 10.1111/j.1750-8606.2009.00118.x
- Farver, J. A. M., Narang, S. K., & Bhadha, B. R. (2002). East meets west: Ethnic identity, acculturation, and conflict in Asian Indian families. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 16(3), 338-350. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.16.3.338
- Faugier, J., & Sargeant, M. (1997). Sampling hard to reach populations. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26(4), 790-797. doi: 10.1046/j.1365-2648.1997.00371.x
- Fisher, C., & Miller-Day, M. (2006). Communication over the life span: The mother-adult daughter relationship. In K. Floyd & M. T. Morman (Eds.), *Widening the family circle: New research on family communication* (pp. 3-19). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Flick, U. (2002). *An introduction to qualitative research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

- Fosco, G. M., & Grych, J. H. (2010). Adolescent triangulation into parental conflicts: Longitudinal implications for appraisals and adolescent-parent relations. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72, 254-266. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00697.x
- Fredricksen, K. I., & Sharlach, A. E. (1996). Filial maturity: Analysis and reconceptualization. *Journal of Adult Development*, 3(3), 183-191. doi: 10.1007/BF02285778
- Gans, D., & Silverstein, M. (2006). Norms of filial responsibility for aging parents across time and generations. *The Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(4), 961-976. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2006.00307.x
- Gerstel, N., & Gallagher, S. K. (1993). Kinkeeping and distress: Gender, recipients of care, and work-family conflict. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 55(3), 598-608.
- Goglia, L. R., Jurkovic, G. J., Burt, A. M., & Burge-callaway, K. G. (1992). Generational boundary distortions by adult children of alcoholics: Child-as-parent and child-as-mate. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 20(4), 291-299. doi: 10.1080/01926189208250899
- Golish, T. D., & Caughlin, J. (2002). "I'd rather not talk about it": Adolescents' and young adults' use of topic avoidance in stepfamilies. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 30(1), 78-106. doi: 10.1080/00909880216574
- Gordon, P. A. (2003). The decision to remain single: Implications for women across cultures. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 25(1), 33-44.
- Gottman, J. M., Katz, L. F., & Hooven, C. (1996). Parental meta-emotion philosophy and the emotional life of families: Theoretical models and preliminary data. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 10(3), 243-268. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.10.3.243
- Greene, A. L., Wheatley, S. M., & Aldava, J. F., IV. (1992). Stages on life's way: Adolescents' implicit theories of the life course. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 7(3), 364-381. doi: 10.1177/074355489273006
- Greenwood, J. L. (2012). Parent-child relationships in the context of a mid- to late-life parental divorce. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 53(1), 1-17. doi: 10.1080/10502556.2012.635959
- Grych, J. H., & Seid, M., & Fincham, F. D. (1992). Assessing marital conflict from the child's perspective: The children's perception of interparental

- conflict scale. *Child Development*, 63(3), 558-572. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.108.2.267
- Gudykunst, W. B., & Lee, C. M. (2001). An agenda for studying ethnicity and family communication. *The Journal of Family Communication*, 1(1), 75-85. doi: 10.1207/S15327698JFC0101\_09
- Gupta, S. R. (1999). *Emerging voices: South Asian American women redefine self, family, and community*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Hammonds, J. R. (2009). *Establishing a model of communication privacy management theory: Examining the criteria that predict an emerging adult's likelihood to reveal private information to their parents*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (AAI3379241)
- Hawk, S. T., Keijsers, L., Hale, W. W., III, & Meeus, W. (2009). Mind your own business! Longitudinal relations between perceived privacy invasions and adolescent-parent conflict. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 23(4), 511-520. doi: 10.1037/a0015426
- Heshusius, L. (1994). Freeing ourselves from objectivity: Managing subjectivity or turning toward a participatory mode of consciousness? *Educational Researcher*, 23(2), 15-22. doi: 10.3102/0013189X023003015
- Hooper, L. M. (2008). Defining and understanding parentification: Implications for all counselors. *The Alabama Counseling Association Journal*, 34, 34-43.
- Hunt, G., Moloney, M., & Evans, K. (2010). "How Asian am I?": Asian American youth cultures, drug use, and ethnic identity construction. *Youth and Society*, 43(1), 274-304. doi: 10.1177/0044118X10364044
- Inman, A. G. (2006). South Asian women: Identities and conflicts. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 12(2), 306-319. doi: 10.1037/1099-9809.12.2.306
- Johnson, V. K., Gans, S. E., Kerr, S., & LaValle, W. (2010). Managing the transition to college: Family functioning, emotion coping, and adjustment in emerging adulthood. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(6), 607-621. doi: 10.1353/csd.2010.0022
- Joseph, A. L., & Afifi, T. D. (2010). Military wives' stressful disclosures to their deployed husbands: The role of protective buffering. *Journal of Applied*



*Communication Research*, 38(4), 412-434. doi:  
10.1080/00909882.2010.513997

- Jurkovic, G. J., Thirkield, A., & Morrell, R. (2001). Parentification of adult children of divorce: A multidimensional analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 30(2), 245-257.
- Kanter, M., Afifi, T., & Robbins, S. (2012). The impact of parents "friending" their young adult child on Facebook on perceptions of parental privacy invasions and parent-child relationship quality. *Journal of Communication*, 62(5), 900-917. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01669.x
- Kennedy-Lightsey, C. D., Martin, M. M., Thompson, M., Himes, K. L., & Clingerman, B. Z. (2012). Communication privacy management theory: Exploring coordination and ownership between friends. *Communication Quarterly*, 60(5), 665-680. doi: 10.1080/01463373.2012.725004
- Kenyon, D. B., Rankin, L. A., Koerner, S. S., & Dennison, R. P., (2007). What makes an adult? Examining descriptions from adolescents of divorce. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 36(6), 813-823. doi: 10.1007/s10964-006-9074-1
- Kerig, P. (2005). Revisiting the construct of boundary dissolution: A multidimensional perspective. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 5(2/3), 5-42. doi: 10.1300/J135v05n02\_02
- Khan, S. (1998). Muslim women: Negotiations in the third space. *Signs*, 23(2), 463-494. doi: 10.1086/495259
- Kim, B. S. K., Brenner, B. R., Liang, C. T. H., & Asay, P. A. (2003). A qualitative study of adaptation experiences of 1.5-generation Asian Americans. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 9(2), 156-170. doi: 10.1037/1099-9809.9.2.156
- Kim, J. L., & Ward, L. M. (2007). Silence speaks volumes: Parental sexual communication among Asian American emerging adults. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 22(1), 3-31. doi: 10.1177/0743558406294916
- Kim, U., Park, Y., & Park, D. (2000). The challenge of cross-cultural psychology: The role of the indigenous psychologies. *The Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 31(1), 63-75. doi: 10.1177/0022022100031001006
- Kloep, M., & Hendry, L. B. (2010). Letting go or holding on? Parents' perceptions of their relationships with their children during emerging adulthood.

*British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 28(4), 817-834. doi:  
10.1348/026151009X480581

Koerner, A. F., & Cvancara, K. E. (2002). The influence of conformity orientation on communication patterns in family communication. *The Journal of Family Communication*, 2(3), 133-152. doi:  
10.1207/S15327698JFC0203\_2

Koerner, S. S., Wallace, S., Lehman, S. J., Lee, S., & Escalante, K. A. (2004). Sensitive mother-to-adolescent disclosures after divorce: Is the experience of sons different from that of daughters? *Journal of Family Psychology*, 18(1), 46-57. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.18.1.46

Kuperminc, G. P., Jurkovic, G. J., & Casey, S. (2009). Relation of filial responsibility to the personal and social adjustment of Latino adolescents from immigrants families. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 23(1), 14-22. doi: 10.1037/a0014064

Lalonde, R. N., Hynie, M., Pannu, M., & Tatla, S. (2004). The role of culture in interpersonal relationships: Do second-generation South Asian Canadians want a traditional partner? *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 35(5), 503-524. doi: 10.1177/0022022104268386

Leach, M. S., & Braithwaite, D. O. (1996). A binding tie: Supportive communication of family kinkeepers. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 24(3), 200-216. doi: 10.1080/00909889609365451

Ledbetter, A. M., Heiss, S., Sibal, K., Lev, E., Battle-Fisher, M., & Shubert, N. (2010). Parental invasive and children's defensive behaviors at home and away at college: Mediated communication and privacy boundary management. *Communication Studies*, 61(2), 184-204. doi:  
10.1080/10510971003603960

Lee, G. R., Netzer, J. K., & Coward, R. T. (1994). Filial responsibility expectations and patterns of intergenerational assistance. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56, 559-565.

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Maiter, S., & George, U. (2003). Understanding context and culture in the parenting approaches of immigrant South Asian mothers. *Affilia*, 18(4), 411-428. doi: 10.1177/0886109903257589

Manohar, N. (2008). "Sshh...!! Don't tell my parents": Dating among second-

- generation Patels in Florida. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 39(4), 571-588.
- Mazur, M. A., & Hubbard, A. S. E. (2004). "Is there something I should know?": Topic avoidant responses in parent-adolescent communication. *Communication Reports*, 17(1), 27-37. doi: 10.1080/08934210409389371
- McBride, M. C., & Bergen, K. M. (2008). Communication research: Becoming a reluctant confidant: Communication privacy management in close friendships. *Texas Speech Communication Journal*, 33(1), 50-61. Retrieved from <http://www.etsca.com>
- McManus, T. G., & Donovan, S. (2012). Communication competence and feeling caught: Explaining perceived ambiguity in divorce-related communication. *Communication Quarterly*, 60(2), 255-277. doi: 10.1080/01463373.2012.669328
- McManus, T. G., & Nussbaum, J. (2011a). Ambiguous divorce-related communication, relational closeness, relational satisfaction, and communication satisfaction. *Western Journal of Communication*, 75(5), 500-522. doi: 10.1080/10570314.2011.608407
- McManus, T. G., & Nussbaum, J. F. (2011b). Social support expectations and strategic ambiguity in parent-young adult child divorce-related stressor conversations. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 52(4), 244-270. doi: 10.1080/10502556.2011.585083
- Meleis, A. I. (1975). Role insufficiency and role supplementation: A conceptual framework. *Nursing Research*, 24(4), 264-271.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miller, N. B., Smerglia, V. L., Gaudet, D. S., & Kitson, G. C. (1998). Stressful life events, social support, and the distress of widowed and divorced women: A counteractive model. *Journal of Family Issues*, 19(2), 181-203. doi: 10.1177/019251398019002004
- Morr, M. C. (2002). *Private disclosure in a family membership transition: In-laws' disclosures to newlyweds*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Arizona State University. Retrieved from <http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/250854617?accountid=4485>. (250854617).
- Morr Serewicz, M. C., Dickson, F. C., Morrison, J. H. T. A., & Poole, L. L.

- (2007). Family privacy orientation, relational maintenance, and family satisfaction in young adults' family relationships. *The Journal of Family Communication*, 7(2), 123-142. doi: 10.1080/15267430701221578
- Morrow, S. L. (2007). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: Conceptual foundations. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 35(2), 209-235. doi: 10.1177/0011000006286990
- National healthy marriage resource center (2009). Marriage and intermarriage among Asian Americans: A fact sheet. Retrieved on July 21, 2011 from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/pdf/marriageamongasianamericans.pdf>
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bustamante, R. M., & Nelson, J. A. (2010). Mixed research as a tool for developing qualitative instruments. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 4(1), 56-78. doi: 10.1177/1558689809355805
- Owen, W. F. (1984). Interpretive themes in relational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70(3), 274-287. doi: 10.1080/00335638409383697
- Parker, L. (2004). Qualitative research. In S. Burton & P. Steane (Eds.), *Surviving your thesis* (pp. 159-177). London: Routledge.
- Petronio, S. (1994). Privacy binds in family interactions: The case of parental privacy invasion. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (pp. 241-257). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Petronio, S. (Ed.). (2000a). *Balancing the secrets of private disclosures*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Petronio, S. (2000b). A disclosure confidant--Being reluctant to listen. In A. C. Richards & T. Schumrum (Eds.), *Invitations to dialogue: The legacy of Sidney M. Jourard* (pp. 113 – 132). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Petronio, S. (2002). *Boundaries of privacy: Dialectics of disclosure*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Petronio, S. (2004). Road to developing communication privacy management theory: Narrative in progress, please stand by. *The Journal of Family Communication*, 4(3/4), 193-207. doi: 10.1080/15267431.2004.9670131
- Petronio, S. (2006). Impact of medical mistakes: Negotiating work-family boundaries for physicians and their families. *Communication Monographs*, 73(4), 462-467. doi: 10.1080/03637750601061174

- Petronio, S. (2007). Translational research endeavors and the practices of communication privacy management. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 35(3), 218-222. doi: 10.1080/00909880701422443
- Petronio, S. (2010). Communication privacy management theory: What do we know about family privacy regulation? *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, 2(3), 175-196. doi: 10.1111/j.1756-2589.2010.00052.x
- Petronio, S., & Caughlin, J. P. (2006). Communication privacy management theory: Understanding families. In D. O. Braithwaite, & L. A. Baxter (Eds.), *Engaging theories in family communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 35-49). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Petronio, S., & Durham, W., T. (2008). Communication privacy management theory: Significance for interpersonal communication. In L. A. Baxter & D. O. Braithwaite (Eds.), *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 309-322). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Petronio, S., & Jones, S. M. (2006). When “friendly advice” becomes a privacy dilemma for pregnant couples: Applying CPM theory. In R. West & L. Turner (Eds.), *The family communication sourcebook* (pp. 201-218). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Petronio, S., Jones, S. M., & Morr, M. C. (2003). Family privacy dilemmas: Managing communication boundaries within family groups. In L. Frey (Ed.), *Group communication in context: Studies of bona fide groups* (pp. 23-56). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Petronio, S., Reeder, H. M., Hecht, M. L., & Ros-Mendoza, T. M. (1996). Disclosure of sexual abuse by children and adolescents. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 24(3), 181-199. doi: 10.1080/00909889609365450
- Petronio, S., & Reiersen, J. (2009). Regulating the privacy of confidentiality: Grasping the complexities through CPM theory. In T. D. Afifi & W. A. Afifi (Eds.), *Uncertainty, information management, and disclosure decisions: Theories and applications* (pp. 365-383). New York: Routledge.
- Petronio, S., Sargent, J., Andea, L., Reganis, P., & Cichocki, D. (2004). Family and friends as healthcare advocates: Dilemmas of confidentiality and privacy. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 21(1), 33-52. doi: 10.1177/0265407504039838

- Pettys, G. L., & Balgopal, P. R. (1998). Multigenerational conflicts and new immigrants: An Indo-American experience. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 79(4), 410-423. doi: 10.1606/1044-3894.703
- Phinney, J. (2006). Ethnic identity exploration in emerging adulthood. In J. Arnett & J. L. Tanner (Eds.), *Emerging adults in America: Coming of age in the 21st century* (pp. 117-134). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Pinquart, M., & Sörensen, S. (2005). Ethnic differences in stressors, resources, and psychological outcomes of family caregiving: A meta-analysis. *The Gerontologist*, 45(1), 90-106. doi: 10.1093/geront/45.1.90
- Portes, A., & MacLeod, D. (1999). Educating the second generation: Determinants of academic achievement among children of immigrants in the United States. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 25(3), 373-396. doi: 10.1080/1369183X.1999.9976693
- Poulsen, S. S. (2009). East Indian families raising ABCD adolescents: Cultural and generational challenges. *The Family Journal*, 17(2), 168-174. doi: 10.1177/1066480709332715
- Puri, S., Adams, V., Ivey, S. & Nachtigall, R. D. (2011). “There is such a thing as too many daughters, but not too many sons”: A qualitative study of son preference and fetal sex selection among Indian immigrants in the United States. *Social Science and Medicine*, 72(7), 1169-1176. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.01.027
- Purkayastha, B. (2005). *Negotiating ethnicity: Second-generation South Asian Americans traverse a transnational world*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Raghavan, C. S., Harkness, S., & Super, C. M. (2010). Parental ethnotheories in the context of immigration: Asian Indian immigrant and Euro-American mothers and daughters in an American town. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 41(4), 617-632. doi: 10.1177/0022022110362629
- Rankin, J., & Bhopal, R. (2001). Understanding of heart disease and diabetes in a South Asian community: Cross-sectional study testing the ‘snowball’ sample method. *Public Health*, 115(4), 253-260. doi: 10.1038/sj.ph.1900777
- Reddy, S. D., & Crowther, J. H. (2007). Teasing, acculturation, and cultural

conflict: Psychosocial correlates of body image and eating attitudes among South Asian women. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 13(1), 45-53. doi: 10.1037/1099-9809.13.1.45

Replogle, E. M. (2005). *Intergenerational conflict, identity and mental health among second generation South Asian-Americans* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. <http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/305432212?accountid=4485>. (305432212).

Ritchie, L. D., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1990). Family communication patterns: Measuring intrapersonal perceptions of interpersonal relationships. *Communication Research*, 17(4), 523-544. doi: 10.1177/009365090017004007

Roberto, K. A. & Jarrott, S. E. (2008). Family caregivers of older adults: A life span perspective. *Family Relations*, 57(1), 100-111. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2007.00486.x

Roberts, J. M., & Gregor, T. (1971). Privacy: A cultural view. In J. R. Pennock & J. W. Chapman (Eds.), *Privacy* (pp. 199-225). New York: Atherton Press.

Roloff, M. E., & Ifert, D. (1998). Antecedents and consequences of explicit agreements to declare a taboo topic in dating relationships. *Personal Relationships*, 5(2), 191-205. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.1998.tb00167.x

Roloff, M. E., & Ifert, D. E. (2000). Conflict management through avoidance: Withholding complaints, suppressing arguments, and declaring topics taboo. In S. Petronio (Ed.), *Balancing the secrets of private disclosures* (pp. 151-179). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Rosenfeld, L. B., (2000). Overview of the ways privacy, secrecy, and disclosure are balanced in today's society. In S. Petronio (Ed.). *Balancing the secrets of privacy disclosures* (pp. 3-17). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Rosenthal, C. J. (1985). Kinkeeping in the familial division of labor. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 47(4), 965-974.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 54-67. doi: 10.1006/ceps.1999.1020

Salam, R. A. (2010). *Second generation South Asians: Dating, mating and becoming American*. (Doctoral dissertation). New York University. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

<http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/305213690?accountid=4485>. (UMI 305213690)

- Schrodt, P., & Afifi, T. D. (2007). Communication processes that predict young adults' feelings of being caught and their associations with mental health and family satisfaction. *Communication Monographs*, 74(2), 200-228. doi: 10.1080/03637750701390085
- Schrodt, P., Ledbetter, A. M., & Ohrt, J. K. (2007). Parental confirmation and affection as mediators of family communication patterns and children's mental well-being. *The Journal of Family Communication*, 7(1), 23-46. doi: 10.1080/15267430709336667
- Schrodt, P., Witt, P. L., & Messersmith, A. S. (2008). A meta-analytical review of family communication patterns and their associations with information processing, behavioral, and psychosocial outcomes. *Communication Monographs*, 75(3), 248-269. doi: 10.1080/03637750802256318
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). London: Teachers College Press.
- Seiter, L. N., & Nelson, L. J. (2011). An examination of emerging adulthood in college students and nonstudents in India. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 26(4), 506-536. doi: 10.1177/0743558410391262
- Shaffer, A., & Egeland, B. (2011). Intergenerational transmission of familial boundary dissolution: Observations and psychosocial outcomes in adolescence. *Family Relations*, 60, 290-302. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2011.00653.x
- Shaffer, A., & Sroufe, L. A. (2005). The developmental and adaptational implications of generational boundary dissolution: Findings from a prospective, longitudinal study. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 5(2/3), 67-84. doi: 10.1300/J135v05n02\_04
- Shanahan, M. J. (2000). Pathways to adulthood in changing societies: Variability and mechanisms in life course perspective. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 667-692. doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.667
- Sillars, A., Koerner, A., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (2005). Communication and understanding in parent-adolescent relationships. *Human Communication Research*, 31(1), 102-128. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2958.2005.tb00866.x
- Singh, A. A., Hays, D. G., Chung, Y. B., & Watson, L. (2010). South Asian



immigrant women who have survived child sexual abuse: Resilience and healing. *Violence Against Women*, 16(4), 444-458. doi: 10.1177/1077801210363976

Skinner-Drawz, B. A., Wrobel, G. M., Grotevant, H. D., & Korff, L. V. (2011): The role of adoption communicative openness in information seeking among adoptees from adolescence to emerging adulthood. *Journal of Family Communication*, 11(3), 181-197. doi: 10.1080/15267431003656587

Speziale, H. J. S., & Carpenter, D. R. (2007). *Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing the humanistic imperative* (4th ed.). London: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Steuber, K. R., & Solomon, D. H. (2011). Relational uncertainty, partner interference, and privacy boundary turbulence: Explaining spousal discrepancies in infertility disclosures. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 29(1), 3-27. doi: 10.1177/0265407511406896

Syed, M., & Azmitia, M. (2008). A narrative approach to ethnic identity in emerging adulthood: Bringing life to the identity status model. *Developmental Psychology*, 44(4), 1012-1027. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.44.4.1012

Talbani, A., & Hasanali, P. (2000). Adolescent females between tradition and modernity: Gender role socialization in South Asian immigrant culture. *Journal of Adolescence*, 23(5), 615-627. doi: 10.1006/jado.2000.0348

Teddlie, C., & Yu, F. (2007). Mixed methods sampling: A typology with examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 77-100. doi: 10.1177/2345678906292430

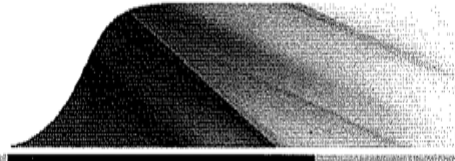
Thorson, A. R. (2009). Adult children's experiences with their parent's infidelity: Communicative protection and access rules in the absence of divorce. *Communication Studies*, 60(1), 32-48. doi: 10.1080/10510970802623591

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality. Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851. doi: 10.1177/1077800410383121

Treas, J., & Mazumdar, S. (2004). Kinkeeping and caregiving: Contributions of older people in immigrant families. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 35(1), 105-22. Retrieved from <http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/jcfs/>

- UN data. (2011). Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub-regions, and selected economic and other groupings. United Nations Statistics Division. Retrieved on February 5, 2012 from <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>.
- Vangelisti, A. L., & Caughlin, J. P. (1997). Revealing family secrets: The influence of topic, function, and relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 14*(5), 679-708. doi: 10.1177/0265407597145006
- Vangelisti, A. L., Caughlin, J. P., & Timmerman, L. (2001). Criteria for revealing family secrets. *Communication Monographs, 68*(1), 1-27. doi: 10.1080/03637750128052
- Weerasinghe, S., & Numer, M. (2010). A life-course exploration of the social, emotional and physical health behaviours of widowed South Asian immigrant women in Canada: Implications for health and social programme planning. *International Journal of Migration, Health, and Social Care, 6*(4), 42-56. doi: 10.5042/ijmhsc.2011.0153
- Wright, C. L., & Maxwell, J. W. (1991). Social support during adjustment to later-life divorce. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, 15*(3/4), 21-48. doi: 10.1300/J087v15n03\_02
- Young, S. L. (2009). The function of parental communication patterns: Reflection-enhancing and reflection-discouraging approaches. *Communication Quarterly, 57*(4), 379-394. doi: 10.1080/01463370903320823
- Zhang, Q. (2007). Family communication patterns and conflict styles in Chinese parent-child relationships. *Communication Quarterly, 55*(1), 113-128. doi: 10.1080/01463370600998681

APPENDIX A  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



---

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

---

To: Janet Alberts  
STAUF

*A* From: Mark Roosa, Chair *sm*  
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 10/14/2011

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 10/14/2011

IRB Protocol #: 1110006970

Study Title: South Asian American daughters' role as reluctant confidant in emerging adult  
child-parent relationships

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B  
INFORMATION LETTER

South Asian American daughters' role as reluctant confidant  
in emerging adult child-parent relationships

Dr. Janet Alberts, Principal Investigator  
Geeta Khurana, Co-investigator

Date

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

My name is Geeta Khurana, and I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Janet Alberts in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication department at Arizona State University. I am engaged in research investigating the roles that South Asian American adult daughters assume within their family relationships.

The purpose of this study is to investigate individuals' communicative behavior with their family members to understand how their interactions affect themselves and their relationships. The results of this investigation will contribute to research literature regarding communication within South Asian American families, interpersonal communication, and family communication.

To be eligible for this study, you must be a South Asian American adult daughter between the ages of 25 and 39 who has previously or is currently the recipient of unwanted disclosure from one or both parents. Additionally, you must fit at least one of the following criteria: (1) unmarried, (2) co-reside with your parent(s), (3) separated or divorced, (4) do not have any children, or (5) pursuing an education. Please contact the researcher if any clarification is needed to see if you qualify for this study.

Your participation in this study involves the researcher interviewing individuals. Interviews may be conducted in-person, through phone conversations, or even virtually (e.g., Skype) depending on your preference. Each interview will last approximately 60 minute. Your participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. You can withdraw from participation at any time and may choose to skip any questions or refuse to answer any questions at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled.

Although there is no monetary benefit for your participation, your involvement in this study will be able to provide insight into intergenerational relationships and family communication. Within the South Asian community, this study will be able to identify potential implications that adult daughters might have on their relationships and on future generations.

There are no foreseeable risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been

identified. Individuals who are uncomfortable being interviewed and/or talking about their family experiences may experience some discomfort or anxiety. Except for this possible temporary effect, the study involves no known risks. If you experience any discomfort for an extended period of time, per your request, the researcher will conclude the interview.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study might be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researcher will not identify you. All research records pertaining to this study (i.e., signed consent form, audio recording, my personal notes, and your transcribed responses) will remain confidential to the extent allowed by the law and stored in a locked cabinet that can only be accessed by the researcher. Individuals will not be identified by name in the final report. Consent forms and field notes will be shredded and audio recordings will be erased on December 31, 2015.

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by the principal investigator or the co-investigator. If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965 6788.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Additionally, you are agreeing that you are at least 18 years old and that you are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study. Thus, you may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In reading this information letter, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this information letter will be given (offered) to you.

**Contact Information:** If you have any additional questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact:

Dr. Janet Alberts  
Principal investigator  
Arizona State University  
Jess.Alberts@asu.edu

Geeta Khurana  
Co-investigator  
Arizona State University  
gkhurana@asu.edu

APPENDIX C  
CONTACT LETTER



I am a doctoral student in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication department at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore South Asian American adult daughters' communication with their parents. As such, I am asking for your assistance in participating in this study and/or forwarding this information to others who are eligible or who might know individuals who are eligible for this study.

I am recruiting individuals to participate in a face-to-face or phone interview which will take approximately 60 minutes. To participate in this study, she must be a second-generation South Asian American daughter between the ages of 18 and 29 who has been in contact with one or both parents within the last three months. Additionally, she must be unmarried and not have any children. For this study, *South Asian* refers to individuals who are of the following ancestry: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

I have attached an information letter which provides useful information regarding my study. If you have any questions concerning the research study or require additional clarification, please email me at [gkhurana@asu.edu](mailto:gkhurana@asu.edu). Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you!

APPENDIX D  
INTERVIEW GUIDE

## **I. Preliminary information**

- A. Where were you born?
- B. How old are you?
- C. Are you married?
- D. Are you separated/divorced?
- E. Do you have children?
- F. Do you currently reside with your parents?
- G. Are you currently attaining your education?

## **II. Communicating within the family**

- A. Describe your parents' marriage.
  - (a) How would you classify your parents' marriage (arranged or love marriage)?
- B. How would you describe your relationship and communication with your mother?
  - (a) What topics do/did you talk about? Why?
  - (b) What topics do/did you not talk about? Why?
  - (c) What, if any, tensions do/did you experience in your relationship?
- C. How would you describe your relationship and communication with your father?
  - (a) What topics do/did you talk about? Why?
  - (b) What topics do/did you not talk about? Why?
  - (c) What, if any, tensions do/did you experience in your relationship?
- D. Do your parents discuss their relationship with you?
  - (a) How do you feel about their disclosure or lack of disclosure?
- E. How would you describe your relationship and communication with your sibling(s)?
- F. How would you describe your relationship and communication with non-immediate family members (e.g., grandparents)

## **III. Negotiating roles**

- A. Describe your role(s) within your family.
  - (a) Why do you/did you perform your role(s) within your family?
  - (b) How does/did taking on these roles affect you?
  - (c) How does/did taking on these roles affect your relationships with others?
- B. According to you, what does it mean to be an adult?
  - (a) Do you consider yourself to be an adult? Why or why not?
- C. According to your parent(s), what does it mean to be an adult?
  - (a) Do you believe that they perceive you to be an adult? Why or why not?

APPENDIX E  
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Career/ Education</b>	<b>Parents' Marital Status</b>	<b>Siblings</b>	<b>Additional Characteristics</b>
Natasha	18	High school	N/A	1 older brother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently resides with parents</li> </ul>
Priya	19	Pre-medical school	Not an arranged marriage	2 younger sisters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently resides with parents</li> </ul>
Karina	21	College student	Not an arranged marriage	1 younger brother	N/A
Payal	21	College student; part-time teacher	Arranged marriage	1 younger brother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Father born in Africa; mother born in South Asia</li> </ul>
Zahra	21	College student	N/A	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only child</li> </ul>
Veena	22	Medical school	Arranged marriage	2 older brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brothers are 15-20 years older, so she views her parents as having a "second chance" at parenting her</li> </ul>
Sheila	23	College student; Retail job	Arranged marriage; Currently divorced; Father is re-married	1 older brother, 1 younger brother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a romantic relationship with a non-South Asian man</li> </ul>
Maya	24	Media professional	Arranged marriage	2 older sisters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently resides with parents</li> </ul>

Neha	25	Graduate student	Assisted marriage based on third party's introduction	1 younger brother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother came to US at the age of 14</li> <li>• In a romantic relationship with a non-South Asian man</li> </ul>
Bhavna	25	Law student	N/A	1 younger brother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bhavna's widowed mother lives with Bhavna's grandmother</li> <li>• In a romantic relationship with a non-South Asian man</li> </ul>
Sunny	26	Pharmacy school	Arranged marriage	1 older brother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents expect her to return home after finishing school, but she is still undecided</li> </ul>
Manisha	26	College student; Social worker	Arranged marriage	1 younger brother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents born in Africa</li> <li>• Part of the 1.5 generation: Born in Africa and arrived in the</li> </ul>

					US before teenage years
Rani	27	Pursuing MBA	Arranged marriage	1 younger sister, 1 younger brother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experienced a terminated engagement to a South Asian man</li> </ul>
Layla	27	Medical student	N/A	1 older sister	N/A
Asha	28	Clinical dietician	N/A	1 younger brother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mother was born in the US and is of non-South Asian ancestry</li> </ul>