

CHAPTER ONE

READING MIGRATION POLITICS/DYNAMICS

Migrancy...involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming—completing the story, domesticating the detour— becomes an impossibility.

(Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* 5)

Migration has actually become the norm and has resulted in a profound renegotiation of the concepts of identity, belonging, and home.

(Soren Frank, *Migration and Literature* 1)

I suggest that becoming “American” had both a hegemonic and a heterogeneous meaning articulated within and through forms of transnational consumption and struggles for rights. Americanness was produced transnationally by cultural, political, and economic practices, so that becoming American did not always or necessarily connote full participation or belonging to a nation-state.

(Inderpal Grewal, *Transnational America* 8)

The aim of this chapter is to examine the way migration narratives, especially migration fiction, is studied and the issues it addresses. It is seen that all migration narratives, whether fictional or non-fictional, deal with issues of displacement, alienation and assimilation as they relate the circumstances leading to migration and how they were received on arrival at the new place. Some writers choose to look at the nature of their settlement in the place they migrated to, the clash of cultures, work ethics, and the generational conflict with their children, their attempts to bond with members of their community as well as their attempts to fit in with the greater American community. There are often issues with the authorities pertaining to labour laws and trade practices, not to mention public health and hygiene, modes of residence, education, etc. Further, these migrant communities even after years of living in America, choose to retain their ties to the original homeland in the shape of its culture including dress, language and food habits. This is seen in Asian as well as Latin American migrant communities in America. This dissertation examines the nature of migrant-settler experience in Asian American fiction. It further examines the construction of mutant identities in fictional

narratives of migration representing Chinese/Korean American and Indian/Pakistani American communities.

Twentieth century migration has been more vibrant in its contribution to American social dynamics, in that they have formed diasporic communities with ambivalent ties to their 'homeland.' They are part of America even as they retain their original cultural affiliation. Asians and Latin Americans have not only made their homes in America, they have also started contributing to its socio-economic structure. While skill is recognised, their culture at best gives them a hyphenated American identity: what is recognised in the public sphere is only their potential to contribute to the economic structure. That notwithstanding, these communities appear to be in a mutant state as they negotiate between assimilation and assertion of ethnic difference. On one side, there are counters of assimilation/alienation/resistance; on the other hand, an in-between space working towards a more hybrid or hyphenated identity. Issues related to the complex social milieu that migrant and diasporic communities find themselves in are addressed by some of their own writers. As such, the literature of migration has become a nuanced record of the immigrant experience as they are drawn towards opposite cultural poles. This is especially so in the United States. This project will focus on the migrant condition in the US as represented in their narratives. It is seen that migrants have to redefine their sense of identity in America.

To this extent, this dissertation looks for patterns, if any, in the representation of such communities in their narratives: how the initial move towards assimilation with the host community is never complete as the different ethnic communities are encouraged to retain their original cultural links, either for identity or for commerce in the new world. As such ambivalences abound in these narratives, both fictional and non-fictional, pertaining to issues of culture, identity, settlement, social and political rights and values, to name a few. It is suggested that the negotiations with the 'host' community are not unilateral, given that the nature of hosting is already complex, multi-pronged and protean. What emerges is a complex mutant identity not constrained by individual, socio-political or geographical borders.

As pointed out by Frank,

Migration...signals *oscillatory and inconclusive processes* that manifest themselves on different levels in the literary work—for example, in relation to

personal, national, and cultural identity, language, narrative form, and enunciation.

(Migration and Literature 8)

It follows that migration literature includes the writings of migrants as well as that of the characters in a work. Irrespective of the work being written by a migrant or second generation migrant author, or someone else, Frank draws upon Rushdie's contention that "migration refers to both an author's and a character's spatial as well as temporal movements" (8). Some of the novels included in this study are written by first generation migrants to America while some others are written by the American progeny of migrant parents.

Further, what Frank points out in the context of other migration novels, could be applicable to these Asian American novels as well:

The enunciatory strategies of the novels reveal a complex play with multiperspectivism, wandering consciousnesses, and narratorial authority, as well as intratextual border crossings between story and discourse. What is more, the novels are often narrated through a migrant perspective that is characterized by an "unstable equilibrium" of familiarity and foreignness as it is positioned between cultures. As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari point out, in-betweenness does not refer to a back-and-forth movement between fixed positions; rather, it implies the destabilization of each position as well as a movement into a completely new dimension. (19)

Contemporary immigrant writers of different ethnic origin have engaged with the condition of being an immigrant in the United States in varying degrees of celebration of what it means to be an inhabitant of the "first" nation of the world. This celebration is often ambiguous and demands a close reading to unravel its real nature. This chapter examines the concept of migration in all its manifestation – trying to analyze the various theories of migration and its effects on the host-settler communities.

Migration studies has emerged as one of the significant ways to understand the varied networks of contemporary society. The newness in migration studies arises from the introduction of new conceptual frameworks such as mobility, transnationalism and diaspora studies (Russell King). Mobility and migration are two very connected terms – one has to be for the other to be. Along with mobility comes a wide range of areas –

issues of space/place (geography), livelihood (economics), everyday life (culture). Mobility is intertwined with the concept of space/place. Place is as much shaped by its inhabitants as it in turn shapes the life of those occupying it.

Transnationalism is changing the way in which migration and immigrants have been viewed through the ages. From seeing migrants as uprooted/rootless people without any agency, transnationalism makes a case for immigrants by implying that migrants forge and retain connections across borders. Transnationalism holds that the cause for migration might be outside one's control but one's condition as an immigrant is very much a choice by contemporary immigrants.

The natural homing desire in human beings is too often confused for a desire for homeland. But the two should never be confused (Brah 16). The nostalgia that is so easily read into as a condition of the immigrant experience can actually may be quite tangible in case of the first generation immigrants. But too often, in the case of second generation, the nostalgia is seldom for an unseen and heard of homeland but rather for a more "settled" family life – for a family who is completely in the present instead of parents sighing away for a life across time and borders. When your contemporaries are obsessed with high school and other familiar problems, it becomes alienating for a child to be stuck between two worlds – and one imaginary at that, for the perfect past does not exist, it is only the future that is perfect – the future that their parents had gone looking for and now cannot accept.

The immigrant condition is one of journey. Once home is left behind, the entire life ahead is an adventure with no guarantee of safe landing. Life unfolds with varying degree of drama. Immigrants are caught between their attachments to their homeland and what they learn or acquire in the hostland, America in this case. Despite attempts by some first generation Asian immigrants in America to retain their own language and culture, they do not succeed in completely shutting out the outside world of mainstream America. This is seen in their consumption pattern and what they as entrepreneurs or shopkeepers offer to the public. Finally they are forced by circumstances to occupy an in-between-space, as they struggle mentally with ideas of home and abroad.

Again in those cases where the first generation tries to assimilate with American society, it is seen that the level of success is only partial. With succeeding generations, however, the struggle between two cultures is not so acute despite cultural differences inside and outside their homes. Despite being branded as Asian Americans on the basis of their looks and general racial characteristics, most of the younger people assimilate so well that they prefer to live and think like other Americans. At times however, there is parental insistence on their following the cultural norms of their original or erstwhile homeland in Asia. This results in a generational clash as children and young adults are pulled in different directions between their loyalty to their parents and their natural acceptance of American values. This dilemma faced by young adults of immigrant stock leads them to consider adopting a more fluid identity bridging East and West, as they try to maintain ties across the cultural divide.

In a number of people who have settled in America, the question of identity is also determined by the individual position as well as the strength of the ethnic community to which he/she belongs. While Asian Americans choose to retain some of their food and other cultural habits from their earlier homeland, they are given specific identities as Korean American or Indian American and so on by others outside the community. Even if they choose to be recognized as Americans, their racial markers ensure that the outside world of White or Black Americans endow them with a hyphenated identity. In this case the hyphenation is imposed from without. However, in contemporary America, with more cultural and political awareness, former immigrants are seen asserting their onetime cultural identities and choosing to be recognized as Americans with hyphenated identities. Whether it is Chinese Americans, or Indian or Pakistani Americans, more and more ethnic identities are fighting for space and recognition in contemporary America. In such cases, the hyphenated identity is a deliberate celebration of their own cultures within the framework of multiethnic America.

Mobility has emerged as the locus in current academic studies pertaining to migration. But mobility has been a characteristic feature of early American life as well as literature. Paralleling the American spirit of restless mobility, American literature since its inception has been concerned with “ceaseless movement into new realms” (Wong 119). The American mainstream understanding of mobility is that of a glorified venture, of the allure of the frontier, of the westward in the time past to the movement towards space in

the modern time. But this celebratory reading of mobility does not encompass the Asian American. As Wong contends, “the Asian American has been conspicuously absent in existing generalist formulations of a presumably universally applicable theory of American mobility; none of the major studies on the American landscape, the frontier, or the journey motif makes a place for the group” (119).

But mobility has been the central theme in Asian American literature since its very beginning. Displacement and migration have been central to Asian American writings since Carlos Bulosan’s *America Is in the Heart* (1943). Wong advocates the examination of the mobility theme in Asian American literature from an ethnic, group-specific approach to better understand the meaning of Asian American. Race, ethnicity and gender along with nationality have played key roles in the formulation of different legislations in the United States – legislations that were exclusively made to control the mobility of specific people.

According to Wong, the representation of mobility significantly varies between Asian American literature and mainstream literature. In mainstream literature, mobility or movement comes across as liberating and privilege, something Wong terms “Extravagance”; in Asian American literature though, mobility is often associated with coercion, by things beyond one’s control, which Wong terms “Necessity.” Wong contends that the Extravagance reflected in mainstream literature overshadows the aspect of the Necessity that was also a definite part of the early pioneers’ lives. The mobility in American mainstream literature has as its end immobility – a desirable immobility, a homestead. In contrast, Asian American literature presupposes mobility as a historical given, it is a coerced mobility as damaging as imprisonment (121, 123). Wong also stresses on the importance of examining the individual historical experiences of the different Asian American subgroups because these experiences had determined the way they view and write mobility (124).

Each of the core chapters draws upon the theories of migration, diaspora and identity put forward by concerned people. Chapter Two: “Negotiating Displacement, Challenging Boundaries” draws upon the contentions of Anderson and Lee in *Displacements and Diasporas* that displacement in connection with migration assumes four forms: “as the lived experienced of the immigrant, the refugee, the exile, the expatriate, and the

migrant: physical/spatial displacement, cultural displacement, psychological/affective displacement, and intellectual displacement” (11). Further, “A displaced group can experience one form or several forms, and one displaced person in a group can live a displaced life differently from others, depending on the relative degree of his or her estrangement” (11). They suggest that “displacement... is linked to the construction of new identities and new cultural or ethnic communities within the new nation-state in which the group has resettled” (12). According to them the nature of migration or the class of migrants is determined from time to time by the requirements of the American situation. If at one time there were openings for skilled and trained middle class personnel, they were followed by the need for cheap labour in the domestic and other sectors.

The chapter also draws upon Grewal’s contentions that “transnational movements of people were made possible by earlier migrants who became cultural and...economic mediators, paying the visa and travel fees to import workers, but often also exploiting the workers as well” (*Transnational America* 6). She informs that the professional networks which facilitated migration are “not simply professional. Rather...culture, gender, class, nationality, race, and other factors also enabled the formation and maintenance of these networks” (6). According to her, each wave of migration left its mark on the American social fabric. She holds that “affiliative practices enabled the formation of subjects of displacement and of national belonging by enabling them to become provisionally attached to new identities....Thus the power of American nationalism was visible in its ability to produce provisional national subjects out of immigrants and refugees” (8). Grewal observes that the economic system in America absorbed them to the extent of allowing them provisional identities which enabled them to have a sense of location and to cross nation-state borders. If on one end there is migration and displacement, on the other end there is an attempt at relocation and assimilation as part of American consumer culture.

Chapter Three: “Politics of the Workplace: Race, Gender and Social Profiling” examines the work situation and the racial or gendered profiling therein—how migrants are pushed to taking up certain jobs and denied certain others—irrespective of existing credentials. This chapter draws upon the observations of Yen Li Espiritu in “Gender and Labor in Asian Immigrant Families” to support some of the arguments. She holds that “The

problems of underemployment, misemployment, and discrimination in the U.S. labor market have turned many educated and professional Korean immigrants toward self-employment” (85). What she says about Koreans is applicable to some of the other Asian immigrants as well. What she says about the problems of the workplace help to consolidate the textual analyses in the chapter. She observes:

Despite their high levels of education, racism in the workplace threatens the employment security and class status of Asian immigrant professional men and women. Even when these women and men have superior levels of education, they still receive economic returns lower than those of their White counterparts and are more likely to remain marginalized in their work organization....(87)

Further, that

As racialized women, Asian professional women also suffer greater sexual harassment than do their Western counterparts due to racialized ascription that depicts them as politically passive and sexually exotic and submissive. In her research on racialized sexual harassment in institutions of higher education, Sumi Cho argues that Asian American women faculty are especially susceptible to hostile-environment forms of harassment. This hostile environment may partly explain why Asian American women faculty continue to have the lowest tenure and promotion rate of all groups. (87)

Espiritu points to the gendered inequality at the workplace, although in the case of wage labourers, women get more easily employed than men as they can be absorbed both in the factories and in the domestic sector. Apart from issues of inequality, Asian American women are more frequently subjected to sexual harassment if not sexism by employers and colleagues.

Chapter Four: “For a New Topopoeia: Rejecting/Re-establishing Sense of Place” deals with the contradictory impulses of attachment to a place (sense of rootedness) and looking for a better place/places with a homogenized corridor to link some of these places. This chapter draws upon the contentions of Lefebvre, Massey and Foucault to begin with. How a person relates to a place, how he sees it, what he draws from it and what he contributes to it are all points of inquiry in this chapter. Lefebvre and Massey’s ideas of space are crucial to the analyses in the chapter. Lefebvre looks at production of space through “a dialectical relationship which exists within the triad of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived” (*The Production of Space* 40). According to him “A spatial

practice must have a certain cohesiveness, but this does not imply that it is coherent (in the sense of intellectually worked out or logically conceived)” (43). Further that it “is the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” (44). He adds that “the lived, conceived and perceived realms should be interconnected, so that the subject, the individual member of a given social group, may move from one to another without confusion” (40).

Massey’s contention that multiplicity and space are co-constitutive, that space has to be seen as the product of interrelations, making for plurality, help to explain the Asian American immigrant space (*For Space* 10). She says that intersection of spaces “includes relations which stretch beyond—the global as part of what constitutes the local, the outside as part of the inside. Such a view of place challenges any possibility of claims to internal histories or to timeless identities. The identities of place are always unfixed, contested and multiple” (5). Moreover, “While place is claimed, or rejected...there are often shared undergirding assumptions: of place as closed, coherent, integrated as authentic, as ‘home,’ a secure retreat; of space as somehow, regionalized, as always already divided up” (6). Added to that “they institute...a counterposition, sometimes even a hostility, certainly an implicit imagination of different theoretical ‘levels’ (of the abstract versus the everyday, and so forth), between space on the one hand and place on the other” (6). It follows that places have different kinds of significance for different people and also to the same people at different times. In the context of immigrants settling in a particular place, there is a possibility that they may think of exploring other horizons within the state or even across states if permitted by the law in America.

Pascual-de-Sans too, looks at the significance of the different places that one comes across in life in “Sense of Place and Migration Histories: Idiotype and Idiotope”:

Other places may appear during the course of people's lives, or not. Some will be chosen, others will be imposed; some are searched out, others are discovered by chance or through circumstantial moves. People may remain in places, voluntarily or by force, or may leave them behind, feeling more or less attachment. They may return to them, or may not. (352)

This in a way consolidates Massey's claims. The chapter also shows a connection between Massey's idea of space as multiplicity and interconnectivity with Foucault's figure of the garden as a heterotopia, with its superimposed meanings.

Regarding the garden in the Orient, Foucault observes that it is the site of "seemingly superimposed meanings". He says that the garden,

was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world...and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together in this space, in this sort of microcosm. ("Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" 6)

In view of the above, contemporary immigrant settlements also manifest the same layered significance as seen in Asian American migration fiction.

Chapter Five: "Reconstituting Community, Reclaiming Identity" examines the intricacies and problematics of identity formation in migrant/diasporic communities. This chapter looks at the changing role of community in contemporary migration fiction and how it influences the identity formation of the immigrant subject. It studies the ever changing relationship between the two while trying to understand the changing significance of the community for succeeding generations of Asian Americans. It is seen that instead of complete assimilation, or disavowal as seen in some of the militant migrant groups, there are shades and levels of acculturation and dissociation amongst the immigrant settlers. This results in complex identities amongst these people as they shift between two cultures or are forced to abide by certain cultural values from their ancestral homeland, even as they generally adapt to or subscribe to American culture.

This chapter draws upon the contentions of critics of identity like Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Iain Chambers and Inderpal Grewal amongst others. Talking about the 'fragmentation of Identity,' Bhabha observes that although it is "celebrated as a kind of pure anarchic liberalism or voluntarism," he chooses "to see it as a recognition of the importance of the alienation of the self in the construction of forms of solidarity." He explains: "It is only by losing the sovereignty of the self that you can gain the freedom of a politics that is open to the non-assimilationist claims of cultural difference. The crucial feature of this new awareness is that it doesn't need to totalise in order to legitimate political action or cultural practice. That is the real issue" ("The Third Space," Rutherford, *Identity:*

Community, Culture, Difference 144). The key words here are “non-assimilationist claims of cultural difference,” which are meant to empower the immigrant’s quest for an identity that draws upon the culture of America as well as that of the ancestral homeland.

Further as Bhabha suggests, identities like everything else are subject to negotiation: “we are always negotiating in any situation of political opposition or antagonism. Subversion is negotiation; transgression is negotiation; negotiation is not just some kind of compromise or ‘selling out’ which people too easily understand it to be” (216). He adds that “political negotiation is a very important issue, and hybridity is precisely about the fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them” (216).

In “Signs taken for Wonders,” Bhabha’s comments on hybridity in the colonial context may be cited to address the process of othering and domination in the case of immigrants vis-a-vis the United States Authorities:

Hybridity...is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. (*Location* 159)

Interestingly, the process of disavowal is seen in mainstream American society as well as in the Asian Americans. They insist on holding on to their original cultural practices and identities even as they fight for space in America. It is here that Roy Sommer’s description of the “transcultural hybrid novel” becomes relevant in the study of these novels (qtd. in Frank).

As Hall points out, there are differences of identity within a larger group identity as there is a layering of identity traits marking changes from what they were and what they are in the present. Identities are not fixed but keep evolving as they are “subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” in culturally complex diasporic situations within America” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” Rutherford 225). Chambers suggests that “In the migrant landscapes of contemporary metropolitan

cultures... a constant struggling into sense and history is pieced together. It is a history that is continually being decomposed and recomposed in the interlacing between what we have inherited and where we are” (*Migrancy, Culture, Identity* 15).

Inderpal Grewal observes that “Although all identities are formed through strategic essentialism, they are neither stable nor ahistorical. They exist to enact specific kinds of agency through the exercise of power” (*Transnational America* 14). According to her, identities are need based as they fulfil specific kinds of agency. They are either determined by essentialism or power operating within a nexus.

Key Terms:

Hyphenation and hybridity

Hyphenation and hybridity are very much connected terms in relation to the immigrant question. The hyphenated experience that is often considered a staple of the immigrant condition has provoked much debate, the reverberation of which is felt in the way immigrants choose to identify themselves. Theodore Roosevelt had in 1915 talked about the dangers to the nation from an infighting of “squabbling nationalities”. Roosevelt summarily rejected the idea of the hyphenated American by calling someone who identifies as such as being no American at all. The environment of World War I after all demanded an united American identity like never before. Patti Duncan has noted how finally during the 1960s, at the height of the Asian American Movement, the use of the “hyphen” came to be consciously discarded by some Asian American writers and activists for the first time (2004). To these people, the hyphen was emblematic of the bifurcation between two very different selves – the Asian and the American – and hinted at a split identity and a “not-quite-American” status (*ibid*). Whereas others like Gloria Anzaldúa criticized the very notion of placing one’s ethnicity before the noun “American”, maintaining that such a practice instead of claiming allegiance to two cultures actually announces that one belongs to neither. Although in current times, the hyphen has mostly been renounced, the debate regarding the state of hyphenation between ethnic allegiance and an unadulterated American identity continues unabated with the more assimilated immigrants (for instance Bharati Mukherjee) believing in identifying oneself as American as opposed to Asian American.

Hybridity on the other hand is a more theoretical issue that has gained much attention from some very reputed scholars. Homi Bhabha tries to explicate the problematic role of hybridity when he says, “Hybridity intervenes in the exercise of authority not merely to indicate the impossibility of its identity but to represent the unpredictability of its presence” (1985). Hybridity is not simply a third term that diffuses the tension between two cultures nor is it merely unacknowledged knowledge systems redefined anew as countercultures. The very presence of hybridity is as much destabilized as it is destabilizing of a dominant discourse. Sten Pultz Moslund drawing upon the work of Soren Frank addresses hybridity as it “manifests itself in tropes and thematisations of the experience of cultural in-betweenness, processes of intermixture, fusions or doublings of two or more cultures or two or more systems of signification” in the contemporary migration novel (2010). The condition of hybridity itself becomes the “language of representation” and it is this that Moslund seeks to address in his work.

Ethnic Enclaves

Ethnic enclaves imply the concentration of particular communities at specific localities. In immigrant history, at various times, there have been laws preventing the assimilation of certain communities into American culture. Laws were made forbidding them from owning land or intermarriage with Whites. They were denied most occupations and housing regulations ensured that they remained contained within their isolated communities. This gave birth to the “enduring cultural images of Chinese restaurants and laundry shops, Japanese gardeners and produce stands, and Korean grocery stores” (Le 16). Over time, these localities have developed into Chinatowns, Koreatowns, Mini Indias, etc.

Model Minority

The myth of the “**model minority**” developed in response to the need to threaten certain other minority communities into behaving “well”. History bears testimony to the fact that the United States has always operated by selective exploitation of its immigrants. One such method is the construction of the model minority. The model minority is the good subject, one who respects and upholds the dominant values of the mainstream society. She is the foil to the bad subject who refuses to comply with the dominant narrative. In the words of Nguyen, “The model minority is an identity that is testimony to the Asian American ability to be good citizen, productive worker, reliable consumer, and member

of a niche lifestyle suitable for capitalist exploitation. The model minority is the vehicle of entry for a racial population not only into American capitalism but also into American politics—indeed, the two go hand in hand” (10). The title of model minority confers certain privileges to a people while at the same time as it limits the people to an expected code of conduct that one cannot simply defy without foregoing the privileges. The idea of the model minority has resonated frequently since the early days of Asian American literature. Increasingly though the idea of the bad subject is gaining ground as more contemporary Asian American intellectuals through their writings and ideologies and nonconformity to the model minority discourse identifies as bad subjects by choice (Nguyen 2002).

The Postethnic

David A. Hollinger uses the term “post-ethnic” in a manner similar to Paul Gilroy when he describes a future liberated from race. Hollinger claims that postethnic goes beyond postracial in that it includes various immigrant groups who do not come under racial identification. In his own words, “A post-ethnic social order would encourage individuals to devote as much - or as little - of their energies as they wished to their community of descent. It would discourage public and private agencies from implicitly telling citizens that the most important thing about them is their descent community. Hence, to be post-ethnic is not to be anti-ethnic, or even color-blind, but rather to reject the idea that descent so determines destiny as to render suspect trans-descent programs that seek to diminish inequality” (175).

Revocable assimilation

The term “revocable assimilation” derives from David A. Hollinger’s idea of affiliation by revocable consent. It is seen that in the very much racially charged and ethnically discriminated landscape of American society, contemporary immigrants are increasingly moving towards an American identity based on affiliation by revocable assimilation. With most immigrant communities having second, third, fourth generation presence in the United States, the sense of one’s ethnic identity does not remain as strong as in the first generation. Despite the strong assimilationist and integrationist policies of the United States, the very appeal of America as the land of the free paradoxically inspires “its” people to hold on to their ethnic identity or forsake it utterly by their own sweet

will. This leads to the immigrants (more clearly in the case of the 1.5 generation and later) choosing to be an “American” when times are pleasant but with the clear understanding that they may choose to become Indian American or Korean American as and when the requirement arises.

Profiling

Profiling is the categorization of individuals based on the stereotypical expectations of their being affiliated to a certain group. This perceived affiliation may be based on their being a member of certain ethnic groups, their gender identification, socio-economic background, spatial location, etc. As Le has shown, the spatial location of certain immigrants within specific ghettos have often been a result of government policies that made people of a particular community huddle within specific regions, shunned by the other. Other legislations had deemed immigrants fit or qualified for certain kinds of work alone – often work that entailed cheap labour or fell below the dignity of the “native” population. These two discriminating factors together determined the “enduring cultural images” of a people as being invested in certain fields, furthering and strengthening the argument for profiling. Profiling carries a negative connotation because it is based on the lesser qualities of a group. In the case of Asian Americans, profiling has also been used to propagate the notion of the model minority. In the racialized discourse of the mainstream white America, Asians have always served as the good subject as opposed to the “bad subjects” like African Americans or the unruly white laborers of the 19th century (Nguyen 2002; Prashad 2000). Profiling has always been a way of controlling the mass behavior of a people, often working on the principle of carrot or stick. Profiling in the workplace is an extension of the same.

There is some confusion regarding the use of the terms “First generation” and “Second generation”. In the United States, the term first generation is being variously used to describe the generation that immigrates to the country as well as their America born children. Again second generation is used to imply both the children of immigrant parents, as well as the grandchildren of immigrant parents. Under such confusion, often a native born person might be considered first generation, as is the case with authors like Fae Mynne Ng. The 1.5 generation in contrast is the little children who immigrated with their parents. For the purpose of this dissertation, the generation that moves in to the

country will be considered first generation, and the first generation to be born in the States will be considered second generation.

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