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This paper identifies "diaspora philanthropy" as an important dimension to maintaining transnational identities among South Asian Indian Americans. Several South Asian initiatives and organisations promote involvement to the motherland (homeland) as individuals negotiate a sense of belonging in a migrant context. It is important to explore the motivations behind this new type of socio-political activism that is fuelled by a sense of responsibility to the motherland. I examine three non-government South Asian Indian organisation websites that are shaped by globalisation as a means to explore new trends in diaspora philanthropy. A critical intercultural communication framework is used to explore how this US immigrant community negotiates intergenerational experiences that challenge and reassert their hybrid identities.

Introduction

I first witnessed the impact of diasporic philanthropy on a cold, autumn evening in a fancy ballroom filled with about 300 South Asian Indian Americans (SAIAs). I was visiting my extended family in Dallas, TX and they invited me to join a fundraiser for *Akshaya Patra.* There was an array of desi appetisers, beverages, and an elaborate vegetarian buffet spread. Women were dressed in traditional saris or men in suits or shalwar kameez. Three hours had passed and the donation count from the night had already reached $650,000. I heard of the organisation *Akshaya Patra* when growing up in Mumbai, but did not know they held such lavish fundraisers in the US (United States of America). One of the coordinators of the event came by our table and said, "You have to spend money to make money!" My jaw dropped and I tried to show my disapproval, instead I kept quiet and smiled. The overall donation figures spoke louder than my disapproval, and I left with an unsettling feeling. This unsettling feeling surfaced a significant teenage memory with my high school principal in Mumbai, India. I vividly recall telling my principal about my decision to go to the US to further my

education and she said to me, "Remember the foundation your country has given you, and think about how you will return to repay your debt to your country." My unsettling feeling represents this moment where I am always reminded about my debt to my country. This moment of disapproval motivates me to conduct this glocalised research and understand how SAIA diasporics engage in philanthropy as a way of redefining or reasserting their transnational identities.

In this paper, I identify trends in "diaspora philanthropy" as an important dimension to maintaining transnational identities among South Asian Indian Americans. I argue that diaspora philanthropy serves as a platform for diasporan individuals to negotiate their transnational identities to their "motherland" in a migrant context. This complex transnational flow of capital secures modes of economic, political, and cultural neoliberal discourses while creating glocalised sense of identifications to emancipate "the other." However, the oppressed subaltern other becomes the oppressor as donors stake claims towards social responsibility and complexify their attachment, albeit monetarily, to the other-left behind-third world. Studying how these diasporic communities communicate their in-between identities in transnational contexts is important in the field of intercultural communication as it can help to understand relationships between diasporic migrations, multiplicity of cultural identities, notions of nation-state, and transnational ties. Diasporas are "transnational, spatially, and temporally sprawling sociocultural formations of people, creating imagined communities whose blurred and fluctuating boundaries are sustained by real and/or symbolic ties to some original 'homeland'" (Ang, 2001, p. 25). In this paper, I show how affluent SAIA diasporic individuals negotiate their identities by maintaining these symbolic ties via their philanthropic efforts. Since these diaspora communities focus attention and channel capital through NGOs, the discourses employed through NGOs becomes a significant site of study. Therefore, I focus on NGO website mediated discourses that have multidirectional flows and spatially (re)orient one's identifications to the homeland.

This paper is organised into five sections, first is the historical context; the second section provides background literature on diasporic transnational hybridities. The third section overviews critical textual analysis methods used to examine three NGO websites: *Akshaya Patra USA, Grameen Foundation India,* and *Pratham USA.* The fourth provides an in-depth discussion of my analyses and interpretation. The fifth and final section of the paper concludes with a summary of key findings and future directions.

Historical Background

Diaspora philanthropy is not a new phenomenon, yet it is shifting and producing interesting trends. This type of philanthropy is marked by complex transnational relationships between immigrant, expatriate, or diasporic

communities or individuals and development in their native homelands. This phenomenon of "diasporic capital flow" includes a wide "range of both economic practices and social, ideological, and political projects" (Bose, 2014, p. 112). Due to forces of globalisation, diaspora communities, in addition to remittances sent to family members, have also started building collective philanthropic efforts. India is the top recipient of remittances with an estimated $69 billion in 2012, with about $12 billion sent from the US (Pew Research, 2014a). In 2011, "about 22,000 Indian NGOs received a total of more than $2 billion from abroad, of which $650 million came from the US" (Lakshmi, 2013, para 7). Donations to Indian NGOs from the US rank among the highest. Online platforms make it easier for individual donors to give their funds directly to initiatives abroad or to their home countries.

The South Asian Indian (SAI) diaspora comprises more than 20 million people spread out over all continents (Safran, Sahoo, & Lal, 2009). There are slightly more than three million SAIAs in residence in the US, making SAIAs the third largest Asian American population, after Chinese Americans and Filipino Americans (Pew Research Centre, 2014b). The passing of the Immigration and Naturalisation Act of 1965 amended the laws that previously restricted SAI immigrants in the U.S. (Lal, 1999). According to Bhatia (2007), the 1965 Act essentially raised the socio-economic status of the majority of Indian migrants in the US and they very quickly upgraded from social "pariahs to elite" (Rangaswamy, 2000, p. 40). The post-1965 migrants came from middle-class families who used their economic success and wealth to skip the hardships that are often associated with low skilled or migrant labour (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). This group of migrants has contributed to the "brain drain" where highly skilled labourers or educated professionals left their native homeland of India. Their membership in competitive, exclusive professions such as medicine, IT, and engineering has put them in the company of some of the most elite members of the US American society. Of course, intersectionality matters and this group of SAIAs has different experiences, access, and agency compared to descendants of indentured labourers in the Caribbean or wage labourers in Middle East (Prashad, 2000). Postcolonial scholars Shome and Hegde (2002) situate complex historical references that resulted in migratory patterns from the 1950s to 1970s of colonised people to coloniser's cities, first to the UK and then the US. These historical immigration trends serve as conditions for understanding how SAIA immigrants are able to maintain ties with India due to their "comparative affluence" following the flow of remittances and investments (Safran, Sahoo, & Lal, 2009, p. xxiv).

These neoliberal and postcolonial trends situate a specific group of SAIAs and their economic and status positioning differentiates them from other diasporas. Neoliberal logics are apparent in situating this intercultural trend as it mediates the relationship between how people understand movement in relation to nation, power, and ideology (Kawai, 2006).

Neoliberalism is defined as reduced state intervention and responsibility in the form of free market privatisation that redistributes wealth in favour of profit for the elite (see Collier, 2014; Dutta, 2011). Of core importance to this research, Dutta (2011) explains how neoliberalism results in "simultaneous disenfranchisement of the lower classes from social, economic, and political processes where policies are made, debated, and implemented" (p. 49). This impacts resources, opportunities, and policies related to philanthropic efforts towards oppressed groups worldwide.

Developing countries are increasing efforts to maintain ties with their diasporas, and the Internet has made it possible for dispersed populations to organise, collaborate, and nurture relationships across borders (Bardhan, 2011; Bose, 2014; Newland, Terrazas, & Munster, 2010; Ong, 2006). The Internet has connected philanthropic contributors as a way of engaging long distance nationalism (Anderson, 1992; 1994). Not surprisingly, governments around the world are engaging their overseas populations in innovative ways as they consider the diaspora a national asset or "safe source of investment" (Bardhan, 2011, p. 47). An example here is Prime Minister Modi's India Shining campaign that reframes migrant contributions. As Aikins, Sands, & White (2009) note, "Rather than viewing expatriate business, cultural, scientific and policy actors as 'lost' to their countries of origin, active efforts are now being made to identify and link highly skilled offshore citizens to national efforts" (p. 5). However, the Indian government is imposing restrictions on NGOs that receive foreign funding. In 2013, the Indian government suspended the permission that Indian Social Action Forum, a network of more than 700 NGOs, could receive foreign funds by claiming it "prejudicially affect the public interest." As Lakshmi (2013) from *The Washington Post* notes, "Groups in the network campaign for indigenous peoples' rights over their mineral-rich land and against nuclear energy, human rights violations and religious fundamentalism; nearly 90% of the network's funding comes from overseas" (Lakshmi, 2013, para, 3). Similarly, The Foreign Contribution Regulation Act of 1976 governs the receipt of foreign contributions made by Indians. According to The Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora (n.d), this act has made it difficult for transferring donations and NGOs have highlighted delays in receiving funds due to bureaucratic governmental structures. While there are benefits to receiving foreign aid, there are some harmful effects and this relationship is complex and contradictory (Krishnamurty, 1994). In his work on diaspora development, Bose (2014) critiques diaspora involvement that has led to "political disenfranchisement or manipulation, physical harm or dislocation" (p. 114) of indigenous people. Diasporic capital plays an important role on the economic history. It is clear that the diasporic communities need to be more knowledgeable and ethical in their investments.

Diaspora communities are able to mobilise financial, human, and social capital to set up and implement initiatives in both the business and

philanthropic world. These initiatives impact their communities of origin as well as their adopted or host countries. At the 2012 Second Global Diaspora Forum in Washington, DC, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton underlined that:

> . . . diaspora communities have enormous potential to help solve problems and create opportunities in their countries of origin, because we believe that, as the title of this conference says, we can move forward by giving back. By tapping into the experiences, the energy, the expertise of diaspora communities, we can reverse the so-called "brain drain" that slows progress in so many countries around the world, and instead offer the benefits of the "brain gain" (US Department of State, 2012).

Clinton's seemingly positive reframing of brain drain is marked by rapid global interdependence socially, economically, environmentally, and politically. However, her statement also magnifies inequitable relations of power based on flows of capital and access to education that are intensified in the SAIA immigrant context.

Diaspora networks are becoming increasingly significant because of communication and technological development. Several philanthropic intermediaries channel donations from those in diaspora to their countries of origin, to the "homeland." Examples of philanthropic intermediaries include: diaspora foundations (e.g., The American India Foundation, India Development and Relief Fund); professional associations (e.g., The Indus Entrepreneurs); faith-based organisations (e.g., Telugu-based Seventh Day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad promoting the Hindutva movement, and Ramakrishna Missions); ethnic-based organisations (e.g, Maharasthra Mandals and Federation of Gujarati Associations in North America); and online-giving platforms (e.g., Give India). These channels affirm Hegde's (2002) ideas about the creation of hybrid cultures as a type of "collective resistance" that minorities use as a means of cultural continuity (p. 261). In this case, those in diaspora may be viewed as a non-dominant group asserting its hybridity with antagonising realities and powerful dominant forces in the homeland. Hegde (2002) shows how Indian-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) use online platforms to target SAIA immigrant donors.

Diasporic philanthropists have a sense of responsibility towards their home society (Mohammed-Arif & Moliner, 2007). As Bose (2014) theorises, "Diasporic populations feel intimately connected to 'place,' hence their continued involvement with development in their 'home countries'" (p. 114). I have personally experienced this feeling of responsibility that was echoed in my opening narrative. Furthermore, returning to the argument of this research, philanthropy acts as a platform for negotiating a sense of belonging insofar as "philanthropic giving" embodies Ataselim-Yilmaz's (2013) assertion

that: "Diasporas most personal connection to 'home' happens through philanthropic giving" (para 4). The Hindu word *dana* (giving) helps with understanding the meanings and justifications of giving in religious, ethical, moral, political, economic, and sociological contexts. This type of giving connects those in diaspora to home and provides meaning as they reassert their hybridity. The historical flows of immigration in this section provide the context for understanding how transnational hybrid identities are constructed and reasserted by SAIAs. This is addressed in the next section.

Understanding Diasporic Transnational Subjectivities

Of interest to communication and postcolonial scholars are the efforts of migrants to materially and ideologically restructure ideas of home, space, place, and belonging in diasporic or transnational contexts. From a communicative perspective, diasporic subjectivities are multi-layered, dynamic, contextual, and (in)coherent (Drzewiecka & Halualani, 2002). They overview diasporic subjectivities as a dialectical tension between structural and cultural dimensions. They also complicate how these moving contradictions are relevant in situating diasporic identifications between nation-state, culture, and beyond.

> Specifically, cultural groups who experience global changes, political restructurings, and migration movements, have had to ideologically and strategically redefine 'who they are' in order to preserve and reestablish their historical memory, sense of belonging, and their relationship to the defining homeland. (Drzewiecka & Halualani, 2002, p. 340-341)

It is important to understand how this dialectical process (re)characterises SAIA transnational identities. Some previous literature identifies these processes. For example, Safran's (1991) "diasporic consciousness" helps us understand and reconcile how one can feel connected to the homeland via symbolic and material action of remittances or donations. Bhabha's (1990) influential work in *Location of Culture* identifies how diasporic people live lives of transnational (dis)location and cultural translation. One's hybrid subjectivities are caught within the tension of being "here" and "there" simultaneously as a "camouflage" (p. 193). This also refers to Bhabha's "in-betweeness" of the hybridised *third space.* The concealing or masking mechanism explains the unique challenges of hybrid subjectivities, which create moments where one's hybridity needs to be reaffirmed or repositioned. This theoretically helps explain how SAIA diasporans may reassert their subjective hybridities as they attempt to materially and ideologically restructure ideas of home.

As diasporans reassert their subjectivities, they symbolically experience change through movement. Clifford (1994) describes hybridity as a "discourse that is travelling or hybridising in new global conditions" (p. 304). In this

case, the traveling trajectories or flows are relevant to the flow of donations by SAIA immigrants from the "here" to the "there." This flow symbolises a mode of cultural production by mobilising social capital/economic resources in the hopes of redefining a sense of community that transcends national boundaries. Hegde (1998a) states, "Ideological symbols of the past are revived by immigrants with renewed commitment. These symbols become doubly significant in the process of nostalgic connection with a distant history and a receding cultural past" (p. 34). Diaspora organisations can engender a sense of solidarity and community identity and may represent both bonding and bridging social capital (Brinkerhoff, 2008) and simultaneously redefining diasporic identities. However, as Hegde (1998a) notes, the "being and becoming" dialectic embedded in hybrid subjectivities should not be stuck in "the backward-looking conception of diaspora" (p. 38). Similarly, Hall (1990) states, "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (p. 235). It is this transformation—understanding how SAIA diasporans engage in philanthropy as a way of redefining or reasserting their transnational identities--that is the focus of this paper.

Global flows of mediated technology assist in understanding SAIA hybridity. Appadurai (1996) notes, "For migrants, both the politics of adaption to new environments and the stimulus to move or return are deeply affected by mass-mediated imaginary that frequently transcends national space" (p. 6). This NGO mass-mediated imaginary sustains and stages action among SAIA immigrants and fuels transnational philanthropy. My goal is to explore how the immigrant community in the US negotiates transnational subjectivities that challenge and reassert hybrid identities in the context of their philanthropic efforts. To meet this goal, I examine current South Asian Indian NGO initiatives via the organisation websites. Drzewiecka and Halualani (2002) further note that studying the communication practices and subjectivities of diasporic communities can encourage spatial rather than just place-centric and temporally linear theorising about intercultural transitions and power relations within the conditions of transnationalism. I focus on website-mediated discourses that have multidirectional flows and spatially (re)orient one's identifications to the homeland by asking the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do Indian NGO's position people in need on their websites?

Research Question 2: How do Indian NGO's frame immigrant SAIA donors on their websites?

Methods

Similar to Bardhan (2011), a method is needed to address the spatial realities faced by geographically dispersed diasporas. Therefore, it is important to consider how diasporas use cyberspace to "create discursive

spaces that enable discussion of issues related to nation and identit[ies] (p. 50). Therefore, I used a "multi(cyber)-sited textual analysis" (Bardhan, 2011, p. 50) in order to understand how SAI NGOs represent various "third world" needs to SAIA "first world" diasporic individuals.

I conducted my analysis on South Asian Indian based NGOs that also have 501c(3) not-for-profit status in the US. That is, these organisations are situated in India and they have fundraising branches in the US. Three NGO websites were analysed: *Akshaya Patra USA, Grameen Foundation India*, and *Pratham USA*[1]. *Akshaya Patra USA* was established in 2006 as a branch of *The Akshaya Patra Foundation*, which was started in 2000 by the spiritual, religious guru of International Society for Krishna Consciousness in Bangalore. Their vision states, "No child in India shall be deprived of education because of hunger" ("Our Cause," 2015). The US branch is highly visible in the SAIA community and exceeded its fundraising goal by $2.4 million for 2012 ("About Us," 2015). *Grameen Foundation India* was established in 1997 by Cornell graduate and Fulbright scholar Alex Counts after years of training under the founder of micro financing, Muhammad Yunus, in Bangladesh in the 1970s. Their mission states, "Enable the poor, especially women, to create a world without hunger and poverty" ("About Grameen Foundation," 2015). Madhav Chavan established *Pratham USA* in 1995 with the aid of UNICEF and the Mumbai Municipal Corporation. Their goal is to provide education to children in the slums of Mumbai. *Pratham* is now India's largest education NGO, reaching over 4.7 million children annually. These three South Asian NGOs were chosen because of their popularity, impact, credibility, and large-scale fundraising activities and effectiveness in the US. The online presence of these organisations is constructed on the basis of need in a globally digital economy.

In using a multi(cyber)-sited textual analysis, I conducted several close readings of all the advertising and storytelling methods each organisation used in the cyber realm. I used my research questions as a guiding framework to look for ways in which the NGOs positioned those in need versus donors. Next, I looked for dominant categories that emerged from attention grabbing images, graphics, repetitive wordings, or quotations. For example, in the analysis section, repeated words such as hope, one, etc. in order to make explicit appeals to donors. I used open and Nvivo coding (Lindloff & Taylor, 2010) to build and integrate categories, assign meaning to words and sentences, then combine themes towards building the analysis from the narratives on these three NGO webpages.

Textual analysis and visual methodologies help explore the ways of acting as transnational philanthropists and the effects this has on their diasporic hybrid identities. Rose's (2011) chapter highlights visuality: "how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, how we see this seeing or unseeing and are made to see therein" (as cited in Foster, 1988, p. ix). Rose also cites Berger's (1972) "ways of seeing" to refer to how "we never

look at just one thing, we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves" (p. 9). "Visuality" and "ways of seeing" assist in building contextual arguments about how websites position images of social difference in order to get donations.

I am reminded of Hegde's (1998b) work on locating representations from a transnational feminist perspective when I think about how my work walks the fine line of representing the other by producing or reproducing difference or how the global and local intersect in feminist praxis thereby creating the need to theorise by "democratizing the production of knowledge" (p. 275). Here it is necessary to engage in self-reflexivity that informs a way of looking. Haraway (1991) says, by thinking about where we see from, "we might become answerable for what we learn how to see" (p. 190). My location as a South Asian Indian, female, early 30s, single, from an educated, and upper-middle class background frames my analyses, has social effects on my critique, and affects the knowledge this work produces. I grew up in the large metropolitan of Mumbai, and moved to the US for higher education in 2005, eleven years ago. Therefore, as a first generation SAIA, I have first-hand experience with the cultural identities relevant to those in diaspora. This enables feeling associated to the emotional attachment or tugs and pulls that motivate diasporic individuals' altruistic efforts. Yet, this insider's perspective also engenders my biases when I see otherisation discourse prevalent in these websites. Given my positionality, I have the ability to recognise the way affective messages work to gain support from donations, but this also limits my ability in critiquing the systems that marginalise segments of Indian society. This limitation is situated in my family's privileged economic location, my educational background, and my physical distance that does not grant me the access to understand the experiences of families or individual lives that are affected by this vicious cycle of poverty. Equipped with the awareness of my social positioning, I begin my analyses of South Asian based NGOs that market themselves to garner US diaspora donations.

Results & Analysis

This section focuses on key thematic findings to help answer my research questions about how these South Asian NGOs position donors and frame narratives of those in need. Four distinct themes demonstrating various ideological discourses emerged from the data: exploiting smiles for marketing; the commodity of hope; otherisation by privileging education; and opportunities to modernise the other.

Exploiting Smiles for Marketing

The websites in this study engage in a visual and discursive production of knowledge of the other. I use Rose's (2011) methodology of visuality to highlight how India is depicted as a country that requires help and is in need of foreign aid. These websites continuously circulate images of women and

children in poverty in various rural settings, accompanied by displays of statistics about how they need your help or have benefitted by donations. The representations of the lives of these women and children are digitised to provide a visual experience designed to gain sympathy and solicit donations. Therefore, the websites serve the motivations of the intended audience: the SAIA and/or US American donor. For example, a micro-financing organisation *Grameen Foundation India's* (2015) homepage displays this text attached to circulated images of Indian rural women draped in colourful saris: "Only 13% of the poor households in India (earning below Rs. 50,000 [less than US $750] per annum) have access to bank credit." Some of these women are smiling while some stare at or away from the camera. Similarly, *Akshaya Patra's USA* (2015) website shows children relishing a meal, or engaged in learning, and *Pratham's USA* (2015) website shows educators or volunteers interacting with children in classrooms, all while smiling.

Akshaya Patra's USA website also highlights different statistics in dark grey boxes with large orange font for the number, such as "1/3 of the world's malnourished children live in India," or "90% drop out to work for money or to help at home" ("About Us," 2015). Scrolling down on the homepage, a young girl with her hair tied back and wearing a loose-fitting light blue school uniform stares with a blank expression into the camera, holding an empty stainless steel bowl and a spoon. Her dejected, desolate, or slightly frowning face is positioned to evoke a certain empathetic emotion from viewers. On the left of this image, in bold font, is the statement: "TOO MANY OF INDIA'S CHILDREN ARE FORCED TO CHOOSE FOOD OVER EDUCATION."

The image and accompanying text work to create a story of the "other," in need of help, and this is preceded by *Akshaya Patra's* slogan: "Every day, we serve freshly prepared school meals to 1.39 million children in India to fight hunger, promote education, and eradicate poverty - one child at a time" ("About Us," 2015). The organisations display their rescue abilities that were only successful through the philanthropic efforts of donors. Similar to the findings by Zhang, Gajjala, and Yahui (2012):

> "…the visual, photographic representation of happy and content children has the intended audience in mind: The American donor. The upbeat images of children give the visual pleasure to the intended audience who is supposed to engage in altruism and make the unhappy children happy by donating" (p. 112).

This visual representation serves to spatially extend and (dis)connect SAIA diasporans to various causes so that they can promote and engage in what Andersen (1994) calls "long distance nationalism." The SAIA donor enacts this nationalism through their benevolence, which in turn downplays the agency and voice of those photographed. As Gajjala, Zhang, and Dako-Gyeke (2010) state, "the generous American liberals deny these poor and vulnerable third world women any agency or voice of their own. They are discursively

re-created, stripped of the historical, sociopolitical, and lived material realities of their existence" (p. 80). Furthermore, the website discourse that frames SAIA donors as "generous Americans" positions SAIAs as outsiders to the cause and removed from material realities of the people for whom they donate. Another example is how the NGOs provide diaspora donors with a spatial and temporal connection via easy access of online donations. All the websites reviewed sought pledges from US based donors by requesting money in US dollar amounts. They also use online platforms such as PayPal options for easy one-click donations or tools such as CrowdRise, a US based organisation that is used to create an online fundraising campaign. *Pratham USA* is currently fundraising with CrowdRise via the Social Entrepreneurs Challenge ("Pratham USA's Fundraiser," 2014).

Overall, the images serve as marketing tools to exploit those in need by favourably positioning the organisations' and donors' generosity and goodwill. Thus, highlighting the role and distance between the image of those performing need and the resultant effects as it positions spectators (donors) with the goal of gathering donations. This image and imagery serves a western gaze through interests of neoliberal economics that allows for objectification of the other while attracting diasporas in the west to donate (see Gajjala, Birzescu, & Yartey, 2011; Zhang, Gajjala, & Yahui, 2012 for similar findings from online philanthropy research). While this westward gazing repositions SAIA donors as outsiders, these representations also simultaneously distance them from the motherland, seemingly solidifying their hybridity and in-betweeness. The next two sections will uncover how SAIA immigrants embody a western gaze in their conceptualisations of India.

The Commodity of Hope

The NGOs reviewed here use different strategies when asking for donations. One example that stands out is, *Akshaya Patra's USA* "hope" campaign. Their website states, "Renewing Gifts, Renewing Hope: Give just $15 a month to provide school meals and access to education, hope and opportunity to a child every month" ("#Stories of Hope," 2015). They rhetorically structure their message into a commodity that can be consumed via appeals of pathos. They seek donations based on the message of hope. In this way, those in need are produced and marketed within the logics of capitalism for the consumers to purchase (or in this case, save). The difference based on privilege, between the donor and person in need creates the dynamics of commodification, and in turn provides the consumer with satisfaction of authentic giving.

Another message by the same organisation is "Discover the power of one." They position a tag line quotation to appeal to logic based on simplicity: "If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one" - Mother Teresa ("#Stories of Hope," 2015). In this example, I looked for explicit categories such as "one," to uncover the tacit themes on the website as they

make direct, yet simplistic appeals to donors. The ethos of Mother Teresa is used parsimoniously to capture the audience's attention and donors are being compared to Mother Teresa just as she saved several children. These messages of hope are commodified to convey a specific message sustained in existing power structures that differentiates between the privileged and underprivileged. The donors can be seen as buying into the commodification of hope as they perform how just one person can take action to renew hope for the other and experience consumer satisfaction.

In analysing the data above, I focus on the concept or word "hope." For instance, hope appears three times on the website screen before you can scroll down for more information. This organisation also uses action verbs that sustain the word hope as they ask for donations. Action verbs—such as *give*, *discover*, *make*, *sponsor*, or *support*—are used in relation to a direct object of feeding poor school children in rural India. These action verbs position the poor children in India as the other, based on essentialist identities of those in need. Spivak's (1990) strategic essentialism helps situate how NGOs position those in need of aid/assistance/help. This also relates to Spivak's notion of "third world other" where the essence of the person is that they are in need of help or rescuing. The essentialiser (diasporic donors from the first world) perceives this hegemonic identity of those needing assistance (essentialised) and this discursive position solidifies over time among SAIA immigrants. While NGOs in India seek to empower the local community, their essentialist productions via imagery and research reports, in fact affirm negative representations of the other. Overall, these themes relate to how those in need are positioned and how the immigrant community in the US negotiates experiences that challenge and reassert hybrid identities in the context of their philanthropic efforts. The next section follows on this theme and highlights how the NGOs and diasporic individuals frame capitalist privileging discourses in the global north, in relation to how they can improve social and economic disparities for those in the global south.

Otherisation by Privileging Education

I examined how *Pratham USA* positioned those in need and framed the benevolence of current donors for prospective donors. The examples below fortify how power structures between the privileged and underprivileged are made explicit in the way that these narratives are framed and represented. Alcoff's (1991) work aids this analysis as she recognizes the problem of who can speak and how the act of speaking itself can disenfranchise those who are being spoken about. She argues: "In particular, the practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of less privileged persons has actually resulted (in many cases) in increasing or reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for" (Alcoff, 1991, p. 7). Here, we can see Alcoff's assertions playing out in Saroj and Santhosh's story found on *Pratham USA's* website under the "Impact" menu:

> *Against all odd*s, two young boys and *former child laborers*
> in zari karkhanas [embroidery factories] had cracked the
> Navodaya entrance exams held earlier that year. Only
> two years earlier, the boys—Saroj Kumar and Santosh
> Paswan—had been *living hopeless existence*s and working
> endless hours. They *never had any hope* of studying for
> the exam before they got *their break and started living* in
> the Pratham Gyanshala, a residential program for child
> laborers.
>
> The two children are very happy but they still may not
> realize the magnitude or significance of what they have
> *achieved* by passing the Navodaya entrance exam. They
> have shown us that with *the right opportunity and support*,
> a child can go very far. In just two years, they've gone
> from *being child laborers with limited prospects to merit
> scholars with unlimited possibilities.* ("Get Involved,"
> 2015; emphasis added)

The children's story is told by those controlling the website to an anticipated
donor. I make the assumption that these narratives are about real people and
not constructed. The two boys, Saroj and Santosh, are positioned as having a
hopeless existence until they came to *Pratham* and passed the entrance exam.
Their story highlights how *Pratham's* altruistic efforts helped rescue these
hopeless child labourers who needed help and support from donations. The
discourse quoted above show extreme binaries wherein the subject "before
Pratham" is despairing and the "after Pratham" is filled with optimism
and indefinite possibilities. This story focuses on capitalist notions of
achievement, meritocracy, right opportunity, and possibilities. *Pratham USA*
positions Saroj and Santosh as "merit scholars with unlimited possibilities,"
while the exam is very competitive and only 80 students get selected per year,
the entrance exam places them into sixth grade schooling and they are far
from achieving unlimited possibilities. The discourse of hope, once again, is
commoditised in terms of meritocratic gains by using terms like access and
opportunity. This inadvertently reifies how privilege or status can be earned
through hard work and education. Moreover, the modern effort of educating
the poor privileges the function embedded in neoliberal otherisation agendas.
This discourse serves the altruistic needs of SAIA donors who buy into these
representations of the underprivileged, because this reifies their dominant
and subordinate subject positions.

While Saroj and Santosh's subject positioning was constructed and
spoken for, this example shows Kartik's story that is written from his and
his parents' perspectives. This positioning changes who speaks for whom as
Kartik creates a public, discursive self-representation. However, this story
was translated to English, framed, and written on this web interface on his
behalf for the intended donor audience:

Kartik's Perspective

"My parents are not making me study," Kartik says. "They send me to work. At work, whatever my employer orders me to do, I'm supposed to do, otherwise I'm scolded. But if I study, I'm thinking, I would like to be a teacher when I grow up."

Kartik's Parents' Perspective

Kartik's parents are daily wage earners whose monthly income is about $44. They say, "Whatever we get on daily basis is not sufficient even for a single day's meal. We don't even know when we'll get our next meal as that depends on whether we get work. We wish that our children could get educated, but we don't get paid on time, so we are forced to send our children to work. The condition of our family is not good. We don't even have food to eat, so how can we send our children to study. That's why we are putting our children to work—so that we can get a little money. Even if we want, we are unable to provide our children with books. If you have anything to give us, please do. Then we will be able to send our children to school."

"Help break the cycle of poverty for kids like Kartik. Make a donation today." ("Get Involved," 2015)

Examples from Kartik and his parent's discourse are about not having control over educational choices due to the oppressive nature of the system of poverty. Furthermore, his parents emphasise the value of education and thereby reinforce the myth of education as the "ticket" to socioeconomic success. However, education is sacrificed only due to insufficient food. Though Kartik's story is mostly told in first person voice, the writers compose their story to resonate with a US audience by using English and by converting his parents' monthly income into the dollar equivalent. *Pratham* digitises and stylises Kartik's life by setting up dichotomies of the haves versus the have-nots as they conclude by making donation pleas: "If you have anything to give us, please do. Then we will be able to send our children to school" ("Get Involved," 2015). Thereby, engaging production of knowledge implicit in power structures between the privileged US American donors and underprivileged poor in India. These stories discursively represent oppressive forms of classism that are sustained in hegemonic capacities of altruism in the SAIA community. As emphasised in Zhang et al. (2012) study on web representations of orphanages in India and China, "these voices and representations are used to exploit a transnational investment market" where the children become "a homogenized group of othered and third world bodies" (p. 216). Except in this case, the othering is constructed by SAIAs who buy into and are a part of the neoliberal logics of social class, economic status, and access to education. The following section examines

instances where SAIA donors reinforce goals of modernising othered bodies through education.

Opportunities to Modernise the Other

This otherisation discourse is furthered on *Pratham USA's* "Why I Support Pratham?" webpage through showcasing interview testimonials from SAIA donors. I found recurring themes ingrained in neoliberal ideology that takes the moral high ground: importance of giving back, prioritising education to come out of poverty, emotional aspects of donating, and values tied to modernisation. The othered bodies in India were represented as being in "horrible situations," which was "heartbreaking" because their lives are "wasted" ("Get Involved," 2015).

> I think education is the one thing that can't be taken away from you. Even if you're in the most horrible situation… education can take you places… so I thought that if you can give education to one kid, that kid can become something really great in the world…
> – Dhruv Kothari. ("Get Involved," 2015)

Dhruv Kothari is a 16-year-old high school student who became involved with Pratham soon after his parents told him about it. "I really found the cause interesting because it doesn't cost much to help [educate] a child in India…" ("Get Involved," 2015).

Another selected quotation came from Mr. Hamir, a Los Angeles Board member of Pratham who advocates education as the key to creating a healthy democracy:

> "I very strongly believe that if we are going to build a civil, competent, democratic society, you cannot do it without educating your society." He poignantly spoke of the state of people in the slums of India: "All that is heartbreaking – when you see children's lives absolutely wasted outright. What Pratham does is it touches the people, uplifts the people, gives them opportunity. Imagine the impact it has on society." "Supporting the cause of education is natural to me. You cannot create a modern society if you don't have educated people – period… and Pratham does a fantastic job of educating the poorest of segments of society." ("Get Involved," 2015)

Mr. Hamir's story stood out to me because of how easily his words represented colonialist otherisation discourses. It is ironic that the world's largest democracy is in need of building, due to lack of civility or competence which is explained through lack of education. He is making assumptions on the superiority of a democratic and educated society while silencing other forms of knowledge production, such as the oral

education traditions that have existed since ancient Indian civilisations. His Eurocentric discourse systematically constructs versions of the social and natural worlds that positions subjects in relations of power, specifically in how his ideas of educational knowledge, competence, and civility contribute to the differential production of power and subjectivity (see Apple, 2006; Fairclough, 2001). Here, Mr. Hamir positions himself as superior to the "poorest segments of society" ("Get Involved," 2015) and thereby reproduces structures of dependency and binary thinking. Here, Gajjala et al. (2010) recognise: "The benevolent action of donation is done out of pity, self-aggrandizing mentality, and the binary oppositions largely ingrained in [US] American culture and constitutive of [US] American identity" (p. 80). The idea that supporting education is "natural" suggests binaries that are pervasive in dominant ideology. Fairclough (2001) writes, "'Naturalization is the royal road to common sense" (p. 76); what constitutes common sense is determined by those who exercise power and domination over public institutions and society. This natural inclination serves as common sense ideology necessary to create this modern and educational world without addressing the systemic power structures that keep people in poverty.

Mr. Hamir evokes US dominant frames by bringing up the deficit model in his thinking as his perspective overlooks the root causes of oppression by localising the issue within individuals and/or their communities, specifically "people in the slums of India" and how "children's lives [are] absolutely wasted" ("Get Involved," 2015). Gajjala and Birzescru (2010) state, underdeveloped areas are usually "represented as a curious blend of primitive/modern. Emphasis is placed more on the unusualness of such hybrid subjectivities rather than on the circumstances underpinning their existence" (p. 17). This example, once again, exemplifies how education is used as a scapegoat method to modernise the other in attempts to alleviate people from poverty without tackling systemic change.

I highlight another example below where SAIA donors Aradhana and Raj Asava frame their altruistic endeavours with a visit to various facilities of *Pratham* India. They share their experience with a 4 page, single-spaced, detailed report on the *Pratham USA* website. Several excerpts support my analysis:

> Raj and I return to the US energized and inspired. Yes, there is a lot to be done…. but having seen the caliber of the people working with Pratham, *the issues now feel like opportunities*. We are encouraged to be a *part of a peoples' movement* that is influencing policy. Together, our voice is being heard!
> In closing, Raj and I are both of the opinion that our limited donation dollars are positioned to get the *best return on investment* through Pratham. ("Get Involved," 2015; emphasis added)

The Asava's philanthropic efforts show explicit neoliberal ideas based on "return of investment." The harsh realities facing rural education efforts and people in poverty are equated to "opportunities" for investment. The Asava's find energy and inspiration as they are convinced that their "limited donation dollars" make them "part of a people's movement" ("Get Involved," 2015). They superfluously describe changing policy without detailing which policies or how change is occurring thereby exaggerating their own agency to "help" the other. SAIA donor agency is positioned as a return on investment that helps reassert their hybrid identities while living away from the homeland and away from the material realities of those in living in poverty. Drzewiecka and Halualani (2002) envision:

> dynamic possibilities for agency in the diasporic context, as migratory communities recycle and resignify nationalistic symbols to simultaneously: prove ethnic or national loyalty to a home government, claim ethnic or cultural belonging in a heterogeneous environment, and reimagine their community in a new space among new groups and opportunities. (p. 342)

In theorising by Ong (1999), the agency attributed to the resistive hybrid subaltern subject is transferred to the diasporic subject, who is seen as opposing capitalism and state power. However, contradictory to previous theorising by Ong, the SAIA diasporic subject, in this case, uses their agency to reify capitalist and Eurocentric dominating forms that furthers structural inequity through their philanthropic efforts, all while trying to prove or maintain their ethnic or national loyalty among diasporans.

Conclusions & Implications

This research highlights the importance for NGOs and communication researchers to pay attention to the impact of visual and textual representations in online mediated texts. Furthermore, I show how SAIAs discourses reassert the Eurocentric binary oppositions of the powerful global west and marginal local non-west, even when acting as transnational collaborators of philanthropy. This paper explored the multilayered communication discourses surrounding philanthropic efforts of South Asian NGOs, SAIA diaspora groups, the embedded socio-economic, political, and historical forces that (re)shapes this diaspora group identities, and the discursive contradictions related to modernising the homeland.

This research features four key thematic findings: exploiting smiles for marketing; the commodity of hope; otherisation by privileging education; and opportunities to modernise the other. These themes substantiate the neoliberal ideology of societal change based on contradictory and weak actions such as commoditised and quantified "quick fixes" for problems that deal structural inequities. The larger implications for this research point out existing discourse that sets up binaries in which NGOs and donors essentialise

the other and ultimately reify unequal power relations between benevolent donors and those in need. This sets up dependencies that are enacted by donor agency which fuel inequities without targeting systemic change to remove people from poverty. Furthermore, donors and NGOs communicate extreme claims about the value of their contributions by staking claims of a moral high ground without substantiated efforts to eliminate poverty and this ultimately acts to reify dependency.

As donors seek to situate their hybrid subjectivities via their donation efforts, they symbolically essentialise the subaltern/other through website representations that initially attract them to the cause and how they then substantiate and promote their benevolent efforts. Both forms of articulation suggest in-betweeness of their hybridity that is a part of their complex transnational (dis)location. The transnational economic links that connect the subaltern migrant to the subaltern-in-poverty is situated in cultural asymmetries from the global to the local and continues to perpetuate inequalities and contradictions that lie within subaltern subjectivities. Even as NGOs position narratives of those in need to unify and maintain common group interests among diasporans, the modes used to help oppressed communities are embedded in problematic structural representations. The transnational flow of significant amounts of money from diasporas to the homeland points to complex notions of how SAIA diasporans view national ethnicity and membership as they remain loyal via philanthropic efforts and maintain resignified subjectivities (Drzewiecka & Halualani, 2002). Therefore, the global, transnational relations that diaspora philanthropy has instigated is producing complex changes in how subaltern hybridities are (re)located and are challenging positions of dominance and marginality.

Limitations & Future Research

In this paper, I focus on the discursive strategies used by non-profit organisation websites to make appeals to donors in the US. This research, while uncovering who speaks for whom, still speaks about a certain group of people (in this case, SAIAs) by critiquing neoliberal discourses. Therefore, additional research using varied methodologies and methods will help gain multi-layered perspectives on diaspora philanthropy. Future research can use critical rhetoric to answer questions such as: How does the diasporic community enact their accountability in hopes of creating social change in India? How does the diasporic community rhetorically negotiate their identities as donors (at a distance), and thereby perform their accountability towards social justice? How can NGOs resist hegemonic discourse to ensure non-oppressive modes of online communication? Another significant follow up to this research would be to interview the SAIA donor population, for example, those who attend fundraisers in the U.S. for NGO's in India such as *Pratham* or *Akshaya Patra*.

Possible research interview questions could include:

- Can you tell me about why you choose to donate to NGOs in India?
- How do you select which organisation to donate to? What factors are important in your decision making process?
- How did you learn about XYZ organisation?
- Have you visited these organisations in India?
- How do you know that your money is going for the right cause?
- How do you make these donations?
- How often do you donate?
- Do you donate to any organisations in the US? Why or why not?

Last, critical ethnographic studies examining the longitudinal relational contexts over a period will help provide insight into the diaspora transnationalist philanthropic efforts.

My opening narrative suggests shock and indignation for the extravagant *Akshaya Patra* fundraiser, followed by a call to action by my high school principle. After conducting this research, I remain sceptical towards the online discourses that perpetuates hegemonic oppression of those living in poverty by celebrating the benevolent donor. Yet, through these contradictions, I remain optimistic that my research points out ways to change how NGOs frame the reality of these social inequities.

Finally, and most importantly, a critique of these online representations is not meant to overlook or disregard the benefits of this work or its socially just aims. Some of these problematic representations continue to perpetuate cycles of oppression that are part of the larger system, and this invariably continues the system of domination that philanthropists and NGOs initially aim to destroy. By critically paying attention to these themes, we can uncover messages that further subjugate the very people they claim to emancipate. It is clear that the problem is not merely in the cyber realm, yet small discursive changes online will sustain a more equitable relationship between donor and those in need. For example, donors can communicate about how their altruistic tendencies can alleviate the feelings of displacement associated while being in diaspora. Donors can use socio-economic and diplomatic leverage to create awareness about the systemic problems and create sustainable options towards structural policy change.

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Endnotes

[1] The NGO websites used for this study are as follows. Some of the websites have been updated and changed since this research was conducted in October 2014.

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