Assignment 2: I Would Rather Live in This Generation

**Introduction**

The concept of normality varies across cultures and generations. Each individual has a different idea of what he/she views as normal; usually “normal” to one are things that he/she has grown up around. Over time, normal has changed drastically with historical developments, advancements in technology, and humans overall change in lifestyle. People’s views on normal vary from culture to culture; for instance, members of collectivist cultures place a greater importance on relationships than individualistic cultures, which focus more on independence and personal success. In addition, “normal” also has distinctions between genders and time period.

In the 1930’s, India was still under British control; the people had little to no freedom on their own land. During this time, Mahatmas Gandhi was leading the movement for India’s independence using a non-violence approach. In 1947, India finally won its Independence, and the country was starting to develop. Women, during this time, were not given equal treatment, they were seen as housewives and had many restrictions placed on them. They were raised to be very obedient and had to learn how to start cooking and taking care of their family at an early age. Luckily, women were granted the right to vote in India in 1949, but they still were suppressed by society. This was the time period that my grandmother was raised in.

**Case Study**

My grandmother, Minaxi Jhaveri, was born on October 2, 1945, in a small town named Madhi, in India. My grandma was born into a farming family; her parents owned their own agricultural farm where they grew rice and a few other crops. She has nine brothers and two sisters; my grandmother is the fourth oldest, and so she had to help her mom take care of her younger siblings. As her mother got older, and started to have some health problems, my grandma had to take on full responsibility for some of her younger siblings. She practically raised her two youngest siblings while she was in high school. As a little girl, my grandma really enjoyed playing outside with her siblings and neighbors. My grandmother explained, “It was a lot of fun. My favorite activity was jump roping.” They did not have phones, computers, or even televisions at that time. In fact, the electricity was not dependable and often went out.

Luckily for my grandma, her parents promoted education and so my grandma was able to go to school. All throughout her school years, my grandma had a very specific mandated uniform where all the girls had to wear a white shirt and a white skirt with a green belt. They also had to have their hair in two braided pigtails with a black ribbon at the ends. My grandma was especially fortunate because she also was able attend college. She attained a bachelor of arts from the college of Bardoli of Arts and Science; she majored in Gujarati and minored in psychology. Unfortunately, she was never able to use the degree she earned.

Due to society’s pressures and her parents pushing for her marriage, my grandma got married while she was in college. At the age of 22, my grandma moved out of her parents’ house and moved in with her husband. The norm in India at this time was for parents to arrange their kids’ marriages. My grandma’s marriage was also arranged; she only met her future husband once before they got married. My grandma said, “Arranged marriages in the Indian culture were the norm for many years. All of my kids even had arranged marriages, only recently has the idea of one choosing his/her mate has become acceptable.” She explained how in India, everyone had arranged marriages, but after moving to the United States she sees how the different cultures influence future generations, and so nowadays in the United States many of her nieces and nephews are having love marriages. Only a year after her marriage, my grandma had her first child, Nitesh, at the age of 23. The next year she had her second child, Vinit, and three years later her last child, Sonal.

After her kids were born, her only job was to take care of them and the house. She devoted all of her time in nurturing her children and making sure they got a good education. Many of the home appliances that we use nowadays were not there during her time and/or she could not afford them, for instance, a refrigerator, and so she would go to the market everyday to get fresh vegetables to cook for her family. In July 1986, she had the opportunity to come to the United States. Her whole family moved to the US with very little money. At first, the five of them lived with my grandma’s brother for a little while until they got accustomed to the new environment. Her kids were in high school when they moved, and so she knew that only one person’s income would not be enough to send her kids to college. My grandma had never gotten a job when she was in India, but in America to make ends meet, she began working. She worked for Speedmark for Macys in which she would package diamond-made jewelry. The job required one to stand the whole time and walk around. That was the only job she ever had, she worked there for 22 years, in order to continue supporting her family. In 2009, she finally retired because of health issues and because all of children were grown up and had become quite successful in their respective fields.

When looking back on her life, my grandma says that she would definitely want to live her life all over in this generation rather than her own. She feels that the world has grown so much and that many of the hardships she faced have now been lessened with time and technological advancements. Technology is one thing that has definitely changed throughout the years, as a young girl she was never exposed to this type of equipment. Nowadays, she really enjoys using her cell phone, watching TV, and having a microwave. She believes that the American society has changed for the better throughout the 27 years she has lived in the United States.

**Analysis and Discussion**

After conducting an interview with my grandmother it is evident that conceptions of normality have changed greatly over generations. My grandmother considers playing outside normal because that is what she did growing up. There were no computers or videogames at that time, and now seeing this new generation she says that the amount of time kids play with these gadgets is awful. She believes that kids should become more active, like how she used to be in her youth. It is abnormal for her to see her grandchildren playing with iPads and xboxs at a very young age, when she just recently learned how to operate these items. The development of technology over time has greatly created a change over generations. Nowadays, it is normal to see kids operating all types of technological gadgets all throughout their childhood.

Technology has created a communication gap between the generations. As a child, my grandma would communicate with her friends by talking to them in person or walking over to their houses to chat. Nowadays, my generation tends to communicate via text message or through social networking sites such as, Facebook and Twitter. My grandma finds this very abnormal because she feels that strong and lasting connections between friends cannot be made through this method. According to the Pew Research Internet Project:

“63% of all teens say they exchange text messages every day with people in their lives. This far surpasses the frequency with which they pick other forms of *daily* communication, including phone calling by cell phone (39% do that with others every day), face-to-face socializing outside of school (35%), social network site messaging (29%), instant messaging (22%), talking on landlines (19%) and emailing (6%).”

Normal is defined as what the majority of people are doing, and so these statistics prove how the normal and the most used type of communication within my generation is through texting rather than face-to-face communication. The advancement in technology has definitely created new standards of normality when comparing my grandma’s generation to mine.

Furthermore, another thing that has changed from what was considered normal to abnormal is marriage. Two topics in marriage, specifically, have changed over time: age and selection process. During my grandma’s time, the “normal” age to get married for women was very early usually between 15-22; however, nowadays women’s “normal” age to get married is later in life like 25-35 years of age. Nowadays, it is considered “abnormal” to get married at such early ages. Women choose to wait till they have fulfilled their education, found a secure job, and are content with their personal achievements.

In addition, my grandma also witnessed how “normal” changed within cultures. The norm in India was for parents to arrange their kids’ marriages, while in the United States many young adults had love marriages, arrange marriages were considered abnormal in the US. According to Dr. William Cornell, a Marriage and Counselor professor at the University of Florida, “culture plays a large role in deciding whether a love marriage is better than an arranged marriage- it is all a matter of perspective… in India, where arranged marriages are the "norm," love marriages are becoming increasingly popular.” This depicts the changing notions of normality with time and culture. Compared to my grandma’s generation, my generation in India is more open to love marriages, and even elders are less likely to force their kids into arrange marriages nowadays. This change probably occurred due the westernization of the world, with the media and televisions promoting the Western lifestyle, the world is beginning to loosen up on their strict cultural norms and beginning to be more open.

In some ways, the conception of normality has changed for the better, while in others for the worse. For instance, the norm used to be for kids to play outside which allowed them to get physical exercise. The norm nowadays is to use technology; kids are straining their eyes and not being as active. An example for a better change is within the concept of arranged marriages. The norm today is love marriages, which allows individuals to make their own decisions and choose their life partners. Time is big factor in determining what is normal and abnormal.

**Works Cited**

"Teens, Smartphones & Texting." Pew Research Centers Internet American Life Project

RSS. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Mar. 2014. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/03/19/teens-smartphones-texting/>.

"To Love or to Arrange?" Arranged Marriages|Love. N.p., n.d. Web. 23 Mar. 2014.

<http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/projects/spring07/zuffoletti/love.html>.