Tanuja Desai Hidier is one of several South Asian American writers recently awarded accolade for her works that explore themes of hybrid identity. Her work of popular fiction, *Born Confused* (2002) was received with critical acclaim in the United States. Characters that attempt to negotiate transcultural borders figure prominently in her work, no doubt stemming from the fact that Hidier is American born, of South Asian origin. She comes one generation after authors like Salman Rushdie, Arundati Roy, Kamala Das, and Bharati Mukherjee, as her main protagonist is the child of educated immigrants. *Born Confused* is the tale of a seventeen year old South Asian American adolescent, named Dimple Lala. Dimple is called an “ABCD”, or an “American Born Confused Desi.” This euphemism can be seen as pejorative, but it depends on the context. She is attempting to navigate through the somewhat unstable waters of individuation in suburban New Jersey, as well as reconciling the fact that she is a hybrid subject, straddling multiple sites of cultural production and consumption. Set in New Jersey and New York City, in 2002, the text is resplendent with references to popular culture, from bhangra beats mixed with hip hop, and pop icons Madonna and Gwen Stefani utilizing and commodifying elements of traditional South Asian culture. Dimple does her best to ignore her heritage, until she realizes that what is considered tradition for her is now trendy for the world at large. With her identity exploration catalyzed by her cousin Kavita, a recent transplant from Bombay and a student at NYU, Dimple’s tale is one of her attempting to drop the “C” from being an “ABCD” and come to terms with being a hybrid subject, an American Born Desi. My paper attempts to trace a genealogy of desire through the text. There is the desire for “culture”, that is Dimple’s battles with it, definitions of it, and ultimately, reconciliations with it. There is the desire for the corporeal within the text; Dimple’s parents function as a family unit, an alliance that wishes to enact complete control over her body. They wish for her to meet a “suitable boy” and reign in her sexuality. Lastly, there is the desire for a multiplicity of languages, including spoken, written, and musical. When we pay close attention to Hidier’s woven rhetoric, we can comprehend her capacities as navigator, and the subtle fissures and critiques of twenty first century hybrid adolescent society. What I am attempting to explore is a somewhat painful yet poignant field of diasporic consciousness, seen through the eyes of a young woman. I will be
examining the text using theories of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Raymond Williams, Antonio Gramsci, Gayatri Spivak, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Michel Foucault.