

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ASIAN
INDIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN A MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY TOWN IN THE
UNITED STATES: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

by

LEENA CHAKRABARTI

B. A., Calcutta University, India, 1983

M. A., Jadavpur University, India, 1986

M. A., Kansas State University, 1994

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Curriculum and Instruction

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Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

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This study describes the educational experiences and the academic achievements of Asian Indian students in a middle and high school district in a Midwestern college town. It uses the multiple case study design, which results in a picture of the commonalities among these Asian Indian students as well as their unique individual experiences. The researcher studies the experiences that the Asian Indian students have in school through student, parent and teacher feedback. Nine Asian Indian American students are interviewed in detail, eight of their parents are surveyed with detailed electronic surveys, and five core curriculum teachers were surveyed with a detailed email survey questionnaire.

This study reveals three major themes, namely, the struggle for self-identity in the AIA students, the various definitions of academic success and success in life; and the role and responsibility of the school district in nurturing these concepts of self-identity and academic success. The recommendations for schools and the teachers are to modify the curriculum to include AIA information as part of the regular curriculum. Asian Indian and Asian Indian American culture, history, geography, literature, must be taught regularly. Teachers must

conscientiously incorporate the contributions of AIs and AIAs as a part of the regular curriculum. The recommendation for AI parents is to realize that their children are Americans of Indian origin, and not Asian Indians. The recommendations for further research are an inquiry into the absence of AIA information in the curriculum, a longitudinal study to follow the success of AIA students in later life.

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Approved by:

Co-Major Professor
Dr. Jacqueline D. Spears

Approved by:

Co-Major Professor
Dr. Be Etta L. Stoney

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	x
Dedication	xi
Acknowledgements	xii
Prologue	1
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	5
Introduction to the Problem	5
Background to the Problem	7
The Purpose of the Study	10
Description of the Study	11
The Research Questions.....	12
Significance of the Study	12
Definition of Terms	13
Organization of Study	14
CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review	15
History of Asian Indian immigration to the North American continent.....	15
Cultural views and values of Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans	16
Concept of Self Identity in Asian Americans, Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans	17
Academic Achievement of Asian Americans, Asian Indians, and Asian Indian Americans ...	20
Academic Achievement of Asian Americans	20
Academic achievement of Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans	22
Research methodologies used in previous studies conducted on Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans	23
Chapter Summary	24
CHAPTER 3 - Research Methodology.....	26
Nature of Qualitative Research.....	27
Philosophical Assumptions.....	28
Theoretical Framework.....	29
Research Design	30

Role of the Researcher	30
Participant Selection	31
Instrumentation	32
Interview Protocol for Students	33
Interview Plan	33
Parent Survey Questionnaire.....	34
Teacher Survey Questionnaire	34
Data Collection & Data Analysis.....	34
Ethical Issues Involved in this Study	36
Establishing Trustworthiness	37
Credibility	37
Transferability	38
Dependability	39
Confirmability.....	39
Methodological Limitations of the Study	39
Chapter Summary	40
CHAPTER 4 - Participant Profiles and Case Description	42
Student Profiles.....	47
Sunaina.....	47
Rohit.....	48
Anjali.....	50
Surya	51
Dev	54
Ganga	55
Vayu.....	57
Sushmita.....	58
Sohan.....	60
Chapter Summary	61
CHAPTER 5 - Data Analysis	63
Concept of Self Identity	64
Concept of Academic Success and Success in Life.....	71

Parents.....	76
Teachers	83
The Role and Responsibility of the School District	87
Students.....	87
Parents.....	96
Teachers	101
Chapter Summary	106
CHAPTER 6 - Discussion and Implications.....	108
Study Overview	108
Discussion of the Findings.....	110
Research Question #1	110
Research Question #2	114
Limitations	122
Implications for the Schools / Curriculum and the Teachers.....	123
Implications for AI Parents.....	125
Recommendations for Further Research.....	126
Chapter Summary	127
References.....	128
Appendix A - Letters of Invitation.....	139
Appendix B - Consent form.....	143
Appendix C - Interview Protocol and Survey Questionnaires.....	147
Interview Protocol for Students	148
Demography Questions.....	148
Interview Questions of the Asian Indian American Students.....	149
Survey Questionnaire for Parents	151
Demography Questions.....	151
Survey Questionnaire for Parents	152
Survey Questionnaire for Core Curriculum Teachers	154
Demography Questions.....	154
Interview Guide for Core-Curriculum Teachers.....	155

List of Tables

Table 4.1 Student Participants.....	58
Table 4.2 Parent Participants.....	59
Table 4.3 Teacher Participants.....	60

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to members of my family who have always been there for me. To my mother, Kanak Mitra, and my father, Sanjib Chandra Mitra, for their unconditional love and encouragement. Even though my father is no longer with us, his calm voice and advice always gives me the strength to persevere. To my mother, who is my greatest inspiration and my biggest cheerleader -- I stand in awe of the sacrifices you have made in your life, so that I can be my very best. I thank you both for giving me the strength to embrace life.

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Prologue

In my son's (daughter's) eyes, I see the ambition that had first hurled me across the world. In a few years, he (she) will graduate and pave his (her) way, alone and unprotected. But I remind myself that he (she) has a father who is still living, a mother who is happy and strong. Whenever he (she) is discouraged, I tell him (her) that if I can survive on three (two) continents, then there is no obstacle he (she) cannot conquer. While the astronauts, heroes forever, spent mere hours on the moon, I have remained in this new world for nearly thirty years. I know that my achievement is quite ordinary. I am not the only man (woman) to seek his (her) fortune far from home, and certainly, I am not the first. Still, there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept. As ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination. (Lahiri, Jhumpa, 1999, p. 197)

This passage speaks directly to how most Asian Indian immigrants parents feel about themselves, their lives in America, and their children. They have all struggled to make a respectable living in a country very far their own, both geographically and emotionally. Their continuous journey is often still awe-inspiring to them. They are eager to encourage their children to take advantage of every opportunity available to them in the United States, educationally and culturally. Nevertheless, they are always working hard to help their children learn and maintain their Asian Indian cultures, values, and beliefs, interwoven with the United States culture, values and beliefs. Yet, it is difficult for their children to understand the importance of their Asian Indian culture. Our journey through life in the United States has been very similar to the experiences of other AI first generation immigrants. We have thoroughly enjoyed the personal freedom that America has given us. On one hand, as a woman, I have enjoyed the kind of social and intellectual freedom that I probably would not be able to benefit from back in India. On the other hand, my husband and I have greatly yearned for the cultural experiences of home. We have felt alone in dealing with life while living in the United States.

We have felt the weight and the responsibility to inculcate in our daughters a sense of who we are as Asian Indians and our heritage, and who they are as Asian Indian Americans.

Education is very important to all Asian Indian immigrants. We taught our oldest daughter how to read and write by the age of three. She was an intelligent child, and learned quite a bit in two languages. In first grade, we had her tested for the gifted program, and she qualified. Like other AI parents, we were very happy about this. We were proud that our daughter was smart. Even though my specialization is English language and literature, we wished for her to make a career in science or engineering, following in the footsteps of her father. Like all Indian parents, we wanted our child to have the best, and we knew that a career in the sciences or engineering, rather than a career in English would give her more stability and money.

When our older daughter was born in 1987 in the United States, we were very eager to imbibe in her a sense of our culture and heritage traditions. We urged her to speak fluently in Bengali, our native language. She can still speak it fluently, even though she has an accent, for an American born Asian Indian child. We were young, energetic, and idealistic parents who spent hours teaching her about her culture and language. We taught her nursery rhymes in our language and read to her in both English and Bengali every night. We also taught her to read and write in English at an early age. We were proud Asian Indians, sure of our self-identity. We wanted our daughter to reflect the same confidence and traditions. Because of her chronic health issues, we decided to remain in the United States, but that did not stop us from educating her in both cultures and languages.

Growing up in the American culture, our daughter struggles to remain true to her Asian Indian cultural heritage and traditions. As our daughter (who is now 21 years old) grew up, we

realized that she had a mind of her own. Growing up in this country, she has learned how to be quite independent and often asserts her own views, characteristics, or traditions that most Asian Indian women do not display in India. As I stated in the aforementioned, as parents, we wanted her to consider a career in the sciences or engineering, but she decided otherwise. In spite of all our efforts, she became more interested in English and the social sciences, than in math and science. Her first year in college, she wanted to major in English literature and the classics. Even though she has suffered from a chronic illness all her life, she often expressed the sadness of her chronic illness through her poignant poetry. However, she has once again changed her mind recently. Having first hand knowledge of and dealing with people in the medical field, she has decided she wants to work in a profession that helps people. She applied for and has been accepted to the School of Social Work. She believes that as a medical social worker, she will be able to help patients and families make a smooth transition from the hospital to their homes and home health care.

Our younger daughter, now 13, is another remarkable young woman. She has had her own health challenges, but has been able to maintain her poise and dignity through it all. She is full of optimism and hope. Like our oldest daughter, she too has a mind of her own. She is a cautious child by nature, and no one can force her to do anything. She does things at her own pace. Because she is our second child and we have prior experience, we are much more relaxed in letting her follow her own path.

Our two daughters are very different from each other and they have their own personalities. What I have seen and am seeing in them is an independent spirit. They do not do everything because they are Asian Indians, nor do they always follow our wishes blindly. Our older daughter has always made up her mind when it came to clothing. I remember having

arguments with her every time we had to go to an AI party. She wanted to dress *normal* in jeans and a T-shirt, and I would insist that she wear the beautiful Indian clothes that I would buy for her on my trips back home. Our younger daughter, who is 13, has started the process of self-assertion. Once again, I am having arguments about clothes that are appropriate weather conditions, for parties-- how and when to study for tests etc. Their growing up process made me realize that there is more to the picture than the fact that all Asian Indian American students are model students who skip grades, are in gifted programs, and always listen to their parents and teachers.

My inspiration for this study has been primarily based on my life experiences in this country. It is our life in the United States and the way in which we have incorporated Asian Indian and American traditions and ideas into our two daughters' lives, made me realize that the picture of Asian Indian American students as model students born into model families is just too simplistic. I figure our daughters could not be the only ones to step outside this monochromatic picture in struggling to find their identity.

Based on the literature review, all the studies conducted on Asian Indian American students in schools in this country have been from the point of view of their parents, or their teachers, and not the students. I saw a real need to share the true voices of this group of young people.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

There is a considerable body of research on Asian-Americans students and the educational experiences of this large minority group in the United States of America (Khandelwal, 1998; Feng, 1994; Tse, 1999; Monaghan, 1999; Bracey, 1996; Halford, 1999; Oei & Lyon, 1996; Braxton, 1999; Okagaki and Frensch, 1998; and Zhang and Carrasquillo, 1995). This body of research includes in the term “Asian Americans” the variety of national, cultural, and religious heritages of people from all parts of Asia. Asian Americans represent more than 29 distinct subgroups that differ in language, religion and customs, among other things (Pang, 1990). The four major groups of Asian Americans are East Asians, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean; Pacific Islanders; Southeast Asians, such as Thai and Vietnamese; and South Asians, such as Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi (Pang, 1990). Although there are some similarities, Asian Americans are a very diverse group. In addition to the differences among the groups, there are differences among the individual members of each group. Some Asian immigrants came as refugees from countries torn apart by war, while others came from middle and upper class families and stable countries. Some came with nothing, and others came with skills and affluence (Brand, 1987).

The history of East/Southeast Asia with the United States has also been very different from the historical relationship of South Asia with the United States. The relationships with China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, etc. has been marked with struggle and major military conflicts such as Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima-Nagasaki, communism, Korean War, Vietnam War,

Khmer Rouge etc. Whereas, South Asia and America have been “far more distant associates” (Shankar, 1998, p. xi). It is true that at the turn of the century farmers of Indian origin in California were subjected to intense racism and were victimized by male-only immigration policies and discriminatory land ownership laws like the early Chinese and Japanese settlers, but their numbers were not large. Most South Asian immigration in the last fifty years has been voluntary. These immigrants have brought with them a college education and professional skills. Many of them have gone on to Ph.D. and further professional degrees and have become affluent in the United States in the first generation. Thus, under the genus Asian American, there are at least two major species that have numerous unique and defining features and characteristics. As Shankar states, this is one of the reasons to study each group of Asian Americans with separate identities, to be able to describe and understand the experiences of each group better (1998).

Just as Asian Americans are often stereotyped, lumped together as a homogenous group, Asian American students are often stereotyped as being the “whiz kids” or the “problem-free kids.” This group of students is often stereotyped as “the model minority.” However, not all Asian American students are superior students; many are not proficient in English, have financial difficulties, have more prominent cultural differences among other things. Often these students drop out of school (Yao, 1988). There is a need to look beneath the stereotypes and to study each group of Asian American students as having separate identities.

Added to this is the issue of non-inclusion of South Asians in Asian American Studies. South Asian studies have not been seen as part of Asian American studies. The groups mainly included in such studies are East Asians, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean; and Southeast Asians, such as Thai and Vietnamese. It is true that South Asian scholars have presented their work at conferences, but mostly to a South Asian audience (Khandelwal, 1998). According to

Khandelwal (1998), South Asians have been included in three ways, all of which are not very effective. The first approach can be termed as tokenism or an “additive strategy.” They are just briefly mentioned in Asian American studies, without any real analysis. The second approach accepts the non-inclusion of South Asians in studies about America because they are “new” immigrants. According to this group of scholars, the history of South Asians in this country is too short, and implies that inclusion in Asian American studies will occur when their history is old enough. The fallacy in this logic is that even though most South Asians immigrated in the 1960s, this group has been immigrating in small numbers since the 18th century (Khandelwal, 1998). The third approach just simply accepts the non-inclusion of South Asians in Asian American Studies because they are different from the other Asian groups. In essence, such an approach freezes the definition of what it is to be an Asian American (Khandelwal 1998).

The study of South Asians is further complicated by internal diversity. Contemporary South Asia includes Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, each of which has its own set of internal and international politics. They have cultural values that are different from each other as well. In addition, they all have their own languages and dialects. India, the largest South Asian country, itself has over 20 official languages and hundreds of dialects. All the major religions of the world are practiced here, and the twenty eight different states and seven union territories have different foods and attire. Thus, a study of South Asian Americans must acknowledge all this diversity (Shankar, 1998).

Background to the Problem

It is against the backdrop of diversity and complexity that the current study is placed.

The current study focuses on the experiences/needs and academic achievements of Asian Indian American students in middle and high school. By Asian Indian American students, the researcher means the children of Asian Indians who have immigrated to the United States of America since 1965.

Significant immigration of Asian Indians to the United States is a recent phenomenon (Mehra, 1996). Most Asian Indians immigrated to this country after the change in immigration laws in 1965. In addition to the large Indian communities in big cities such as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, there are Indians in all parts of the United States. Most of these Asian Indians are highly educated and gainfully employed in relatively good professional positions. This group of Asian Indians entered the middle or upper-middle level of the occupational structure; they became structurally assimilated while simultaneously maintaining a great deal of cultural distinctiveness (Saran & Eames, 1980). Strong educational credentials and occupational skills facilitated their economic adaptation. Fluent English language skills and strong work ethics supported cultural adaptation. Yet a rapidly growing Indian community supported the continuation of their ethnic identification (Saran & Eames, 1980). Asian Indians were the fastest growing immigrant group (111 % between 1980-1990) in this country, consisting of 11 percent of the Asian population in this country. The U. S. Census Bureau, reported 815,447 Asian Indians in this country (Embassy of India, 2000).

The 2000-year census reflects further increases. Fueled by the demand for hi-tech visa workers as well as a growing number of immigrants sponsoring their families, the Asian Indian population in the United States has doubled in the last 10 years, according to data released by the Census Bureau (2000) and analyzed by the Asian American Federation Census Information Centre. Based on the 2000 Census count, there are 1.7 million people in the United States who

identify themselves as Asian Indians or Indian Americans -- first- and second-generation immigrants or those whose ancestors migrated to the US from India (Chabra, 2001). Although Chinese Americans constitute the largest Asian sub-group in the US (2.4 million people), followed by Filipinos (1.9 million or 18 %), Asian Indians had the largest growth rate in the 10 years since the 1990 census.

In his ethnographic study of first and second generation Asian Indians and their assimilation into Silicon Valley, Gawlick (1997) reported that the expression of identity of the first generation ranged from work identity, private Indian identity, economic status, to just being a human being going through life. Practically every family that Gawlick (1997) interviewed socialized exclusively not only with their own ethnic but also within their own religious group. Fenton (1988) argues that immigrants had to develop stable voluntary associations with their own religious group to build the social structure of an ethnic community. They did so to preserve a sense of cultural identity, and to enhance the transmission of religious traditions to the next generation (Fenton, 1988). Aside from the work environment, the first generation focused mainly on the preservation of their cultural and religious traditions. Although first generation Asian Indians have often lived more than twenty years in the United States many Asian Indians of the first generation still dream of returning to India for their retirement. Asian Indians interacted with the mainstream culture only in a limited way, making their dialogue essentially intra-cultural (Gawlick, 1997). This was the cultural setting in which the second generation was raised.

Although raised in this more isolated cultural setting, the situation for the second generation has been entirely different. "The second generation was born into this country; they did not choose it," posited Gawlick (1997). Once they enter the school system, second

generation Asian Indians or Asian Indian Americans are exposed daily to the larger context of American culture and its diversity. As they grow up, they have to cope with different cultures that often confront them with opposing messages. Especially during their teenage years second generation Asian Indians often want to free themselves from the strictness of their parents' control and assimilate more with their peers at school. They want to be accepted by their peers as one of them.

In their struggle to find their identity, Asian Indian American students go through different phases. As school students, they often wish to shun everything Indian out of the need to feel accepted by their friends and peers. However, as they grow older, in their twenties, they reconcile more with their own cultural background, which they come to appreciate in a new way. At the same time they realize that they cannot and for the most part do not want to avoid an inter-cultural dialogue. They grew up in the American culture, they feel part of it, and they have assimilated. They are connected with the American culture through their social life. Therefore, Asian Indian Americans develop different strategies for assimilating into the American culture as well as maintaining their Asian Indian heritage. As highly educated professionals, they see themselves contributing to American life, not only in the technical field, as their parents did, but also in the larger cultural context. They willingly enter into inter-cultural dialogue bringing to it the richness of their own cultural background. They realize that their identity is not fixed but reevaluated and re-formed with every new change (Farver, Bhadha, & Narang 2002).

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe experiences and the academic achievements of second-generation Asian Indian children. Studies that have been conducted on Asian Indians,

first and second generation have probed the perspectives of Asian Indian adults. By contrast, this study focused on Asian Indian students in middle and high school. The most important and detailed source of information was the lengthy interviews with nine student participants. This helped in capturing their true voices. It captured their commonalities and their uniqueness. Once their voices are heard and their needs identified, it can affect teaching practice, school policy making, curriculum development, and parent involvement.

Description of the Study

This research study used a multiple case study design to examine the commonalities among nine Asian Indian American students as well as their unique individual qualities. The researcher has studied the experiences that Asian Indian students have in school through student, parent, and teacher feedback. The case study design was used because the project involved in-depth analysis of nine cases. The researcher was not focusing on the common factors among all the nine student participants that were interviewed, but on the uniqueness of these teenagers, based on the unique experiences of the researcher with her two children.

The face-to-face interviews helped the researcher capture the unique voices of the participants. Detailed questionnaires written on floppy disks were given to their parents. The survey questionnaire format was used with the parents because the researcher is a member of the Asian Indian community. There was the risk that face-to-face interviews might lead the Asian Indian parents to be less than candid. Finally, five core-curriculum teachers were surveyed by email. This triangulation of sources enabled the researcher to describe the social and educational experiences of these students in a more holistic manner.

The Research Questions

To examine the social and educational experiences as well as the academic successes of Asian Indian American students in the Asian Indian communities who reside in a university town in the Midwest, the following research questions were proposed:

1. Are Asian Indian American students considered “academically successful” by Asian Indian parents, by the school district, and by the Asian Indian American students themselves?
2. What are the experiences, through interactions with peers, teachers, administrators, and the curriculum, that Asian Indian American students have in the American school system?

Significance of the Study

There is paucity of research on the adaptation patterns of Asian Indians and the educational experiences of the children of Asian Indians. The limited number of studies that are available suggest that the educational experiences and performance of the students of Asian Indian immigrants to the United States are related to parent involvement, parents’ cultural background, and acculturation into the host society. These studies also show that Asian Indian American students excel academically and are well behaved socially (Mehra, 1998). Minority cultures, which have historically had more problems and have needed help from the society and government organizations, have been studied more often.

However, there are strong arguments for studying minority groups (such as the Chinese and the Japanese) that are for the most part successful. Studying Asian Indian American students could have implications for teaching practice, policy making, school administration, curriculum, parent involvement, etc for the general student population in this country as a whole. Such studies could help us understand and develop new ways of teaching and schooling that are applicable to other minority groups or to the mainstream school population as well.

According to Gay, “multicultural education is a basic for all students in a culturally, ethnically, and socially pluralistic society such as the United States (1994, p. 6). Educational decisions made without consideration for cultural pluralism in not enriching and inclusive. Therefore, a study of Asian Indian American students can add another perspective to issues of inclusiveness.

Definition of Terms

1. Asian Americans—Asians who have immigrated to the United States. The four major groups of Asian Americans are East Asians, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean; Pacific Islanders; Southeast Asians, such as Thai and Vietnamese; and South Asians, such as Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi.
2. Asian Indian—Asian Indians are residents of the United States who are of Indian ancestry. The United States Census Bureau popularized the term Asian Indian to avoid confusion with American Indian (Native American). A number Asian Indians came to the U.S. via Indian communities in other countries such as Fiji, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, the United Kingdom (where around 2.5% of the population is Indian), Trinidad and Tobago, South Africa, Canada, Guyana,

Mauritius and nations of Southeast Asia such as Malaysia and Singapore. Asian Indians are mostly Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, and Christian and are among the most highly educated in American demographics.

3. Asian Indian Americans—Children (born in the United States) of Asian Indians
4. Core curriculum teachers—these are the teachers of English, math, social studies. Science is part of core curriculum in middle schools, but not in the high schools in the district in which the research was conducted.

Organization of Study

The present study is organized as follows. Chapter 1 presents an introduction to the study. Chapter Two presents the literature review that situates this study. It consists of five sections. First, it traces the history of immigration of Asian Indians to the United States of America. Second, it discusses cultural views and values of Asian Indians, and Asian Indian Americans. Next, it explores the concept of self-identity in Asian Americans, Asian Indians, and Asian Indian Americans. Fourth, it discusses past research on academic experiences and achievements of Asian Americans in general, and then Asian Indian Americans in specific, thus showing the implications of this past research on the study proposed here. Finally, Chapter 2 discusses the methodologies used in similar studies. This gave a framework for this dissertation's methodology. Chapter Three presents the design of this study, its methodology, and its theoretical and philosophical framework. Chapter Four presents the participant profiles. Chapter Five presents an analysis of the findings of the study. Chapter 6 contains a discussion of the implications of the study, recommendations for future research, and recommendations for teachers, parents, and students.

CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

The literature review in this chapter is divided into five main sections:

- I. History of Asian Indian immigration to North America;
- II. Cultural views and values of Asian Indians, and Asian Indian Americans;
- III. Concept of self identity in Asian Americans, Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans;
- IV. Academic achievement of Asian Americans, Asian Indians, and Asian Indian Americans;
- V. Research methodologies used in previous studies conducted on Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans.

The fourth section also includes a sub-section on the academic achievement of Asian Americans in general because that helps in situating the current study in the larger context of academic achievement.

History of Asian Indian immigration to the North American continent

According to Ogbu, Asian Indian immigrants are considered voluntary minorities because they willingly came to the United States in search for a better future. Thus, they do not feel that mainstream American culture and life is being forced upon them (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Voluntary immigration of Indians to the North American continent occurred in two distinct phases. The first wave of immigration occurred in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. These immigrants were mainly men from the British Indian province of Punjab. They were mostly from soldiering and farming backgrounds, and grew rice, cotton, and grapes in

California. This phase of Indian immigration ended with the U. S. immigration laws of 1917 and 1924, which stopped the immigration from Asia of Chinese, Japanese, and South Asians (Leonard, 1997).

These Indians, mostly Punjabis who were already settled in California, were only able to retain some land by marrying into the local families. Marriage across racial lines was prohibited, so the Indian men (some already married in India) often married Mexican and Mexican American women. There was often a big age difference between the Indian man and his local wife. These families retained strong ties to Indian culture and came to be known as “Mexican Hindus” (Leonard, 1997).

Two important events in 1946 and 1947 brought in the next wave of South Asian immigration. In 1946, the Luce-Celler bill was passed which allowed 105 Indians per year to immigrate to the United States through naturalization. In 1947, when India gained independence from Great Britain, each of the new independent countries of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Burma were also allowed an annual quota of 105 immigrants (Leonard, 1997).

The latest and the largest phase of Indian immigration began in 1965, when the new Immigration and Naturalization Act reversed the earlier discriminatory laws to give preference to Asian immigrants with special skills. The annual quota was 20,000 for each country. This group of immigrants was mostly families that came from “urban, highly educated backgrounds” (Leonard, 1997). They were naturalized based on “preferred skills or family reunification.”

Cultural views and values of Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans

While Indians participate in some local affairs in the United States, it is not extensive. Most of their social activities revolve around other Indian friends and local Indian organizations.

Close friendships are usually formed with other Indians. Indian immigrants keep in close touch with family and friends back in the home country. Most Indian immigrants rely on friends and family for emotional support. The Indian population is hesitant to seek help from psychiatrists and psychologists in cases of mental health. The stigma against seeking professional help remains strong among Indian immigrants (Saran, 1985).

The nature of the parent-child relationship has changed with immigration, and Indian immigrants believe child rearing to be a serious concern. Achievement of higher educational qualifications and high professional standards remains one of the most important goals of Indian immigrants. This is passed on to the second generation, which sometimes leads to conflict. The sense of an Indian identity is very strong in this group, and this is carefully cultivated in the children (Saran, 1985). Asian Indians being voluntary minorities, keep comparing the educational system in the United States with “back home” in India. They see education to be the way to a better future. They encourage their children to learn English, and do well in schools. This makes them expect their children to get good grades in school (Ogbu, 1998).

Cultural relocation and experiential ambivalence is a central theme in the contemporary concept of globalization. Hegde (1998) in her article about Asian Indian women states that as immigrants “walk in and out of cultural frames that are often incompatible, they struggle to deal with the contradictions they see outside and within themselves (p. 35). She also states that adaptation by an immigrant depends on the level of participation in the new country.

Concept of Self Identity in Asian Americans, Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans

One of the major goals of multicultural education is to provide students with information

about the history and contributions of various ethnic groups—groups who have been excluded from curricula. Multicultural education must also replace biased and distorted information on groups who have been included but misrepresented with accurate and significant information. This goal serves all students in a school district. However, one of its crucial contributions is to the students belonging to the omitted or distorted ethnic groups. This inclusion or modification of information helps in developing a greater self-understanding, a positive self-identity (Gay, 1994).

Self-identity in members of any ethnic group depends on how far the members of that group have acculturated or assimilated into the immigrant country. This acculturation is again dependent on several factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, length of residence in the host culture and religion (Farver, et al., 2002). Previous research has shown that females identify more with their natal cultures than do males. Ghuman (1997) states that in traditional societies like India, there are different expectations for male and female behaviors. Males are given more freedom and educational opportunities than females. These gender differences might become more intensified when families immigrate to Western cultures because of the relative permissiveness of adolescents (Dasgupta, 1998). Therefore, the extent to which Asian Indian American females are constrained by Indian culture might be greater than that seen in males.

Prior research has also shown that immigrant families with higher socioeconomic status prefer assimilation to separation (Barankin et al., 1989). Years of residence in the new country also are a factor in acculturation. It has been noted that the longer a family resides in the host country, the more they prefer assimilation. Also, the younger the age at which individuals immigrate, the greater is the assimilation (Lalonde, Taylor, and Moghaddam 1992). Consequently, Asian Indian American students who come from families of higher

socioeconomic status are more likely to identify themselves as “American” rather than “Indian.”

According to researchers, the process of ethnic identity development often follows a distinct course. In discussing Asian Indian immigrants (first generation), Phinney (1990) proposes a three-stage model of ethnic identity development: uninspected ethnic identity, exploration, and consolidation. In the first stage, the minority group unquestioningly conforms to its own values and culture. In the second phase, the group starts exploring its relationship with the majority culture. The third stage involves merging or consolidation of both cultures, but each group member still exhibits unique characteristics.

Tse (1999), in discussing ethnic identity development of ethnic minorities of second-generation ethnic minorities (for example AIA students), proposes a four-stage model: ethnic unawareness, ethnic ambivalence/evasion, ethnic emergence, and ethnic identity incorporation. The first stage, ethnic unawareness happens in early childhood when children are not yet in school and are in limited contact with other ethnic groups. The second stage of ethnic ambivalence/ evasion occurs during adolescence when the ethnic minority youngsters distance themselves from their own group and adopt the behaviors of the dominant group. The stage of ethnic emergence occurs during late adolescence or early adulthood when the young people realize that it is not possible to join the dominant group. They then start looking to their ethnic homeland group for acceptance and self-image. The final stage of ethnic identity incorporation is when these young adults join their own ethnic minority American group and resolve many of their ethnic identity conflicts.

Religion is also a big influence in acculturation and in developing self-identity. As a group, Asian Indians are highly religious, more so in the new country than in India (Williams, 1988). Research has shown that religious activities often reinforce ethnicity and unites the group

as a particular ethnic group. It also introduces and familiarizes the next generations (Asian Indian Americans) to their natal heritage and traditions (Dasgupta, 1998; Sheth, 1995). Among Asian Indian American young adults, religious participation often strengthens ethnic identity, and reinforces traditional Indian values outside the home (Williams, 1988). Min & Kim (1999) believe that religion has stronger effects on ethnicity than the home-country culture. Religion sustains ethnicity in part by helping members of ethnic groups maintain their native cultural traditions. He goes on to say that, Asian groups have brought with them very distinctive cultures, religions very different from the Anglo American culture, and Christian religions. The South East Asians brought with them Confucianism and Buddhism; the South Asians brought with them three non-Christian religions, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Islam. This distinctiveness helps the Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans to maintain a separate ethnic identity. At the same time, according to Min & Kim (1999), this same distinctiveness from other ethnic and minority groups and the majority group, makes it difficult for second-generation Asian Americans to maintain and practice their ethnic cultures and religions.

Academic Achievement of Asian Americans, Asian Indians, and Asian Indian Americans

Academic Achievement of Asian Americans

This section discusses related literature about academic success of Asian American immigrants and their children in general. According to Sue and Okazaki (1990), the most popular view about the academic success of Asian American students is that their families value and emphasize academic success. Researchers have found that Asian families expect their children to do well academically, to obey authority figures, and to be aware of the sacrifices their

parents have made for them and the need to fulfill obligations (Zhang and Carrasquillo, 1995). Asian families often teach their children to read before they enter the school system. This early start often helps these students to achieve more when in school (cited in Zhang, and Carasquillo, 1995). This holds true of most Asian Indian families as well.

However, Asian American students, being voluntary minority students, sometimes have problems dealing with the high expectations of parents and teachers. The difficulty of living up to these high expectations can sometimes lead to anxiety and poor performance in school. Even when school performance is not weak, students resent being characterized as “model minorities” (Ogbu, 1998).

Some other researchers have found that Asian American students work harder in school than those whose families have settled in the United States for several generations. Dornbusch, Reed-Hodgson, Prescott, and Ritter (1987) have found that the level of academic achievement among Asian American students tends to be inversely proportional to the number of generations that have lived in the United States. In other words, over time, assimilation into a new society dissipates the advantages of being able to draw on resources from the old country. Furthermore, researchers like Smith and Billiter (1985) have found that parental expectations of students are also inversely related to the number of years in the U. S. First generation Asian immigrants have the highest expectations of their children. The second generation Asian Americans have higher educational expectations than those of the third generation, who have been more integrated into the mainstream. This body of literature on Asian Americans serves as a foundation of academic achievement for this case study.

Academic achievement of Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans

According to Saran (1985), compared to the average adult American population, Asian Indian immigrants of both sexes are substantially better educated. At the time of his research, only about 15 percent of the white American population had completed four or more years of college, while nearly six times that percentage has done so among the Asian Indians living in the New York metropolitan area. This is because the immigration laws of 1965 only granted immigrant visas to people with certain educational backgrounds and belonging to certain professions. Thus, an overwhelming majority of Asian Indians have earned high educational qualifications. The majority are doctors and engineers, followed by college professors, scientific researchers, etc. As of 1985, the children of these Asian Indian immigrants are maintaining the high educational achievement standards (Saran, 1985).

Gawlick's (1997) research showed that teaching values is very important for Indian parents. Mutual respect, especially respect for parents and elders, maintaining close family ties, being a hard worker, and having a high motivation for academic achievements were mentioned as some of the core values lived for and transmitted to the second generation. Gawlick also posited that Asian Indians feel that these values are not lived by the mainstream culture.

Parents expect their children to do well. All parents interviewed saw their children ten years from now in the best scenarios, with very good education and in careers that granted them a comfortable lifestyle with no financial worries (Gawlick, 1997). Many saw their children as doctors or engineers. Ultimately, however, they wanted their children to choose what they liked as long as the choice would guarantee enough income for comfortable living conditions and happiness through their achievements. Dropping out of education, having no goals in life, or coming into bad company such as the drug scene was perceived as the worst scenario. These

values were widely internalized by the second generation. High achievements academically, goal orientation, but also, for some, a clear sense of contribution to the mainstream culture were among the goals of the second generation.

Research demonstrates a close relationship between this minority group's theories of success, its strategies for getting ahead in society, and the school adaptation patterns of its young. Asian Indian immigrants view formal education as extremely important and the primary avenue to upward mobility (Mehra, 1998). The family plays a critical role in the individual's career decision making. In his personal interviews with Indian professional families in Texas, Yao in 1989 (cited in Mehra, 1998) found that most of the Indian parents showed a great deal of interest in their children's education.

Research methodologies used in previous studies conducted on Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans

Most studies conducted on AI and AIAs have been qualitative. Two studies, Saran (1985) and Dasgupta (1989) relied on interviews. Saran (1985) conducted ten in-depth interviews to collect detailed information about the Asian Indian experience in a smaller community in the United States. In the interviews, Saran asked numerous open-ended questions in addition to basic questions to gather demographic and background information. Dasgupta (1989) in her study analyzes the process of becoming an immigrant for Indians in the United States and the methods these immigrants use to develop and define a network of social relationships in their adopted country. She conducted a qualitative study in which she interviewed 25 couples with children in the New Jersey area.

Gawlick's (1997) study was ethnographic in nature. He explained first and second

generation Asian Indians and their assimilation into Silicon Valley. He focuses on adjustment strategies of Asian Indians of both generations. His study deals with how Asian Indians of both generations perceive themselves and whether these perceptions of identity are different according to the different life circumstances they are facing. The research sample consisted of two main groups: the parents who reflect the characteristics of post-1965 professionals, and their children who range in age from 14 to 29 years old. The interviews were mostly conducted at the participants' homes.

Kalavar's (1998) research had both a quantitative and qualitative component. It explored the level of life satisfaction among immigrant Asian Indian elderly, and examined the influence of selected variables on the level of life satisfaction. The participants were asked four open-ended questions followed by an interview protocol that asked for background information such as age, sex, marital status, education, employment status, reasons for coming to the United States, and length of stay in the United States etc. The participants were then administered the Life Satisfaction Index-B, and finally the Life Satisfaction Index-A.

Mehra's (1998) study explored the attitudes, expectations, and involvement of Asian Indian parents in their children's education and schools. Semi-structured interviews with parents, children, teachers and principals, and classroom observations were used to collect qualitative data. The study looked for emerging themes and patterns that were not only common to the four participating Asian Indian families, but also unique to each of them.

Chapter Summary

The review of literature covers all the topics needed to situate this current study. First, it details the history of Asian Indian immigration to North America, which started in the 1880s.

This is significant because very little is known about this phase of immigration, even in the Asian Indian communities in this country. However, the major wave of immigration started in 1965, after the change in immigration laws. The second section covers the cultural views and values of Asian Indians. First generation Asian Indians have strong ties with their native country and carefully nurture Asian Indian cultural ideas in their children. The third section discusses the concept of self-identity development in Asian Americans, Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans and its importance. It details two models of self-identity development and explicates the role of acculturation in first generation Asian Indians, socioeconomic status, and religion in developing a self-identity. The fourth section discusses academic achievement of Asian American students, Asian Indians, and Asian Indian American students. It provides information on how Asian Americans reinforce in their children the importance of education and those Asian American students perform better on average than mainstream students do. The final section provides information on research methodologies used in previous studies conducted on Asian Indians and Asian Indian Americans.

CHAPTER 3 - Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to describe experiences and the academic achievements of Asian Indian American students in a middle and high school district in a typical Midwestern college town. The first generation Asian Indians are usually English speaking and are a very highly educated group. Among the immigrants, there are a large number of engineers, scientists, physicians, dentists, and other professionals (Banks, 1997). The town used in this study is representative of many of the university towns scattered around this country, which usually has a sizeable Asian Indian faculty, Asian Indian undergraduate and graduate students, and Asian Indian American student population in the school system. Research also shows that little differences exist between Asian Indians residing in various size cities in the United States of America. Saran (1985) has conducted two parallel studies, where he interviewed ten Asian Indians in New York City and ten in a smaller community. He noticed very few differences between the two groups.

The case study design results in a picture of the commonalities among these Asian Indian students as well as their unique individual qualities. This study focused on the following research questions:

1. Are the Asian Indian American students considered “academically successful” by Asian Indian parents, by the school district, and by the Asian Indian American students themselves?
2. What are the experiences, through interactions with peers, teachers, administrators, and

the curriculum, that Asian Indian American students have in the American school system?

This chapter includes the following sections:

a) nature of qualitative research, b) philosophical assumptions, c) theoretical framework, d) research design, e) role of the researcher, f) participant selection, g) instrumentation h) data collection and data analysis, i) ethical issues involved in this study, j) establishing trustworthiness, k) methodological limitations of the study, and k) chapter summary.

Nature of Qualitative Research

“I think metaphorically of qualitative research as an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material” (Creswell, 1998, p. 13). Qualitative research is becoming increasingly popular in the social sciences for researchers who are often trying to understand social and human problems by studying things or subjects in their natural settings. In a qualitative research study, the researcher constructs a “complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). According to leading experts such as Merriam (1988), Eisner (1991), Bogdan and Biklen (1998), and Creswell (1998), some of the characteristics shared by most qualitative studies are the following: a) natural setting, b) researcher playing a key role in data collection, c) data collected in words or pictures, d) research outcome seen as a process, not a product, e) inductive analysis of data, f) focus on individual participant’s perspective, g) use of expressive language, and h) persuasion by reason.

The qualitative research method used in this particular investigation is the case study

method. A case study is an exploration of a system bounded by time and place (a case or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (which include observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports) rich in context (Creswell, 1998).

Philosophical Assumptions

This study was guided by the five philosophical assumptions that guide all qualitative studies. Being a qualitative researcher, I acknowledge that multiple realities exist (the ontological issue), namely the realities of the Asian Indian students, the Asian Indian parents, the teachers, and finally, the researcher. Therefore, I “rely on voices and interpretations of informants through extensive quotes, present themes that reflect words used by informants, and advance evidence of different perspectives on each theme” (Creswell, 1998, p. 76). I have used numerous direct quotes from the participants. Secondly, because I am a part of the Asian Indian community, I had no problem abiding by the epistemological assumptions of qualitative research—that of minimizing the objective separateness of the researcher and the researched (Creswell, 1998). As an insider, I had no problem establishing relationships of trust and assuring the participants that I was not there to make judgments, but to gather information for research.

The third philosophical assumption to guide this study was the axiological assumption. “In a qualitative study, the investigator admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports his or her values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field” (Creswell, 1998, p. 76). I was aware that my research is filled with the values of the participants and of the researcher. I have reported the values and biases of my participants, as well as my own perceptions and biases. Fourthly, true to the rhetorical assumptions of

qualitative research, I used first-person to describe individual stories. Words such as explore, describe, understand, and discover, meaning, nature, and characteristics are important rhetorical markers in my purpose statement and in the research questions. Finally, my study reflects the methodological assumptions of qualitative research. My study is truly exploratory, and I did not specify any codes or categories at the onset of the project. The codes and categories of my research emerged from the data collected from my participants. Thus, all five philosophical assumptions broadly guided my research study.

Theoretical Framework

This study was framed on the four-stage ethnic identity model (Tse, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Phinney, 1989; Atkinson, Mortensen, & Sue, 1989). Because the Asian Indian students in the school system are always questioning their identity and redefining who they are as they experience school life, defining and explaining their ethnic identities is an integral part of my research. According to this model, the first stage is ethnic unawareness, where the ethnic minorities (EMs) are unaware of their minority status, usually because of limited contact with the dominant culture. This stage occurs in early childhood. Stage 2 is ethnic ambivalence/evasion, when ethnic minority adolescents may distance themselves from their own group and adopt the norms and behavior of the dominant culture. In stage three, or ethnic emergence, EMs realize that joining the dominant group is not an effective approach to achieving a better self-image. At this stage, the EMs look to homeland groups for support. In the case of Asian Indian students in higher education, they look to the Indian Students' Associations for support. In stage four, ethnic identity incorporation, the EMs return to their own ethnic minority American group and resolve most of their identity issues.

Tse (1999), the researcher who uses this four-stage model, postulates that Asian Americans, like other ethnic minorities, experience more than one culture when growing up, and face the challenge of incorporating those diverse influences into their identities. Tse's study focused on the last two stages, ethnic emergence, and ethnic identity incorporation. In contrast, this study focuses mainly on the second and third stages. The participants of my study were in middle or high school. Therefore, they were definitely past the age of ethnic ignorance. Most of them were in the ethnic ambivalence and ethnic emergence stages.

Research Design

A multiple case study design was used. Each Asian Indian American student interviewed was defined as a separate case. Common themes or patterns among my participants as well as unique qualities each participant might possess were examined.

Selected Asian Indian American students in the middle and high schools in this particular school district were interviewed. Detailed questionnaires were sent to their Asian Indian parents. In addition, similar detailed questionnaires were also sent to core-curriculum teachers who had the participating Asian Indian American students in their classes at the middle and high schools. This triangulation of participants enabled me to describe the experiences of these students in a more holistic manner.

Role of the Researcher

The problem in conducting research among the members of the ethnic group to which the researcher belongs is often referred to as the "problem of over identification" (Dasgupta, 1989, 31). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) refer to this as doing research in "your own backyard—within

your own institution or agency, or among friends and colleagues' (21). Creswell (1998) strongly advises against such research because the participants might withhold information, or change the information so that they can maintain a certain social image. He believes that it is extremely difficult to observe objectively the phenomenon in which the researcher is deeply involved.

However, research among the members of the ethnic group to which the researcher belongs is a common practice in studying minority groups. Almost all of the qualitative studies conducted on Asian Indians have been conducted by Asian Indian researchers (Saran, 1985; Dasgupta, 1989; Kalavar, 1998; Mehra, 1998). This type of research would actually be more productive because the researcher's involvement in that culture would help her/him to understand the participants and see the world through their experiences. These problems can also be avoided if the researcher is aware of the possibility of over identification (Saran, 1985). These problems could also be avoided by triangulation of research sources. Therefore, I conducted face-to-face in-depth interviews with the students, computerized interviews/survey with their parents, and email surveys with the core-curriculum teachers of the participant students.

Participant Selection

This study was focused on the Asian Indian community of a Midwestern college town. The Asian Indian American students in middle schools and high school, their parents, and their core-curriculum teachers were contacted. Elementary school students were not used because they were too young to be able to identify concepts such as self-identity, academic achievement, and success in life. *All* Asian Indian American students in middle and high schools and their parents who fit the following criteria were approached: a) families with students in the middle

schools who had lived in the community for at least three years; b) families with students in the high school who had lived in the community for at least five years. c) both the parents must be of Asian Indian origin. After receiving favorable responses from nine families, (students and parents included), the researcher orally and then formally, in writing, requested participation from the parents and their children who met the criteria. Ultimately, of the nine families, eight families participated in the study.

This university town has two middle schools (grades 7 and 8) and one high school (grades 9-12). I contacted *all* the core curriculum teachers of the students participating in this study. The criteria for teacher selection were as follows: a) the teachers taught in the middle and high schools attended by the student participants. b) The teachers were core curriculum teachers (English, math, science in middle schools, and social studies). c) The teachers had the student participants in one of their classes in the semester the electronic surveys were conducted. Ultimately, five core-curriculum teachers participated in the study.

Instrumentation

The interview protocol for students and the parent and teacher survey questionnaires were all developed around the two research questions. In all three instruments, the first group of questions was centered on academic achievement and success in life. The second group of questions was about the experiences of the AIA students. The parent survey also had some additional questions to explore their educational experiences in India. The parents had lived the first 20+ years of their lives in India, and then had immigrated to the United States—thus they could compare the two very different worlds.

Interview Protocol for Students

The interview protocol (see appendix C) chosen for this study was semi-structured and called a standardized open-ended interview (Patton, 1990). The exact wording and sequence of the questions were chosen in advance based on the two research questions. In addition, all interviewees were asked some basic demographic questions. If, during the interview, the participants moved to another question, or moved away to another topic during the course of their remarks, then the interviewer explored with follow-up questions to allow them to tell their stories in their own ways. Moreover, the questions were worded in an open-ended way to allow for a wide range of answers.

The protocol was designed to present questions in an orderly way, thus enabling the interviewer to ask all the participants essentially the same questions. This allowed the researcher to increase her ability to compare the responses without dramatically affecting the spontaneity of subjects' responses. The first part consists of some basic demographic questions. Questions 1-4 are about academic achievement and success in life. Questions 5-14 were about academic, peer, and cultural experiences, and the school's role in enriching these experiences.

Interview Plan

The plan for conducting student interviews consisted of calling each participant to set up an interview at a site that was mutually agreeable to both parties. The researcher wanted to conduct the interviews at her office. This would be a neutral location, where the students could be more comfortable and candid in their responses. However, the parents were not quite comfortable with the idea. Only one student was interviewed at the office. All other interviews

occurred in the students' homes. Some of the interviews took place during the afternoon after school when the parents were still at work. The others were conducted in the student's bedroom with the door closed, while the rest of the family was in another part of the home.

Parent Survey Questionnaire

The parent survey questionnaire (pp. 163-165) was also developed from the two research questions. This questionnaire was piloted as part of a class project. The first page consisted of some demographic questions. Questions 1-4 were unique to the parents. These questions probed their educational experiences in India and compared it to the American education system. Questions 5-10 were about academic achievement and success in life. In addition, the last eight were about academic, peer, and cultural experiences of Asian Indian American students, and the school's role in enriching these experiences.

Teacher Survey Questionnaire

The teacher survey questionnaire (pp. 166-169) was also developed from the two research questions. The first page consisted of some demographic questions. Questions 1-4 were about academic achievement and success in life. In addition, the last eight were about academic, peer, and cultural experiences of Asian Indian American students, and the school's role in enriching these experiences.

Data Collection & Data Analysis

In qualitative studies such as this one, the researcher is well recognized as the principal research instrument (Patton, 1990; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Berg, 1995). The researcher's

role is to gain insight into the case under study and interpret the data collected through various means. For this project, the researcher used lengthy interviews for the students, survey questionnaires for the parents and the core-curriculum teachers.

The interview protocol is included in Appendix C, pp. 164-166. The interviews were 60 to 90 minute in-depth interviews of the Asian Indian American students in the middle and high schools. The purpose of in-depth interviewing was not to test hypotheses or to evaluate (Patton, 1990), but to try to understand the experiences of the participants and the meanings they find in those experiences (Stoney, 1999). After the interviews were transcribed and made available to the students, some of them made some minor changes to the transcription on the paper copy. The researcher then revised the information. Other students were happy with the transcriptions, and did not make any changes. These revised versions were used by the researcher for data analysis.

Detailed survey questionnaires written on floppy disks were given to their parents. The survey questionnaire is included in Appendix C. The computerized survey questionnaire format was used with the parents because the researcher is a member of the Asian Indian community. Given that the researcher is a member of the Asian Indian community, it seemed likely that face-to-face interviews would not be effective. Consequently, the interview questions were placed on a floppy disk and parents were asked to respond in writing and return the disk to the researcher.

In addition, the core-curriculum teachers of the participating Asian Indian American students in the middle and the high schools were sent detailed survey questionnaires by email. The survey questionnaire is included in Appendix C. After some editing and cleaning up, the researcher asked the core-curriculum teachers to make sure that the notes had captured the essence of their respective interviews. This triangulation of subjects enabled the researcher to

describe the educational experiences of these students in a more holistic manner.

Ethical Issues Involved in this Study

Regardless of the exact method used, a qualitative researcher is always faced with a number of ethical issues that arise at different junctures of the research process, such as data collection, data analysis, and data sharing. Qualitative research experts such Bogdan & Biklen (1998), Merriam (1998), and Creswell (1998) have set numerous guidelines to maintain the ethical standards of qualitative studies such as: a) the researcher must protect the anonymity of the participants, b) the researcher must treat the participants with dignity and respect, c) the researcher must not engage in any deception about the nature of the study and must explain the purpose of the study, d) the researcher must get permission from the human subjects review board, e) the researcher must also get written permission from the participants, and parents of underage participants, f) the researcher must present the truth when reporting the research findings, g) the researcher must not report information shared with them off the record, and h) the researcher must seriously consider whether to share personal experiences with the participants.

The researcher abided by these guidelines. Aliases were assigned to the participants. The purpose of this study was explained in detail. The Internal Review Board (the human subjects review board) reviewed the research plan and granted permission to conduct this study. Written permission from the adult participants, and written permission for the minor participants was secured. When appropriate, personal experiences relevant to the study were shared with the participants.

In the data analysis and interpretation stages, the researcher made sure that the identities

of the student participants were kept confidential. That is why the data was not interpreted in family units. Because then it would have been very easy to identify the student participants who were all dependent on their parents.

Establishing Trustworthiness

In qualitative research establishing trustworthiness, or “the study’s truth-value” (Stoney, 1999, 93) is extremely important. “Trust is a developmental process that is established between the researcher and participants” (Stoney, 1999, 86). According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) there are four main standards of ensuring trustworthiness: a) credibility, or producing believable findings and interpretations for critical readers, b) transferability, or writing a sufficiently thick description to enable persons who are interested in transferring this knowledge to their own circumstances to be able to do so, c) dependability, producing results that can be trusted, and d) confirmability, or making sure that the data support the conclusions accurately. In the current study, these four standards were met in the following ways.

Credibility

“Credibility relates to the degree that the study achieves truth” (Stoney, 1999, 86). In the current research study, credibility was achieved in the following manner:

Prolonged Engagement. Prolonged engagement is “the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes: learning the culture, testing for misinformation introduced by distortion, and building trust” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 301). To ensure prolonged engagement, the researcher collected data for over six months.

Triangulation. Triangulation is the “act of bringing more than one source of data to bear

on a single point” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, 114). Methodological triangulation combines dissimilar methods such as interviews, observations, surveys, and others. In the current study the researcher uses triangulation in participants as data sources. In this study, Asian Indian American students were interviewed in depth. Their parents were given a detailed questionnaire on a computer disk to fill out. The core-curriculum teachers of these students were sent detailed questionnaires via email. They sent their replies back via email.

Peer Debriefing. Peer debriefing is a process of “exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only knowledge in the researcher’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 308). The researcher regularly met with one of the other class members during the pilot study, during the writing of the proposal, and data collection period. She also met with her dissertation advisor during data collection, data analysis, and dissertation write-up periods.

Member Checking. Member checking provides “the participants the opportunity to clarify interpretations and provide additional information” (Stoney, 1999, 89). After the individual interviews with the students were transcribed, the researcher asked the students to read them and make sure the essence of their views have been captured. Many of the high school students did not want to take the time to read over the 20-25 page interviews, but a few of them did and made some minor changes.

Transferability

According to Krathwohl (1998), “the rich and detailed illustrations of qualitative research” (343) allow readers to see if these descriptions fit their own experiences, and thus transfer to new situations. This study includes thick, rich descriptions of the participants and the

setting.

Dependability

Dependability ensures that if a study were to be replicated using the same type of participants in the same context, the findings would be then replicated (Erlandson, et al., 1994). The researcher took field notes during interviews and during peer debriefing. This left an audit trail, which helped establish dependability. Triangulation of participants also served to maintain dependability of the study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the “degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interest, or perspectives of the inquirer” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 290). The audit trail and triangulation also helped in establishing the confirmability of this study.

Methodological Limitations of the Study

A lack of generalizability is often cited as one of the inherent limitations of qualitative research. According to Marshall & Rossman (1995), generalizability refers to “the ability to generalize or transfer the use of qualitative findings to other populations, settings, and context” (144). However, qualitative studies are very context dependent, and are therefore not transferable or generalizable. Saran (1985) in his study based on 10 in-depth interviews acknowledges that “ten cases may not provide a statistically representative sample” (93), but “they do present a fairly close picture of the experiences of Asian Indians living in the United

States” (93). Mehra (1998), reflecting on the findings of her qualitative study admits the limitation of a “very small and highly skewed sample of high achieving Asian Indian families” (194). But, she also asserts that her study “has generated findings that raise a number of issues about the ways in which families, schools, and educational researchers approach the issues related to parental involvement and the education of minorities” (194).

A second limitation of qualitative research is the use of a human as the principal instrument of data collection. Bogdan & Biklen (1998) suggest a number of ways to reduce this limitation. First of all the researcher was always aware of the fact that the primary goal of this research was to understand, not judge. The researcher also took extensive notes with ample subjective and objective reflection. In addition, the researcher submitted interview transcripts to the students for verification. This procedure is called member check (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

Chapter Summary

Using a case study design, the researcher explored the educational experiences and the academic achievements of Asian Indian American students in the middle and high school district in a typical Midwestern college town. In this chapter, the researcher discussed the nature of qualitative research, philosophical assumptions that guided this study and the theoretical framework for this study. In explaining her research design, she discussed the role of the researcher and the limitations that accompany being a member of the participant group. She also discussed the process of participant selection in a somewhat small Asian Indian community. The next section discussed the processes of data collection and data analysis. For this project, the researcher used lengthy interviews for the students, survey questionnaires for the parents and the core-curriculum teachers. The next section detailed how the researcher dealt with the ethical

issues such as protecting the anonymity of participants, obtaining permission from the internal review board and from participants, and establishing trustworthiness. The chapter ends with a discussion of the methodological limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 4 - Participant Profiles and Case Description

This study was conducted in a mid-sized university town in one of the central states of the United States of America. It has a population of about 50,000 people. This town was first settled in the mid 1800s and houses a state university with an enrollment of 23,000 students. The university is the major employer in this town. The town covers an area of about 18 square miles and is adjacent to a military installation, which is the other major employer in this region.

The state university housed in this town is a comprehensive, research, land-grant institution with eight colleges and sixty departments. Since its founding in 1863, the University has evolved into a modern institution of higher education, committed to quality programs, and responsive to a rapidly changing world and the aspirations of an increasingly diverse society. Research and other creative endeavors comprise an essential component of this University's mission. The University has numerous extension and outreach programs that serve the state, the country, and the world. The University attracts a diverse population, nationally and internationally. Out of a total of 5976 faculty and staff members at this university, over 30 faculty and staff members are from India. Over 300 Asian Indian students reside in this community. It is from this community of Asian Indian parents and students that participants were selected for this study.

The school district in this university town consists of seven elementary schools, two middle schools (seventh and eighth grades) and one high school. Of the two middle schools, one is located on the west side of town where the majority of the students are from affluent neighborhoods (upper middle class to professionals such as university professors and administrators, doctors, lawyers, etc.) The second middle school is located on the north side of

town where the majority of its population consists of lower and middle-income families and blue-collar workers. There is only one high school, which is comprised of two campuses - the East Campus serves students in the 9th grade and the West Campus serves students in 10th through 12th grades.

Nine high school and middle school girls and boys participated in this study. The two middle school participants are from the same middle school located in the west side of town. All seven high school students were from the West campus. Based on the criteria of participation described in chapter 3, 12 middle and high school students were asked to participate in the study. Nine of the twelve students agreed to participate in this study (see Table 4.1). As students are the focus of this study, I have provided short descriptions of each student in this chapter.

In addition, the parents of these nine students were contacted. Detailed survey questionnaires were given to the parents of these student participants. Even though all of the 17 parents initially agreed to fill out the survey questionnaires, only nine of the parents actually filled out the questionnaires (see Table 4.2). Seven of the nine parents who completed the survey work at the university. Of the other two, one is a schoolteacher and the other is a graphic designer.

Through the school principals, I contacted all the core-curriculum teachers in the middle and high schools. After extending the invitation to all the core curriculum teachers of the Asian Indian American students, I received a positive response from only five of the teachers. They were two English teachers, two social studies teachers, and one math teacher. I gave a descriptive survey questionnaire to the core-curriculum (English, mathematics, and social studies) teachers (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.1 Student Participants

Pseudonym, gender	Age	Years spent in university town	Grade Level	Age, Gender and grade level of siblings
Sunaina, female	18	11	12th	12, Female, 6 th
Rohit, male	17	9	11 th	22, Male, College
Anjali, female	16	6	12 th	12, Female, 6th 8, Male, 2nd
Surya, male	15	12	10th	13, Male, 8 th 11, Female, 7 th
Dev, male	13	12	8th	15, Male, 10 th 11, Female, 7 th
Sohan, male	18	12	12 th	7, Male, 2nd
Ganga, female	18	17	12 th	13, Male, 7 th 6, Male, Kindergarten
Vayu, male	18	18	12 th	15, Male, 10 th
Sushmita Female	12	9	8th	10, Male, 5 th

Table 4.2 Parent Participants

Pseudonym, gender	Years spent in United States	Years in this town	Level of Education	Occupation	Age, gender and grade level of students
Punya Male	16	10	Ph.D.	Assoc. Professor	18, Female, senior in high school 12, Female, sixth grader
Sushila Female	16	10	Masters	Research Lab Technician	18, Female, senior in high school 12, Female, sixth grader
Lalita Female	18	9	Masters	Accountant	12, Female, 7 th grade 10, Male, 5 th grade
Nilesh Male	27	21	Ph.D.	Professor	18, Male, Senior in high school 15, Male, 10 th grade
a Narendr Male	22	12	Ph.D.	Professor and Department Head	15, Male, 10 th grade 13, Male, 9 th grade 11, Female, 7 th grade
Ojaswi Female	31	12	Bachelors	CLC Curriculum Coordinator	15, Male, 10 th grade 13, Male, 9 th grade 11, Female, 7 th grade
Joyita Female	25	10	Bachelors	Graphic Designer	22, Male, College student 17, Male, 11 th grade
Harshit Male	31	10	M.B.A., Ph.D.	Professor and Department Head	22, Male, College student 17, Male, 11 th grade
Gopal Male	24	17	Ph.D.	Assoc. Professor	17, Female, 12 th grade 13, Male, 7 th grade 6, Male, kindergarten

Table 4.3 Teacher Participants

Pseudo nym, Gender	Years in Teaching	Years teaching in this school district	Years teaching in middle or high schools	Education of Participant	Area of Expertise
Mr. Holland Male	16	16	16 High School	B.S. in Secondary Education, emphasis in Math; M.S. in Educational Administration	Mathematics
Mr. Jardine Male	8	8	8 High School	BS, Secondary Education (Social Science Comprehensive)	History and Social Studies
Mrs. Gunn Female	19	19	19 Middle School	BS, * MA*	Social Studies
Ms. Fulton Female	14	9	14 Middle School	BS in Secondary Ed/English Graduate level endorsement in Teaching ESL	English
Mrs. Pollen Female	16	14	16 High School	B.A. in English M.A. in Education in progress	English

* This is the only information that was provided.

Student Profiles

Sunaina

Sunaina is an 18-year-old young woman who was in the 12th grade. She was my first interviewee whom I interviewed in my office. She was very forthcoming in her responses. She drove herself and her younger sister to my office. She apologized for bringing her sister, and let me know that when she scheduled this interview, she had forgotten that she was supposed to baby-sit her sister that afternoon. We settled her sister in my office on my computer, and we set up the tape recorder in the conference room next door. She was casually dressed in jeans and a T-shirt and her thick black hair, just past her shoulders, was tied in a loose ponytail. She was very relaxed and gave detailed responses to my questions. The tape recorder did not seem to bother her at all. The interview was approximately an hour and a half long.

She lives at home with her father, mother, and her younger sister. Her father is a faculty member at the state university and her mother holds a technical position in a university research laboratory. Sunaina has lived in this mid-western town for 11 years and has attended to elementary school, middle school, and high school here.

She discussed in detail the dichotomy of the role her parents have played in her life. She acknowledges the positive role of her parents—since 2nd grade she has been involved in *dance, gymnastics, violin, piano, and Gold Orchestra*. However, she also recognizes that what she considers success in life and in academics is not the same as what her parents want from her. She believes that security is a great motivator for her parents, who wish for her to be a doctor or an engineer because *doctors will be guaranteed to make \$ 100,000 a year; engineers are*

guaranteed to find a job worth \$ 70-80,000 a year. It establishes a stable life. However, what she wants in life is quite different from what her parents want from her:

I think success in life is being happy with what you do, [] something that makes you happy [] If you are good enough, you are going to be successful. What I think is that if you find something that you are passionate about, it does not matter if you are a straight A student or how high your IQ is, you can always be the best in your own thing.

She equates success to happiness and passion and not to financial stability, like her parents. She also introduced and elaborated on her concept of self-identity. She believes that she is similar to and unique from the other mainstream American students in school:

I am similar in the fact that, I am just like any other kid going to school, going to classes, learning. I am involved in activities like most of the kids. But I'm different because I come from a completely different background than most; I'm different from the white American, from their background I think it's harder for foreign kids to go into school and be accepted by other children, because we are from a different background, our parents have different views, and they have brought us up differently. We tend to be more conservative, and we are not allowed to do many things that they are allowed to do.

It was a pleasure interviewing her because she was so eloquent and candid with her responses. Even if asked a question that caught her off guard, she seemed to have the maturity to reflect on it momentarily and give a thoughtful answer.

Rohit

Rohit is a 17-year-old young man attending grade 11. He has an older brother who is away in college. His father is a faculty member at the university. His mother is a graphic designer. Rohit is a shy person, which is reflected in his short 45-minute interview session.

The interview took place in his home, where we sat comfortably in the living room. Before we started the interview, there was no one else in the house. Halfway through the interview his mother came home from work. I stopped taping for a few minutes and exchanged pleasantries, since she is, like all Asian Indian families in town, a personal friend. After she went upstairs, we continued with the interview.

Rohit stressed the importance of hard work in being successful. He also gave the credit of his good study and work habits to his parents who have always said “to do it our best, or not to do it at all.” He stated that the schools in this town focus more on the larger minority groups such as African Americans and Hispanic Americans, but do not do so with the Asian Indian American students because there are only six to seven students in the high school. In this particular high school, usually there are no more than a handful of Asian Indian American students. The statistics are similar in the two middle schools as well.

Rohit informed me that he believed that Asian Indians are recent immigrants, and do not have a long history in the United States. He is not aware of the history of Asian Indian immigration into this country, so he did not think that Asian Indians had a long tradition in this country. He said that unlike the African Americans, and Hispanic Americans, Asian Indians did not have violent struggle that marked their entry into this country. They just came with the dreams of a better future. Therefore, this minority is not worth including in the history books of this country. But when I informed him that the first Asian Indians came to this country in the 1890s, with the Chinese and the Japanese, helped with the building of the railroads, and moved to Canada to become farmers, he acknowledged that knowing these facts in history classes would

make a difference for both the Asian Indian American students, and the other students in the school. Even though Rohit was shy, he gave thoughtful and independent answers.

Anjali

Anjali is a 16-year-old female student who has lived in this university town for six years and is in the 12th grade. To my knowledge, she has skipped at least one grade in her early grade school years. She lives with her parents and her two younger siblings, one female and one male. Her father is a professor at the university and her mother is a laboratory technologist at the university.

I interviewed her in her home one late afternoon. The family had recently moved to their new custom-built house, and the whole family took turns showing me their rooms. It is a beautiful home with large windows through which we watched the sun set. We finally settled down to conduct the interview in their study, which was just off the main foyer. Anjali told me that the family does actually use this room to do serious studying and this is her favorite room in the house, after her own bedroom.

Even though she is only 16, her answers were very mature and thoughtful. She wanted to major in bio-medical engineering and Japanese. I asked her, “How do you define success?” She replied, “You are successful as long as you’re happy with what you’re doing.” She also noted that she is a good student because she genuinely “enjoys” studying and that her friends think that is “strange.” When asked to compare herself to a mainstream American student, she stated that she did not believe that all white Americans are mainstream. She said that the popular kids

surely could not be mainstream because there are not enough of them. Then there are the other kids, but nobody talks about them or notices them, so they cannot be mainstream.

She also acknowledged that not all Asian Indian American students are the same. She often has trouble relating to Indian kids her age. *I'm somewhat strange, a little bit different from all, I think, many kids, like not only just mainstream Americans but also the Indian kids. There's Indian parties and whatever, but when I go there I always bring books and whatever because I just don't get along very well with the mainstream Indian kids, anyone my age or like a little bit older or a little bit younger, I just don't get along with them for some reason.*

As with many of the young participants, I was once again faced with the fact that even within the students in Asian Indian American community in this town, there was a range of characters. Some of them were very outgoing; some were more reticent. Some of them were more Indian than the others.

Surya

Surya is a 15-year-old young man promoted to the 10th grade. He lives with his parents, a younger brother in middle school, and a younger sister in fifth grade. His family has lived in this university town for 12 years. His father is a faculty member at the university and his mother is a schoolteacher. Surya is a soft-spoken young man. However, I was surprised at his detailed, yet candid answers. He was casually dressed in shorts and a t-shirt. He had sharp facial features and wore a pair of glasses perched on the bridge of his nose. He kept pushing his glasses back up his nose as he became more and more animated in his answers. Once he was able to overcome the awkwardness of the taped interview, he was a fascinating young man to interview.

When asked if he considers himself a good student, he answered that *I consider myself a good student*, and his biggest achievement was when he had attended a summer enrichment program in Stanford University and scored well on his own initiative. He does not relate good grades to success in life—“Cuz Hitler had great grades, but cannot necessarily be considered to have success in life.” He also believes that his parents’ idea of success in life is different from his —“I want to be president of the United States—but my parents, like many other Indians, want their son to be a doctor, - - - If you’re a doctor and you don’t enjoy it, but you get the money, that’s not a success, because you’re not enjoying it.”

He was very perceptive of the stereotypes that prevail in schools towards Asian Indian American students. He told me that after 9/11, the skin color of Indians became visible; “people often mistook us for middle-eastern people.” According to him, the white parents of the students in schools propagate many of the stereotypes. He says that while he was in Stanford, he met many young Asian Indian Americans like himself, who did “puja” and were just happy being themselves. Puja is the act of showing reverence to a god, a spirit, or another aspect of the divine through invocations, prayers, songs, and rituals. An essential part of puja for the Hindu devotee is making a spiritual connection with the divine. Most often that contact is facilitated through an object: an element of nature, a sculpture, a vessel, a painting, or a print. This incident made him realize that there is not much that he can do about being of Indian parentage, but be true to himself.

His most interesting comments were about the importance that mainstream students in high school place on religion. He said that it is really important because “it’s just mainly an identity thing, I’m Hindu” He also mentioned that one day when he was at the high school, he

was very surprised by a group of students and teachers praying around the flagpole—he questioned the legality of such a thing on public property. He said that textbooks and teachers also propagate the religious stereotypes. “The first sentence in my geography book was about Hinduism: “Hindus pray to cows. - - -and then they ask what caste I am. - - - You see, it’s mainly the teachers.” Therefore, he rests much of the responsibility of stereotypes being propagated on the textbooks, teachers, and many parents of mainstream students.

He realizes that there are stereotypes and misconceptions, but he does not always want to openly clarify issues. For example, he said, “I tell them part of what caste I am, I tell them we worship God, we worship cows. - - - but I don’t speak up, I don’t tell them on my own, I don’t take the initiative.” When asked to explain this statement he said that as a rule he does not like to bring undue attention to himself, so he does not speak up unless asked a question. He does not expect much to change in the schools and does not believe that it is his duty to make changes. What all this made me realize is that if he had spoken up, his comments could have made a difference in how students learn about Asian Indian people and their religions. His silence and incorrect information continue to propagate the stereotypes and racism. Yet at the same time, I knew that the time would come when he would be ready to speak up just like many other Asian Indian American young adults—realization is the first step to vocalization.

When our conversation circled back to academics, he mentioned that his family does not expect much from public schools. He said that in his family the children just go to school for good grades. They academically challenge themselves at home, under the guidance of their parents. I was not convinced that these were his thoughts; it seemed more like what his father would say. When I asked him if these were his ideas, he informed me that his entire family

believes so. We are close friends of his parents, and frustration with the school district and low expectations of school were a recurrent theme with the parents. His parents were known to challenge their children's teachers often.

Dev

Dev is the younger brother to Surya. I interviewed him in the summer after his 8th grade. I interviewed both brothers on the same day, but at different times in their basement recreation room. Dev is livelier of the two brothers. He always has this mischievous look on his face – his eyes twinkle and he has a quirky smile on his face. His mother reports that every morning he spends a lot of time getting ready. Most of that time is spent on grooming his hair. He puts gel in his hair and styles it so that the hair on the top of his forehead is slightly turned up. This seems to be the fashion among mainstream male teenagers today.

He believes that being a good student is being well rounded—being good in studies, sports, music, etc. He confesses that studying and good grades do not take a lot of effort on his part, and that he always waits until the last moment to finish his assignments. According to him, money only serves as a functional purpose and that you need it to support yourself and your family. His parents, he thinks, relate success in life to having a career where one can help humankind, for example a doctor. He is aware that he and his parents do not agree on many issues.

He believes that he is the same as his white American friends in that they all have the same school culture, but he and his brother are unique because their home culture is very Indian. Not only is their skin color different, but they have different religious practices. His American

friends make fun of the fact that Hindus worship cows. To him religion seems to be what separates the Asian Indians from the Americans. He believes that the teachers, who only emphasize the negative aspects of a country, often propagate many of the stereotypes about various countries around the world.

Ganga

Ganga has lived in this Midwest town for 17 of her 18 years of her life. She and my older daughter have been friends since childhood. She is a striking young woman and I had been looking forward to interviewing her. She has always expressed her views on various issues with great clarity. She is always well groomed and her light caramel colored skin seems to glow. Ganga is a very pleasant and polite person, and has beautiful, expressive eyes. She had also been going through some social adjustment issues, and I wanted to hear her perspective on life as an Asian Indian American student. I interviewed her in her home during the early afternoon when the rest of her family was either at work, or at school. She is at home during the afternoons because she has finished all of her high school course requirements except for the required English and mathematics, which are taught in the morning. She is also enrolled in college courses that occupy her mornings as well. We settled down at the dining room table and our conversations flowed easily.

She has two younger brothers: a 13-year old who is in 7th grade, the other is six and attends kindergarten. Her father is a faculty member at the university and her mother is a research scientist at the university. When discussing her self-identity she emphasized that she always identified herself as an American. From what she later elaborated on, it becomes clear

that she really identified herself as a White American. “I fit in with friends that are from here because I was born here and I feel like, up until first grade, whenever I drew pictures of myself I’d always use the peach colored crayon. Like for some reason I never acknowledged that I was Indian.” She noted that she has more white friends than Indian friends. She also feels obligated to socialize with Indian friends because her parents are friends with other Indian student parents. She says that in seventh grade (middle school) she realized that she was not White! She realized, *to be popular, you had to be White and blond, and that boys also wanted the White girls.* In ninth grade, she rebelled against this ideology in her own way by trying to break out of the mold of an Asian Indian student. She argued with her teachers, and even managed to earn a B in her English class. She also went through the phase of spending a lot of money on name-brand clothing with the hope of blending in with her white peers,

I can remember looking back at pictures from being at friends houses, how we’d take, like, pictures and I would be the only one who wasn’t White or I would be the only one who’s face wouldn’t show up clearly in the picture because of the dark background and like, it really started to bother me, I just thought I could disguise myself if I was wearing clothes that I guess that my friends wore.

Even though she is much more comfortable with her identity as an Asian Indian, she still believes “if I was given a choice, I’d rather be white.” According to her, she wants to be a white person to be accepted by mainstream society and her peers, and to escape the scrutiny by the Asian Indian community who all want their kids to be overachievers and gifted. She has enjoyed the college classes that she has taken through her high school because the stereotypes about Asian Indian students are not as prevalent in college, and she has had an easier time blending in with other college students.

Vayu

Vayu is a senior who has finished all of his high school requirements except English and Math by his junior year, and attends school only in the mornings. I interviewed him at his home in the early afternoon. We made ourselves comfortable at one end of the dining table close to an electric outlet for my tape recorder. He was courteous and polite, and asked me if I would like something to drink.

He is a good-looking, quiet young man with sharp facial features and a well-trimmed beard. He has lived in this Midwestern town all his life and has a younger brother who is a sophomore in high school. His father is a professor at the university and his mother holds a staff position in one of the departments at the university. He has a polite smile and does not talk too much. However, he has always seemed quite observant to me. As he is reticent person, it took him a few minutes to forget about the microphone and my presence. However, he finally relaxed, and to my surprise, had thoughtful, intelligent answers. He also has a quiet sense of humor... he reminds me so much of my father. Like my father, he would crack jokes filled with irony. While I would laugh aloud, he, like my dad would only be smiling.

I asked him what he sees as the connection between good grades and success in life. He understands that good grades and being a good student in high school as being a stepping-stone to where he wants to go— to college. For him college is a *clean slate* of new opportunities where students get a fresh start at doing what they want to do. However, he seems more sympathetic to the caring of Asian Indian parents as compared to the other student participants. He says that the Indian parents in this town have more or less the *same economic status, same*

social status, they are all very successful people, have good educational backgrounds, and therefore they expect the same from their kids.

When asked about the stereotypes of Asian Indian American students in high school, he said that he is not sure if he can call it a stereotype, but rather a generalization. He knows that students and teachers at school think that Asian Indians, Chinese or all the people from Asia are smart. Yet, according to him, what they miss is that the Asian Indian parents in this town are *the smarter people* because they all have higher education, and are in high paying jobs. Therefore, their students have better abilities and opportunities. He realizes that this not a random sample of Asian Indians, as you could find in the subcontinent of India.

When asked about the responsibility of schools in a child's educational growth, he believes that all schools need to do is provide opportunities. *The school provides an opportunity for every single person to see how far you want to go and what you can do, but the average level they require just to get by is not very high.*

He told me that he did not see much use for discussing the presence of Asian Indians in this country because it is not as dramatic as the immigration history of other Asian Americans, and also because they are very recent immigrants. When I informed him that Asian Indians came to this country in the late 1800s, he was surprised, but still did not see much use for inclusion of this group in the history of this country.

Sushmita

Sushmita is one of the two middle school students I interviewed. She is a 12-year-old female who has lived in the town for nine years. She is a young woman with a shy smile and a

face that showed the early stages of puberty. She has just finished seventh grade and has been promoted to eighth grade. I interviewed her in her home. Because her mother is a friend of mine, I first had tea with her mother and grandmother. Her grandmother, who lives in another state with her son's family, often comes to visit them. Her grandmother speaks in Hindi, one of the Indian languages that I can understand, but cannot speak very well. We had a unique four-way conversation—the grandmother was speaking in her native language, Sushmita's mother was speaking in both the vernacular and English, Sushmita, and I were speaking in English. It was as if I had never left my own country. However, the adults dominated the conversation, and we almost forgot that Sushmita was in the conversation. In her quite manner, Sushmita yielded the conversation to the adults and patiently waited to be interviewed.

After exchanging pleasantries with the mother and grandmother, Sushmita and I exited for her room. Once we were settled in her room with the door closed, Sushmita underwent quite a transformation. She became quite eloquent and gave detailed answers. Like many of the other students, she relates success in life to being happy and being one's own person. She also relates success to being a good person and having good qualities. She is the child of a single parent and she and her mother are very close. She says that she and her mother have similar views about success in life because her mother has instilled her values in life in her.

When asked about her similarities to American mainstream student peers, and her uniqueness as an Asian Indian American, she states that *in an Asian household it is more important to get good grades than it is in American households*. She has always been aware that she is of Indian heritage, but she has not felt singled out because of her heritage. According to her, one of the major stereotypes about Asian Indian Americans is that they are over achievers.

However, she has been able to avoid being stereotyped because she is good at making and keeping friends, mainly mainstream white friends. She is a member of student council and participates in different clubs. For her, this is what helps her in assimilating and connecting with mainstream students. She continued to explain why it is easier for her to make friends than some of the other Asian Indian American students. She does not boast about her aptitude or intelligence. For example, when someone asks her what classes she is taking she does not show-off: *I don't say, algebra, I say math. I'll never like put someone down just because they're at a lower level than me or anything, so that's what, I think, makes me a good friend because some all my friends are at different levels.*

The concept of religion and the school's role in religion was discussed and she said schools should be more aware of the needs of different religions. For example, some students need to pray during the day. Because her family does not practice organized religion, she does not have to face that much religious pressure at home. Nevertheless, she would like her peers to stop pitying her because she does not celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas. She has other holidays that she prefers to celebrate.

Sohan

Sohan is an 18-year-old young man who has a seven-year-old brother who is in 2nd grade. Sohan himself is a 12th grade student. I interviewed him in his home. His parents were quite reluctant at first to give us some privacy. They were more protective of their son and possibly not quite comfortable with what their son might reveal to me. Finally, I was able to help them

understand that the interview would not be very useful if he could not speak his mind. They then left us in the formal living room and went downstairs to watch TV in the family room.

Sohan was a very soft-spoken individual, and at times, it was difficult to hear and transcribe his words -- so difficult that there are some blank spaces in his interview transcription notes. He defined himself as *an average seventeen year old who is lazy, but tries to work hard*. He is a very interesting character and used unique examples to illustrate his ideas. When asked about the relationship between good grades and being a good student, he said that it is a big part, but it is not always a part of it. *Bill Gates dropped out of Harvard, for example. The Stanford guys were terrible, the Google guys were terrible in school, but they still turned out okay*. He had a unique way of explaining what success in life meant to him—*there's an old transcendentalist writer; I don't remember his name. However, in his essay, "Walden" he wrote that the masses live life's quiet desperation. I don't want to be that. I consider success being different in your own way; you don't have to stand out, but being different*. He was referring to Henry Thoreau's essay "Walden" where he writes, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them." In addition, Sohan did not want to leave life with any unfulfilled dreams. He was a well-read and thoughtful young man.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a context for this study by describing the university town in which the participants live in detail. Asian Indian American students are the focus of this dissertation, so I have described each of them separately in this chapter. In addition, I have provided demographic information about the participants.

In interviewing the student participants I realized that they were all remarkable young people, who were trying hard to define and retain their self-identity against the power force fields of the mainstream American culture and their parents Asian Indian culture. Sunaina and Ganga were the talkative two who were very candid with their answers. Ganga let me know that if she were given a choice, she would like to be “blond and white.” Rohit and Sohan were the quiet ones. However, Sohan did not want to die life’s quiet desperation. The brothers, Surya and Dev, imitating the ideas of their parents, do not have much faith in the school system. Finally there are Vayu and Sushmita who are quite self-effacing and do not believe that Asian Indian American history does not necessarily need to be included in the history curriculum. This rich description of the student participants helps the reader to visualize these young students.

CHAPTER 5 - Data Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the research findings of the educational experiences and the academic achievements of Asian Indian students in the middle and high school district in a mid-western college town. Three primary themes emerged from the research, which led to several sub-themes during coding and data analysis. In this discussion of themes and sub-themes, I have included direct narrations by the participants in an attempt to capture the true essence and richness of data.

This chapter presents the findings (in the form of themes) from data analyses, which are based on the following research questions:

1. Are Asian Indian American students considered “academically successful” by the Asian Indian parents, by the school district, and by the Asian Indian American students themselves?
2. What are the experiences, through interactions with peers, teachers, administrators, and the curriculum, that Asian Indian American students have in the American school system?

Three major themes evolved from these research data: a) concept of self-identity, b) concept of academic success and success in life, c) the role and responsibility of the schools in nurturing the students’ self-identity and academic success. The first theme, self-identity, is

mainly discussed from the point-of-view of the student participants. The second and the third major themes are discussed from the perspective mainly of the students participating in the research study, but the perspective of their parents and their core curriculum teachers are also discussed. At the conclusion of this chapter, a summary of the analyzed data is given.

Concept of Self Identity

Self-identity took on many forms of characterization for the participants. They expressed that being Asian Indian and trying to *fit into* mainstream America at the same time was perhaps the most difficult aspect to understand. I found Ganga to be the most interesting. But I was also distressed with her wanting to be *white*, yet knowing that her skin color would not allow her that opportunity. Her reasons for wanting to be *white* were that the White majority community would better accept her, and that she would not be judged by the Asian Indian minority community as an *overachiever*. She strongly stated that she did not distinguish herself as Indian

Up until first grade, whenever I drew pictures of myself I would always use the peach colored crayon.... for some reason I never acknowledged that, I was Indian. Just never did, I never felt as if I was Indian. I did not have any ties back to India, my mom did not influence religion, or that I had to dress in Indian clothes, or.... I mean I just felt like outside of home I was just like them.

She has always had more White friends than Indian friends. She does not believe in being friends with other Asian Indian American (AIA) peers because their Indian mothers are friends. Just because a student her age is Asian Indian by birth and the parents are friends of other Asian Indian families does not mean that there is a common ground for friendship. In sixth and seventh grades, she started noticing that her differences to mainstream peers were more prominent than her similarities with them. For example:

In seventh grade, the popular thing was to be White and blonde-haired person, if you were anything else, you just were not attractive or you just weren't popular. In order to be considered an attractive person you had to be White and blonde. There are always exceptions there were a few times when I was made to feel other ways or when people gave me compliments , "you have pretty skin, but still it's like I have this image instilled in my head ...what most white people like is white and blonde.

She explained that she did quite a few other things to show that she was not just like all Indian kids; that she related more with the American students she saw around her. For example, she rebelled against her parents, her grades began to decline, she started wearing name brand clothes and going to the mall during weekday evenings. She believed that this would make people think that she was *more* American than Asian Indian and they would forget that her skin color was brown.

People would start noticing my clothes more and not my skin color, or what I looked like, because I can remember feeling so good when a student would give me compliments like, "oh, you have such a cute outfit," or "I never see you wear the same thing twice," or "you accessorize great" (laugh). I was drawing attention away from the fact that I wasn't White. I can remember looking back at pictures of how I would be the only one who wasn't White or I would be the only one who's face wouldn't show up clearly in the picture ..., it really started to bother me.... yeah, I just thought I could disguise myself ...by wearing clothes that...um...I guess that my friends wore.

This young adolescent has dealt with her own personal identity crises on many levels. As an Asian Indian, her burden has caused her to doubt who she is -- an Indian or an American, and, have self-doubt and self-acceptance issues trying to fit into mainstream America. How does one fit into mainstream America with self-doubt and self-acceptance? She did not acknowledge her Indianness until middle school and never felt comfortable with it. This is best illustrated in her poignant declaration—

If I were given a choice, I'd rather be White. Which is sad to say, but, it's the truth, I still think that even now, if I had a choice I would... I would rather be White for the social aspect mainly. I feel like I would be much more accepted.... I feel like I wouldn't be judged all the time.

When she talks about being judged, she is not only thinking about being judged by the majority White population, but also by the close knit Indian community in her town. Ganga states that she has noticed that students who are very religious and whose parents are traditionally Indian are not able to fit into the American culture. However, AIA students who do assimilate into the mainstream American student crowd are the ones who do not participate much in Indian social gatherings. According to her, an Asian Indian American student can be either Asian Indian or American. She did not feel she fits the American image – *white and blonde*, an image that is acceptable by mainstream America on one hand, yet unacceptable on the other hand among the Asian Indian community.

Surya believes he is like most mainstream American students in high school because they all have the same ideology-- *We're all teens, we all believe we have to risk things, we have to take risks, if we don't take risks, we don't learn anything*. However, Surya also acknowledges that outside of school, Asian Indians are unique because they do not take many risks. They are more attuned to what their parents want and not what they want.

He noted at times that Asian Indians are more ostracized by some mainstream American students because of their cultural traditions. He also believes that in high school, students' ideas reflect the ideas of their parents—

If your parents think that one ethnic group that is causing all the trouble in American society, you're going to think that too. Actually, my parents are Democrat and I'm Democrat too, cuz I know what they think and I agree with that. These children (white children) come in with the belief that their parents are

right and that this ethnic group is causing trouble and we shouldn't quite assimilate with them, we shouldn't quite bring them into the main stream.

Therefore, according to him, the ideas that students have about different cultures and races are often a reflection of ideas discussed at home. He remembers that in middle school there was an Indian student who wore a turban on his head because he was a Sikh. Finally, he decided not to wear his turban and cut his hair to be able to blend in better— *you'll notice that immediately after 9/11 and still today, brown skin peopled, in particular South-Asian, Middle Eastern, we look almost exactly the same, but we take a lot more bad rap- - -*.

I was stunned with the realization that this is a powerful commentary by this young man on the racial scenario of the United States. All Asian Indians are visible minorities in this country; however, a Sikh Punjabi with a turban on his head stands out even more. A middle school student who wore a turban would be more susceptible to being ostracized. It also brings into focus the aftermath of 9/11/2001, when some Sikh Punjabis were harassed in parts of the United States and one man was shot and killed because the shooter mistook him for a middle easterner (Hanania, 2008). This example has special significance to me because my husband shaved off his 20-year-old beard the day after 9/11 because with his beard he was often mistaken for a Muslim, an Arabic, or Urdu speaker. My husband just did not want to be the next fatal case of mistaken identity. Surya's comment made me realize how pervasive and critical it is for AI persons to be accepted and integrated.

Surya seems to have given this idea of self-identity (*who I am*) a lot of thought. He said that like most Asian Indian American students, he tried to fit in with the majority population of middle and high school, but he finally gave up—

In 7th grade I stopped wearing socks with my shoes...I'd wear socks and they'd always be up to mid-calf level on me and no one wears those, no one really likes that. I'd start wearing socks in and stuff them into my shoes ... I'd kind of emit that athletic perception which is *really* big amongst Caucasians and African-Americans, so I tried doing that but I just gave up on that.

Surya is here trying to explain to me how in middle school, he tried to blend in with the White majority by going through all the little rituals that he believed would make him be accepted. Because sports are so important in mainstream American culture, looking more *athletic* was one little way he was trying to be like the others. Thus, he must have realized soon that it did not really help. As his conversation progressed, he began to identify more with the Chinese students in school who are also seen as “intelligent, Asian students,” and less involved in trying to fit in with mainstream Americans. He said there is a point at which other Indians and Chinese will give up.

These, these Americans, they . . . we will never be the same. We will never be the same. We will always have a different culture and we will always have a different skin. We should just keep our culture and we should try... just revert to our Indian self or Chinese self. At the end of 8th grade, I felt... like I was part of the main stream. I had all the friends and everything.

It was at this point I realized that part of his self-identity is strongly tied to being a Hindu. He told me that religion is very important in high school. He remembers that one day in high school he had observed a group of mainly white students and some teachers praying. He had wondered about the legality of the act, but what had really *psyched* him out was that he was a Hindu, and all the Christians were praying. He did not know what his role should be at that moment. He had tried so hard to go through all the little rituals of mainstream American culture

in order to fit in, but at that point, he felt isolated. He could not in any way identify with their Christian practice.

He said that the first time he ever felt comfortable being Indian was when he went to Stanford to attend a Summer Institute. *I felt more comfortable being Indian, these guys, these students I met at Stanford, they were content with themselves. They knew they were cool. They knew Hinduism; it's an Eastern religion: it doesn't have one god; it has 30,000 gods ... At this point in which I decided, ah, forget it! I will never assimilate!* This was quite an epiphany for him!

Uniqueness and similarities were other ways the participants described their character of identities and *fitting in* with their mainstream peers. In trying to explain how she is unique and how she is similar to the mainstream American students, Anjali had some interesting ideas in defining mainstream and who is mainstreamed. She finds it hard to decide *who* is mainstream:

Well, I really don't know how to define mainstream, 'cause it really depends on who you want to define as mainstream. The popular kids are mainstreamed but then again there are not very many of them. In addition, that would leave the kids that nobody ever talks about or notices in lunch would be mainstream but then, then again nobody ever talks about them or notices them. So I really don't know exactly who to compare against.

She further explains that popular students are *usually the ones who always have boyfriends, are always wearing expensive clothes, or designer clothes, or they wear Aeropostale or whatever it is, "mall clothes."* *They're always wearing make-up and caring about how they look or they talk about boys in class when they really shouldn't be talking about them and things, I guess that would be popular kids.* She continues to explain that there are the other "White kids" who are not popular. *They're somewhat quiet and in the background. I really don't think*

I'm with mainstream kids as much.... In her mind, she did not fit in with the popular kids at school; neither did she fit in with the other White kids. The most amazing aspect of Anjali's identity is that she did not identify with the Asian Indian students of her age in her school either. She knows that she does not fit into *that crowd* and that is perfectly fine not doing so. She was very sure of her identity but it was neither an American nor an Asian Indian identity.

Sohan sees many similarities between him and the mainstream students. He believes all the students share the same school culture — *We're similar with the kinds of clothes we wear and stuff....we have the same jokes and stuff, we laugh at the same things.* He thinks that he does not have to try “extra” hard to fit in with the other students because he does all the things they do because he lives in America and it comes naturally to him.

At the same time, he thinks that he and the other Asian Indian students and parents are unique in that they focus more on academics, while mainstream students and their families focus more on sports. To him being Indian means his brown skin color and his different religion. He stated that *sometimes his friends make fun of him because he is a Hindu and worships cows.* At times he realizes, however, no matter how much he tries to play the “game” by mainstream rules, he is separated from them by his culture, his ethnic heritage and his religious beliefs.

Each participant took different routes in explaining how his/ her identity is unique, alike and similar to their mainstream American peers, nevertheless each one of them still struggles in giving voice to his/ her identity. Rohit believes that he is more similar to mainstream American students than he is unique. For example, like mainstream American students, he likes *American sports mostly.* It is because he ‘grew up in America, and likes to do the same things, such as “American” sports. He thought that he did not really have to *try* to fit in among the mainstream

American students because he was an Indian. *I think I've always been able to fit in, just by being myself. I don't have to act like a white American to have friends.*

Concept of Academic Success and Success in Life

Success is to be measured not as much by the position one has reached in life....by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed ~
Booker T. Washington

The AIA students did not relate academic success to good grades as such. Some of them acknowledged that good grades are in some ways a manifestation of academic achievement, but it was not all. Some of them see good grades, academic success, and success in life as a continuum, one leading to the other. The students' definitions of what is success in life are also very interesting.

Sunaina relates academic and success in life to happiness and passion. She does not relate it to good grades or high IQ. She says,

I think success in life is being happy with what you do, I think it's being happy with the class or what ever you are planning, -----One doesn't have to be a doctor or a lawyer, and be a real life Bill Gates, a real life businessman who makes a lot of money. I think success in life is like doing what you want to do, and you're happy going into that [] you know just something that makes you really happy [] you can be an amazing dancer, go out there, and make good money. If you're good enough, you're going to be successful. What I think is that if you find something that you are passionate about, it doesn't matter if you are a straight A student or have high IQ , you can always be the best in your own thing.....it's not just academics, it more related to passion, and more about loving what you do, and being good at it.

She says that she feels pressured by her parents to become a doctor or a lawyer. They want her to be completely focused on academics and she does not agree with them:

As far as things I like to do outside of academics, they don't support me. I have to fight my way through our arguments because I want to be involved in dancing and music in college as well. It's not something I want as a future career; it's just a hobby that I would like to stick with for the rest of my life. There are many disagreements on that. For them success is like becoming a doctor or a lawyer.

Sushmita defines success in life as being *happy, being your own person, and, just being a hard worker*. She told me that her mother always encourages her and that her mom's definition of success in life is very similar to her own:

She's always encouraged what I wanted to do, in that I've always wanted to be a doctor and she says "well, uh, that's a, like, pretty high goal you need to set for yourself, and to achieve it you need to be good in school, and you need to work hard in certain subjects.

Rohit thinks the relation between good grades, academic success, and success in life is that success is not related to grades as it is to how hard one works. *I believe hard work is more important than just intelligence in a sense. For example, in harder classes, when you try harder and get a decent grade, it's usually more significant than just taking easier classes and doing well in them.*

He agrees that it is always nice to have money, but he would not base his life on that idea. He believes that when *I've everything I need to know to do something I love to do. To have a job that I worked hard to get and its something I like to do rather than just being able to do it.* He also believes that his parents' definition of academic success and success in life would be very similar to his own ideas.

Like many of the other AIA students, Ganga believes that *to be successful in life, education has nothing to do with it. To be successful in life, we just need to be happy and peaceful, at peace with ourselves.* However, she does acknowledge that it becomes related to

education if *you define success as having money and fame, being good in studies will get you to medical school, in which you will earn lots of money.* She has a hard time understanding the purpose of grades because she believes it makes students lose focus on what is really important—acquiring and retaining knowledge.

I don't understand grades. I don't understand why schools have to give grades. Why schools are made to give grades—because the focus, at least the focus for me was not to increase my knowledge. I totally lost focus of why I going to school. We go to school because we want to increase our knowledge and retain it. A lot of this drive to get good grades comes from my parents, the need to please them. I have always felt this need to please them and for them to feel that I have achieved great things. I always needed to get their approval.

As we talked about the subject of grades, academic success, and monetary success in life, Ganga remembered a school project that she had to do:

One time as a school project, I had to do a job search assignment. They had options such as prima ballerina, pro-wrestler, or physician, all sorts of things where you would make lots of money, good paying jobs. So you are given the impression that you stay in school, you get good grades; you will get good paying jobs. Therefore, it is implied that good grades is related to success in life, which is related to money.

Anjali had an interesting way of connecting getting good grades, academic achievement, and success in life. To her getting good grades means *more perseverance and determination.* She thinks that *if you're willing to work hard enough, then you'll get the grade.* To her it is the same with life where if you work hard to reach your goal you will be successful. She defines success in life as being the state in which *you're happy with what you're doing.*

She loves reading, and as she reads, she learns that the characters that make lots of money are never happy:

They're always trying to make even more money, for some reason they're never happy. However, the people who are happy they usually don't have that much money, they just have what they want or what they love and so they don't need to work harder for something that they don't need. Therefore, I guess that's why I admire them.

She wants to study bio-medical engineering and Japanese in college, and her parents are not sure why she wants to minor in Japanese. They understand bio-medical engineering as a career, but she wants to learn Japanese because she is interested in anime, and it makes her happy.

Surya is a very interesting character, and gave me some unique examples connecting academic success, good grades and success in life. He said *hard work can lead to good grades, but good grades don't necessarily mean you're going to have success in life. Because Hitler had great grades but he wasn't necessarily considered to have success in life!*

He says that the key component to one's success is motivation— *motivation is always success*. To him success in life means achieving a goal that one has set for himself/ herself, whatever it may be. However, to his parents, he believes, success is very hard work and becoming a doctor. For his parents becoming a doctor is the ultimate achievement.

Sohan was another student who gave me some interesting examples to illustrate his point about academic success, good grades, and success in life:

Bill Gates dropped out of Harvard, for example. The Stanford guys were terrible, the Google guys were terrible in school, but they still turned out O.K. But, for most people it's very important to do well in school.

When I asked him, "When would you consider yourself successful in life?" He replied, *I have my own unique way of being successful*. He continued his conversation about the transcendentalist writer, Thoreau who said *most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the*

grave with the song still in them. He did not want to be one of those men. He wanted his own brand of success, *something that's me.* He goes on to say that, many people think that success in life is related to money, but it is connected to happiness.

According to Vayu, success in life has *nothing to do with grades or any, ranking system, rating, or, anything with numbers and facts.* It is not a standard that society puts on us.

Success is when someone achieves or accomplishes a status, standard, or aspiration that they have for themselves. That they've set only for themselves by themselves...it's purely personal, and just whatever you want for yourself, because success breeds satisfaction, but satisfaction also breeds success. Therefore, people decide what satisfies them, or how they're happy, and if they can reach that then they'll feel like it's, like it's a success.

He thinks that money is good, but it is not everything. Happiness is the most important thing. He believes that his parents' definition of success in life will be very similar to his, even though they are usually more concerned with grades. To him high school is not significant; it is only *a stepping-stone to college.*

Dev related good grades, academic success, and success in life as being on a continuum. *Good grades and getting through college, having a good job, so you can support your family and stuff, all are related together.* In addition, according to him, money is only *functional.* *It's not as if it's essential in the sense that success is only defined by money, but you need it because otherwise you cannot support yourself. At least you need to do that.* His parents define these terms in a slightly different manner. To them academic success and success in life is *doing volunteer work. Of course getting straight As. Definitely getting to a college. Getting a good job, that helps humankind, like a doctor. Um, they think that's successful.* His parents wanted Sohan to be an oncologist because doctors have "stability."

Parents

Most of the parents think that their definition of academic achievement is very similar to the definition given by their children. In reality, only some parents' definitions are closer to their children's than others. Some of the parents defined and related academic achievement and success in life in a very narrow sense, good grades lead to high paying stable jobs or careers. Whereas some of them related good grades to happiness and hard work, like most of the AIA students. Thus, I have organized the parents' views from very narrow to broad (which are closer to the students' views).

Sushila gives a very narrow definition of academic achievement. She says that *this is a very subjective definition. In my opinion getting the information and use all the potentials to get the good job.* She relates it only to getting a good job. However, she goes on to modify her answer and says that

To some extent, there is good correlation between academic achievement and success. Having good academic achievements leads you towards better job opportunities--but not necessarily success in the life. One needs lot more for the success in the life than mere getting the job.

She says that since living in the United States, her concept of academic achievement and its relation to success has changed a lot: *being motivated, sincere efforts and self-confidence plays major role in the success of life than academic achievement.* She says that as long as her children are in middle and high school, there will be a difference between their opinions of academic achievement, but *at the college level with the increased maturity, their definition should mean the same as in my thinking.*

Punya's answers were quite brief and to the point. He directly relates academic achievement to a career and says that it is *important for preparing for job career*. "*Academic achievements are important for job career but not essential for success in life*."

Since living in the United States, my concept of academic achievement and its relation to success of life has changed. In my opinion, the motivation, efforts, belief in yourself and willingness to pay the price for career and personal achievements play a key role for success in life rather than academic achievements.

Lalita understands academic achievement as a concept in which students, parents and teachers have an ownership. She believes *academic achievement is when student, parent, and teacher all feel satisfied*.

Student should feel that he/she is achieving success in every positive aspect of life. Parent should feel that their children are going to be successful and happy in what they do. Teacher should feel that they have taught to the best of their knowledge.

She said that her concept of academic success has changed since she has been raising her two children in this country—

Yes. In India, parents expect their children to be doctors and engineers only, but here I learned that US is a country full of opportunities. Anybody can be successful with the hard work and determination...When my daughter gets all A grades she thinks she is achieving the goal. In my opinion, there are other aspects of life that they need to learn along with just getting good grades.

Lalita believes that *academic achievement is the base of success*. *That if students learn most important values of their life during their academic period, they are going to be successful and happy in what they do*.

Narendra defines academic achievement as a *stage where one could be placed into a vocation that is compatible with one's personality. This not only implies that one has to earn a decent living to support one's family but also that one is placed in an activity that uses one's innate and natural skills. A life-long habit of learning is cultivated and a sense of responsibility dominates every undertaking in life. Common sense and rational thinking dominate blind faith and crystallized dogma.*

He had been a hands-on parent until his three children began middle school. He and his wife would spend one to two hours every weeknight helping their children with their homework and doing extra academic work using outside books and other sources of information. He also sees a positive correlation between academic achievement and success in life: *True academic achievement leads to success in life. This positive correlation is far from true at present, because of graduates landing in incompatible vocations.* He says that his views on this subject have changed quite a bit since living in this country:

Life in the US is relatively free of the glamour that we suffered in India during school years – glamour of becoming either a medical doctor or an engineer. The socioeconomic prestige associated with these two professions was so excessive in India that academic achievement and success in life were exclusively tied to becoming a doctor or an engineer. I have seen so many people in this country choosing neither of these two professions, becoming good at what they do, and prospering (financially) along the way.

Harshit defines academic achievement in a traditional way as *mastering the material to which you are exposed. As a high school/college graduate, you should be well versed in what you have learned. The educational system should also instill a desire for life-long learning, something that the American system does better than the Indian system.*

He does not focus all that much on grades—*Grades are not that important. "I have always told my children that as long as you honestly put in your best effort, I don't care about grades. This view is carried over in non-academic areas as well.* He is a hands-on kind of dad who spends quite a bit of time with his two sons-- I spent quite a bit of time with my older son, but perhaps not as much with my younger one. *A primary reason for this is the difference in their personalities. Of course, as they progressed through the grades, my direct interaction decreased. However, I have always remained very interested in how they were/are doing in school.*

He strongly believes that academic achievement and success in life *are highly positively correlated. Sure, there are exceptions, but academic achievement increases the odds of success in life tremendously.* His definitions of academic success and success in life have not changed because he has been raising two children in this country since their birth. His parents during his young years also highly focused on academic success

Academic achievement was always stressed in my family. My parents have sacrificed a lot, both financially and in their social lives, to ensure my education. I have been fortunate to be in a country where the level of parental sacrifice necessary is not quite that drastic.

He believes that this emphasis on academic achievement that he has inherited from his parents is something that he and his wife have been able to pass on to their sons.

According to Gopal, “at the school level, acquiring sound fundamental skills in language, music, math, science, and humanities. At the graduate school and beyond, ability to learn, enjoy, and contribute to a particular area of one’s choice in any discipline.”

Joyita defines academic achievement as being *able to apply the knowledge you acquired and be able to make a positive difference in the society*. She seems to be a romantic and an idealist. She does not spend as much physical time with her sons, helping them with their education; but she gives *200% of motivation and moral support!* She places a lot of value on enjoyment and passion to academic success and success in life. To me this seems very different from what most first generation Asian Indian immigrants believe:

I really believe, you have to be able to understand and more importantly enjoy what you are learning to be persistent and stay motivated. That joy in turn brings passion. That motivation and persistence is what brings you success.

She says that her concept of academic achievement and success in life has dramatically changed since moving to the United States:

Absolutely, before I came to the United States I thought getting good grades was the key to being successful. Now, I realize that you have to be able to enjoy what you are learning to be able to stay motivated.

Nilesh gives a more holistic definition of academic achievement. He seems to acknowledge the importance of a well-rounded life, which includes academics as well as extra-curricular activities:

Doing the best for the given level of ability while balancing the time to enjoy and participate in other non-academic enrichment activities. Grades are usually an indicator of achievement, but I am willing to accept lower grades for excellence in other activities.

This family seems to be more relaxed and gives a lot of weight to the sense of responsibility of their two sons. Their sons are responsible about their academics, and they do their work without being prompted by their parents:

Although we didn't spend too much time with them on a regular basis, we were aware of their progress. We have discussed their academic plans including classes they want to take, career options, and SAT/ACT exams. We have also suggested ways to improve their performance if there was such a need. An example of this is working with them for SAT/ACT preparation. We have expected them to perform well, but we have not pushed them too much.

Nilesh acknowledges that *there is definitely some relationship between academic achievement and success in life, but the correlation is not too strong. I feel that the probability of success is higher with higher academic achievement. On one hand, people with lower achievement can also be successful, but they will have to work much harder or be very creative. On the other hand, people with higher academic achievement can be a failure in life. This can be attributed to their unwilling to work hard, especially if they had achieved academic success without working too hard.* His answers seem to be very realistic and matter of fact. He lets me know that his relaxed attitude has only somewhat changed since he has settled in this country--

Even while in India, I didn't believe that academic success was the only way to succeed in life. I believed in total development and I continued to emphasize that to my children. This concept has been reinforced since living in the United States and with the growing of my children.

He believes that he has been successful in relaying this information to his sons through their family discussions or conversations:

I think their definition is more or less the same with some minor differences. One son feels that he doesn't need to be the best so long he can be the best in the areas that are of his interest. The other son feels that he wants to do his best in everything he does even if he doesn't like the subject matter. However, none of them is overdriven to achieve academic success.

As an educator, Ojaswi defines academic achievement in terms of student learning, teaching, and assessment: *Academic achievement is when a student is learning what the teacher is teaching and this is evident in the assessments and the grades.*

Ojaswi and her husband were very particular about their children's education. Her eldest son is in college now, and the other two are in high school. When her three children were in elementary school, she and her husband spent two hours a night helping with homework. Now that they are much older, the parents do not spend nearly as much time on the children's studies.

Ojaswi's answers often reflect the fact that she came to the United States with her parents at an early age, and was educated in this country's school system. According to her, academic achievement is only one ingredient in a successful life; however, it is not the only element to success.

One can be successful in life without receiving wonderful grades. If success is defined as getting a good paying job, then grades are extremely important. If success is defined as maintaining relationships then academic achievement helps little. It will keep one disciplined and focused but it may prevent a person to be open to others that may not be achievement oriented.

Ojaswi's perspective between India and United States in terms of academic achievement reveals that she was raised in this country. Even though she was educated in the United States, she still understands the emphasis placed on education. She parallels the two systems in how she values and appreciates both views.

In India it is necessary for students to strive to get the very best grades because of the population is so high and in order to even apply for a job you must have college education. In America, the competition for jobs is still high; however, if you are talented in other areas or have a good work ethic, you can still maintain a decent life style. Success in life in America is more broadly defined than in India. In India success is very materialistic and how financially well off you are. In America, success means how much you enjoy your job and your everyday life.

Gopal does not see much of a connection between academic success and success in life. He says that :

success in life, to him, means being nice and true to yourself and others. The word nice is a poor substitute for compassion, respect, etc. Academic achievement defines a particular intellectual activity. It will be useful if applied properly and it is good if it will help make you at peace with yourself. But it is no guarantee that one leads to the other. I have come across some academically more accomplished individuals with poor development as good human beings. In the same way, I have also come across individuals without significant academic accomplishment who have had a tremendous influence on me through their behavior as warm human beings.

So, to him a person can be successful in life as a human being, even if they are not academically successful.

Teachers

The core-curriculum teachers' definitions of academic achievement does include grades, but goes beyond to the concepts of mastering the curriculum, applying the knowledge gained, etc.

Mrs. Pollen, an English teacher at the high school, defines academic achievement in terms of grades: *Academic achievement is success in scholastic endeavors. This success is normally defined through grades. In this instance, it would constitute an A/B average.* Her experience with Asian Indian American students has been very positive. She believes that they place a very high priority on academic success, in other words, get As and Bs. She thinks Asian Indian parents place a *very high priority on academic success and feel it is related to life success.*

Mrs. Gunn defines academic achievement as *progress in learning the curriculum.* That learning should be demonstrated in a variety of ways: *verbal and written; by application in projects; and in both individual and group situations.* Her definition is traditional, yet comprehensive. She does not consider academic achievement and success in life to have a *one-*

to-one correlation, but most students who do well in school do well in the working world. People who have set good habits for organizing and completing work in school generally continue those habits in the real world.

According to her, Asian Indian American (AIA) students that she has worked with *have high expectations of success in the classroom. She thinks that they define academic achievement as more closely connected to grades than I do, but in order to get the good grades, they generally learn the concepts I want them to learn. She also believes that the parents of most of these students define academic achievement as a combination of my definition and their children's.* They want their children to both learn the curriculum and get good grades. Many of the parents of Asian Indian American students that I have worked with want their children to go above and beyond the requirements of the class to do extra work or apply their knowledge in extra-curricular activities as National History Day or other contests.

Mr. Holland defines academic achievement very broadly and states that it is *highly dependent upon each individual. For him, demonstrating a firm knowledge of concepts and application of those concepts by any number of measures (grades, classroom projects, standardized test scores, criterion referenced exams, college admission exams) defines achievement. He also sees a strong positive correlation between academic achievement and success in life. Of course, I also believe that success in life is in the eyes of the beholder. Being able to contribute positively in the community is a large part of that.* He thinks that Asian Indian students define academic achievement in a very traditional manner:

For the most part, I feel as though these students typically define academic achievement through grades in course work and to some extent, exam scores. Since grades in most high school courses depend upon daily work and practice,

most Asian Indian students are diligent in completing practice.

He also believes that there is a *very strong relationship between the views of students and their parents. That is, I believe that the expectation of most parents is for their students to bring home "A's" in their course work.*

Mr. Jardine, on the other hand, does not define academic achievement in terms of grades at all. He teaches social studies and history at the high school. He believes that *real achievement comes when students have mastered the skills that are necessary to acquire new knowledge and to apply what has already been learned.* According to him, students who have acquired the *critical skills of evaluating, synthesizing, and applying knowledge* are prepared to deal with *changing trends in history, other academic pursuits, and the problem-solving situation of the "real world" of work:*

Scholarship in history has changed greatly over the years; an early emphasis on political and diplomatic history has been supplemented by cultural and intellectual history, and of late greater emphasis has been given to social and economic history. However, how historical knowledge is acquired, evaluated, synthesized, and applied has remained the same. Additionally, I believe academic achievement is measured by the willingness of students to take intellectual risks. My most successful students do not look to their textbooks for the same old answers; they look to their books for new questions.

He believes that Asian Indian American students (like most students) define academic achievement in terms of grades. Most of these students expect to attend the best universities and they are fully aware that an exceptional GPA is essential. *This focus on grades leads them to look at achievement in short bursts (one subject over a short marking period). In addition, many Asian Indian American students consider anything less than an 'A' as a personal failure.*

He thinks that parents of Asian Indian American students view academic achievement in

a more far-sighted manner. However, they also look at “As” as the only acceptable measure of academic performance. He says that during parent-teacher conferences, he has witnessed a great deal of disappointment and hand wringing because their children were less than two percentage points away from an A. It has been his experience that parents of Asian Indian American students place a great deal of pressure on their children, and this pressure often begins at an early age. *It is also my experience that achievement in math and science classes is viewed as more important than achievement in social studies or language art classes.*

Ms. Fulton, who teaches English at one of the middle schools, defines academic achievement in a very thoughtful and comprehensive manner. She writes,

Academic achievement is the ability to gain knowledge or skills that usually fit into understandable systems of prior knowledge. This achievement is usually defined by the teacher and measured by the teacher. Most often, we express academic achievement in the form of percentages or letter grades. In middle school, much of what is being measured through the letter grade is actually responsible behavior (handing in work on time, completed, honest attempts at understanding the content, etc.)

She believes that the connection between academic achievement and success in life exists only for the people who *aspire to a college or university; I believe academic achievement and the opportunity for success in life is closely tied.* She definitely believes that there are greater opportunities for those who can display academic achievement. On the other hand, she does believe that *there are other types of achievement that are not as closely tied to academics as defined in the public school or post-secondary education.* However, according to her the *common threads to success in either realm are internal motivation.*

She does believe that the definition of academic achievement varies from person to person, but for most AIA students and parents that she has worked with academic achievement is defined

as receiving the highest grade point average possible--letter grades.

The Role and Responsibility of the School District

One of the themes that emerged as this study progressed is extent to which the schools are responsible for the cultural awareness of all the students. I investigated this by interviewing the AIA students, surveying their parents and by asking questions to the core curriculum teachers. I was interested in finding out if the students and their parents were aware of their valuable history in the United States, if the school teachers were aware, and if they teach all the students about the early presence of this group of immigrants. I believe that knowing about Asian Indian immigration to the United States would make this small group of students feel more included in their schools.

Students

Sushmita acknowledged that she has learned a bit about Indian culture and history, for example the Indus Valley civilization, and some Indian holidays and festivals such as Deewali (the festival of lights) in her various social studies classes. However, she does not believe a lot of this culture/history/geography should be taught in the American classrooms because some of the Asian students might become too *self-conscious or sensitive*. Like the others, she was not aware of Asian Indian presence in this country since the late 1800s, but she still did not think it was a great idea to teach about this in the curriculum because some of the Asian Indian American students might not like this limelight. I believe, she was expressing her own views on this matter—she would rather blend in than have her *different* origins brought into focus.

When asked about the inclusion of Asian Indian culture in the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, Rohit said there were not many such activities in the schools in the area because *especially in a small town as this, there are only six or seven high school students. It is not a big culture in our school. They tend to focus on the larger cultures, like African American and Hispanic American cultures.*

However, he did not feel marginalized because he has always lived in America. When asked if his friends were aware of the history of Asian Indian immigration in this country, he replied that he had no clue how much they knew or wanted to know. When asked how his school curriculum reflected internationalism, he said that the emphasis is mainly on North America and Europe. It is the same in English, history and geography classes.

In the process of discussing this issue, what I learned was even more interesting. Not only was Rohit not aware of his fellow students' knowledge, he himself was not aware of the details of Asian Indian immigration. He believed that Asian Indians had started immigrating to this country only 30-40 years ago. When I told him that Asian Indians had first come to this country in the 1880s, along with the Chinese and the Japanese, he was astounded! At that moment, I realized that his parents had focused on his Indian heritage by telling him about India and its glory, but had not thought to educate him about the Asian Indian roots in this country. It could also be that his parents were not aware of AIA history in this country, just like I had been before I started my research work.

Like many of the other students and parents, Anjali did not think that the American education system was equipped to teach other cultures of the world. She did not think that it is a good idea for schools to teach about topics in which they are not experts:

But then again I really can't expect this country to teach too much about other cultures because that's the way foreign countries are. When I went to Cambridge this summer, they had a British cultural history class, because, of course, you're going to Cambridge, why would they teach about another country, they know the most about their own country...

She also dismisses the significance of teaching Asian Indian immigration to this country because she believes that Asian Indian culture has not had any major impact on America:

They talk about African-Americans because, of course, it was slaves first and then they helped a lot with the Civil Rights Movement. In addition, they talk about Gandhi of course, because he helped inspire Martin Luther King, but they don't really talk about, as if you've mentioned, those Indian populations that came because I don't think they did that much. I don't think the Asian Indians ever had, like, a major war with America, so there's no real point in talking about them, right?...

I am surprised at how easily she is ready to dismiss the significance and impact of Asian Indian culture on mainstream American culture. In her 10th grade literature class, she had read works by some Indian authors who write in English as her independent reading project. She had also read Kipling's *Jungle Book*. She did not feel the urge to research further the writing by other Indian writers. This token representation in the school curriculum seems to have satisfied her.

Dev responded that schools should treat all students the same regardless of their ethnic heritage. He believes that Hispanic and African Americans and their heritage deserve to get importance in the school systems because they made major contributions to the history of this

country. But, he also thinks that not everything can be taught in classes, and Asian Indian American contributions to the United States is not significant enough to deserve a place in the curriculum. This is very much in accord with his self-identification--

I define myself as an average seventeen year old who's lazy but tries to work hard. I work hard. I have some things that make me different, I just, I just stand out.

Vayu does not believe that the school has much of a responsibility to teach about Asian Indians, because there are only a handful of students of that origin in the school district. He believes that there needs to be much curricular inclusion of the Hispanic and African American studies, because of the larger numbers of students in the classes. Like many of the others, he does not differentiate between the Indians and Asian Indians in this country who have a history here since the 1880s. He mentions that he studied a bit about Gandhi, only in reference to Dr. Martin Luther King. He mentions that in history class the teachers discuss Ellis Island, but do not go into detail about the later immigrants. He, too, does not see the purpose of teaching Asian Indian immigration.

I don't see a reason, because Indians are not really getting away from any persecution, famine, or war. Anything bad. They all came here just to take more advantage of the opportunities, mainly for jobs, education, and, uh just to raise families. But they're not getting away from anything; they just want to do more with their own personal lives...

Like all the other students, Vayu did not have any awareness of the Asian Indian heritage in this country. In school, he had only learned about Gandhi and Gandhi is the only Indian whose contributions to American history are recognized. Even his parents had not made him

aware of his own history of Indians in this country, probably because they themselves were not aware of the historical facts about American and Indian history.

Like many of the others, Sohan did not have any knowledge of the long history of Asian Indian immigration in this country. He thought it was justified to study about the European immigrants because they had come in the 1700s. He knew that he had studied about the Chinese and the Japanese immigrants because they immigrated to the United States in the late 1800s and had a long history of living in the United States. Therefore, when I told him about the people from Punjab who had immigrated in the 1880s, he was very surprised. He then realized that Asian Indians had been on this continent for a significant period, and should be included in the curriculum.

When asked how the schools in the region are meeting the general cultural needs of the AIA students in the middle and high schools, Sunaina said that the schools do not necessarily expose other students to the Asian Indian culture. There are opportunities in school to take Spanish, French and sign language, but that is where it stops. She said that it would be great if students had a chance to learn a language such as Hindi. She recalls, in elementary school *we had guest speakers from other cultures, but they were mostly parents of students from that culture*. She also remembers doing a few presentations herself, one with my older daughter, where she had to bring some Asian Indian artifacts, clothes, etc., and talk about her culture. That is where the exposure ended. Other than these few instances, students are not afforded the available opportunities to be exposed to others from different cultures.

She believes that with the increase of Asian Indians in the current population and prominence of Asian Indian presence in this country, this group should be included in the regular

curriculum. She does not remember the Indian culture or Indian immigration ever being mentioned in textbooks. Students have read about the Spanish culture, and African American literature, but not about Asian Indians in this country.

She does acknowledge that at the classroom level, teachers have made an effort to make sure that the students of minority cultures feel included and not left out. The curriculum is not very inclusive. She said that in her classes there was almost no mention of South Asian culture, history, geography, or literature. It was mostly limited to guest speakers who were parents and students of South Asian origin. In addition, this sporadic exposure only happens when there is a student of South Asian origin in the classroom, but never as a continuous part of the curriculum for mainstream students.

Surya agrees with Sunaina in this matter. He is very skeptical about the role of the schools in increasing awareness of different cultures. Actually, he says that it is the textbooks and the teachers who propagate misinformation and stereotypes. He finds these behaviors or lack of sensitivity annoying:

The first sentence in my geography book was about Hinduism: 'Hindus pray to cows'. We're doing a religious study about all these religions; Hinduism – we pray to cows....There are many stereotypes, and the fire keeps burning because of the teachers. The teachers will show movies about Hinduism and Buddhism. First Hinduism, they'll show a real skinny yogi doing yoga and all these fantastic moves and stuff. It takes the seriousness out of it. They show snippets. The problem is that they don't go deep into it; they just touch the surface, where all the stereotypes begin.

He does not have high expectations of the school district understanding or being sensitive to his own cultural expectations or needs--

We don't expect much out of the public schools, quite frankly. We just go there for the education. We don't ask them to raise Indian flags when we want, or celebrate August 15th, we'll do that at home.

He has seen a lot of African American literature included in the English classes, and some Hispanic literature too, but he has not seen any literature by Indian writers or about Asian Indians in this country. When asked about the one thing that school districts could do to enhance the school experience for Asian Indian student, he says it should be the removal of bias and wrong information about Indians and Asian Indians. Misinformation actually hurts the Asian Indian students.

Although he acknowledges that American students need to learn about other cultures, *how* the information is presented by teachers creates bias:

We have to have an understanding of as many cultures as we can.....there's Indian culture, there's Dev Lankan culture, there's Thai culture, you can teach about anything like that. However, the problem is it turns into a bias. In America, it turns into a bias if you talk about Indian culture.

Ganga does not believe that there are any special cultural needs of Asian Indian American students. Alternatively, in her words *if I really wanted to get culturally involved with the Indian culture, I could. I am just choosing not to. I guess.*

She thinks that if students in school were made more aware of Asian Indian American culture, it would be helpful particularly if mainstream students would be more accepting and appreciative of the culture, yet she is angered by the superficial nature of inclusion, and the lack of respect regarding the Asian Indian attire--

I remember a couple summers ago when it was cool to wear Bindis and you know many Indian style dresses were coming in. And even then, I kind of felt angered because I felt like those people are wearing things from our culture but they don't even understand, like they don't understand it. *They're not really Indian, they can't pull that off, you know?*

Struggling with her anger and the lack of understanding for the beauty of her culture, she gave me several examples of how the schools dealt with multicultural diversity. During multicultural/diversity activities, schools do not take the time to explain the foundations or significance of each culture. The activities are too much on the surface.

We had multicultural fairs, and the only thing I can remember about that is, at that age when you're in elementary school, you're not going to really implant knowledge of another culture. You know you're just too young to understand. I remember walking around the multicultural fair, seeing, and sampling different kinds of food. You don't really understand the culture. I remember the Indian booth. People walked by and got a bindi and left. They didn't really understand what was going on. So I guess they tried, I mean there was an effort on the elementary school's part, to expose the children to different cultures, but I don't think it actually worked. I don't think it was effective.

Even though the effort was made to introduce different cultures at the elementary level and during the middle school years, in high school, diversity was made "optional." She continues her conversation saying--

In middle school, I felt like there was nothing culturally. I don't remember anything. We didn't have any multicultural fairs or multicultural fashion shows. High school we had a multicultural fair that was optional. That was during lunch, and many high schoolers aren't even in the building during lunch. So no one came and we did have food there, if they did come, they would just take it and leave. It's not like they actually cared, you know.

She was very critical about the fact that the high school makes this event optional because it makes it *seem insignificant. Like, what you're doing matters, but it's not important enough for us to require our students to participate.* She is very caustic about the fact that students are required to go to pep rallies, but not to multicultural fairs, or to speeches by experts on multiculturalism.

We are required to go to the pep rally, which is at the end of school, and watch all of our white cheerleaders cheer on the basketball team or the football team. We have to go to those twice a year...we miss class for them. No one knows why it's required. I've asked teachers that several times. Our pep rallies are required. We miss class time for that. Class time when we should be in a class studying, we miss that for these stupid pep rallies. Yet, the multicultural fair, which is, doesn't take up any time outside of class time, it's just during lunch, so, kids could very easily be required to stay in the building that day and look at the exhibits.that's just optional.

She also believes that schools should have experts visit to discuss multicultural experiences or lead well-guided conversations to add to the little bit of information about the rest of the world that is taught as part of the curriculum.

I feel like, when they learn about India, or when they learn about Africa, they are given the image that the textbook gives them. In many cases, the textbook image is not anything like what it's really. A first hand knowledge by a person who's lived in India, or a person who grew up in India. For example, if I was a teacher and I was teaching my class with like a unit on India, I would invite an Indian speaker to come in and talk to them about how it was, about how life was growing up there in China, or any other country. I know that would take time, but I think that would be the most effective way. I think that would allow students to be exposed to other cultures, and that would be a required way to get them to listen.

Like all the other AIA students whom I interviewed, Ganga had not learned the historical facts about Asian Indian immigration to this country, which started in the 1880s. She agreed that it would have made her feel like she had more of a claim to this country. In literature classes, they only read writing by American and British writers. Only the gifted students are given the opportunity to read literature from around the world. That is where she read Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth*. It would *raise awareness--*

This is the first time I've heard anything about that, to tell you the truth, and that's really funny cause I just completed a unit about, colonization in America and people coming from over seas. I learned about Chinese immigrants, Korean

immigrants, and about the African Americans, but I didn't hear anything about the Indians.

She continued this train of thought by relating to her experiences and understanding:

Especially after 9/11, people were saying people should just go back to their own countries. But this is the America's for the White man. It is somewhat ironic that most people that founded America were immigrants. To know that so many immigrants Indians were there during the late 1800s, really, it really means more to me because I feel like, there was more an Indian presence in America than I had really thought. We do have history here.

Parents

All the parents believe that the school district is meeting the academic needs of the students. However, many of them acknowledge that teachers should have more awareness of cultural diversity. They should also shed the stereotype that all Asian Indian students are high performers. They believe that the school curriculum has very little of South Asian culture, history, geography, and literature. The *hidden curriculum in the schools* needs to change. The parents expressed the need for the curriculum to be more inclusive, reflective, but not just for AIA students, but also for all students. The parents felt that if the curriculum was inclusive of all cultures and ethnicities, their jobs as parents would be easier and more focused. The Asian Indian parents could then focus more on the Indian cultural needs at home, rather than deal with both the curriculum and its globalization, and their children's cultural needs.

Joyita has very distinct and clear views on this topic. She believes that schools should only focus on education. She thinks that this school district that her sons have attended or are attending meets the educational needs of her sons, but does not want schools to have anything to

do with teaching Asian Indian culture. *I send my children to school, to learn what I can not teach them at home. I don't think schools are responsible to teach them about my culture.*

She believes that to foster a positive self-identity in the AIA students the schools do not have to foster their uniqueness, but they need to *make them comfortable with who they are, make them believe that just because they look different should not change their personality or make them incompetent in any way.* She does not care about the amount of South Asian culture, history, geography, and literature incorporated into the school district.

Don't know for sure, and don't care, it's something kids get from the family anyway! However, I wish they could teach them more about other countries and their history, geography, cultures, industry, agriculture, etc., from all around the world.

She wants the school district to educate students about the whole world but does not want the schools to teach her sons about their *culture, their history.* Rather she prefers that teachers teach and educate in subjects such as English, math, science, history, and geography, but do not teach and educate about other cultures. She believes that *it is the family's responsibility.*

According to Joyita, the schools are meeting the academic/cultural needs for the most part. *Some teachers are good, and some are not. Availability of AP and Honors classes also help.* The schools are meeting the cultural needs of her sons, by and large. *One of my sons doesn't want to engage in many cultural activities. On the other hand, the second child participates in and enjoys all the cultural activities at the school. We haven't felt a shortage of activities.*

Punya does not think that there is enough incorporation of AI culture, literature etc., in the school district where his daughters attend. There is more of a need *to incorporate South*

Asian history, geography, and cultural literature. Particularly the biography of some known South Asian leaders (poets, historians, etc) can be included in the curriculum. There is not enough literature incorporation in the course books. The school district can also incorporate more presentations to the classes by the Asian Indian students or by their parents. The schools are meeting the educational needs and most of the cultural needs of the students. Thus, parents have to also work at home preparing their children for doing well and earning good grades in school.

Lalita believes that the teachers need to learn more about *students' culture and encourage them more to participate and treat them that they are just human beings as other students are. Not any different from the rest of the students. . . I think they cover enough about South Asian culture, history etc.* She does not want her children to be treated any differently from the other students in the schools.

Narendra does not have much respect for the American school system. He believes that in his family, they have set high expectations for their children; therefore, the children *have learned to use the school district to meet their educational expectations.* He does not believe that the schools are equipped to foster cultural diversity--

More needs to be done to bring cultural diversity into classrooms. I haven't seen a healthy and knowledgeable exchange of cultural ideas in a classroom setting. I don't believe the educators are equipped with this knowledge.

To assist the AIA students to feel included, the schools need to *address positive aspects of the two diverse cultures (American and Asian Indian) and actively engage students in conversations about cultures (as opposed to merely expecting a tolerance of cultural*

differences). He seems really disappointed with the whole school district and had strong views regarding tolerance of cultural differences and cultures –

I don't believe any of these are incorporated into the school district. In a couple of instances, I noticed that the teachers made mistakes in presenting fundamental aspects of South Asian religions. I believe the teachers should be trained in these matters and should be made aware of the importance of presenting the facts correctly. A wrong notion about foreign cultures left unchallenged in a young mind is the root cause for much of the trouble we see nowadays in the world.

Harshit believes that the school district does meet the academic needs of his children. He has already witnessed his older son progressing through the system and he has done well. He, too, does not believe that the schools should be solely responsible for the cultural education of his sons. When it comes to the cultural needs of mainstream American students, he feels that they need to be less *Euro-centric*. Even though he realizes that would take a major shift in thinking—

This requires changing the way the administration thinks, and it will take time for a complete overhaul. I can't fault them, since they grew up in a Euro-centric society. Moreover, parents are responsible for instilling a value system (based on their culture). Let the schoolteacher deal primarily with academics.

He continues the dialogue by saying that if the schools were to be responsible about the cultural needs of students, they should:

Have classes (language, history, and social studies) that deal with global cultures, and not Euro-centric. I think they are changing, albeit slowly. Again, parents should be the ones that create a value system that fosters *inclusivity*.

He also raised the issue of teachers encouraging the students to look at the same concept from different perspectives. This he believes will make the students more analytical and open-minded: *They should discuss different ways of looking at the same issue*. As an example, he

discussed the issue of uniforms in Indian schools:

Several years ago, an American friend of his who had taken a short vacation in India, commented that the Indian schools require uniforms, and that this is coercive. What this person failed to recognize is that the school uniforms avoid social/economic differences. There is always two ways of looking at things, and this type of thinking should be encouraged. For example, what is the root cause of the sacred cow? How does it differ from certain Christians avoiding red meat on Friday's?

Harshit has a very interesting perspective. He acknowledges that the current curriculum is *euro-centric*; but it should focus on cultures from around the world, and not just the western world. Yet at the same time, he wants the value system of Asian Indian culture to be fostered mainly at home.

Ojaswi, a parent and a schoolteacher had some very specific ideas as to how the schools could do a better job in being more inclusive. She is also unique among all the parents because she is the only parent who was raised in this country, and was educated in the American school system. Ojaswi said that the schools are meeting the academic needs of the AIA students, but there is room for improvement—

Teachers don't really pay much attention to the students that are following the rules and receiving good grades. More focus is placed on the underachieving population. My children are successful in school because of us and because of their own motivation to succeed.

However, the schools are not meeting the cultural needs of her children because the schools are all about *white Americans*. She had some good recommendations for the schools. Schools could do several things to make Asian Indian students feel more included.

Since most Indians are not sports inclined, there should be more emphasis on academic competitions. Right now, there are science fairs, history day, spelling bees, geography bee, and math competitions. However, none of these has

any type of coaching or extra assistance from the school. Only the gifted teacher helps in most these instances. If there was more staff involved like, there is for sports, I am sure the Indian population would be more active and encouraged to participate in more school activities.

She also had some good ideas on how the curriculum could be more inclusive. Since there is little curriculum integration about the South Asia cultures or any other, Ojaswi suggests that schools *could study about authors, scientists, artists, etc. from different countries.*

There is such a vast international population at the university that the school could have some of them visit the schools to discuss or present to teachers and students about their culture. Schools could play music or sports from different countries. They could have food from different countries once a week or once a month. They could recognize independence days of other countries each month. This is not just about South Asian. All students would get a better sense of their place in the world if they understood more about the world.

Teachers

Mrs. Pollen believes that the schools in the area are meeting the academic needs of the AIA students, but she is not sure if they are meeting the cultural needs of this group. One of the reasons that she does not know is because these *students appear to be well adjusted, happy, and uncomplaining towards their schooling. Their positive attitudes toward school and life are wonderful.* To me her responses are like painting a picture on an invisible canvas. It almost seemed that Mrs. Pollen did not want to take the risk of knowing these AIA students as individuals. She continues painting on this canvas by discussing the students and their families in the following manner:

These students appear more well-rounded and adjusted, both academically & socially. Their family lives also appear stable, warm, and encouraging. I also personally feel these students do not express bias or basic unhappiness with

others. If they do, they keep it to themselves. In addition, most of the Asian Indian American students I have known have a positive self-image.

Mrs. Pollen shared perhaps an Asian Indian cultural festival or peer group organizations might help the AIA students not feel marginalized. She knows that in literature classes, some South Asian literature is introduced, but she is not sure if this occurs in other classes.

Mr. Holland, now a middle school principal, then a math teacher at the high school, said that the schools do have a responsibility in raising the multicultural awareness of their student population. *Our schools should provide opportunities for all our students to become involved.* He believes that schools can provide multiple opportunities for all students to become involved, can adopt, and practice non-discriminatory policies, and remain sensitive to the cultural needs of Asian Indian American students:

Schools seem to be meeting the academic needs of the Asian Indian students, but they could always do more with local institutions such as the local university. Schools are definitely falling short in providing cultural enrichment for many of the minority groups because a vast majority of students have their cultural needs addressed through networking with families of similar cultural backgrounds.

He said that he believed the schools could do a lot more than what they are currently doing:

I believe in activities such as multicultural fairs that address diversity issues on many levels and address multicultural issues very broadly. However, these really serve as awareness activities. Educators can be far more effective by creating warm and inviting environments where multiple views and beliefs are honored and respected.

Mr. Jardine, a history teacher in the high school is known as an excellent teacher, who always challenges his students to think independently. He makes them do the best

that they can. He believes that the schools in this town are meeting the academic needs of the Asian Indian students through an offering of a wide range of classes. According to his experience, most of the AIA students are in the gifted program, or they are in Advanced Placement classes --

At the high school, a full range of courses is offered; students can find Advanced Placement offerings in all core academic areas. The music, drama, and debate are forensic programs that are superb and inclusive. Capable students are also encouraged to explore off-campus opportunities to include enrolling in classes at the university. The high school has three full time and one part time gifted facilitator, and the two middle schools share a gifted facilitator between them. I believe that all gifted students have their academic needs met at this high school; and many Asian Indian American students have been identified as gifted and receive the services offered by our gifted program. All of the Asian Indian American students I have encountered have good formal English skills and their English skills have not proved to be a problem for my students.

He is not sure if the cultural needs of the Asian Indian American students are being met by the school district or not, but he has not heard any complaints from the AIA students that he has had in his classes. He acknowledges that there is racial tension in the high school, but according to him, *that tension is a black-white issue*, at least to his knowledge. *I have not heard other groups, to include Asian Indian American students, express concerns.* In his classroom experiences, the AIA students in his AP classes *have not lacked self-esteem and have not felt marginalized.* That has been his experience and his opinion, but he is not sure that is the case for all AIA students. He also believes that schools are responsible for *providing a climate that accepts students from all cultural backgrounds. Schools should also ensure that there are no obstacles to participation in extracurricular activities.* In his opinion, the AIA students might feel marginalized because *popular youth culture does not value success in academic endeavors. It is more than likely because they excel in their coursework and not because they are from*

another cultural group.

Mr. Jardine gave me some specific examples of how he incorporates world perspectives and world history into his classes—

World History has been an elective class at the local high school for as long as I have been a teacher in this building. This year, World History became a mandatory class for all freshmen. I taught this class for three years, and the curriculum is very inclusive. Beginning with the ancient civilizations and ending with the post imperial period, South Asian history was covered. I have also taught sociology for the past eight years and many of the examples I use to illustrate ethnocentrism, issues of gender, and social stratification are drawn from South Asian culture.

His curriculum appears to be inclusive. Another example he gave is from the European History class he teaches:

I now teach European history, but when we get to the era of European imperialism, I present the issue from multiple perspectives. I often finish teaching with nonwestern history. One year, the week was dedicated to the development of the Indian National Congress and Gandhi's nonviolent resistance. I can't speak to literature; I am not familiar with the curriculum other than to say there has been an effort to ensure it is more than a presentation of western literature.

However, his method is not very inclusive, but there is an attempt to move away from teaching only about European cultures. However, it is still limited because it only includes the history of India, but does not include history of Asian Indians in the United States.

Mrs. Gunn teaches social studies in one of the middle schools. She believes that the schools have high academic standards, which are important in most Asian Indian American households, but sometimes teachers are too lax in pushing students to achieve their full potential. When asked what could the schools and the teachers do to make sure that the Asian Indian American students are not feeling marginalized, she said that all teachers should have awareness

training of the feelings students from different cultural backgrounds have. They should know never to stereotype students, and should be on the watch for any problems with other students

I don't know about primary grades curriculum, but students learn about South Asian culture and history in 6th grade social studies (along with other areas of the Eastern Hemisphere), South Asian geography in 7th grade, and they take world history in 9th grade. The world history requirement is new, and is a step in the right direction in teaching the culture and history of areas of the world outside the United States. As to literature, I don't know how much is incorporated into our school district, but I suspect there is not much.

Ms. Fulton is a language arts teacher in the middle school. She is known as an excellent teacher and has won a best teacher award. Like the other teachers, she thinks that the schools are meeting the academic needs to the AIA students, but she is not sure if they are meeting their cultural needs. They are not focusing on Asian Indian immigration in this country 200 years back... they are not even focusing on India and its cultural norms.

When asked what specific steps, if any, could the schools take to make sure that Asian Indian students have the opportunity of developing their self-esteem and not feel marginalized, she said-

I think the schools would need to take the same steps they take with any group of students--validate their personal experiences, express interest in their culture and needs, ask questions about what they are feeling is missing in their experience with us and then work together to address those issues, if there are any.

She is not sure how much South Asian culture history or geography is taught in the middle and high schools, but as an English teacher, she herself teaches some Asian literature—

I teach several pieces of literature that reflect the Asian worldview and experience--Amy Tan, Pearl Buck (although she was a westerner who lived in an Asian country), among others who are not as well known. I do teach one piece by

Rudyard Kipling. Again, I know this only reflects one aspect of Asian Indian culture--through a westerner's perspective.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the research findings of the educational experiences and the academic achievements of Asian Indian students in the middle and high school district in a mid-western college town. Three primary themes emerged from the research: concept of self-identity, concept of academic achievement and success in life, and role and responsibility of schools in nurturing student self-identity. Self-identity took on many forms of characterization for the participants. They expressed that being Asian Indian and trying to *fit into* mainstream America as people was perhaps the most difficult aspects of their lives.

When discussing studies, AIA students did not relate academic success to good grades. Some of them acknowledged that good grades are in some ways a manifestation of academic achievement, but it was not all. Most of the parents think that their definition of academic achievement is very similar to the definition given by their children. In reality, only some parents' definitions are closer to their children's than others are. Some of the parents defined and related academic achievement and success in life in a very narrow sense; good grades lead to high paying stable jobs or careers. Others related academic achievement to happiness and hard work, like most of the AIA students. The core-curriculum teachers' definitions of academic achievement does include grades, but goes beyond to the concepts of mastering the curriculum, applying the knowledge gained, etc.

The discussion of the role and responsibility of schools in nurturing student self-identity led to some interesting discoveries. The AIA students believe that the schools should do more to

continuously and as part of the standard curriculum, educate everyone about multi-cultural and intercultural issues. However, they believed that their history in the United States is not significant enough for it to be included in the school curriculum. Most of the parents wanted the schools to just educate students in the traditional sense, but leave the cultural education to the parents. The teachers, on the other hand, are happy to have AIA students in their classes because they seem well-adjusted and are good in studies. As seen in their survey answers, they are quite unaware of the cultural experiences of their AIA students and have not made much of an effort to get to know these students.

CHAPTER 6 - Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize this study. The problem, purpose, and design of the study are reviewed, and a summary of major findings of the research is presented.

Presented are the following topics: a) discussion and implications of the findings, b) the researcher's perspective on the investigation, c) limitations of the study, d) recommendations for further research and for practical applications in schools.

Study Overview

This dissertation focused on the educational experiences/needs and academic achievements of Asian Indian American (AIA) students in middle and high school. These are children of Asian Indians parents who have immigrated to the United States of America since 1965. By Asian Indian American students, the researcher refers to the second generation, i.e. children of Asian Indian parents who were born in India and immigrated to the United States. There is paucity of research on the adaptation patterns of Asian Indians and the educational experiences of the children of Asian Indians. The limited studies that are available suggest that the educational experiences and performance of the children of Asian Indian immigrants are related to parent involvement, parents' cultural background, and acculturation into the host society. This research also shows that Asian Indian students excel academically and are well behaved socially (Mehra, 1998).

Given the qualitative nature of this study, hypotheses were not tested. Rather this investigation focused on the following research questions:

1. Are Asian Indian American students considered “academically successful” by Asian Indian parents, by the school district, and the Asian Indian American students themselves?
2. What are the experiences, through interactions with peers, teachers, administrators, and the curriculum, that Asian Indian American students have in the American school system?

The purpose of this study was to describe and understand the educational experiences and the academic achievements of Asian Indian American students in a middle and high school district in a typical Midwestern college town. The Asian Indian community in this college community is representative of the educated Asian Indian communities residing in the numerous college towns in this country. This study described and interpreted educational experiences and academic achievements of AIA students in the following areas: a) self-identity, b) academic success and success in life, and c) the role and responsibility of the school district in nurturing this self-identity and academic success. The first theme, self-identity, is only discussed from the point-of-view of the students. Discussion of the second and the third major themes also include the perspective of the parents and the core curriculum teachers.

Discussion of the Findings

Two research questions were used to focus the collection and interpretation of data. In Chapter V, the questions were summarized and the findings are analyzed in this chapter.

Research Question #1

Are Asian Indian American students considered “academically successful” by Asian Indian parents, by the school district, and by the Asian Indian American students themselves?

Academic Success and Success in Life

Success is peace of mind, which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to do your best to become the best, that you are capable of becoming. John Wooden

The Asian Indians who immigrated to this country often brought many of their cultural values with them from the parent country. Like other immigrant groups, they do not participate in the mainstream culture as much, however, they form close relationships with other Indians (Saran, 1985). Being an immigrant group from a country in which education is critical to escaping poverty, they take their child’s academic and cultural education seriously.

Researchers have found that Asian families expect their children to do well academically, obey authority figures, and be aware of the sacrifices their parents have made for them and the need to fulfill obligations (Sue & Okazaki, 1990, Zhang & Carrasquillo, 1995). Asian families often teach their children to read before they enter the school system. This holds true of most

Asian Indian families as well. Dornbusch, Reed-Hodgson, Prescott, & Ritter (1987) have found that the level of academic achievement among Asian American students tends to be inversely proportional to the number of generations that have lived in the United States. Furthermore, researchers like Smith & Billiter (1985) have found that first generation Asian immigrants have the highest expectations of their children. Second generation Asian Americans have higher educational expectations than those of the third generation, who have been more integrated into the mainstream. This body of literature on Asian Americans serves as a base for exploring academic achievement for this case study.

Research has also shown that overwhelming majorities of Asian Indians are highly qualified. The majority are doctors and engineers, followed by college professors, scientific researchers, etc. As of 1985, the children of these Asian Indian immigrants are maintaining the high educational achievement standards (Saran, 1985). Gawlick's (1997) research showed that mutual respect, especially respect for parents and elders, maintaining close family ties, being a hard worker, and having a high motivation for academic achievements were mentioned as some of the core values lived for and transmitted to the second generation. Asian Indians feel that these values are not lived by the mainstream culture (Saran, 1985).

Students

The AIA students all acknowledged the importance of education, but did not associate good grades with academic achievement and success in life. Some of them acknowledged that good grades are in some ways a manifestation of academic achievement, but it was not all. Some of them discern good grades, academic success, and success in life as a continuum, one

leading to the other.

A common thread in all their discussions regarding academic success and success in life was the emphasis on *happiness* and *hard work*. All the students stated that they would consider themselves successful in life if they were happy in their careers and had achieved the individual goals they had set for themselves. Most of them acknowledged that people had to work hard to achieve their goals whether it is success in school or in life. In addition, good grades and academic success might be essential if one wants to be a doctor or a lawyer, but not necessarily in other vocations. The AIA students revealed interesting reasons for the disconnect between grades and success in life. One of them pointed out that Hitler received excellent grades in school, but we would not consider him successful in life. Another student commented that Bill Gates dropped out of school, and *the Stanford guys* and *the Google guys* were terrible in school, but they are considered successful in life.

The participants' emphasis on happiness and hard work also led to a discussion of what they wanted to choose as their careers. It is true that some of them wanted to be doctors, engineers, and lawyers, but some of them wanted to move away from the path chosen by their parents because it did not make them *happy*.

Parents

The parents of the AIA students, for the most part, related academic achievement and good grades to success in life. Most of them related good grades and academic success to getting a good job or establishing a good career. On the other hand, some of the parents also have changed their views to acknowledge that there is more to life than a well paying job that brings

stability. One mother related success in life to enjoyment and passion. A second mother said that if success in life means a good salary, then grades are important. However, if success in life is related to maintaining good human relationships, then academic achievement and good grades are not as important.

Teachers

The five core curriculum teachers also included grades in their description of academic achievement, but their definitions were in general much more comprehensive than the definitions given by the parents. They wrote about mastery of skills and knowledge in a variety of ways, oral, written, through reading, through projects, etc. They mentioned that AIA students do think about academic achievement in terms of grades because many of them want to go to good colleges. The teachers have also noticed that the AI parents are also very focused on grades, specifically As. To the parents, anything less than an A is not good enough. The teachers think that the AIA students feel this pressure, which then makes them focus on grades. The teachers, however, acknowledge that there is a correlation between academic achievement and success in life. The students who are good in studies and get good grades have a higher chance of being successful in life, in the sense that they get good paying jobs. The teachers believe this to be true of AIA students, who are considered by all the teachers I interviewed to be good students.

Summary of Findings on Research Question # 1

In discussing academic achievement and success in life, the AIA students placed much

more importance on enjoyment and happiness and a lot less on money. However, their AI parents, who have moved approximately 12,000 miles from their homeland and have had to build their lives and careers in a new country, want them to have stable professions such as doctors, engineers and lawyers, where a good financial standing is inevitable. This leads to expectations of nothing less than As, something that the core curriculum teachers thought was placing a burden of the AIA students. According to the teachers, the AIA students come from a home culture which emphasizes respect of parents and other elders. Therefore, when the parents place great importance on grades, it translates into a substantial amount of academic stress on the AIA students.

Research Question #2

What are the experiences of Asian Indian American students in the American school system?

Two main themes emerged. The first theme was the concept of self-identity, and the second was the role of the teachers and the schools in nurturing this developing concept of the self in these youngsters. I believe schools have a major role to play in defining the experiences minority students have within the school environment and through the approved curriculum. I also believe that there is a strong connection between the experiences of minority students in the school community and their development of self-identity.

Self Identity

What does it mean to be Indian in America? On what grounds does one stake a claim on identity, and by extension, on community? My Indian and American experiences and my gender identity and class background collectively shape the way I see the world. These not distinct identities can be separated out under close examination. Frustratingly, perhaps, there are no roadmaps on this journey of self-definition. Finding the intersection of one's multiple identities—cultural and otherwise—is different for each of us. . . . However, in the end, being both Indian and American is a tightrope, a delicate balance that I must cross and maintain everyday. . . . And while at times I feel uncertain and uneasy, my dual cultural heritage also brings with it an ungainly beauty that's very much like that of a black tropical bat flapping awkwardly, but strongly, on the distant horizon. (Mediratta, 1999)

Immigration to the United States is a complex process of psychological adaptation and change not only for immigrants but also for their children. It is important for the AI parents to retain their Indian identity and they pass on this sense of pride to their children (Saran 1985). How Asian Indian Americans identify with either mainstream culture or Asian Indian culture depends on several factors, such as gender, socioeconomic status, length of residence in the host culture and religion (Farver, et al., 2002). Girls and women identify more with their parent cultures than the males because in traditional societies like India, there are different expectations for male and female behaviors (Ghuman, 1997). In addition, immigrant families with higher socioeconomic status prefer assimilation to separation (Barankin et al., 1989). The longer a family resides in the host country, the more they prefer integration. Also, the younger the age at which they immigrate, the greater the assimilation (Lalonde, Taylor, and Moghaddam 1992).

Religion is also a big influence in developing self-identity. As a group, Asian Indians are highly religious, more so in the new country than in India (Williams, 1988). Research has shown

that religious activities often reinforce ethnicity, uniting the group (Dasgupta, 1998; Sheth, 1995).

This complexity is reflected in the discussion of self-identity with the AIA students. Self-identity took on many forms for the participants. They expressed that being Asian Indian and trying *to fit into* mainstream America as individuals was difficult. Uniqueness and similarities were other ways the participants described their character of identities and *fitting in* with their mainstream peers. Each participant took different routes in explaining how his/ her identity is unique, alike, and similar to their mainstream American peers; nevertheless each one of them still struggled in giving voice to his/her identity.

As shown in previous research (Saran, 1985), Asian Indian immigrants make a conscious effort in maintaining their Asian Indian culture and heritage, and they try to incorporate this love of Indian culture in their children. With the middle and high school students I interviewed, I saw a struggle to blend into the mainstream American culture as well as a need to be unique in their Indianness. Most of the students felt a great urge to be an American. They were born in this country, so they thought and felt like other Americans. They wore clothes like their mainstream peers, and styled their hair like most American teenagers. They also tried very hard to adapt to the mainstream culture, for example by wearing socks tucked into their shoes, or wearing designer clothes. However, all of them were also aware that even though they want to blend in with white Americans, there is always a difference, a difference in skin color, religion, parental expectations, etc. One of the participants said that she had tried so hard to blend in that she did not realize until her teen years that her skin color made her stand out in a white crowd. She mentioned that *if given a chance, she would like to be white and privileged.*

For a few of the participants, religion is also what separates them from the mainstream students. They feel left out when it comes to religion, and are often frustrated by the superficial knowledge and stereotypes about the religions of India. One young man said that he is *always uncomfortable by his American friends asking him about his religion*. He knows that he is unique in this. He finally became confident in his self-identity when he went to a gifted camp in Stanford and saw many Asian Indian students who were praying to their own gods and were comfortable with their Asian Indian choices. This has been the same for my two daughters who have been repeatedly told that if they were Christians and prayed to Jesus, their chronic illnesses would go away.

To be able to better assimilate, many of the AIA students, as early as in seventh grade, consciously remove themselves from the local Asian Indian social scene. They do not believe that they have more in common with other AIA students their own age just because the parents are friends. They make friends with other American students and bring them home to their parents because it helps them to assimilate. Hegde (1998) in her article states that as immigrants “walk in and out of cultural frames that are often incompatible, they struggle to deal with the contradictions they see outside and within themselves (35). This is what I saw in the nine AIA students I interviewed.

Role and Responsibility of Schools

One of the key questions of the study was to what extent are the schools responsible for the cultural awareness of all the students in that school district. I researched this question by interviewing the AIA students, surveying their parents and by asking questions to the core

curriculum teachers. I was interested in finding out if the students and their parents were aware of this tremendous increase of AI and AIA population, if the school district teachers were aware of this increase, and did they teach all the students about the early presence of this group of immigrants. I believe that knowing of Asian Indian immigration would make this small group of students feel more included.

Immigration of Indians to the North American continent occurred in two distinct phases. The first wave of immigration occurred in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. The immigrants in the late 19th century were mainly men from Punjab, mainly soldiers and farmers (Leonard, 1997). Another group of this first wave of immigrants came in 1946-47 after the passing of the Luce-Celler bill, which allowed 105 Indians per year to immigrate to the United States through naturalization (Leonard, 1997). The latest and the largest phase of Indian immigration began in 1965, when the new Immigration and Naturalization Act reversed the earlier discriminatory laws to give preference to Asian immigrants with special skills. The annual quota was 20,000 for each country (Leonard, 1997).

None of the students was aware of the AI history in this country. They had never heard at home nor as part of their school curriculum that Asian Indians had settled in this country since the late 1800s. When I informed them about this history, *all* of them were pleasantly surprised. They acknowledged that this history gave them more of a sense of belonging. However, only three of the nine students thought that the history of AI immigration should be a part of the social studies and history curriculum. One of them wanted chances to learn an Indian language such as Hindi. Another student was horrified by the superficial nature of multiculturalism in the schools. She had a hard time believing that pep rallies are required at the High School, but not the

multicultural speaker forum. Out of these three students, one was very skeptical about the ability of the schools and the teachers to be able to teach this material without further propagating stereotypes.

The other six students did not think it was necessary to have AIA history included in the regular curriculum for various reasons. Some of them thought that because there are only six to ten AIA students in the high and middle schools of this school district at any one time, their needs are not as important as the needs of the African American or Hispanic American population. One student in particular thought that teaching this *would actually make the AIA students more self-conscious, so it should not be done.*

When the parents were asked whether the schools were meeting the cultural needs of your children, they interpreted it in a very narrow sense. I intended this question to focus on whether the schools have helped the AIA students to fit in culturally. Have the schools helped them feel accepted by educating the whole school about AIA history, culture, etc.? To the parents this question was about the extent the schools were successfully educating their children on Asian Indian culture, history etc.

All the parents acknowledged that the schools were meeting the educational needs of their children, but the teachers were not equipped to teach the AIA students about India and Indian culture, society, history. They wanted the schools to focus on studies; the parents will educate their children about their native culture. They also wanted the curriculum to be less Euro-centric and more international (all over the world, all the continents). They also stated that the teachers needed more training in international education.

The five core curriculum teachers I surveyed agreed that the schools are meeting the educational needs of the AIA students. They are doing so with the help of the Gifted Program, the AP courses, and partnership with the state university located in this town. However, they agreed that the schools do not have a comprehensive multicultural program that includes all ethnic, racial, linguistic, sexual orientation, and gender groups. There are some multicultural fairs and peer group organizations. In various classes, there might be some sporadic inclusion of AIA material. Sometimes a particular teacher might include some AI literature. In seventh grade, the students have a short chapter on South Asian geography. In ninth grade, the students learn world history. In some high school AP classes, students learn about Gandhi, the nonviolence movement for India's independence from the British in 1947, and the Indian National Congress. The curriculum includes some information on India, but it does not have any material on Asian Indian American history or culture in the United States. There might be some incidental inclusion of AIA literature if an AIA student decides to do a novel study on an AIA author.

Summary of Findings on Research Question # 2

Interviews with the nine students revealed that all of them are struggling with the issue of self-identity in some form or other. All of them are caught between the culture and values of India, which their parents want to cultivate in them, and the culture and values of mainstream America. All of them seem to be hovering in the second and third stage of ethnic identity development (Tse, 1999). They are all past the stage of "ethnic unawareness." Most of them are in the stage of "ethnic ambivalence/ evasion" and some of them have moved onto the stage of

“ethnic emergence” where they have realized that joining mainstream Americans is not wholly possible. They then look to other ethnic or minority groups to find their identity. At this stage, they often look to the “ethnic homeland group” for acceptance (Tse, 1999).

This struggle for self-identity is heightened by the roles that the AI parents and the middle and high schools are playing in the lives of the AIA students. Most of the AI parents, who had spent most of their first 20+ years in India, have their own self-identity deeply rooted in India. Asian Indian values are what guide their lives, and that is what they try to inculcate in their children. They have made some modifications to how they view themselves in adjusting to the American lifestyle, but they remain grounded in Indian values. They have almost never felt the need to learn about the details of Asian Indian immigration and culture in this country, because it has never been essential to their self-identity.

Therefore, they have never made their children aware of AIA presence in this country since the 1880s. The school curriculum *has been* and *is* very Eurocentric, and includes little about AIA history, culture, or literature. The absence of culture, history, and literature in the curriculum has also not helped the AIA students to identify themselves as a distinct ethnic minority American group. Consequently, the AIA students, not having any source of information about the presence and role of their ethnic group in this country, have struggled with their self-identity. For these students to reach the fourth and final stage of ethnic identity development, namely “ethnic identity incorporation,” changes need to be made.

Limitations

I selected a multiple case study approach to understand in depth, rather than generalize (Merriam, 1988). Nine cases might not provide a statistically representative sample, but they do present a vivid picture of the experiences of Asian Indians American students in smaller Midwestern universities. Sunaina and Ganga were the talkative two who were very candid with their answers. Ganga let me know that if she were given a choice, she would like to be “blond and white.” Rohit and Sohan were the quiet ones. However, Sohan did not want to die life’s quiet desperation. The brothers, Surya and Dev, imitating the ideas of their parents, do not have much faith in the school system. Finally there are Vayu and Sushmita who are quite self-effacing and do not believe that Asian Indian American history needs to be included in the history curriculum. One limit to generalizability that can be found in this study is because of the study’s geographical location. This study was conducted in a midwestern university town where the Asian Indian immigrants are all from the same social class. To increase the generalizability of a study such as this, it could be repeated in a large city with a large Asian Indian population where there might be Asian Indians of various social classes.

A second limitation is that out of the 15 parents, only nine parents participated in the study. A full cohort of parent participants would certainly have enhanced the study. A final limitation is that the researcher is a member of the ethnic group on which she is conducting research. It is often referred to as the “problem of over identification” (Dasgupta, 1989, 31). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) refer to this as doing research in “your own backyard—within your own institution or agency, or among friends and colleagues’ (21). Creswell (1998) strongly advises against such research because the participants might withhold information, or change the

information to maintain a certain social image. For that reason, information from the parents was not through face-to-face interviews.

The researcher was able to get participation for the Asian Indian community because she is a member of that community. However, sometimes the parents put undue restrictions on the project. They knew that it would be hard for me to refuse things that they might want the researcher to do. For example, they would not let the interviews take place at the researcher's office. Nevertheless, it was more productive because the researcher's involvement in that culture would help her to understand the participants and see the world through their experiences. The researcher also gathered the same kind of information from three groups of sources. She conducted face-to-face in-depth interviews with the students, computerized surveys with their parents, and computerized surveys with the core curriculum teachers of the participant students.

Implications for the Schools / Curriculum and the Teachers

Self-identity is crucial to the development of every student. It is more so in the case of students whose parents have emigrated from another country, a country whose culture and history is totally different. In the case of the nine AIA students, the parents provide them with their own set of values based on India. However, the dominant culture (schools being a part of this) that they currently live in, provides them with another (mainstream American values). In such cases of ambivalence (Tse's second stage of ethnic identity development, ethnic ambivalence/evasion), the schools have a responsibility to nurture the AIA students in such a way that the students can move on to the fourth and final stage of ethnic identity development, namely ethnic identity incorporation.

One way that the schools can nurture the self-identity of AIA students is by helping them develop a positive sense of ethnic identity. The parents mostly believe that the self-identity of their students depend on knowing about India and Indian culture. So, they do not believe that the schools are capable of teaching their students about it. The students want to blend in, but are having a hard time developing a positive self-identity. The schools need to find ways in which the AIA students feel that they are a part of the school culture and American culture in general. Inclusion of this nature is possible by incorporating AI immigration and history of Asian Indians in this country as part of the regular curriculum. Multicultural education in schools should reflect race, language, ethnicity, habits, and customs of different groups throughout the global community. Schools must use a variety of methods and various areas of scholarship such as, arts, social sciences, history, politics, and sciences (Gay, 1994).

If AIA students were to learn that Asian Indians immigrated to the United States as early as the 1880s, they might believe that they had more of a claim to call this land their home. AIA immigration from Punjab in the 1880s and the life of the Indian Mexicans should be a part of the curriculum. History and waves of immigration of AIs and AIAs should be taught in the schools irrespective of whether a particular class has an AIA student enrolled in it. Asian Indian and Asian Indian American culture should be taught in social studies classes. In English classes, regular and AP, Asian Indian, and Asian Indian American literature should be taught as part of the regular curriculum, not as a special project or an independent study when there is an AIA student is present in a class. Teachers in the middle and high schools must conscientiously make the legacy and contributions of this fast growing ethnic minority a part of the regular curriculum, irrespective of whether there is an AIA student present in their class that quarter/ semester/ year.

One last thing that teachers can do for their Asian Indian students is to find ways in which to reduce the social pressure on these students. Even if the AIA students are doing academically well, they often feel pressure from their parents to succeed, and they feel the pressure of being called “model minority (Ogbu, 1998). Teachers need to find ways to reduce these pressures by providing avenues to discuss them openly and finding ways to deal with them.

Implications for AI Parents

The findings of this study show two major implications for AI parents of AIA students. First, parents of AIA students must not only educate their children about the heritage and culture of India, the land, which holds the key to their own self identity, but they must also educate their children about the history and contributions of AIs and AIAs in the United States. They must then educate their children because all the different historical perspectives are crucial to the development of the AIA students. The self-identity of AIA students may emerge out of their Indian, Asian Indian, and American heritage.

Secondly, the AI parents need to realize that there is a discrepancy between how they define success in life and how their AIA students define success in life. AI parents define success in life as having a stable life and a stable career in which they make plenty of money. This is a typical first generation immigrant who has left behind the security and stability of home and ventured thousands of miles away to make a new life. However, the AIA students equate success in life with happiness and doing what makes one happy. Earning a lot of money and stability is not as important to them as enjoyment of life. They do not want to all be doctors, engineers, and lawyers. Some of the parents show an awareness of this difference between their

ideas and their children's. The AI parents must give their children the opportunity to be who they want to be, and allow their children opportunities to try new things.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research is needed in the area of curriculum development. It is true that the number of AIA students in the schools in the Midwest is not large, but such is not the case on the east and west coasts, and in the urban cities such as New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Dallas, and Houston. As discussed earlier, it is the fastest growing Asian minority in the last two decades. What then are the reasons for non-inclusion of AI immigration and AIA history, culture and literature in the regular school curriculum? It is crucial to explore the reasons for such omission. Then the Department of Education, local education agencies, and school districts will be able to incorporate the contributions of this ethnic minority into the state standards. As an initial effort, each school district could certainly tailor its curriculum to include the ethnicities/cultures present in that community. This kind of multicultural curriculum is essential in nurturing the ethnic identity of Asian Indian Americans, and all other ethnic and minority group in the United States (Gay, 1994). In addition, learning about every ethnic minority group is essential to making American culture more enriched, because the United States is a land of immigrants.

This study has provided a “snapshot” of AIA students and their development. A longitudinal study of AIA students would also be helpful. This would be a longitudinal study with prolonged engagement with several AIA students whose development and progress in life would be followed through high school, college, and if possible even beyond educational years

and into the work life. In this way, a researcher will be able to follow their experiences over time.

This study was conducted in a midwestern university town where the Asian Indian immigrants are all from the same social class. To increase the generalizability of a study such as this, it could be repeated in a large city with a large Asian Indian population where there might be Asian Indians of various social classes.

Chapter Summary

The results of this study indicate that attention needs to be paid to this group of students in the middle and high schools of this country. Just because they are not troublemakers is not a good reason to ignore their needs. To make sure that AIA students reach the fourth and final stage of ethnic identity incorporation and feel confident in their self-identity, the schools must introduce information about this minority group into the regular curriculum. The AI parents of these students also need to realize that their children are not Asian Indians, and their identity lies within this country. If the AI parents and the education system recognize and address this need, the AIA students might be confident in their own identity, and later find the happiness that they define as a key element in success in life.

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Appendix A - Letters of Invitation

Letter of Invitation to Student Participants

Dear _____ :

I am asking for your help and participation in conducting the following research study on the educational experiences and academic achievements of Asian Indian American students in middle and high schools. As you might know, there is a lack of research on the adaptation patterns of Asian Indians and the educational experiences of the children of Asian Indians. Studying Asian Indian American students could have implications for teaching practice, policymaking, school administration, curriculum, parent involvement, for the general student population in this country as a whole. Such studies could help us understand and figure out new ways of teaching and schooling that are applicable to other minority groups, and to the mainstream school population as well. In addition, I have from personal experience seen that there is indeed variation in the Asian Indian American student population. Such an exploratory study might also show variation and intricacies within the different students in this particular group. At this stage of the research, I plan to study the experiences that the Asian Indian students have in school through student, parent, and teacher feedback. The project will also explore the nature and characteristics of the concepts of educational experience and academic achievement (the success or lack of success in academics).

I will invite a certain number of middle and high school Asian Indian American students, such as you, their parents, and their core-curriculum teachers to participate in my study. I will use face-to-face interviews with you, the students. The face-to-face interviews will help me to capture the unique voices of the student participants. Detailed questionnaires written on floppy disks will be given to your parents. The questionnaire will be Microsoft Word and in WordPerfect, so that they will be able to copy it onto their computers and then answer at their convenience. In addition, your core curriculum teachers in the middle and the high schools will be interviewed in focus groups...

I am writing to ask for your assistance with this study. Your unique and particular perceptions and insights into educational experiences will be critical in developing an understanding how and what Asian Indian American experience in their schools. I will contact you to discuss specific details of the study. I hope that you will consider this a project in which you would like to participate! Please feel free to call me (532-3339, 537-6893, leena@ksu.edu) or Dr. Stoney (532-3531), or Dr. Spears (532-5530) if you have any questions. Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Leena Chakrabarti
Graduate student in Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

Letter of Invitation to Parent Participants

Dear Parent/s:

I am asking for your help and participation in conducting the following research study on the educational experiences and academic achievements of Asian Indian American students in middle and high schools. As you might know, there is a paucity of research on the adaptation patterns of Asian Indians and the educational experiences of the children of Asian Indians. The limited number of studies that I have come across suggests that the educational experiences and performance of the children of Asian Indian immigrants to the United States are related to parent involvement, parents' cultural background, and acculturation into the host society. This research also shows that Asian Indian students excel academically and are well behaved socially. Studying Asian Indian American students could have implications for teaching practice, policymaking, school administration, curriculum, parent involvement, for the general student population in this country as a whole. Such studies could help us understand and figure out new ways of teaching and schooling that are applicable to other minority groups and to the mainstream school population as well. In addition, I have from personal experience seen that there is indeed variation in the Asian Indian American student population. Such an exploratory study might also illuminate variation and intricacies within the different students in this particular group. At this stage of the research, I plan to study the experiences that the Asian Indian students have in school through student, parent, and teacher feedback. The project will also explore the nature and characteristics of the concepts of educational experience and academic achievement (the success or lack of success in academics).

I will invite a certain number of middle and high school Asian Indian American students, their parents, and their core-curriculum teachers to participate in my study. I will use face-to-face interviews with the students. The face-to-face interviews will help me to capture the unique voices of the student participants. Detailed questionnaires written on floppy disks will be given to you, the parents. The questionnaire will be Microsoft Word and in WordPerfect, so that you will be able to copy it onto your computers and then answer at your convenience. In addition, the core curriculum teachers of your students in the middle and the high schools will be interviewed in focus groups...

I am writing to ask for your assistance with this study. Your unique and particular perceptions and insights into the educational experiences of your children will be critical in developing an understanding what Asian Indian American experience in their schools. I will contact you to discuss specific details of the study. I hope that you will consider this a project in which you would like to participate! Please feel free to call me (532-3339, 537-6893, leena@ksu.edu) or Dr. Stoney (532-3531), or Dr. Spears (532-5530) if you have any questions. Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Leena Chakrabarti
Graduate student in Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

Letter of Invitation to Core-Curriculum Teachers

Dear Teacher:

I am asking for your help and participation in conducting the following research study on the educational experiences and academic achievements of Asian Indian American students in middle and high schools. As you might know, there is a paucity of research on the adaptation patterns of Asian Indians and the educational experiences of the children of Asian Indians. The limited number of studies that I have come across suggests that the educational experiences and performance of the children of Asian Indian immigrants to the United States are related to parent involvement, parents' cultural background, and acculturation into the host society. This research also shows that Asian Indian students excel academically and are well behaved socially. Studying Asian Indian American students could have implications for teaching practice, policy making, school administration, curriculum, parent involvement, for the general student population in this country as a whole. Such studies could help us understand and figure out new ways of teaching and schooling that are applicable to other minority groups and to the mainstream school population as well. In addition, I have from personal experience seen that there is indeed variation in the Asian Indian American student population. Such an exploratory study might also illuminate variation and intricacies within the different students in this particular group. At this stage of the research, I plan to study the experiences that the Asian Indian students have in school through student, parent, and teacher feedback. The project will also explore the nature and characteristics of the concepts of educational experience and academic achievement (the success or lack of success in academics).

I will invite a certain number of middle and high school Asian Indian American students, their parents, and their core-curriculum teachers to participate in my study. I will use face-to-face interviews with the students. The face-to-face interviews will help me to capture the unique voices of the student participants. Detailed questionnaires written on floppy disks will be given to the parents. In addition, the core curriculum teachers of the students in the middle and the high schools involved in this study will be interviewed in focus groups...

I am writing to ask for your assistance with this study. Your unique and particular perceptions and insights into the educational experiences of your students will be critical in developing an understanding how and what Asian Indian American experience in their schools. I will contact you to discuss specific details of the study. I hope that you will consider this a project in which you would like to participate! Please feel free to call me (532-3339) or Dr. Stoney (532-3531), or Dr. Spears (532-5530) if you have any questions. Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Leena Chakrabarti
Graduate student in Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

Appendix B - Consent form

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT TEMPLATE

PROJECT TITLE:	EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ASIAN INDIAN AMERICAN SCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES: A CASE STUDY
-----------------------	---

APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT: February 25, 2003

EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):	Dr. Jacqueline D. Spears, Dr. BeEtta L. Stoney, Leena Chakrabarti
--	--

CONTACT AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:	532-5530, 532-3531
--	---------------------------

IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION:	Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 1 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224 Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice Provost for Research Compliance and University Veterinarian, 1 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224
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SPONSOR OF PROJECT:	N A
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PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:	The purpose of this study is to describe and understand the educational experiences and the academic achievements of Asian Indian students in the middle and high school system in a Midwestern college town. Asian Indians that will be the focus of this study are representative of the educated Asian Indian communities residing in the numerous college towns in this country. The city used in this study is representative of many of the college towns scattered around this country, which usually have a sizeable Asian Indian faculty and Asian Indian American student population.
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PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:	Interviews, surveys, focus-group interviews-- A certain number of middle and high school Asian Indian American students will be interviewed. The face-to-face interviews will help the researcher to capture the unique voices of the participants. Detailed questionnaires written on floppy disks will be given to their parents. The questionnaire will be Microsoft Word and in WordPerfect, so the participants will be able to copy it onto their computers and then answer at their own convenience. The parents will be given stamped and addressed envelopes, so
--	--

	that they can return their completed questionnaires. In addition, the core curriculum teachers in the middle and the high schools will be interviewed in focus groups
--	---

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:
NA

LENGTH OF STUDY:	2-3 hours
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RISKS ANTICIPATED:	No known risks
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BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:	Studying Asian Indian American students could have implications for teaching practice, policymaking, school administration, curriculum, parent involvement, for the general student population in this country as a whole. Such studies could help us understand and figure out new ways of teaching and schooling that are applicable to other minority groups and to the mainstream school population as well. In addition, the researcher has from personal experience seen that there is indeed variation in the Asian Indian American student population. Such an exploratory study might also illuminate variation and intricacies within the different students in this particular group.
------------------------------	--

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consent forms will be stored separately from interview and survey data. 2. Taped recordings, computer disks, and taped transcription materials will be stored in locked file cabinets in the student investigator's home. Files will only be accessible to the student investigator and the principal investigator. 3. Computer disks will be stored on stand-alone computers, which are password protected. 4. Data files will not be submitted via email transmission. 5. All data will be coded. The sheet with code data will be stored separately.
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IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS?

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:	Yes
--------------------------------------	-----

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed

and kept by the participant

Participant Name:			
Participant Signature:		ate:	
Witness to Signature: (project staff)		ate:	

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix C - Interview Protocol and Survey Questionnaires

Interview Protocol for Students

Demography Questions

1. Name of participant _____

3. Grade level _____

4. Years in this Midwestern town _____

7. Education Middle School _____ High School _____

8. Age and Gender _____ _____

9. Last name that your family would like to assume for this study _____

10. First name that you would like to assume for this study _____

Interview Questions of the Asian Indian American Students

1. Do you believe that you are good in studies? Can you give some specific examples?
2. Do you think success in life depends on being a good student and getting good grades? What does success in life really mean? What does it really depend on?
3. According to your parents what is being successful in life? Do you agree with your parents?
4. How do you think your teachers define a good student?
5. How are you similar to the other American students in school? How are you different or unique?
6. How well do you fit in with the other students in your school? What do Asian Indian American students like you do to fit into the mainstream school culture?
7. Are there any stereotypes about Asian Indian American students, among other students, and among the teachers?
8. Are you academically satisfied with your school and your teachers?

9. Are the schools in this town meeting your cultural needs?

10. Do you sometimes feel left out or singled out in school? Or do you feel accepted as an integral part of the students in your school?

11. If you feel left out, what specific steps, if any, could the schools take to make sure that Asian Indian American students can develop to the best of their ability and not feel left out?

12. If you feel included in the student body, what has the school done to make this assimilation or inclusion happen?

13. How much of the South Asian culture, history, geography, and literature is incorporated into the school district? What more could the school district incorporate?

Survey Questionnaire for Parents

Demography Questions

1. Name of parent participant _____

2. Years spent in the U. S. A. _____

3. Years in this current Midwestern town _____

4. Education (name of degree, or years completed)
High School _____ Undergraduate _____

Graduate _____ Other _____

5. Occupation _____

6. Age, Gender, and grade level of Students

7. Last name that your family would like to assume for this study _____

8. First name that you would like to assume for this study _____

Survey Questionnaire for Parents

Directions for filling out the questionnaire: Please answer the questions as fully as you can. Insert the answer after each question. If anecdotes would help explain your answers, please use them. Save the questions and answers on this disk and return to the researcher (Leena Chakrabarti). Please call her (537-6893) or email her (leena@ksu.edu) and she will pick the disk up from your home. **Thank you for your help.**

1. Have you attended American schools and universities, or have you attended Indian schools and universities? Please give details. (You do not have to specifically indicate names of schools. Use schools in the Midwest or schools in India, or private college in the West of the United States, etc.)
2. How do you compare the educational system in the United States with that in India? At school level? At university level? (Answer this question based on your own experiences, and on the experiences of your children.)
3. In your opinion, what are the most positive features of American schools and colleges?
4. In your opinion, what are the most negative features of American schools and colleges?
5. How would you define academic achievement?
6. How much time did/do you two spend with your children helping them with their homework, or interacting with their academics?
7. According to you, what is the relationship between academic achievement and success in life?
8. Has your concept of academic achievement and success in life changed since living in the United States, and with the growing of your children? Please explain.

9. How do you think your children would define academic achievement? Is their definition different from yours?
10. How do you think the educators in your children's schools define academic achievement? Is their definition different from yours or your children's?
11. Did/do your children have to make adjustments in school because of their ethnicity (Indianness)? What do think Asian Indian children do to assimilate into the dominant school culture?
12. How is their adjustment similar and/or different from your dealing with a foreign culture when you first came to this country?
13. What do you see as the parent's role in this adjustment process?
14. What do you see as the school's role in this process?
15. Are the schools meeting the academic needs of your children?
16. Are the schools meeting the cultural needs of your children?
17. What specific steps, if any, could the schools take to make sure that Asian Indian students have the opportunity of feeling more included?
18. How much of the South Asian culture, history, geography, and literature are incorporated into the school district? What more could the school district incorporate?

Survey Questionnaire for Core Curriculum Teachers

Demography Questions

1. Name of participant teacher _____

2. Years spent in the teaching profession _____

3. Years teaching in this school district

4. Years teaching in middle or high school

5. Education Undergraduate _____
 Graduate _____

Interview Guide for Core-Curriculum Teachers

Directions for filling out the questionnaire: Please answer the questions as fully as you can.

Insert the answer after each question. If anecdotes would help explain your answers, please use them. Then please email the questions and answers back to the researcher Leena Chakrabarti at leena@ksu.edu. Please call her (537-6893; 341-6761) or email her (leena@ksu.edu) If you have any questions. **Thank you very much for your help.**

1. How would you define academic achievement?
2. According to you, what is the relationship between academic achievement and success in life?
3. How do you think the Asian Indian American students define academic achievement?
4. How do you think the parents of these students define academic achievement?
5. What do Asian Indian American students do to assimilate into the dominant school culture?
6. What do you see as their parent's role in this assimilation process?
7. What do you see as the school's role in this process?

8. Are the schools in this town meeting the academic needs of Asian Indian American students?
9. Are the schools in this town meeting the cultural needs of Asian Indian American students?
10. What specific steps, if any, could the schools take to make sure that Asian Indian students have the opportunity of developing their self-esteem and not feel marginalized?
11. How much of the South Asian culture, history, geography, and literature is incorporated into the school district? What more could the school district incorporate?
12. In summary, how are these students similar to students in the mainstream culture, and how are they unique?