

**DEVELOPMENT OF A NEWSLETTER SERIES ON THE PARENTING CONCERNS
OF ASIAN INDIANS IN THE UNITED STATES**

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North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to review research on the parenting concerns faced by Asian Indian parents in the United States. This paper reviews issues such as the impact of cultural differences on Asian Indian parenting practices, dating norms that challenge the Asian Indian traditional practice of arranged marriages, autonomy and independence that affects the career choices of growing children, and the cultural stigma that is attached to seeking counseling services or support by Asian Indians. In addition, the paper proposes the development of a series of educational newsletters specifically designed to educate Asian Indian parents in the United States on these significant parenting concerns and offer recommendations for building positive parent-child relationships and lowering intergenerational conflicts. These newsletters will be provided to Asian Indian parents through the Indo American Great Plains (IAGP) organization in Fargo, North Dakota.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The United States is a home to many immigrants from different parts of the world and many consider it as a land of opportunity, security and, prosperity (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). Among these immigrant groups, Asian Americans are one of the largest and fastest growing ethnic minority populations (US Bureau of Census, 2010). The total number of Asians residing in the United States in 2010 is estimated to be around 17.3 million, which accounts for 5.6 percent of the total population (US Bureau of Census 2010). Asian Indians represent the third largest Asian population (behind Asians of Chinese and Filipino descent), and have been identified as one of the fastest growing populations in the United States (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000). The current population of Asian Indians in the United States (in 2010) is 2.8 million, and by the year 2050 the number of Asian Indians living in the United States is projected to be even more significant.

The term Asian Indian refers to people who are originally from India. Asian Indians who have migrated to the United States are from different states within India; however, the majority of immigrants are from the western state of Gujarat and also from northern Punjab (Prasad, 2006). Most of the research on Asian immigrants has focused on the Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Filipino communities in the United States. Studies on Asian Indian immigrants are not widely represented in the academic realm among Asian studies. One of the reasons that could be cited for the absence of academic interest in the topic of Asian Indian immigrants is their sparse numbers in the United States until after 1965 (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994). However, the overall growth rate of the Asian Indian population in the United States between 1990 and 2000 was 106 percent, nearly ten times the overall growth rate in the U.S., and the growth rate remained very strong at nearly 70 percent between 2000 and 2010. The primary reasons behind

immigration to the United States in the Asian Indian community include the pursuit of higher education, employment or business, and reunification with extended family members (Friedman, 2005; Reeves & Bennett, 2004). There is a strong need for researchers to address this population as they are a fast-growing group and are becoming both numerically and socially significant.

India is considered a land of tremendous diversity with many religions, castes, tribes, languages, and regional subcultures (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). For example, in the United States the majority of Asian Indians consider themselves Hindu (51 percent), with other religious associations including Christian (18 percent, with Protestants being 11 percent, Catholics 5 percent, and Other Christians as 3 percent), Muslim (10 percent), Sikh (5 percent), Jain (2 percent), and others (Pew Research Center, 2013). There are several hundred languages spoken in India, with the most common spoken languages including Hindi, English, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, and others. As a result of these circumstances, many different customs and traditional practices exist in India. However, the Asian Indian immigrant community is also characterized by a high sense of ethnic identity and adherence to the values of their native country (Mogelonsky, 1995). The primary values held by Asian Indians are often very much different from the dominant culture in the United States. The traditional values and practices engaged in by Asian Indians influence the way they raise their children. For example, in Asian Indian families decisions by young people are often highly influenced by parents and other elders in the family (Ranganath&Ranganath, 1997; Segal, 1998). Parents often play a role in decision-making because they believe that they are more experienced and feel their children do not have enough life experiences (Segal, 1998). Additionally, a greater level of parental control may be exerted upon Asian Indian children in order to instill a sense of obligation to the

family, and this approach may at times lead to intergenerational conflict in immigrant families (Rastogi, 2007).

Asian Indian families in the United States often have extremely busy lifestyles, as with many other families, and they may not have a great deal of time to engage in traditional parent education. Traditional parent education engages families directly through participation in extended classes or seminars intended to provide instruction on key parenting issues (Duncan & Goddard, 2010). However, one strategy for reaching out and helping Asian Indian parents with their parenting concerns may be through the use of educational newsletters. Educational newsletters are becoming more widespread in their usage and popularity in parent education (Futris & Stone, 2010). Newsletters can be used to provide information and educate parents to promote healthy parenting practices (Walker, 2005). Newsletters can make a difference in the lives of families if they are well written and focused on a specific parenting issue (Reisbeck, 1980). For the Asian Indian community in the United States, an educational newsletter resource may fit well with the high educational level of most Asian Indian parents. The Asian Indian community in the United States has the highest educational attainment of any ethnic group with 71 percent of them (in 2010) having a bachelor's degree or higher (Pew Research Center, 2013). A number of studies have documented that newsletters are an effective tool for providing relevant information to parents (Bogenschneider & Stone, 1997; Brotherson & Bouwhuis, 2007; Garton et al., 2003). For example, Bogenschneider & Stone (1997) reported that reading materials are preferred by parents when compared to other forms of parent education (i.e., attending parenting classes, workshops, etc.). Newsletters are also considered as the most convenient source of information for parents who are not able to attend parent education classes (Riley et al., 1991). Another advantage of newsletters is that the information is printed, which allows parents

to read at their convenience, save it for future reference, and share it with others (Cudaback et al., 1985).

According to Reisbeck (1980), effective newsletters must provide useful practices which can be implemented and explain the reasons, benefits, and implications of doing so. The content of the newsletter is very important and it must be related to the real needs, interests and opportunities of the person receiving it (Reisbeck, 1980). Hughes and Clark (1994) also suggest the following as some of the things to be considered for the development of educational newsletters: using information grounded in theory and research, using questions to get participants cognitively involved, relating activities to the objectives, testing the activities and information on real people of the correct age of the intended audience, double checking the readability and use of examples, making it visually appealing, and being sensitive to various cultures.

Despite their growing numbers in the United States, research on Asian Indians is scarce and under-represented as a population of interest. Thus far, much of the literature on Asian Indians is mostly theoretical. As a result, there is an absence of resources that target the common concerns of Asian Indian parents in raising their children in a different cultural environment (Ross-Sheriff & Chaudhuri, 2004). The dominant American culture is characterized by a strong set of pervading values that include freedom of expression, earned status, individualism, self-reliance, independence, materialism, and family ties (Weaver, 1997). These values in practice can often significantly complicate or clash with the parenting values and patterns that are common in Asian Indian immigrant families (Mogelonsky, 1995; Ross-Sheriff & Chaudhuri). Hence the purpose of this study is twofold: (1) To review the experiences or concerns of Asian Indian parents raising children in the United States; (2) To develop parenting newsletters to

increase parenting knowledge and skills of Asian Indian parents raising children in an American cultural setting and to enhance the opportunity for positive parent-child relationships.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter gives an overview of the research on some of the cultural differences between the Asian Indians' culture of origin and their host country (the United States), which often imposes serious parenting challenges on Asian Indian immigrant families, and how these cultural differences affect the parent-child relationship. First, the Asian Indian immigration process to the United States will be described. Next, the parenting concerns of Asian Indians in the United States will be identified and explored. Each concern will be explained in some detail with regard to the influence on parent-child relationships. Finally, the subject of parent education newsletters as a useful resource will be introduced.

2.1. Immigration of Asian Indians to the United States

The first set of Asian Indian immigrants arrived in the United States in the late 1890s and early 1900s (Nandan, 2007). The 1917 Immigration Act prohibited further immigration from India (Nandan, 2007). The Immigration Law of 1924 prohibited recent immigrants from bringing their family members to the United States. The Immigration Act of 1965 opened doors for Asian Indians to enter the United States once again (Nandan, 2007). The Asian Indians who arrived from 1965 to 1975 are considered to be first wave Asian Indian immigrants (Nandan, 2007). On average the first wave Asian Indians are highly educated and faring well financially and socially. They possess permanent citizenship and are aged over 60 years old. The second set of Asian Indian immigrants (1976-1985) are also well educated and faring well financially and socially (Nandan, 2007). Second wave immigrants are in their 50s with their children in high school or college. The third wave immigrants from India (1990-1999) are not as highly educated as the first and second wave immigrants. As a result they occupy a variety of jobs, including working in family-owned businesses, convenience and grocery stores, etc. (Nandan, 2007). Almost 40

percent of all Asian Indian immigrants who entered the United States in the decades after 1965 arrived on student or exchange visitor visas, in some cases with their spouses and dependents (Nandan, 2007). Most of the students pursued graduate degrees in a variety of disciplines. They were often able to find promising jobs and prosper economically, and many became permanent residents and then citizens. Among all the three waves of Asian Indians, it is evident that Asian Indians leave their country mainly for higher education, economic prosperity, and better working conditions and opportunities (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000; Nandan, 2007; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). Asian Indians prefer to settle in larger cities where the job opportunities are plentiful and also to have easier access to other Asian Indian immigrants (Nandan, 2007).

2.2. Cultural Differences and Parenting Concerns

A number of studies have documented that Asian Indians have quietly permeated many segments of the American economy and society while still retaining their Indian culture. Most Asian Indian families strive to preserve traditional Indian values and transmit these to their children. Offspring are encouraged to marry within the community and maintain their Indian heritage. Many Asian Indian families have different stories and values that they bring from their country of origin. Hence one cannot talk about the experiences of parents and parenting practices without considering their cultural values and traditional practices. Cultural values and beliefs serve as a structure for parents to do their best parenting (Deepak, 2005; Farver, Narang & Bhadha, 2002; Farver, Yiyuan, Bhadha, Narang & Lieber, 2007).

Parents serve as the child's first agents of socialization to the world and to the culture. The way parents take care of their children depends on the culture they are exposed to in their lifetime (Baptiste, 2005). So for the most part, parents behave in ways governed by their culture of origin, and teach their children to observe and learn and adopt the same behaviors (Farver et

al., 2007). Each culture or ethnic group has parenting approaches or practices that reflect the culture of origin. Parenting behaviors are based on several factors: socialization experiences, familial practices, parent personalities, and the cultural background (Farver et al., 2007; Jambunathan, Burts& Pierce, 2000). It is evident that parenting practices are often culture specific. Typically, immigrant parents face the issue of integrating their own parenting styles with that of the dominant US culture. Goals related to child rearing seem to represent the most significant differences between American families and Asian Indian families(Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000).

Asian Indian culture is described as having an emphasis on the group (collectivism) through filial piety, humility, restraint of emotional expression, and sense of obligation towards older people; whereas the dominant US culture is described as individualistic, competitive and more concerned with one's own environment(Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000; Baptiste, 2005; Deepak, 2005). Asian Indians' values, ideologies, and way of conduct are often heavily based on their religious and philosophical heritages which may be Hinduism, Islam, Christianity or Sikhism. For the most part, Asian Indians' values and beliefs are heavily based on Hinduism since a significant portion of the population (83%) follows the Hindu pattern of belief (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000). Such differences indicate the clash between familiar cultural patterns and approaches to parenting within the dominant culture that Asian Indian families often encounter as they raise children in the United States.

2.3. Traditional Family Structure in Asian Indian Families

The traditional family structure of India is defined as patriarchal, extended and interdependent (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000; Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). The father is the head of the family, who makes the decisions for the family, and his

authority is unquestioned. He is the primary disciplinarian and enforces the family rules. The mother is more emotionally devoted to the children than the father (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000; Jambunathan, Burts & Pierce, 2000). She is considered as the primary caretaker and nurturer of the family. Asian Indians' parenting beliefs are shaped by a cultural emphasis on interdependence. Children live with their parents until they are married. Children are obliged to show gratitude to their parents by taking care of them in their old age (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000; Jambunathan et al., 2000). Children are expected to financially support their immediate and extended families once they start working (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000; Jambunathan et al., 2000). Therefore, Asian Indian immigrant families are surrounded by a culture in the United States that holds different views of the family structure compared to their own.

In any culture parents and children are responsible for what they contribute to the parent-child relationship. In Asian Indian culture parents are expected to socialize their children to be obedient, as well as to bring honor to the family by exhibiting good behavior, maintaining high academic achievement, and contributing to the well being of the family (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000; Farver et al., 2007; Jambunathan et al., 2000; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). The expectation is that the children do not question or challenge this traditional parenting style and obey as they are told (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). Some studies have illustrated how the dominant American culture and environment affect the ability of Asian Indian immigrant parents to parent their children and deal with the difficulties encountered when raising them (Baptiste, 2005; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993).

2.4. Family Roles

Family roles in Asian Indian families are more highly structured than American family roles (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). Parents and elders in the family wield greater authority in Asian

Indian families when compared to American families. Parents are expected to be highly involved and responsible for decision making, particularly for their children (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Farver et al., 2002). Asian Indian parents think that they are more experienced than their children and must be involved in making decisions for them. Children are expected to consult with parents and seek their parents' advice and guidance. Throughout their childhood and adulthood, Asian Indian children are socialized to be obedient, respectful and not allowed to question their parents, whereas American children are more often allowed to voice their opinions and feelings (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Farver et al., 2002).

Children of immigrant families acculturate more rapidly into the dominant American culture when compared to their parents. To instill their cultural values, Asian Indian parents frequently try to enforce strict and rigid rules for their children's behaviors which often results in intergenerational conflict. Some studies have documented that immigrant families from traditional backgrounds experience more family dysfunction than other ethnic minority groups. A study by Segal (1991) found that Asian Indian parents perceived adolescents to be rebellious and contaminated by American culture where issues arose surrounding the topics of dating and gaining independence. Another study done by Farver et al. (2002) also revealed that conflicts are high in families where children embraced the host culture.

2.5. Becoming Westernized

The primary concern of many Asian Indian parents is that their children who either migrated to or were born in the United States are becoming American. Parents report with concern that their children are easily abandoning their cultural values (Baptiste, 2005). According to Baptiste (2005), Asian Indian parents fear that their children are rejecting traditional values and hurting themselves by drinking beer, partying for long hours, sleeping over

without parental permission and dressing in unacceptable ways. As such concerns arise, Asian Indian parents often exert greater levels of parental control by not allowing their children to be exposed to American culture and friends. In a study done by Baptiste (2005), the Teekas family realized that their 17-year old son (Devenan) was totally immersed in American culture: partying and staying out for longer hours, drinking beer and eating meat, and not seeking parental permission for activities. As a result of such concerns, his parents withdrew him from the soccer team because they thought three other American boys on the team were responsible for Devenan's behavior, and many of the freedoms he previously enjoyed were severely curtailed. The findings in the study revealed that children who are assimilated into the dominant American culture embrace more autonomy and independence.

2.6. Loss of Parental Authority

Some Asian Indian parents feel that they have lost absolute authority over their children because of the different parenting rules in the United States. In Asian Indian families social control over a child's behavior is often exerted through shame and guilt: children are taught to be aware of what others think of them and to behave accordingly (Chao & Tseng, 2002). For example, if a child is misbehaving he or she is often compared to a well behaved child, or else the child is reminded that others are watching or seeing them (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Asian Indian parents tend to feel that the power of parental authority seems to be less important in the United States than in their country of origin. Many Asian Indian parents lament that they are not able to discipline their children in the way they do in their traditional culture (Baptiste, 2005). For example, corporal punishment is very typical in India. Even Asian Indians who possess rigid ideas of what Americans do are more likely to enforce corporal punishment and a threatening environment (Baptiste, 2005). Many Asian Indian immigrant parents feel that they are not

respected and their authority is questioned often. According to the standards of parenting cultivated in the United States, those disciplinary strategies (physical and verbal punishments and inculcation of guilt and shame) are considered to be harsh and even abusive (Baptiste, 2005). Asian Indian parents have expressed feelings that the new rules in the host culture devalue their cultural values and practices (Baptiste, 2005). Some Asian Indian parents contend that their lack of knowledge regarding disciplinary strategies in the United States is also a reason for intergenerational conflicts with growing children.

2.7. Sex Role Ideology

Sex role ideology plays a crucial role in Asian Indian culture. Traditional sex role ideology in Asian Indian culture posits men as the provider and women as the nurturer and caregiver in family life (Jambunathan et al., 2000). American culture emphasizes a more modern sex role ideology: egalitarianism. South Asian women are the center of the family and are represented as educated, demure, chaste, modest, submissive, self-sacrificing, kind, patient, and devoted to the family. Asian women are considered to represent their nation, culture and religion, whereas American women are represented as irreligious, avaricious, selfish and sexually promiscuous (Barry, Bernard, & Beitel, 2006). While such culturally informed sex role stereotypes do not apply in a universal manner to individuals and families, Asian Indian parents may still carry such beliefs and perceive their culture as significantly different from the surrounding American culture.

After immigration to the United States, the modern sex role ideology adopted by young Asian Indians often brings them into relational conflict with their parents. Research findings indicate that Asian Indians who embrace egalitarian/non-traditional values also experience significant stress. The perceptions held by parents surrounding sex role ideology also influence

the socialization patterns of children. Asian Indians who are aware of the modern sex role ideology of the dominant American culture may become caught up in many fears. Some parents restrict their children from interacting with American children and often bring their grandparents to take care of their younger children, or else they send their children to India and do not bring them to the United States until they are ready for schooling in the later years (Baptiste, 2005).

2.8. The Practice of Arranged Marriages

One major concern for Asian Indian parents is the concept of dating. Traditional Asian Indian culture includes arranged marriages and socialization within one's own cultural group (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994). Arranged marriages are still considered to be the normative pattern for mate selection in India. Dating is not a traditional Indian custom. Therefore, Asian Indian parents tend to frown upon the practice of dating, although some parents are slowly yielding to the demands of their teenage and young adult children to be allowed to date (Farver et al., 2007). The preference still exists for the selection of a marriage partner from within the subgroup of the larger community and with the full approval and consent of the parents. Family or community members are often involved in the selection of a suitable mate. The family and educational backgrounds of the potential partner are thoroughly examined before introductions are made. Asian Indians believe that their children will be happier if they are married to someone who shares the same history, tradition, religion, and social customs and who will be able to impart these values to their children, thus ensuring the continuity of the community (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994). They believe that such marriages made within the community tend to be more stable and longer lasting than those that cross community borders.

In Asian Indian families, parents will usually select the mate for their children. Parents look into many variables before selecting the mate for their children: religions, castes, education,

family background and social status. According to Durvasula & Mylvaganam (1994), caste appears to be an important variable for arranged marriages. For Asian Indians concerns around marriage and dating are numerous and affect their parent-child relationships, especially with children who are adapted to American culture. Some studies have documented that dating and relationship patterns appear to be at the root of a raging intergenerational conflict. In a study by Dasgupta (1998), a mother of three adolescents and a pediatrician addressing a roomful of youngsters on the practice of dating stated, "As a representative of parents here, I want to say we love our children. We care for our children. I am not telling our neighbor Tony or Harry not to go for dating, because they are not my children. [To] all the children I want to say: trust us, because we want the best for our kids." In the same study Venkataraman, an Asian Indian immigrant and father, said, "Children talk about going out on date(s) and tell us that we don't know anything about the U.S. culture. What do they know about their cultural background? I think they are lost If dating is an exploration, they are going the wrong way."Pg. (963). Segal (1991) notes this fear in Asian Indian parents and believes most Indian immigrants who are not quite familiar with the practice tend to conflate dating with sexual activity. During a parent youth forum, a physician and father commented on what he believes to be the actual motivation for dating: "Why do men want to see women, for sex; why do they want to go out with them, for sex; why do they want to marry them, for sex again" (p. 964). These remarks represent the dread some parents feel about exposing their children to what they believe are the evils of premarital intimacy through dating. Segal (1991) further asserts that added to this fear of sexual intimacy is that of sexual assault. Many Asian Indian parents fear that their children would not accept arranged marriage and thus will lose their culture and traditional practices.

Also, they express concern that Asian Indian children who embrace the dominant American culture are more likely to date and have premarital sex.

2.9. Selection of Career Choices

Another traditional practice in Asian Indian families which gets challenged as families immigrate to America is choosing careers for their children. One of the main reasons many Asian Indian families relocated to America was to establish a better future for themselves and for their children. Thus, as soon as they arrive in the United States they do everything possible to give their children education and also put incredible pressure on their children, who need to do great in the careers that their parents choose for them (medicine, law, education). Parents typically act out of their best intentions; however, it often causes frustration for their children, who tend to feel obligated and pushed towards a career in something they might not even want (Bhattacharya, 1998).

The majority of immigrant Asian Indian parents aspire to better educational and job opportunities for their children. Researchers have reported that Asian Indian students tend to express higher educational aspirations, have higher math performance, and have parents who have higher status occupations and education levels than the other Asian ethnic groups in the U.S (Bhattacharya, 1998). Another study examining the school adjustment of South Asians revealed that parents believed education was the only means of success for their children and were less likely to participate in school related activities. In addition, students were likely to report having a sense of responsibility to achieve their parents' dreams (Bhattacharya, 1998). In spite of these good intentions, researchers also noted that Asian Indian youth tend to have difficulty living between the Indian and American cultures and are expected to obey their parents regarding

issues related to education, career choice, dating and socializing. In turn, conflicts between parents and their children may arise if the family expectations are not met.

2.10. Cultural Stigma for Seeking Support

In the acculturation process, Asian Indians encounter many stressors and adjustment difficulties (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). As with any relationship, building a positive relationship between parent and child is one that requires work and effort to make it strong and successful. Parenting is a difficult task and maintaining close relationships and open communication helps to ensure that the parents and their children stay connected through all ages of their upbringing. In the acculturation process both parents and children often feel isolated from both their original culture and the new culture. Cultural counseling or other support mechanisms could help them in the acculturation process, but in Asian Indian families a lot of stigma is attached to receiving counseling services (Khanna, McDowell, Perumbilly & Titus, 2009; Panganamala & Plummer, 1998). Parents in Asian Indian families do not think of counseling as a solution for problems. Instead, they feel shame and guilt for being in counseling. In Indian culture it is not typical to share problems or seek help from individuals outside of the family and it is usually considered disrespectful of the family (Panganamala & Plummer, 1998). However, some professionals suggest that accessing counseling or other support services would enable Asian Indian parents to learn better coping mechanisms for relieving their stressors and attaining greater life satisfaction (Panganamala & Plummer, 1998).

A cultural stigma is often attached to psychological and mental illness conditions among Asian Indians (Nandan, 2007). Professionals involved in health care or mental health services have the knowledge and sensitivity to address the distinct cultural needs of patients, and linking families with support systems can facilitate positive outcomes. However, for counselors or other

helping professionals it is more important to understand the cultural context of Asian Indians. A therapist who has knowledge of the variations in the family structure, values, and potential for conflict would be better able to solve the problems that might arise (Nandan, 2007; Rastogi, 2007). When dealing with different ethnic groups, therapists should be culturally competent. Research indicates that medical and social services provided in a culturally appropriate manner can enhance the health and overall well-being of culturally diverse groups.

2.11. Coping Supports for Asian Indian Parents

The presence of both formal organizations as well as informal social networks is almost a certainty among Asian Indian communities (or any other ethnic community for that matter). It is this social capital that is at work and plays a major role promoting culture and providing a platform for ethnic identity. As an example, on the North Dakota State University (NDSU) campus, there is a significant presence of Asian Indian minorities. In spite of their academic or professional pursuits, these students maintain a close association with people of their culture. Hence, celebrations of their culture and identity very often are linked with special occasions such as “Diwali Night” (Festival of Lights), which is a very popular cultural event on the campus. There are also occasions like Independence Day, Republic Day, and others that are coordinated by the Association of Students from India. This represents another organization on campus that provides a cultural base for Asian Indian students.

On the other hand, Asian Indians who might not be a part of ASI (like spouses of the students or employees) have their own informal gatherings for religious purposes, and take part in Indo American Great Plains (IAGP) activities. The objective of the Indo American Association of Great Plains (IAGP) is to represent those of Indian origin in North Dakota. IAGP promotes joint efforts in social, cultural, educational, and charitable activities. IAGP also strives

to provide insight into the multifaceted, dynamic face of India and to enrich knowledge of the Indian community in North Dakota. Just like ASI, IAGP brings awareness about the rich culture of India by celebrating Indian festivals and occasions of vital importance. These organizations play a useful role in assisting with social and cultural support for Asian Indians in the Great Plains region. We envision these organizations as potential partners for reaching Asian Indian families with resources for parents such as educational newsletters.

2.12. The Use of Newsletters for Family life Education

The Levels of Family Involvement model proposed by Doherty (1995) appears to be a practical conceptual model for professionals who practice parent and family education. This model describes five levels of involvement with families from minimal involvement to higher levels of involvement. The following are five levels of involvement according to the model: (1) Minimal emphasis on families; (2) Information and advice; (3) Feelings and support; (4) Brief focused intervention; and (5) Family therapy (Doherty, 1995). An educational newsletter series which does not include a class or workshop falls between Level 1 and Level 3 of the family involvement scale. According to Doherty's model (1995), Level 2 educational materials are intended to provide good grounding in knowledge, personal development and skills for the targeted audience.

To accomplish the purposes of the proposed project, we intend to develop a set of four educational newsletters targeted to the Asian Indian immigrant community and the common parenting concerns that are faced by such families in the United State. The educational newsletters would be considered a Level 2 parenting intervention since educators are communicating information and advising parents on practical strategies through the use of parent education newsletters.

2.13. Key Elements of Parenting Newsletters

Traditionally Asians focus more on the parent-child relationship than on any other family relationship. This is particularly true among Asian Indian families. Immigration imposes significant pressures for immigrant parents, who often face the complex task of parenting their children in a culture that is dissimilar from their culture of origin. In this circumstance, parent education programs offer a promising resource for Asian Indian immigrant parents. Such programs allow family life educators to communicate with Asian Indian parents and children regarding how to be successful in maintaining good interpersonal relationships.

Educational newsletters have the potential to serve as an effective parent education tool for Asian Indians who have immigrated to the United States. Parent education resources have the potential to prevent or minimize problems between parents and children through the improvement of parents' knowledge and skills (Campbell & Palm, 2004; Hughes & Clark, 1994). Educational newsletters for specific parent groups can be an effective tool for providing parent education (Walker, 2005). They have the potential to be useful in providing education to Asian Indian families due to a variety of characteristics.

One of the most important considerations in parent education is reaching the target audience. Asian Indian parents have a cultural tendency to keep family issues within the family system. Also, as already mentioned there is a stigma associated with seeking outside supports such as counseling for family difficulties. One of the benefits of parenting newsletters is that they have the potential to bypass cultural or mental barriers to seeking support and be delivered directly to families who may have needs (Walker, 2005). The development of a specific newsletter series targeted to Asian Indian families who may not attend parenting classes or seek counseling support to resolve their problems can reach out to them in their homes. Also, such a

resource can minimize the shame and guilt aspect of dealing with concerns that often arise in Asian Indian families.

In order for parents and children to have quality relationships, it is necessary for parents to have knowledge and information of best parenting practices. Because of the hectic lifestyles, time constraints, distance, and economic challenges that exist in many Asian Indian families, they may be less likely to participate in useful programs which can increase their knowledge on the issues important to them and their children. Parenting newsletters have become a popular in tool in parent education because such difficulties to participation can be overcome through usage of a parenting newsletter approach (Merkowitz, Jelly, Collins, & Arkin, 1997).

Educational newsletters also help and support families in other ways. Research indicates that newsletters often increase the confidence of parents by increasing their knowledge on the issues that are relevant for their families. Newsletters also help in promoting healthy parenting practices through practical applications (Bogenschneider & Stone, 1997; Garton et al., 2003; Walker, 2005). Many Asian Indian immigrant families have brought with them a strong sense of their native culture and customs. These cultural traditions and customs affect the way that they raise their children in the United States. Unfortunately, some of these parenting practices are considered as inappropriate and perhaps not supported by the culture and laws in the host country (United States). Therefore, Asian Indian parents need knowledge and information to build good parent-child relationships. Parents are more likely to adapt and improve their parenting as they gain increased knowledge on the issues they face raising children in the United States. Educational newsletters can be kept and referred to when needed or they may also be shared with friends, relatives and even new parents who come to the United States from India.

3. NEWSLETTER DEVELOPMENT

Parenting plays a significant role in a child's overall development. As children develop from infants to teens to adults they go through a series of developmental stages that influence their physical, intellectual, and emotional growth. The proper role of the parent is to provide encouragement, support, and access to activities that enable the child to master key developmental tasks.

However, the ability of parents to provide a secure and supportive atmosphere for a child's development may not happen smoothly for a variety of reasons. One reason that parents may encounter challenges can be due to immigration to a foreign country, particularly when the cultures of origin and the host country hold entirely different parenting beliefs. This section of the paper describes the development of a proposed newsletter series designed to enhance parental knowledge on the parenting concerns faced by Asian Indians in the United States. The information in the newsletter would help parents by supplying knowledge, guidance and tools based in best practices and scientific research to aid them in giving the support, guidance and learning experiences necessary for their child to grow and develop.

3.1. Developing an Educational Newsletter Series

This project proposes the development of an educational newsletter series that would include information directed to Asian Indian parents in general. A variety of studies have documented the value of educational newsletters and their educational and practical advantages (Bogensneider & Stone, 1997; Brotherson & Bouwhuis, 2007; Garton et al., 2003; Walker, 2005). There are several factors that can increase the effectiveness of newsletters and these factors will be taken into consideration in the development of the newsletter series.

Reisbeck (1980) stated that developing appropriate material is a very important factor in the development of newsletter. The content of the newsletter must be related to the real needs, interests, and opportunities of the person receiving it. Reisbeck (1980) also stated that the information provided in the newsletter must be factual and made pertinent to the needs of the reader by explaining the reasons and benefits for the newsletter. Each issue of the newsletter series will consist of information targeted at Asian Indian immigrant parents to enhance their knowledge on various aspects of parenting concerns identified in the literature review.

Definitions and explanations of new terms will be provided. Information presented in the newsletter will highlight the parenting concerns faced by Asian Indians in the United States, and provide ideas, tips and suggestions for positive parenting and building strong parent-child relationships. The goal of the educational newsletter series is first to address the parenting concerns faced by Asian Indian immigrant families in the United States. A second goal is to enhance the knowledge of recipients about parenting styles and practices that help in building positive parent-child relationships and balancing between the culture of origin and the culture of the host country.

Another important factor noted by researchers is the importance of receiving highly relevant information at a “teachable moment” (Riley et al., 1991). Studies on Asian Indian immigrant families have documented that adolescence is the period that often results in intergenerational conflict. The adolescent period can often be referred to as a time of stress and strain. As a child begins to enter adolescence, there appears to be a rise in conflict between the adolescent and the parents. The amount of conflict differs from family to family and is dependent on many factors (Baptiste, 2005; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). Parents need help in understanding what leads to these conflicts. An educational newsletter can provide a resource for parents who

are encountering these concerns during the period of a child's adolescence. In addition to providing basic information relating to intergenerational conflict and building positive relationships, the newsletters may also help families benefit from improved communication. A study by Riley (1991) found that parents who received monthly newsletters reported improved parenting practices, increased parental confidence, and decreased parental worry. Reisbeck (1980) also stated that parents in his study reported that newsletters issued regularly were very effective. The proposed newsletter will include four issues and the design will allow for each issue to focus on one specific concern. Issues will be distributed one per month.

A third factor that influences the effectiveness of a newsletter is the specific design of the material. According to Cudaback & Nelson (1985), the information presented in the form of a newsletter is effective when it is easily accessible, appealing, and attractive in format. The information provided in this educational newsletter series will be research-based, educational, easy to read, visually appealing, and consistent in format with each issue. Also, the newsletter series will be professionally peer reviewed and professionally developed and designed prior to final printing and distribution. This will ensure that the material is presented in a manner that is appealing and the material will be reviewed so that the content is accurate and consistent with best practices and current research.

This series of four publications will contain research based information to educate Asian Indian parents on the concerns faced by them after immigrating to United States. The newsletter resource will provide them with knowledge and suggestions for improved parenting and emphasize the need for establishing healthy parent-child relationships.

3.2. Newsletter Recipients

This newsletter series is a pilot project and is intended for initial distribution to the Indo American Great Plains (IAGP) group and the Association of Students from India (ASI) at North Dakota State University during 2013-2014. Distribution of educational materials through the organization may help parents to share and discuss the issues with others, which can enhance the possibility of utilizing and extending their social networks. In addition to distribution through these avenues, the newsletters will also be made available on the NDSU Extension Service website and the “eXtension” site on the Internet.

3.3. Newsletter Design and Content

The newsletter design will include a professionally developed header which will appear consistently on each issue. The title of the newsletter is “Parenting Across Cultures”. The newsletter series will focus on addressing several parenting concerns faced by Asian Indians in the United States. Each issue will highlight one specific parenting concern faced by Asian Indians after immigrating to United States. The issue will address the negative impacts associated with each concern faced by Asian Indians in the United States, and ideas and suggestions will be provided for positive parenting in each circumstance by utilizing supportive articles based on current research. Each issue will have research-based information for Asian Indian parents, as well as ideas and activities designed for the Asian Indian parents to implement in their own parent-child interactions. The activities may provide parents with opportunities to spend time with their children positively interacting and discussing important issues together. References for the information used in the newsletter will be listed in each issue.

The content of the newsletter series will address the following issues based on research explored in the literature review.

3.3.1. Newsletter Issue One:

The impact of cultural differences on Asian Indian parenting practices. This issue will introduce the topic of how cultural differences between the country of origin (India) and the host country (the United States) can influence Asian Indians parenting experiences and practices. This issue will also address how parent-child relationships are often affected by such cultural differences.

3.3.2. Newsletter Issue Two:

Dating and relationship patterns in the United States influence Asian Indian youth. This issue will introduce the subject of how the concept of dating in the host country challenges the traditional Asian Indian practice of arranged marriage as well as factors that lead to intergenerational conflict. Ideas will be presented to help parents in creating open communication with their children about this topic.

3.3.3. Newsletter Issue Three:

This influences autonomy and independence on the career choices of Asian Indian youth. This issue will explain how the concepts of autonomy and independence often embraced by Asian Indian children in the host country influence their career choices. Tips and suggestion will be provided for parents in helping their children to make good career choices.

3.3.4. Newsletter Issue Four:

Cultural barriers to seeking support for parenting concerns. This issue will explain the cultural stigma often exhibited by Asian Indian families in regard to seeking information or support services for parenting concerns and will be explained to Asian Indian families.

3.4. Newsletter Review

Review of the newsletter series will assist with making the resource useful and appealing to the target audience. One extension specialist, one graduate student, two Asian Indian parents, and one North Dakota State University associate professor will review the newsletter series to make recommendations and revisions. Recommendations made by these persons upon review will be incorporated and revisions will be made before the newsletter is considered for distribution. This review process will enhance the quality of information provided to families.

3.5. Newsletter Evaluation

Effective parenting newsletters should reassure the reader that the information provided is useful. The newsletter series will be geared towards a specific audience: Asian Indian parents in the United States. The information and activities presented in the newsletter are not age specific and the topics will provide educational information which is designed to be valuable and useful. The content will be designed to be appealing and understandable. The newsletter format is intended to be an effective parent education tool.

In order to determine if this newsletter series fulfills these criteria and is meeting the needs of the targeted audience, an evaluation tool will be developed. The evaluation tool will be an instrument that can be used to determine how the newsletters are being utilized and the results for those parents who are reading the newsletters. Dimensions of the evaluation tool will include:

3.5.1. Characteristics of the Population using the Newsletters:

It can be useful to assess who is using the newsletters and their characteristics. Information regarding those individuals reading the newsletter may include age, gender, educational level, employment status, years of residence in the United States, ages of children, or other characteristics.

3.5.2. Usage of the Newsletter:

It is important to understand the usage of the newsletter and this piece of information will also be included in the evaluation tool. Questions regarding how many of the issues are read, what is done with the newsletter after reading, and whether the information is shared with others will be included in the evaluation tool.

3.5.3. Usefulness of the Newsletter Resource:

A number of studies have reported that newsletters are considered to be a useful source of parenting information when compared to other sources like parenting classes, books, etc. The evaluation tool would include questions on what other sources of information the parent also utilizes such as attending parenting classes, reading books on parenting, parenting tips from friends and relatives, etc.

3.5.4. Impacts of the Newsletters:

The goal of the proposed newsletter series is to educate and enhance parenting knowledge on various parenting concerns faced by Asian Indians in the United States. The goal is also to encourage building positive and healthy parent-child relationships. The evaluation tool will include questions on how the newsletter series impacted Asian Indian families who are reading them and if the newsletter series was found to be helpful.

4. OVERVIEW OF THE PARENTING ACROSS CULTURES NEWSLETTER SERIES

This section provides a brief and general overview of the Parenting Across Cultures educational newsletter series for Asian Indian immigrant parents. The actual content of each newsletter is included in the appendices.

4.1. General Overview of the Newsletter Series

The Parenting Across Cultures newsletter series consists of four issues. Once development of the newsletter series is completed a plan exists to distribute the newsletters during the year of 2014 year through the Indo American Great Plains (IAGP) Association, headquartered in Fargo, North Dakota. The purpose of the newsletter series is to reach out to the intended audience with useful parenting information and provide a basic resource on parenting issues faced by Asian Indian immigrant parents.

4.2. Conceptual Outline of the Newsletter Issues

Each issue in the newsletter series is meant to introduce a common parenting concern and provide research-based information to Asian Indian immigrant parents in the United States. The conceptual outlines for each newsletter issue are highlighted below.

4.2.1. The Impact of Cultural Differences on Asian Indian Parenting Practices:

4.2.1.1. Concepts

This issue introduces the parenting concerns faced by Asian Indian parents in disciplining their children because of the cultural differences that exist in the United States. This issue also explains the cultural differences often reflected in differing disciplinary strategies.

4.2.1.2. Objectives

This issue will explain the negative consequences of some disciplinary strategies adopted by Asian Indians. Parents are provided with tips and suggestions for implementing positive disciplinary strategies in raising their children.

4.2.2. Dating and Relationship Patterns in the United States that Influence Asian Indian Youth:

4.2.2.1. Concepts

This issue highlights how the concept of dating in America challenges the traditional practice of arranged marriages and also contrasts with Asian Indian values regarding premarital sexual intimacy. The issue further explains how these dating and relationship issues may affect parent-child relationships.

4.2.2.2. Objectives

This issue offers advice to parents to create open communication with their children about this dating topic. This issue also discusses the negative consequences of not having open communication with their children about this topic. An activity is provided to encourage parents to think critically about dating issues. The open-ended questions in this activity are intended to help parents facilitate discussions with their children.

4.2.3. The Influence of Autonomy and Independence on the Career Choices of Asian Indian Youth:

4.2.3.1. Concepts

This issue highlights the how the Western concepts of autonomy and independence can affect the thinking and choices of Asian Indian youth. The issue also suggests how such values may affect their career choices and the challenges that may result in the parenting process.

4.2.3.2. Objectives

Suggestions are offered for parents to help their children in making good career choices. An activity is offered to assist parents to think critically about their role in helping their children to make good career choices.

4.2.4. Cultural Barriers to Seeking Support for Parenting Concerns:

4.2.4.1. Concepts

This issue introduces the phenomenon of cultural stigma that often exists among Asian Indians in seeking support services for resolving their individual or family concerns. The issue also suggests some possible strategies to overcome this concern.

4.2.4.2. Objectives

This issue offers advice to parents about seeking support for their parenting concerns. An activity with open-ended questions is provided for Asian Indian parents to critically think about seeking support services if they are needed.

4.3. Evaluation Materials

The sample evaluation included with the newsletter series is brief and intended to gather information regarding participant demographic characteristics, how recipients use information from the newsletter series, and perceived impacts on recipients of the newsletter. The evaluation form would be given to newsletter recipients following the delivery of all issues in the newsletter series.

4.4. Summary

The newsletter issues briefly outlined in this chapter explain the basic content of the Parenting Across Cultures newsletter series for Asian Indian immigrant parents in the United States. Each newsletter issue was developed with an objective, a specific topic, and material to assist parents who receive the information. As parents receive this information, they will understand issues that may arise in their parenting efforts in a different cultural context and learn of strategies and resources that can be useful to them as parents.

5. CONCLUSION

One of the primary differences between Asian Indian immigrant families and many families in the United States is the manner in which parents pursue objectives related to child rearing. The United States has been recognized as a society that focuses on individualism whereas Asian Indian culture tends to place a heavy emphasis on collectivism (Ross-Sheriff & Chaudhuri, 2004). Asian Indian families living in the United States often try to preserve the traditional values of Indian culture and also transmit these values to their off spring (Mogelonsky, 1995). In the process of transmitting these values to their offspring they may encounter some parenting difficulties.

One substantial difficulty for Asian Indian immigrant parents is parenting in a culture that is different from their own. The cultural differences between the culture of origin and the culture of the host country can make parenting very challenging for Asian Indians in the United States (Rastogi, 2007). Since many Asian Indian parents are struggling with parenting in the United States, the need for parent education that promotes knowledge and information that is helpful for parents in this ethnic and cultural community is vital.

Traditionally, Asians focus more on the parent-child relationship than on any other family relationship. This is particularly true among Asian Indian families (Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000). Immigration imposes significant pressures for immigrant parents, who often face the complex task of parenting their children in a culture that is dissimilar from their culture of origin (Kwak, 2003). In this circumstance, parent education programs offer a promising resource for Asian Indian immigrant parents. Such programs allow family life educators to communicate with Asian Indian parents and children regarding how to be successful in maintaining good interpersonal relationships (Hwang, 2012).

Educational newsletters have the potential to help and support families in a variety of ways. Research indicates that newsletters often increase the confidence of parents by increasing their knowledge on the issues that are relevant for their families. Newsletters also help in promoting healthy parenting practices through practical applications (Bogenschneider & Stone, 1997; Brotherson & Bouwhuis, 2007; Garton et al., 2003; Walker, 2005). Parent education newsletters have become a useful mechanism in parent education for providing parents and caregivers with information on parenting issues and techniques. Newsletters can make a meaningful contribution to the knowledge of parents and their efforts to maintain and increase the quality of their parent-child relationships.

Asian Indian parents who receive the Parenting Across Cultures newsletter series will have the opportunity to read each issue at a time that is convenient for them. They will be able to save them for future reference, discuss the topics with a fellow parent, or share the information with their relatives and friends. The content of the Parenting Across Cultures newsletter series has been developed based on available research and includes activities designed to assist parents in thinking critically about a variety of key parenting issues. It is not possible to avoid all parenting concerns for Asian Indian immigrant parents raising their children in the United States. However, the Parenting Across Cultures newsletter series provides one resource that will highlight potential concerns and furnish Asian Indian parents with a vehicle for thinking about their parenting efforts as they navigate the challenges of parenting across cultures.

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APPENDIX A. PARENTING ACROSS CULTURES NEWSLETTER: ISSUE ONE

A.1. The Impact of Cultural Differences on Asian Indian Parenting Practices

A number of studies have documented that Asian Indians have quietly permeated many segments of the American economy and society while still retaining their Indian culture. Most Asian Indian families strive to preserve traditional Indian values and transmit these to their children. For example, offspring are often encouraged to marry within the community and maintain their Indian heritage. Many Asian Indian families have different stories and values that they bring from their country of origin. Hence one cannot talk about the experiences of parents and parenting practices without considering their cultural values and traditional practices. Cultural values and beliefs serve as a structure for parents to do their best parenting (Deepak, 2005; Farver, Narang & Bhadha, 2002; Farver, Yiyuan, Bhadha, Narang & Lieber, 2007).

The way parents raise their children is associated with their native culture. Most parents raise children in the ways taught within their culture and so their parenting behaviors are governed by cultural values. Research studies on parenting and culture provide much evidence that parenting is often culture-specific. In other words, we raise our children with values and practices that are common in our traditional Indian culture. However, what do we do as parents when we live in a different country and must raise our children in a different cultural setting?

Typically, Asian Indian immigrant parents in the United States face the issue of balancing or integrating their own cultural values and parenting styles with the values and practices common within American culture. There may be a variety of differences in how each culture approaches parenting. Goals related to child rearing seem to represent the most significant differences between American families and Asian Indian families (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000).

Other possible differences may include communication patterns between parents and children, expectations regarding education, decision making processes, and parental styles of discipline. As a result, after moving to the United States Asian Indian parents often face the difficulty of integrating their parenting styles with the patterns commonly practiced in American culture.

A.2. Challenges in Child Discipline

A study by Baptiste (2005) confirmed that Asian Indian immigrant parents commonly feel that they are not able to discipline their kids while living in the United States in the way they do in their traditional culture. Such differences indicate the clash between familiar cultural patterns practiced in India and approaches to parenting within the different culture that Asian Indian families often encounter as they raise children in the United States.

For example, corporal punishment and shame and guilt are the most frequently used disciplinary strategies by Asian Indians. Many Asian Indian parents think that corporal punishment techniques or similar strict approaches are the best way to discipline their children and also note that these techniques have existed for many years. The use of corporal punishment and shaming approaches in parenting are increasingly viewed negatively in mainstream American culture.

A variety of research studies indicate that corporal punishment or spanking are effective discipline approaches only for a short time to suppress undesirable behavior. Asian Indians in the United States may wish to consider also that there are many theoretical and practical disadvantages in using corporal punishment. The following points highlight some of the disadvantages in using a corporal punishment approach to discipline:

- Corporal punishment is considered to be an artificial form of punishment and will have only a temporary impact on the child's behavior.

- Corporal punishment or spanking is often considered as being against the law in many regions of the United States.
- Physical punishment often leads to inappropriate behavior in a child. For example, research indicates that children who are spanked often are more likely to hit or hurt other children and behave aggressively as they grow and mature.
- Sometimes corporal punishment may lead to serious injuries for a child.
- A number of research studies have found that corporal punishment or spanking is associated with diminished quality of parent-child relations, poorer child and adult mental health, antisocial behavior in children and increased criminal behaviors in adults.
- Spanking and using negative or harsh language may also negatively influence or impair the psychological well-being of a child. Healthy psychological well-being is crucial to a child's development.
- Spanking can also lead to producing feelings of isolation, inadequacy and inferiority in children.

A.3. What Parents Can Do

Parenting is both a challenging and rewarding experience. It is very hard for many parents not to spank their children. However, the word “discipline” actually means “to teach,” particularly teaching good values. It is definitely possible to discipline children without spanking or using corporal punishment through a positive discipline approach. The following ideas suggest some of the techniques that can be used by Asian Indians in the United States to discipline their children without spanking or being too strict.

- Tell your child the logical consequences of repeated misbehavior. For example, if a child insists on throwing food then he or she will not be allowed to eat. It is very important for

parents to keep in mind that hitting or spanking will only make a child afraid of parents, but often will not help the child to realize the logical consequences of the misbehavior.

- Set a positive example of how to behave for the child and eliminate negative or abusive language.
- Clearly state the expectations for how you desire or expect a child to behave. In addition, providing clearly explained reasons and telling the child the consequences of breaking a rule are very important.
- It is very important for parents to understand how children feel and think. Take time to look into the situation through the lens of a child's perspective.
- Show warmth and affection toward children through a variety of strategies. For example, say "I love you" to children, tell children they are loved even when they do something wrong, hug them, comfort them when they are hurt or afraid, listen to them, look at the situation from their point of view, and praise them.
- Find supportive websites on discipline that can help you to gain more parenting knowledge. Good resources on this topic include Project NoSpank (www.nospank.net) and the Center for Effective Discipline (www.stophitting.co). These sites have some very helpful information for parents who would like alternatives to spanking.
- Read books on parenting. Select books that are recommended and which will help you to gain knowledge on parenting and the issues that will help in building a strong parent-child relationship.
- Taking their children to the cultural programs organized by the Indian associations will help their children to be exposed to their native culture and will also learn cultural things from observing other children.

- Attend parenting classes. Attending a parenting class can help you in the struggles of everyday life or in understanding some of the difficulties of child rearing, such as appropriate versus inappropriate discipline. Parents can benefit from the preventative aspect of such educational programs.

A.4. Summary

Research studies show that teenagers with strong connections to their parents are more likely to have positive relationships with other adolescents and adults, feel trusted by their parents and want to maintain that trust, listen and act on parental advice, respond to others with respect, have self-confidence and higher self-esteem, and also have better mental health. On the other hand, when the parent-child relationship is controlling and punitive, teenagers are more likely to fear and avoid their parents, lie to escape punishments and become depressed and anxious.

A.5. Parent Corner – Ask Yourself These Questions

- What are my thoughts on parenting?
- What are the parenting concerns you have faced after coming to United States?
- Do you think that you are not able to discipline your child in the way you did or do in your home country?
- Do you believe in spanking or corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy?
- Do you see any negative effects associated with spanking?
- What disciplinary strategy worked the best for you? Do you think that you need to learn disciplinary strategies adopted in United States?
- Have you read any books on parenting? If so, how useful they were in your life?

- What are your thoughts on attending parenting classes?

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APPENDIX B. PARENTING ACROSS CULTURES NEWSLETTER: ISSUE TWO

B.1. Dating and Relationship Patterns in the United States that Influence Asian Indian Youth

One major concern for Asian Indian parents who are raising youth in America is the Western concept of dating. Traditional Asian Indian culture includes arranged marriages and socialization within one's own cultural group (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994). Arranged marriages are still considered to be the normative pattern for mate selection in India. Dating practices that are common among young people in the United States do not fit with traditional Indian customs. Also, there is a strong cultural value in Asian Indian culture that discourages premarital sexual activity. Therefore, Asian Indian parents tend to frown upon the practice of dating, although some parents are slowly yielding to the demands of their teenage and young adult children to be allowed to date (Farver et al., 2007).

The preference still exists for the selection of a marriage partner from within the subgroup of the larger community and with the full approval and consent of the parents. Family or community members are often involved in the selection of a suitable mate. The family and educational backgrounds of the potential partner are thoroughly examined before introductions are made. Asian Indians believe that their children will be happier if they are married to someone who shares a similar history, tradition, religion, and social customs and who will be able to impart these values to their children, thus ensuring the continuity of the community (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994). They believe that such marriages made within the community tend to be more stable and longer lasting than those that cross community borders. How can parents who are raising their teenage and young adult children in American culture navigate the processes of dating and relationships that are common in American culture?

B.2. Dating Issues and Parent-Child Communication

In Asian Indian families, parents are typically involved in the selection of a mate for their children. Parents look into many variables before selecting the mate for their children: religion, caste, education, family background, and social status, as well as identity within the Asian Indian community. For Asian Indians, the concerns that exist around dating and selection of a marriage partner are numerous and affect their parent-child relationships, especially with children who are making adaptations to American culture. Some studies have documented that dating and relationship patterns appear to be at the root of a raging intergenerational conflict (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994).

In a study by Dasgupta (1998), an Asian Indian mother of three adolescents and a pediatrician addressed a roomful of youngsters on the practice of dating and stated, “As a representative of parents here, I want to say we love our children. We care for our children. I am not telling our neighbor Tony or Harry not to go for dating, because they are not my children. [To] all the children I want to say: trust us, because we want the best for our kids.” In the same study Venkataraman, an Asian Indian immigrant and father, said, “Children talk about going out on date(s) and tell us that we don’t know anything about the U.S. culture. What do they know about their cultural background? I think they are lost If dating is an exploration, they are going the wrong way” (p. 963). Segal (1991) notes this deep anxiety in Asian Indian parents with regard to Western dating practices and believes most Indian immigrants who are not quite familiar with the practice tend to conflate dating with sexual activity.

As already noted, relationships that develop in traditional Asian Indian culture typically occur through the practice of arranged marriages and socialization within one’s own cultural group (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994). Dating is not a traditional Indian custom. It is not

uncommon for Asian Indian parents to simply reject or highly discourage the practice of dating. If their teenage or young adult children make demands which include the desire to date or pursue relationships, this clash between American cultural patterns and traditional Asian Indian practices can result in frustration and conflict between parents and their children (Farver et al., 2007).

Casual dating is highly discouraged and often Asian Indian parents fear that dating will lead to sexual activity. On the other hand, young Indian adults may think that their parents are just confused with this unfamiliar practice and usually relate dating to sex. Some studies have reported that a lack of intergenerational dialogue on the issues of dating and sexuality in Asian Indian families can lead to secret dating behaviors by their children. Disagreement around the issue of dating and relationships usually leads to intergenerational conflict (Baptiste, 2005; Manohar, 2008). Thus, a solution for this disagreement may lie in both parties meeting each other halfway and taking steps to communicate about the issues and negotiate expectations regarding dating behavior and relationships.

B.3. What Parents Can Do

The following ideas provide a variety of strategies that can be used by Asian Indians in the United States to explore the issue of dating and relationships with their children and take steps to avoid difficulties that might occur if there is not mutual understanding between parents and their children.

- It is very important for parents to define dating because it varies from person to person, family to family. The definition may be influenced by cultural practice, religious beliefs

and, simply, parental values. A common understanding of how this concept is defined will enable parents and children to understand each other.

- Discuss with your children what you believe to be the right time and age to consider dating. Some parents have a set age in mind and feel that young people should not be able to date until that time, while others take into account the maturity level of their children. Decide what is important to you as a parent and learn how your children feel about your beliefs relative to dating.
- When your teen begins to show an interest in dating, take steps to personally explore how you feel about dating practices. Define in your own words how you conceptualize dating. Consider whether you distinguish between dating and sexual activities. A good awareness of your own feelings can help you to communicate better with your child.
- Talking to your children about love, intimacy, and sex is an important part of parenting. Parents can be very helpful by creating a comfortable atmosphere in which to talk to their children about these issues. However, many parents avoid or postpone the discussion. Adolescents need input and guidance from parents to help them make healthy and appropriate decisions regarding their dating behaviors.
- Researchers have suggested that if parents take time to discuss expectations about dating and relationships, this pattern will help their children to make the decisions that are best for them without feeling pressured. Helping children understand that these are decisions that require maturity and responsibility will increase the chance that they make good choices.
- Encourage your children to talk with you and ask questions they may have about dating, relationships or sex. Maintain a calm and non-critical atmosphere for these discussions.

- Try to explain the cultural values behind allowing or not allowing young children to date and pursue relationships. Explain how parental judgment and community standards may inform your thinking.
- Talk about why dating is not related to sexual activity.
- Discuss the importance of responsibility for choices and decisions.
- Help your child to consider the pros and cons of choices.

By developing open, honest and ongoing communication about dating, relationships, sex, marriage, responsibility and choices, parents can help their youngsters learn about dating in a healthy and positive manner.

B.4. Parent Corner – Ask Yourself These Questions

- How do you define dating?
- What do you think is the right time to accept dating?
- What do you think young people should know about dating and relationships?
- What behaviors do you think are appropriate or inappropriate in dating?
- What things would you want your child to consider before dating?
- How would you like to advise your child when he/she is ready for dating?
- How do you plan to discuss issues of dating and relationships with your child?
- How would you like to resolve issues that arise around dating?

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APPENDIX C. PARENTING ACROSS CULTURES NEWSLETTER: ISSUE THREE

C.1. The Influence of Autonomy and Independence on the Career Choices of Asian Indian Youth

A common traditional practice in Asian Indian families which often gets challenged as families immigrate to America is choosing careers for their children. One of the main reasons many Asian Indian families relocate to America is to establish a better future for themselves and for their children. Thus, as soon as they arrive in the United States they do everything possible to give their children a quality education. Parents may also communicate very high expectations to their children and this places pressure on their children, who are expected to prepare for and do well in the careers that their parents choose for them (medicine, law, education). Parents typically act out of their best intentions in such circumstances; however, high expectations and pressure often causes frustration for their children, who tend to feel obligated and pushed toward a career in something they might not even wish to do (Bhattacharya, 1998). What can Asian Indian parents do to encourage their children to make positive career choices while also allowing for the influences that American values may exert on their children?

C.2. Parental Desires and Career Choices

The majority of immigrant Asian Indian parents aspire to better educational and job opportunities for their children. Researchers have reported that Asian Indian students tend to express higher educational aspirations, have higher math performance, and have parents who have higher status occupations and education levels than other Asian ethnic groups in the U.S (Bhattacharya, 1998). A study examining the school adjustment of South Asians revealed that parents believed education was the only means to success for their children and so children were

less likely to participate in school related activities. In addition, students were likely to report having a sense of responsibility to achieve their parents' dreams (Bhattacharya, 1998).

In spite of these good intentions, researchers have also noted that Asian Indian youth tend to have difficulty living in the divide between the Indian and American cultures and are expected to obey their parents regarding issues related to education, career choice, dating and socializing (Downing & D'Andrea, 1994). In turn, conflicts between parents and their children may arise if family expectations related to education or career choices are not met. The decision making patterns related to career choices in Asian Indian families and in modern American culture are often very different.

In Asian Indian families, decisions made by teenage or young adult children in the family are highly influenced by parents or other elders in the family. It is very typical in Asian Indian families that parents influence their children's career choices. Asian Indian children are often encouraged by their parents to pursue professional degrees in demanding, high-status fields such as engineering, medicine, law or business. Many Asian Indians aspire to better education and job opportunities for their children (Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000). Hence they play a vital role in choosing careers for their children. However, this traditional practice in Asian Indian families tends to get challenged when families are in the United States.

Research suggests that conflicts tend to arise between Asian Indian parents and their teenage and adult children on issues related to education, career choices and dating (Chao & Tseng, 2002). This is because children of immigrant families begin to assimilate into and adopt some values within the modern American culture as compared to their parents. For example, young Asian Indians being raised in America often learn and adopt the concepts of autonomy and independence in thinking about their career choices. This means that they are more likely to

diverge from parental desires and seek to chart their own path in making career choices. The difficulty this may create is that Asian Indian parents expect their children to value family obligations and expectations with regard to career choices whereas children may prefer autonomy and individual desires in making their own decisions (Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002). In simple terms, young Asian Indians being raised in America often want to make their own career decisions that differ from parental expectations and this leads to intergenerational conflicts.

It is possible to respect the feelings of Asian Indian parents with regard to career choices and also make room for exploring the interests and desires of children. Research overwhelmingly indicates that parent involvement not only positively affects student achievement, but it contributes to higher levels of educational and career attainment. Students whose parents are actively involved in their education are more likely to attend school regularly, adapt well to school, and excel academically. Thus it is not desirable to discard the aspirations and involvement of Asian Indian parents in guiding the career choices of their children. Instead there needs to be communication about expectations and dialogue that enables high achievement while also considering the interests and well-being of children as they plan future career options.

C.3. What Parents Can Do

The following ideas furnish a number of tips for parents that can be used in advising children with respect to making good career choices.

- Advise children from a young age about the importance of a quality education. Explain what is required to pursue a particular career choice and succeed in each field. In addition, consider what career options might be a good fit for their interests.

- Give information about different career possibilities and expose children to work settings and professionals in particular fields.
- Provide feedback as children explore ideas for career choices. Communicate your thoughts but also allow for children to indicate their interests.
- Set high and positive expectations for children in pursuing an education that will allow them to select a career.
- Be encouraging of children and their career interests.
- Attend career fairs along with your children.
- Provide emotional and financial support that enables children to pursue education and positive career options.
- Teach children to be responsible in making choices that determine their educational achievement and career opportunities.
- Encourage children to explore their dreams with regard to career possibilities. Balance this process with understanding of the reality that is needed to pursue particular career choices.
- Provide direction about your feelings and desires as a parent related to career choices. Also, consider the value of allowing your child to exercise freedom in choosing career options and how you might agree on career possibilities.
- Act as a role model for your child in reaching for educational and career excellence.
- Become more aware of your child's career interests and abilities. Ask questions of your child regarding what careers they have considered. Engage in activities that allow them to learn about and explore the career options that they have mentioned, as well as options that you would like them to consider.

C.4. Parent Corner – Ask Yourself These Questions

- As a parent, to what extent would you like to be involved in your child's career decision making process?
- How much discussion have you had as a parent regarding career options with your child?
- To what degree you would expect your child to attend a university?
- If your child decided on a career that is different from what you think he or she ought to do, how would you feel about that choice? How would you support your child?
- What things would you consider to be important in assisting your child in the career decision making process?
- What inadequacies do you see in helping your child with his or her career development?
- What choices could you make that would enable your child to feel confident about career options and his or her preparation for a career?
- Have you approached your child about career choices and discussed the feelings and values that you hold regarding this topic? Have you listened to your child's feelings and values on this topic?
- What activities could you do with your child to explore future career options of interest?

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APPENDIX D. PARENTING ACROSS CULTURES NEWSLETTER: ISSUE FOUR

D.1. Cultural Barriers to Seeking Support for Parenting Concerns

In the acculturation process, Asian Indians encounter a variety of stressors and adjustment difficulties (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). As with any family relationship, building a positive relationship between parent and child requires work and effort to make it strong and successful. Parenting is a difficult task and maintaining close relationships and open communication helps to ensure parents and their children stay connected through all stages of a child's upbringing. When Asian Indian families come to the United States and experience a different culture, often in the acculturation process both parents and children feel isolated from both their original culture and the new culture. How can Asian Indian parents manage the stresses associated with raising children in a different cultural setting while also maintaining the values and practices that are important to them in their native Indian culture?

D.2. Cultural Stigmas and Support Mechanisms

Cultural counseling or other support mechanisms can be of significant help in the acculturation process as families adapt to American cultural values and practices. However, in Asian Indian families there is often a lot of stigma attached to receiving counseling services (Khanna, McDowell, Perumbilly, & Titus, 2009; Panganamala & Plummer, 1998). Parents in Asian Indian families may not think of counseling as a solution for family problems. Instead, they may feel shame and guilt for being in counseling. In Indian culture it is not typical to share problems or seek help from individuals outside of the family and it is usually considered disrespectful of the family (Panganamala & Plummer, 1998). However, some professionals suggest that accessing counseling or other support services would enable Asian Indian parents to learn better coping mechanisms for relieving their stresses and attaining greater life satisfaction

(Panganamala & Plummer, 1998). A cultural stigma is often attached to psychological and mental illness conditions among Asian Indians (Nandan, 2007). Thus, cultural prohibitions against sharing family concerns with outside sources or stigma associated with mental health needs can limit the likelihood of Asian Indian parents seeking out support services when there are needs in the family.

Professionals involved in health care or mental health services are trained with the knowledge and sensitivity to address the distinct cultural needs of patients. Also, linking families with support systems can facilitate positive outcomes. However, for counselors or other helping professionals, it is also important to understand the cultural context of Asian Indians and the values and practices that may characterize their worldviews and family relationships.

Asian Indian culture is often described as maintaining an emphasis on collectivism, whereas the modern American culture is described as individualistic and competitive. Such differences tend to create a clash between traditional Asian Indian patterns of parenting and approaches to parenting in the United States. Hence in the acculturation process Asian Indian families encounter some stresses and difficulties as children seek autonomy while parents desire to maintain particular values and practices. The acculturation process can leave Asian Indian parents and their children struggling to bridge the cultural differences they encounter and seeking to find ways to build a positive parent child relationship. One positive strategy suggested by scholars is to take advantage of cultural counseling or other support systems. There are a variety of things that Asian Indian parents might consider if they are dealing with stresses in parenting due to cultural differences.

D.3. What Parents Should Know

- Counseling services or other support systems can provide parents dealing with stress with useful knowledge, coping strategies, and a source of support.
- Individuals who immigrate to a different country often face stresses and adjustments continuously in professional and social settings over an extended period of time.
- Feelings of isolation, stress, and the need to make adjustments can lead to great stress for Asian Indian or other immigrant populations.
- Asian Indian women who withdraw from challenging situations have been found to experience a loss of hope, reduced effectiveness in managing conflict, and display of more avoidant behaviors.
- Problems may arise more often when Asian Indian children become acculturated within modern American culture and exhibit choices and behaviors that make the parenting process more challenging. Research studies suggest that intergenerational conflict in Asian Indian families tend to arise around issues of discipline and communication patterns, dating and marriage, career choices, and socialization patterns.
- For Asian Indian immigrant parents, seeking to balance family relationships between these two cultures can make life very challenging and stressful. To cope with such stresses, Asian Indian parents may benefit as they seek out support services in the community.
- Some professionals suggest that accessing counseling services or support systems would enable Asian Indian parents to better cope with family difficulties in the United States if they arise and help in attaining greater life satisfaction.

D.4. Parent Corner – Ask Yourself These Questions

- Have you ever felt a need for counseling or support services to improve your parent-child relationship(s)?
- What made you think about counseling services?
- Do you know of a counseling service or other support agency that you could call or schedule a visit if you had a personal or family need?
- How do you think that counseling services could benefit you if you had a need to visit with someone? How could it benefit your children?
- Do you really believe in counseling services?
- What type of support services would you like to use (i.e., attending parenting classes, seeing a counselor or therapist, etc.)?

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APPENDIX E. SAMPLE EVALUATION FOR PARENTING ACROSS CULTURES
NEWSLETTER

E.1. Parent Questionnaire

Please answer each question to the best of your ability. There are no right or wrong answers.

Your answers will be kept confidential. Please check or circle the answer as appropriate. When you are finished, please return the questionnaire.

1. Four issues of the Parenting Across Cultures newsletter have been distributed through the Indo American Great Plains association. How many of these newsletters did you receive?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

2. How much of the Parenting Across Cultures newsletters did you read?

- None of it
- Some of the content in some issues
- Some of the content in most issues
- Most of the content in most issues
- All the content in all issues

3. If you did not read the newsletter, why not?

4. What do you usually do with the newsletters?

- Throw them away
- Keep them and file them for later use
- Give them to someone else to read when I am finished
- Other _____

5. Who else read the newsletter?

- Spouse or partner
- Child's grandparent

- Another friend or relative
- Other parents
- Co-worker
- Other _____

For me, the Parenting Across Cultures newsletter was:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. About the right length				
7. Easy to read and understand				
8. Interesting to read and informative				
9. Valuable as an information source				
10. Useful in my everyday parenting				
11. Helpful in understanding potential parenting concerns				
12. Helpful in understanding cultural issues and parenting				

Parents get information on parenting issues from many sources. Please rate how useful each of the sources listed below has been for you. Circle the appropriate number.

Source	Does Not Apply	Not at all Useful	Some-what Useful	Very Useful		
	0	1	2	3		
13. Your parents, relatives, in-laws	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. Spouse	0	1	2	3	4	5

15. Friends or other parents	0	1	2	3	4	5
16. Physician, nurse, care provider	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. Books, magazines, newspapers	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. The Internet	0	1	2	3	4	5
19. Parenting Across Cultures newsletter	0	1	2	3	4	5

20. Since receiving the Parenting Across Cultures newsletter, what information from the newsletter has been the most useful to you?

21. Have you shared or discussed information from the newsletter with others? If so, with who and has it been helpful in your personal or family life?

22. Have you applied any ideas from the newsletter in your association with your child? If so, what? Can you share this briefly?

23. Please list any other things that you would like to share regarding the Parenting Across Cultures newsletter resource.

E.2. Demographic Information

The following personal information is important to this survey. Your answers will be kept confidential. Please respond sincerely.

1. Age _____

2. Gender

- Male
- Female

3. Family Status

- Single (never married)
- Married
- Separated/Divorced
- Live with partner
- Remarried
- Widowed

4. Employment Status

- Employed full time (40+ hours a week)
- Employed 26 to 39 hours a week
- Employed less than 25 hours per week
- Seeking employment
- Not seeking outside employment (full time student, homemaker, retired)
- Other _____

5. Education

- Some high school
- High school/GED
- Some college
- 2-year college degree
- 4-year college degree
- Master's degree or higher

6. Region of India or South Asia that you come from: _____

7. Number of children _____

8. Amount of time you have been in the United States

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 2 years
- 2 to 4 years
- 4 to 8 years
- 8 years or more