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Challenges of Asian immigrant college students in the U.S. educational system

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**CHALLENGES OF ASIAN IMMIGRANT COLLEGE STUDENTS
IN THE U.S. EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Child and Adolescent Development

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by Seung-Jin Lee

December, 2002

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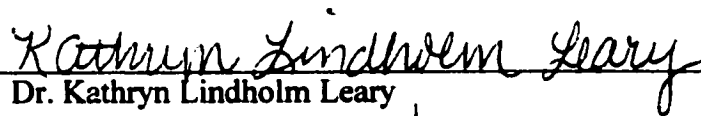
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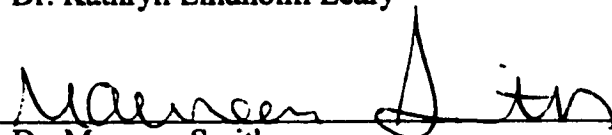
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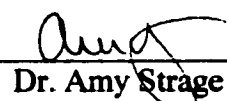
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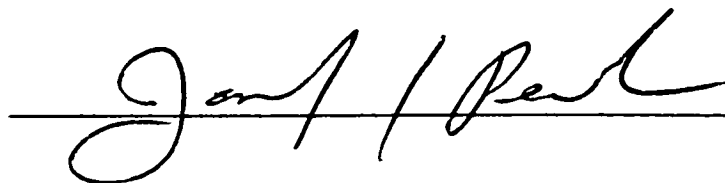
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Abstract

Challenges of Asian Immigrant College Students

in the U.S. Educational System

by Seung-Jin Lee

The purpose of this study is to examine challenges of Asian immigrant college students in the U.S. educational system. A total of 190 Asian immigrant college students, from different Asian backgrounds, completed a questionnaire related to the challenges they experienced in their homes, at school, and with other students. The findings suggest that Asian immigrant students' major challenges relate to conflicts with their parents, proficiency in English, and the school environment and relationships with other students (experiences of unfair treatment, racial discrimination, and students' hostile attitudes). Level of English proficiency influenced relationships with other students, grades in English/social studies but not math/science, selection of a major, selection of the current college, and overall attitude toward college. Most students felt that they received a sufficient amount of assistance in school and most participants did not perceive many difficulties in entering college.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Asian Americans are the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the United States (Chan & Hune, 1995; Nakanishi, 1995a; Takaki, 1998; Tanaka, Ebreo, Linn, & Morera, 1998). The recent growth of the Asian American population has been dramatic. According to Takaki (1998), the Asian American population increased at a rate of 577 percent from 1960 to 1980, compared to an increase of 34 percent for the general population. While the total US population increased at a rate of 17 percent from 1980 to 2000, the Asian American population increased by 153 percent (Lindholm, 2001).

In 1990, people from Asia and their U.S. born children reached approximately 7.3 million, and by 1996, nine million (Weinberg, 1997). Kitano and Daniels (2001) stated that in 1996, the Asian American population represented 3.7 percent of the U.S. population. It is estimated that by 2020, the Asian American population is expected to reach twenty million (Jo, 1999), which would be more than 6 percent of the total U.S. population (Kitano & Daniels, 2001), and by 2050, this number will continue to increase to more than 40 million, constituting over 10 percent of the nation's total population (Lee & Zane, 1998).

According to Spring (2001), immigration was the major factor accounting for the increase in the size of Asian American communities. The substantial increase of the foreign-born population from Asia can be attributed to the Immigration Act of 1965, which eliminated the provision of discriminatory quota, the Indochinese Refugee Resettlement Program Act of 1975, and the Refugee Act of 1980 (Chan & Hune, 1995;

than English is used (Lindholm, 2001). Studies done by Olsen, Jaramillo, McCall-Perez, White, and Minicucci (1999) and Olsen and Jaramillo (1999) found that almost 1.4 million students, constituting 24 percent of students in public schools, are limited English proficient or non-English-speaking.

Strage (1997) pointed out that linguistic minority children often find little respect for their cultural heritage, and suffer from ethnic stereotyping by others, which might lead them to have high rates of drop out, psychological disorders, and academic failure. Such children are often placed in classes where they cannot understand what is being taught. In addition, although there has been a dramatic increase in the Asian immigrant student population, federal funding for immigrant education programs has been delayed, restricted, or cut considerably (Rong & Preissle, 1998). Suzuki (1986) also argued that there are large numbers of limited English speaking Asian American students whose needs are not being met in the U.S. educational system. Many researchers have mentioned a variety of problems that Asian immigrant students with limited English proficiency have to face (Cheng, 1998b, 1999; Dao, 1991; Novak, Schuler, & Watanabe, 1997; Olsen, 1997; Pang, 1990, 1995; Spring, 2001; Suzuki, 1986; Young & Takeuchi, 1998; Weinberg, 1997). In California, there has been a severe shortage of qualified bilingual and ESL teachers. For example, 41 percent of California schools experienced a shortage of bilingual or ESL teachers in the 1993-94 school year (Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999; Olsen et al., 1999), and only 30 percent of limited English proficient students received bilingual education or received any instruction in their native languages in California (Olsen et al., 1999).

Moreover, development of a healthy identity has been regarded as one of the most important developmental tasks (Erikson, 1968), and for ethnic minority students, a coherent ethnic identity is related to positive outcomes, such as higher academic performance and behavioral competence, as well as positive adjustment and self-esteem (Gonzales & Cauce, 1995). However, Asian immigrant students are often expected to accept being American, though they are frequently rejected in their attempts to assimilate by dominant society because of their distinct physical and cultural characteristics (Young, 1998). This may lead their development of a positive identity to be more complicated than those immigrants who share similar physical and cultural characteristics with the dominant society (Leung, 1998; Yee, Huang, & Lew, 1998). In addition, due to perceived distance in physical and cultural characteristics, the process of acculturation, which refers to the process of adjusting to one's cultural attitudes, beliefs, practices, knowledge, and skills as a result of close contact between two dissimilar cultures (Sue, Mak, & Sue, 1998), can be stressful for Asian immigrant students (Padilla, 1980). Because such students' understanding of ethnicity gradually includes the values and attitudes of their major social environment, such as school (Gonzales & Cauce, 1995), the influences of schools on Asian immigrant students' ethnic identity formation are significant. The prejudice and discrimination they experience in school can have important impacts on minority students' socio-psychological development and school performance (Gonzales & Cauce, 1995; Tanaka, Ebreo, Linn, & Morera, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

Asian American students have a well-known reputation for high academic achievement. In fact, Asian Americans have the highest level of college education of any ethnic group in the United States. In spite of Asian Americans' academic success, they have various unresolved obstacles to overcome in the U.S. educational system. Students from immigrant families face many challenges in their educational and social adjustment in this new country. Many of them come from homes where languages other than English are spoken. Because most of these children are dealing with the acquisition of a new language and culture, while still trying to maintain their native language and culture at home, many of them suffer from adjustment problems in both environments.

In addition, prejudicial attitudes and racial discrimination from the dominant society have important impacts not only on minority students' academic achievement but also on their positive socio-psychological development and adjustment. Moreover, Asian immigrant students' insufficient English communication skills may present a barrier in achieving higher education and future career advancement, which may lead to problems in adjustment in the United States (Wong, 1990). Furthermore, because of their lack of highly proficient communication skills in English, many Asian American students have a tendency to concentrate in the technical field, which may lead them to work in lower white-collar positions rather than in decision-making administrative positions (Wong, 1990).

Purpose of the Study

Considering the increasing size of the Asian American population, it is important to understand their needs as well as the barriers they face in U.S. schools due to different languages and cultural backgrounds. Although in recent years there have been many studies done on Asian Americans, there is a lack of research that deals with Asian immigrant students' needs and concerns, school interventions, or other service-related issues (Chang & Liu, 1998). Because of the emerging importance of exploring educational challenges that may influence overall development and adjustment of Asian immigrant students in the United States, their challenges in the U.S. educational system will be investigated in this study. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine various educational challenges that Asian immigrant college students have confronted during their years in the U.S. educational system, and the effect these challenges have on Asian immigrant college students. The following research questions guided data collection and analysis:

- 1. Do Asian immigrant students experience cultural differences that influence their educational and interpersonal experience in U.S. schools?**
 - o Cultural differences between students and their parents**
 - o Cultural differences between home and school**
- 2. What challenges did Asian immigrant college students have in their U.S. elementary and secondary school education?**
 - o How did they perceive the school environment and their relationships with other students?**

- **Did they receive enough academic assistance?**
 - **Did they experience difficulties associated with proficiency in English?**
 - **Did their proficiency in English affect their school achievement or interpersonal relations in school?**
- 3. What challenges do Asian immigrant college students perceive in higher education?**
- **Do they perceive discriminatory admission criteria when they enter higher education?**
 - **Do limited financial resources affect them when they enter higher education?**
 - **Does their proficiency in English affect their choice of college or a major?**
 - **Do they perceive there is enough academic assistance for them?**
 - **What is their overall attitude toward their college?**
- 4. What was the greatest barrier or challenge they had in U.S. schools?**
- 5. What type of assistance was most helpful with the challenges in school?**

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Even though Asian American students are well-known for their high academic success, they nonetheless often face various obstacles. In this chapter, success stories and myths about Asian American students are reviewed. Various challenges that Asian immigrant college students have confronted, as linguistic and cultural minorities, in the U.S. educational system are also introduced. The educational challenges include issues that are related to their limited English proficiency, a lack of assistance and resources received from U.S. schools, their experiences of racial prejudice and discrimination, and their perceived challenges in higher education. In addition, conflicts that Asian immigrant students face both at home and at school, due to cultural and linguistic discontinuities, are presented.

Success of Asian American Students

According to Lee and Zhan (1998), Asian Americans are viewed as the “model minority.” This term refers to this group’s outstanding educational achievement, especially in mathematics and science, and as the economically successful minority group that does not need special assistance to become self-sufficient in U.S. society. This popular image that Asian Americans are a successful minority in both educational and economic achievement has been discussed in many studies (Chan & Hune, 1995; Gall & Natividad, 1995; Hsia & Peng, 1998; Hune, 1998; Lee & Zane, 1998; Leong, 1998; Suzuki, 1995; Wang; 1988, 1995).

According to Chan and Hune (1995), Asian American students spend more hours studying and doing homework, and usually take more college preparatory classes, than do students from other ethnic groups. In addition, Asian American parents arrange family life in order to enhance their children's educational opportunities. In fact, Asian Americans have succeeded in U.S. higher education. According to the research conducted by the American Council on Education (2000), Asian American enrollment in higher education increased by 73 percent from 1988 to 1997 (Wilds, 2000). Forty percent of Asian Americans had college degrees, compared to 21 percent of the total U.S. population (Karnow & Yoshihara, 1992). The number of Asian Americans who received bachelor's degrees and the number of Asian Americans earning doctorates more than doubled from 1987 to 1997. Asian American women, especially, showed remarkable growth in the number of degrees; the number earning a Masters degree has nearly tripled and the number receiving professional degrees has nearly quadrupled (Wilds, 2000). Wang (1988, 1995) claimed that Asian Americans have been vigorously pursuing admission into the most prestigious, selective universities in percentages far exceeding their population percentage. For example, in 1991, while Asian Americans made up approximately 3 percent of the American population, they represented 18 percent of the students at Stanford, 19 percent at Harvard, and 22 percent at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Karnow & Yoshihara, 1992).

By national standards, Asian Americans have the highest median household income, the highest percentage of college graduates, the highest percentage of technological and scientific positions, the highest percentage of professional jobs, the

lowest divorce rate, the lowest unemployment rate, and the lowest crime rate (Karnow & Yoshihara, 1992).

The Myth about Asian American Students' Success and Its Negative Impact

Popular conceptions of Asian American success are heavily influenced by the portrayals of Asians by U.S. media. The news media often depict Asian Americans in a superficial and stereotypical manner. For example, the media has frequently focused on success stories about some Asian immigrants and refugees who arrived in the United States with nothing, overcame all barriers, and achieved high levels of education and income. However, the news media rarely covers other aspects of the Asian immigrant population, such as their poverty status, the difficulties of Asian immigrant students with limited English proficiency (Walker-Moffat, 1995), or a lack of educational or social assistance and resources for Asian Americans.

According to Bennett (1995), recent immigrants often face various obstacles to adapt to U.S. society, such as limited English proficiency, psychological stress, and alienation. Moreover, Karnow and Yoshihara (1992) stressed that Asian immigrants do not always have equal access to health care and other public services. In fact, vast numbers of Asian immigrant students experience personal or academic difficulties, as well as psychological stress and alienation (Suzuki, 1986) due to their limited proficiency in English. However, Lee and Zhan (1998) argued that Asian Americans generally underutilize professional mental health and psychological services, which leads one to question the effectiveness of psychological services offered to Asian Americans.

In addition, according to Suzuki (1986), although the median incomes of Asian American families are relatively higher than those of white families, their individual median incomes are lower than those of whites. This incongruity may be explained by the following facts: (1) Asian families are larger on the average and, therefore, have more earners contributing to family income than do families in the general population (Gall & Natividad, 1995; Suzuki, 1986, 1995; Takaki, 1998); (2) Asian American children live with the family longer and thereby contribute more to family income (Suzuki, 1986, 1995); (3) A large proportion of Asian Americans live in states-such as California, Hawaii, and New York (Tanaka, Ebreo, Linn, & Morera, 1998)-with higher incomes but also higher costs of living than the national average: 59 percent of all Asian Americans lived in these three states in 1980, compared to only 19 percent of the general population (Suzuki, 1995; Takaki, 1998); and (4) Asian Americans may earn relatively good incomes by working longer hours (Madamba, 1998; Takaki, 1998), often at menial jobs (Suzuki, 1995).

In fact, recent data indicate that, the poverty rate of Asian Americans was almost twice that of whites in 1990 (Lee & Zane, 1998). Furthermore, when the Asian American population is separated into its diverse subgroups, more apparent disparity can be discovered. According to Lee and Zane (1998), poverty rates for Laotians (more than 30%), Cambodians (more than 40%), and Hmongs (more than 60%) are far above those of most Americans. Moreover, contrary to common belief, even though more Asian Americans enter higher education compared to the general population, they have fewer

job opportunities after graduation and, even when they are employed, their earnings are lower than those of whites (Chun, 1980, 1995).

The model minority image produces stereotypes and ignores the diversity of Asian Americans (Chun & Sue, 1998). According to Fung (1998), Asian Americans include various national, cultural, and religious groups, comprising more than 30 different ethnicities that have different histories and immigration experiences. Significant differences in religions, languages, lifestyles, customs, and traditions, as well as socioeconomic and educational experiences, have been identified within and between Asian American groups (Chang & Liu, 1998; Mau, 1995). Therefore, the model minority myth should not be generalized to all Asian Americans.

Reckless acceptance of the model minority myth has resulted in neglect, as well as denial, of the needs and problems of vast numbers of Asian immigrants who do not fit the model minority image (Chan & Hune, 1995). Researchers have emphasized the importance of recognizing variations within some Asian American groups that include high proportions of recent immigrants (Hsia & Peng, 1998; Lee & Zhan, 1998). Hsia and Peng (1998) pointed out that achievement differences between individuals, as well as within and among groups, should be considered in terms of disparities in educational experiences and socioeconomic background before and after their arrival in the United States. For example, although overall educational attainments of Asian Americans far exceed those of other ethnic groups, recent immigrants from Cambodia (35%), Laos (36%), and Vietnam (58%) have much lower rates of high school completion, compared to the national average of 80 percent (Chan & Hune, 1995).

Most Asian Americans are perceived as people who are successful on their own with no problems, or as hardworking overachievers who are willing to accept their disadvantageous situations without complaining (Karnow & Yoshihara, 1992; Lee & Zhan, 1998). This stereotype has led the public to neglect Asian American concerns. As a result, their concerns are given less public attention and a lower priority for support compared to the problems of other minority groups (Nakanishi & Hirano-Nakanishi, 1983). In addition, it has been taken for granted that resources and assistance of public and private social service agencies are less necessary for Asian American groups (Lee & Zhan, 1998). Consequently, they are excluded from the provision of public and private support in relation to social service programs (Gall & Natividad, 1995; Lee & Zane, 1998).

Frequently, the model minority myth places unreasonable expectations on Asian immigrant students by implying that they must be academically successful (Gall & Natividad, 1995; Lee & Zane, 1998). Hune (1998) and Young (1998) argued that in order to fit into the model minority myth, many Asian immigrant students feel academic pressures from the expectations of family and school, and some of those who fail to meet the expectations may internalize a feeling of shame (Young, 1998), and may drop out from school (Hune, 1998).

Suzuki (1986) argued that because Asian immigrant students are frequently viewed as quiet, polite, obedient, passive, yielding, and well-behaved, those who are assertive and aggressive may be regarded and treated unusually by teachers, although similar behaviors of other students would be perceived as normal. Moreover, Suzuki

(1986) added that such stereotypes and treatment might lead Asian immigrant students to become too submissive, inhibiting the development of oral communication skills to express their opinions. In addition, educators often expect Asian immigrant students to be diligent, conscientious, hard-working high achievers (Hune, 1998; Suzuki, 1986) with very few needs for educational supports (Sue & Abe, 1988). Furthermore, Asian immigrant students who do not fit in this stereotype and who fail to measure up to these expectations may experience a feeling of guilt for disappointing their teachers and parents (Walker-Moffat, 1995) and, as a result, may suffer psychological stress (Hune, 1998).

Hsia (1988) argued that the model minority stereotype obscures Asian immigrant students' academic and psychological problems instead of assisting them. Additionally, their outstanding achievements in mathematics and science may conceal their limited English proficiency and therefore lead some Asian immigrant students to pursue academic areas requiring less verbal fluency.

Hsia and Peng (1998) argued that English tests using objective questions might overestimate Asian American students' English proficiency, whereas mathematics problems that are stated in English might underestimate their true quantitative abilities. They emphasized the importance of recognizing students' full potential, which helps avoid underestimating or overestimating Asian immigrant students' strengths as well as weaknesses in various subjects.

The model minority myth has been criticized by many researchers on other grounds as well (Gall & Natividad, 1995; Karnow & Yoshihara, 1992; Lee & Zane, 1998; Spring, 2001; Weinberg, 1997). According to Spring (2001), this myth has been

used to criticize other minority groups. It has been suggested that the model minority image emerged as part of the white backlash to the demands of African Americans (Spring, 2001) for equal rights and equal opportunity through the civil rights movement (Lee & Zane, 1998). Furthermore, the model minority images have been used to argue that Asian Americans were successful in U.S. society without complaining about unequal rights and opportunities for themselves or fighting for their rights (Spring, 2001). Gall and Natividad (1995) also argued that the model minority myth was used in order to blame other minority groups for their lack of effort to succeed and in order to reduce the responsibility of society to assist these groups. Karnow and Yoshihara (1992) further stated that the image of Asian Americans as a model for other minorities damaged relations between Asian Americans and other minority groups.

Challenges of Asian Immigrant Students in U.S. Schools

Citing Greer's (1976) work, Suzuki (1995) argued, "the American educational system has largely served to maintain and legitimize the unequal, hierarchical class structure of American society-in which the racial minorities occupy the bottom rungs-by sorting out and socializing students for appropriate positions for racial minorities in that structure" (p. 117). Young and Takeuchi (1998) also stressed that Asian immigrant students have faced considerable barriers in the U.S. educational system and are often underserved by such a system.

Nakanishi (1995a) described various educational challenges that Asian immigrant students have confronted in American schools. These challenges include "issues of language and cultural adjustment and maintenance, differences in academic performance

levels, inadequate representation of the Asian American experiences in textbooks and curricula, and anti-Asian and anti-immigrant violence in schools” (Nakanishi, 1995a, p. xi). In addition, Asian immigrant students are often excluded from participating in academic tutoring and counseling services at higher educational institutions because they are frequently considered as a model minority who do not have academic, social, and economic disadvantages (Escueta & O’Brien, 1991; Nakanishi, 1995a).

Challenges of Asian Immigrant Students with Limited English Proficiency

The dramatic increase of the Asian immigrant population has resulted in a growing number of students with limited English proficiency in the U.S. educational system (Cheng, 1995). However, efforts to enhance the education of language minority students have failed to catch up with the rapid growth of the immigrant student population. In fact, many limited English proficient Asian immigrant students are not provided equal educational opportunities (Young & Takeuchi, 1998), and their needs are not being met in the U.S. educational system due to a shortage of qualified bilingual teachers as well as the lack of adequate curricula and curriculum materials (Suzuki, 1986).

Despite the efforts to improve the academic achievement of limited English proficient students, their academic performance has continued to be influenced by their limited English skills. Pang (1990, 1995) found that during the 1986-1987 academic year, over 39 percent of Asian American high school students in the Seattle School District were “at risk” in reading, as defined by state standards that students who scored below the 50th percentile on the California Achievement Test are deemed to be “at risk.” Pang (1990, 1995) also found that a large number of Asian immigrant students had

significantly lower verbal scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) compared to white students. In 1985, the SAT verbal mean score of Asian immigrant high school students who reported that their best language was not English was 272, which was significantly lower than white students' average of 449 (Pang, 1990, 1995). In addition, many Asian immigrant students have experienced difficulty in college because of their limited English skills. Weinberg (1997) argued that because many Asian immigrant college students with limited English proficiency failed to receive proper instructional assistance in college, dropouts from higher education were frequent.

Additionally, Olsen (1997) argued that turning non-English-speaking immigrant students into fluent English speakers is regarded as one of the most important roles of schools in educating immigrant students, while other problems in these students' adjustment receive much less attention. For example, according to Cheng (1998b, 1999), many Asian immigrant students who have limited English proficiency are often excluded from peer interactions due to their unfamiliarity with English language. Cheng (1998b) further noted that lack of opportunity to learn and practice English in class as well as fewer opportunities to engage in discourse with peers create barriers to academic success. Such students may not fully participate in classroom activities or instructions (Spring, 2001) due to their limited proficiency in English, which has a negative impact on the students' academic and social adjustment. Spring (2001) argued that their failure to participate indicates a lack of encouragement to engage in classroom activities or instructions, rather than a lack of ability. Thus, without assistance in learning English, they are deprived of equal educational opportunities.

Moreover, Asian immigrant students may not understand English well enough to feel comfortable joining in peer group conversations (Pang, 1990). Thus, their limited English communication skills create barriers in interpersonal relations, which ultimately results in difficulties acquiring a social support network (Huang, 1977). Furthermore, according to Novak, Schuler, and Watanabe (1997), communication difficulties and socioemotional problems are highly correlated with each other. Because effective communication is the basis for social interactions, immigrant students with limited English proficiency have problems in building necessary social relationships, which eventually hamper their socioemotional adjustment in school (Novak et al., 1997).

Dao (1991) claimed that, particularly for immigrant students who migrated to the United States during adolescence, English acquisition is slower and can be more frustrating compared to students who immigrated at a younger age. Such students may face more difficulties because limited English skills create more negative consequences for them than for younger children. For example, they often encounter more academic difficulties because their school subjects, such as science and social studies, require more advanced language skills. In addition, they are more likely to have problems in active interpersonal interactions since such interactions during adolescence depend more on verbal communication ability than those of younger students (Dao, 1991). Inability to express themselves during adolescence may result in lower self-esteem, lower motivation to learn, and lower interest in school (Chun & Sue, 1998). For example, a study of Korean American children found a strong correlation between self-concept and English

proficiency, indicating that those with a low self-concept had low English proficiency and vice versa (Kim, 1983).

Furthermore, other research indicates that immigrant students' limited English proficiency appears to increase the risk of involvement in antisocial activities of such students. Ima and Nidorf (1998b) found that, among the delinquent refugees that they investigated, 54.3 percent had limited English ability. Among serious offenders, no one had English proficiency, and 61 percent had poor English proficiency. These delinquent youths commented that they had trouble in school, especially because they could not understand instructions taught in English. Ima and Nidorf (1998b) concluded that English fluency was a major factor leading to delinquency for these students.

Limited Ranges of Major Choices

Although Asian Americans have reached outstanding records of college enrollment in higher proportion to their representation in the total population (Suzuki, 1986), they still face a number of problems in higher education. Pang (1995) stressed that many Asian immigrant students recognize their lack of ability to communicate in English and become anxious due to a fear of writing and speaking in English. Indeed, their limited English proficiency and their "communication anxiety" (Pang, 1995, p.173) may force a disproportionate number of Asian immigrant students to pursue degrees in more technical and scientific fields of study requiring less verbal fluency, such as engineering, computer science, accounting, mathematics, and physical sciences (Karnow & Yoshihara, 1992; Suzuki, 1986; Wong, 1990), and to take fewer courses in English, humanities, and social studies, which require strong verbal skills (Sue & Abe, 1988; Suzuki, 1986).

As a result, such students find themselves with a more limited range of academic options (Chan & Hune, 1995), in which they may have little interest, which further narrows their career choices (Hune, 1998). It is through this “risk averse strategy,” that Asian immigrant students are able to enter higher education despite their lack of proficiency in English (Hsia, 1988). However, their limited English proficiency may inhibit further socioeconomic and career advancement. Because they concentrate in technical fields, they eventually work in lower white-collar positions, rather than in decision-making positions (Wong, 1990).

In addition, Asian American students are often counseled to study a limited range of majors, such as mathematics, engineering, or science (Suzuki, 1986), because of the conception that they have strong abilities in mathematics and science. Such societal expectations for high academic ability among Asian American students might hinder the development of other types of abilities (Hsia, 1987; Lee & Zhan, 1998). In fact, some Asian immigrant students who might have been interested in studying humanities or social sciences often follow the advice of academic counselors who push them to select a major in mathematics or science, which is consistent with the stereotypes (Hune, 1998). Few Asian students are encouraged to study subjects other than mathematics, engineering, or science (Lee & Zane, 1998).

For example, Gall and Natividad (1995) stated that Asian American students’ popular intended undergraduate majors were health and allied services (25 percent), business (17 percent), and engineering (15 percent), which shows a consistent picture with the research conducted by American Council on Education (2000). According to the

American Council on Education, at the bachelor's level, the most popular degree fields were business, life sciences, and engineering for Asian Americans in 1997 (Wilds, 2000).

Gall and Natividad (1995) added that engineering was the most popular intended graduate field of study, while education was the least popular field among Asian American GRE examinees. In fact, Asian Americans received the largest number of master's degrees in business, followed by engineering (Wilds, 2000).

Negative Consequences of Losing the Native Language

Olsen (1997) pointed out that because becoming a fluent English speaker is frequently encouraged in school, most immigrant students regard the use of their native language as of less importance while they are in school. Without proper support for continued development of their ethnic language, such students often abandon their native language in order to learn English and achieve quick acceptance. This attrition in their native language results in not only failure to develop literacy in their native language (Olsen, 1997), but also loss of a strong family connection and access to one's culture and history (Gall & Natividad, 1995).

Rong and Preissle (1998) argued that immigrant children need more support and comfort from their parents since they are likely to confront unfamiliar and alienating or even hostile environments in the new nation. Moreover, communication within immigrant families helps the children's schooling directly (Rong & Preissle, 1998). However, as children lose their native language, frustration and conflicts might occur within immigrant families. For example, according to Jo (1999), children who lose their mother tongue often do not understand what their parents are trying to say to them, while

the parents are also frustrated due to their inability to guide and direct their children.

Many parents feel that they are not adequate because they cannot teach their values nor even help them their children with their homework due to a failure to communicate with their children in both English and their native language (Jo, 1999).

Despite the fact that many immigrant students gradually give up their native language in order to adapt to American culture as soon as possible, many researchers have suggested that the native language is a powerful factor in forming an ethnic identity (Garcia & Hurtado, 1995; Yee, Huang, & Lew, 1998). Garcia and Hurtado (1995) emphasized that the use of the ethnic language is positively related to the formation of ethnic identity, in that the more children use their ethnic language, the more positive and stronger their ethnic identity will be developed.

According to Phinney (1990), ethnic identity is one of the most crucial components of identity development for ethnic minority students. Gonzales and Cauce (1995) also stressed that minority students' ethnic identity should be reinforced because positive ethnic identity and ethnic pride were related to healthy developmental outcomes, such as positive adjustment and self-esteem, higher academic performance and behavioral competence, as well as lower levels of anxiety, depression, and problem behavior. Moreover, a secure and positive ethnic identity may help reduce prejudice toward other ethnic groups, and facilitate relations with the dominant group (Gonzales & Cauce, 1995) because a strong and positive ethnic identity allows one to respect others who are ethnically different (Aboud & Doyle, 1993; Ramirez, 1984). However, unfortunately, as immigrant students adapt to American culture and English language,

they begin to lose their native language due to insufficient support for development of their ethnic language in school.

Challenges of Learning English and Other Subjects in U.S. Schools

Although learning English is considered to be a primary means for succeeding in U.S. schools (Gall & Natividad, 1995), immigrant students are not given sufficient opportunities to enhance their English proficiency, which is required for full academic participation (Olsen, 1997). Olsen (1997) claimed that many immigrant students are often placed in inadequately supported classes where they are separated from English-speaking schoolmates through special classes designed for limited English speakers, which severely constrains their access to opportunities for learning English from real world situations. In a study of Punjabi high school students, Gibson (1988) found that immigrant Punjabis students believed that they needed more opportunities to interact with non-Punjabi classmates and that the vast majority of the students did not want to be separated from English-speaking students.

On the other hand, Olsen (1997) noticed that some immigrant students with limited English skills are placed in regular classes without adequate assistance, even though they cannot fully comprehend class instructions, which ultimately results in the students' academic failure. In addition, Olsen (1997) pointed out that some immigrant students may acquire oral fluency in English but are still poor at reading and writing in English. Their fluency in spoken English makes teachers overlook the problem of their underdeveloped English literacy. As a result, even though they still have serious

problems in competing at higher level academic courses, some of them are placed in such classes without special attention and support (Olsen, 1997).

In addition, many classes designed for immigrant students with limited English proficiency rarely have special support to help such students access the academic curriculum, and even prevent access to a full academic core curriculum (Olsen, 1997). Gibson (1988) also found that, although many of the immigrant Punjabi students wanted an opportunity to learn the full range of the academic curriculum, the school made it virtually impossible for such students to move according to their actual abilities. Furthermore, Ima and Nidorf (1998a) have pointed out that many Asian immigrant students with limited English skills are passed from grade to grade without an adequate level of language competence. Even though a growing number of Asian immigrant students are not able to pass the language competency test required for graduation, they are not offered proper support programs (Bennett, 1995). Olsen (1997) concluded that because many schools in the United States provide immigrant students with inadequate English language development and instructions in a language that they cannot fully understand, as well as limited access to a full range of the academic curriculum, most immigrant students are not provided an equal educational opportunity.

Moreover, according to Olsen (1997), many immigrant students face difficulties because of differences between the old and new educational system. Olsen (1997) explained that the differences might include curriculum content and order, teaching methods, and expectations for students. Olsen and colleagues (1999) argued that, although each nation has a different educational curriculum, including the content and

order in which it is taught, it is often assumed that immigrant students already have the knowledge related to this educational content. Consequently, some immigrant students must overcome educational gaps to keep up with their American-born classmates. For example, according to Olsen (1997), many immigrant students face difficulties in subjects such as social studies or history, where they do not have any previous knowledge in a U.S. context.

Additionally, educational curricula in American schools do not provide adequate representations of Asian Americans. Suzuki (1986) argued that educational content and curricula in the U.S. educational system mainly deal with European values and history, which provides Asian American students with subtle forms of discrimination. For example, some of the curricula portray distorted images or unfavorable stereotypes of Asian Americans, or neglect their history, experiences, and contributions, which may have negative influences on the self-concept of Asian American students (Suzuki, 1986). Rong and Preissle (1998) further stressed that Asian American students might consider their culture and history insignificant or inferior if the academic curricula provided by their school have only a Euro-centric orientation.

Lack of Assistance and Resources for Asian Immigrant Students

The conception of Asian American students as extraordinary academic achievers has created problems for those who do not fit in the model minority stereotype. Pang and Cheng (1998) argued that the model minority stereotype has led schools to overlook the social, psychological, and educational needs of Asian American students. Hune (1998) also disputed the model minority stereotype by saying that it misleads educators to

neglect Asian American students' language problems because it is believed they do not need academic assistance and pressures them to excel academically. Weinberg (1997) added that, because many teachers assume Asian American students do not experience educational difficulties, these students have not received appropriate educational assistance. In turn, these students are more likely to drop out of school and more likely to participate in gang-related activities, which indicates that Asian Americans' academic success should not be exaggerated.

Moreover, according to Nakanishi and Hirano-Nakanishi (1983), many Asian American students from low income or recently immigrated families have entered into higher education, even though many of them are unprepared to do so. In some situations, financial resources for Asian American college students were fewer than those for other students. Hsia (1988) and Hsia and Peng (1998) commented that, with the exception of Native Americans, Asian American students were less likely than students from other ethnic groups to have received financial support, in the form of grants or loans, for entering higher education. Despite the fact that there were fewer financial resources for Asian American students than for other students, Asian American students were more likely than their counterparts to start their higher education without financial aid (Peng, 1990). Not only have Asian immigrant students been provided less financial support, they are also less likely to receive other assistance (Suzuki, 1986). Because Asian immigrant students are often excluded from receiving needed tutorial and remedial assistance, many of those who have limited proficiency in English drop out from higher education after one or two semesters (Suzuki, 1986; Takaki, 1998).

Admission Quota

There have been increasing concerns raised about the barriers that Asian American students face when they pursue higher education in the U.S. educational system (Gall & Natividad, 1995). Even though Asian American students who apply to highly selective universities are academically well qualified, their acceptance rates continue to be lower than average, and those accepted apparently must have an extraordinarily excellent academic record (Gall & Natividad, 1995; Nakanishi, 1995b; Young & Takeuchi, 1998). For example, Nakanishi (1995b) argued that Asian American applicants to Princeton were admitted at a rate that was 82.4 percent of that for other groups; the applicants to Harvard were accepted at 78.6 percent of other students' admission rates; and at Yale, they were admitted at 92.6 percent of others' admission rates. Thus, it has been claimed that the nation's most prestigious and selective universities are using unofficial quotas in order to limit the number of Asian American students on their campuses (Nakanishi, 1995b; Wang, 1988).

The unofficial quotas include the use of subjective or nonacademic criteria, such as favoring athletes and the children of alumni (Karnow & Yoshihara, 1992; Nakanishi, 1995b), which results in limiting the access of Asian Americans, many of whom are not outstanding athletes and do not have alumni parents (Walker-Moffat, 1995). According to Hsia and Peng (1998), fewer Asian American students choose sports for their extracurricular activities; instead they concentrate more on participating in academic-oriented clubs. Nakanishi (1995b) argued that, in general, applicants who have an alumni

parent or are talented athletes are accepted at a much higher rate and they tend to be mostly white students.

The quotas include changes in admissions criteria that would weigh verbal test scores more heavily (Sue & Zane, 1985). However, Asian American students' verbal scores are usually lower than those of whites, although they consistently outscore all other groups on quantitative tests (Hsia, 1988). In fact, the math score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was a stronger predictor of university grades than the SAT verbal score for Asian American students, while the opposite was true for white counterparts (Sue & Abe, 1988). Similarly, for Asian American students, math achievement was a better predictor of first-year university grades than was English composition (Nakanishi, 1995b).

Furthermore, Asian immigrant students have not received enough information about how admission criteria are weighed. Many Asian American students have claimed that they were not informed about the imposition of new admissions criteria that lessened the influence of grades and test scores, which are often their strong points, and place much more weight on extracurricular activities that Asian American students usually place less emphasis on (Karnow & Yoshihara, 1992). Regarding the subjective and nonacademic admissions quotas, Wang (1995) stated:

University, public or private, should allow full access to their admissions policies and data to avoid suspicion and abuse of power. Asian Americans are not asking for numerical increases in their enrollments, nor are they challenging the merit of existing affirmative action programs. Not unlike whites, they are asking only for

fair and equal treatment and demanding equal participation in decision-making processes. In other words, Asian Americans want only equality and justice, no more and no less. (p. 298)

Experiences of Prejudice and Discrimination

According to Pang (1995), ethnic prejudice and discrimination can negatively affect the social and psychological development of Asian immigrant students. Sam (2000) argued that when negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination toward Asian Americans are prevalent in the dominant society, Asian Americans have difficulties being accepted into the mainstream society. Moreover, Asian Americans have been considered as a distinct group, compared to Euro Americans, by the dominant society due to their distinct physical, cultural, and linguistic characteristics, which has caused greater discrimination against Asian Americans (Fugita & O'Brien, 1994). As a result, Asian American students may develop a negative ethnic identity, as well as a sense of inferiority (Erickson, 1968), which can ultimately result in the development of poor self-esteem. Therefore, experiences of negative racial attitudes and behaviors in schools have significant impacts on minority students' ethnic identity development in negative ways (Tanaka, Ebreo, Linn, & Morera, 1998).

A secure ethnic identity development is critical to the development of a positive self-concept by providing a needed defense for disparaged minority students against the unavoidable emotional insults from the dominant society (Cross, 1991). However, many Asian immigrant students report experiencing prejudice and discrimination, not only from other students, but also from some school personnel (Pang, 1995), which negatively

influences on Asian immigrant students' ethnic identity. For example, Kim (1983) reported that Asian immigrant students were distressed and perturbed by prejudicial attitudes and remarks at school. From a study of Punjabi high school students, Gibson (1988) found that immigrant Punjabi students reported racial hostility, including prejudiced attitudes and behaviors of schoolmates, as well as pressures to conform to the mainstream culture, as their main difficulties at school. Some Asian students felt they received unfair treatment or punishment (Pang, 1995). Hune (1998) found that Asian immigrant students are often ridiculed for their Asian-accented English. In addition, Young and Takeuchi (1998) found that Asian students experience anti-Asian or anti-immigrant attitudes at school. Moreover, Weinberg (1997) pointed out that hostility from faculty members and staff lessened Asian American college students' enthusiasm for learning. This type of unfriendly, or even hostile, school environment is likely to hamper both the academic performance and social adjustment of Asian immigrant students (Olsen, 1997; Young & Takeuchi, 1998).

Gibson (1988) added that minority students' interpretations of perceived prejudice and discrimination, as well as their reactions to them, can also influence the students' achievement in school. For example, if they receive unequal treatment from teachers or other school personnel, they may have difficulty not only in academic performance, but also in accepting school rules (Gibson, 1988).

Cultural Conflicts between Home and School

Asian immigrant students face a number of problems in adjusting to new environments. Asian immigrant students not only need to adjust to the unfamiliar U.S.

school system and a possibly prejudicial school environment (Rong & Preissle, 1998), but they also experience cultural discontinuity. Gall and Natividad (1995) stated that minority students with a different history, culture, and values from those of the United States encounter difficulties in adjusting to the U.S. educational system.

Young (1998) stressed that Asian immigrant students often struggle to be accepted in two distinct groups that have different cultures and values simultaneously. Asian immigrant students try to adopt the mainstream beliefs and attitudes, while their parents often force them to maintain their traditional values and culture (Chun & Sue, 1998), which generally results in experiencing cultural conflicts (Cheng, 1999). Moreover, Gonzales and Cauce (1995) stated that such students may realize that their native culture and its values are regarded as less important in the dominant society, and that the values and expectations of their families are vastly different from those of their peers in school. Such discontinuities in culture and values between Asian immigrant students' home and American schools may lead them to become alienated from school (Suzuki, 1986) and to experience daily conflicts and stresses (Gibson, 1988; Lee & Zhan, 1998). Due to their unfamiliarity with not only the English language, but also the mainstream culture, many Asian immigrant students are often excluded from socialization at school (Cheng, 1998a, 1999).

Cultural conflicts may become more severe when parents force their children to follow the cultural values and traditions of their native country, as the children gradually become accustomed to American values and culture (Chan & Leong, 1994; Chen, 1989; Gall & Natividad, 1995; Lee & Zhan, 1998; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980). In order to

develop a positive self-esteem and promote a healthy psycho-social development, such cultural conflicts between the native and new cultures must be resolved (Olsen et al., 1999; Yee, Huang, & Lew, 1998).

According to Gibson (1988), cultural discontinuities between home and school may affect immigrant students' school performance in negative ways. Garcia and Hurtado (1995) added that when there is less cultural discontinuity between the home and school environments, ethnic minority students can perform better at school. However, due to such discontinuities, many Asian immigrant students not only feel less comfortable, but also face more disadvantages at school compared to those who do not experience cultural conflicts between home and school (Gibson, 1988). Suzuki (1995) claimed that an Anglo-dominated and –oriented school culture further make Asian immigrant students feel alienated from the class or school environments. Cheng (1998a) added that such students might experience difficulties participating in class discussion because they are not accustomed to social rules in school. Being different from mainstream students makes them feel isolated, alienated, and even rejected during a period in which peer acceptance is crucial for healthy development. Such feelings of rejection may steer some students to seek the feeling of belongingness from antisocial groups where they can be accepted. Such students are at greater risk for adopting antisocial behaviors and becoming gang members (Sung, 1977).

Olsen (1997) indicated that many Asian immigrant students who enter American schools in their adolescent years face unique challenges because they encounter various tasks, including learning and understanding a new language and culture, as well as

adapting to an unfamiliar school environment at the same time. Additionally, they need to reconcile all these challenges immediately in order to adjust to a new environment (Olsen, 1997). School environment and the daily routine at school might be vastly different from what they had experienced in their native country. For example, moving from class to class, speaking out in class, participating in class discussions, and students' informal attitudes toward their teachers can be unfamiliar to many Asian immigrant students (Olsen, 1997).

In addition, many school teachers and staff are unfamiliar with cultural values and behaviors of Asian immigrant students (Mau, 1995), in spite of the increasing enrollment of Asian immigrant students in U.S. schools. For example, there are considerable differences between Asian and American cultures in the value placed on verbal acuity (Gall & Natividad, 1995). Because most Asian cultural traditions consider respect toward educators as important, Asian immigrant students are often reluctant to speak out during class and to interact with teachers, even when it is necessary (Fung, 1998). Tran (1998) also mentioned that when Asian immigrant students disagree with teachers, they may express their disagreement in a nonverbal, indirect, and subtle interactive way so they can avoid provocative interactions, because they perceive that it is improper for students to be verbally confrontational with their teachers (Gall & Natividad, 1995).

In addition, in many Asian cultures, overt verbal expression is often restrained and nonverbal communication is respected because it is believed to reduce the possibility of discomfort (Uba, 1994), and considered a sign of personality strength (Tang 1997). Thus, many Asian immigrant students are socialized to control their emotional

expressions (Kodama, McEwen, Liang, & Lee, 2001). However, clear verbal expressiveness is often considered as a norm in U.S. schools. Consequently, many Asian immigrant students feel uncomfortable in such an environment (Chew & Ogi, 1987). Furthermore, Asian immigrant students' lack of emotional expression may reinforce the model minority stereotype that they do not possess any difficulties, and the common assumption that they are doing fine (Tang 1997), which may justify the lack of social and emotional support for Asian students. Leung (1998) stressed that it is important to view their behaviors as orientations that are influenced by Asian cultures, not as indicators of weakness or personality deficit.

Moreover, Suzuki (1986) stated that Asian immigrants students are unwilling to call attention to themselves in class by expressing their opinion or thought in order to avoid provoking ridicule or hostility from other classmates or teachers. Suzuki (1995) added that Anglo-dominated and -oriented school environments make such students feel even more alienated in participating in class discourse.

Intergenerational Conflicts

According to Yee, Huang, and Lew (1998), the maintenance of interdependency and strong family relations might provide psychological, emotional, and social advantages for Asian immigrant students' adjustment in a new culture. Hurh and Kim (1984) also stressed that the family provides strong adaptive mechanisms for Asians immigrants, by providing emotional, social and financial support. However, a growing body of literature has suggested that there are large emotional and communication gaps between Asian immigrant students and their parents (Huang, 1989; Gonzales & Cauce,

1995; Miura, 1997; Yee, Huang, & Lew, 1998). Yee, Huang, and Lew (1998) attributed these intergenerational gaps to differential acculturation rates between immigrant children and their parents. This difference in acculturation means that children develop English more quickly and adapt to American culture, while leaving behind their native culture. When these children communicate with their parents, they often speak in English while their parents speak in the native language. Such communication barriers -both in language and culture- are common in immigrant families.

According to Gonzales and Cauce (1995), Asian immigrant families experience difficulties because children adapt to American culture faster, and participate more actively in American culture compared to their parents who adhere to their native cultures. Asian immigrant students often experience parental pressures to maintain their ethnic language and cultural traditions. At the same time, they are confronted with the problems of adjusting to the new language and culture (Berrol, 1995). Contrary to their parents' expectations, they eventually begin to show a preference for American culture over the native culture (Huang, 1989; Yee, Huang, & Lew, 1998). The resulting intergenerational conflicts might lead such students to rebel or engage in antisocial behaviors (Berrol, 1995), and further disrupt family functioning by hindering parents' ability to effectively socialize their children (Gonzales & Cauce, 1995).

According to Miura (1997), particularly during adolescence, Asian immigrant students not only must deal with the common conflicts with their parents as adolescents, but also face difficulties related to cultural gaps within the family. Whereas American culture emphasizes independence and individualism, Asian immigrant families

emphasize interdependence and strong ties to the family unit (Fung, 1998; Huang, 1997). Consequently, most Asian immigrant parents do not let their adolescent children become independent until a later age than their American peers (Gall & Natividad, 1995).

Moreover, because the school and home experiences of Asian immigrant students may be quite different from those of non-Asian students (Miura, 1997), they may experience unique conflicts with their parents. For example, immigrant Korean parents often demand their children's absolute obedience, excellent academic performance, and pursuit of professional careers. Most Korean immigrant parents put a great deal of pressure on their children to attend one of the most selective universities and expect their children to succeed in some professional career (Jo, 1999). The parental pressure and expectation may lead Asian immigrant students to experience conflicts between their parents and themselves.

It has been suggested that tensions between Asian immigrant adolescents and their parents are further exacerbated as children more easily communicate in English and become translators for their families (Yee, Huang, & Lew, 1998), which may lead to a parent-child role reversal (Ho, 1987; Yee, Huang, & Lew, 1998). As a result, parents might feel their authority damaged (Jo, 1999). In addition, many Asian immigrant parents are often disappointed by their children's disobedience (Mau, 1995). Accordingly, parental discipline might be increased as a means to restore traditional family structures (Yee, Huang, & Lew, 1998), which leads to further conflict. Berrol (1995) speculated that harsh disciplines and the following punishments might provide reason to rebel for many

immigrant students, and some of them might engage in antisocial behaviors as a reaction to the punishments, seeking support from such affiliation.

In summary, educational challenges and barriers which Asian immigrant college students confront have been pointed out by numerous researchers. These students have to resolve cultural shocks and language barriers at the same time as learning academic subjects in a new language in a new environment when they first start their education in U.S. schools. Moreover, prejudicial and negative attitudes toward these new students from school environment hinder their proper academic and socio-emotional development and adjustment. In addition, the model minority myth frequently exacerbates their difficulties. The myth makes educators not only produce faulty stereotypes about Asian immigrant students but also pay less attention to the educational problems of Asian immigrant students and often ignore their needs. Moreover, there have been evidences of limited financial aid resources for Asian students and admission quotas that inhibit Asian students from entering higher education in the U.S. educational system. Finally, cultural and communication gaps within family make Asian immigrant students experience intergenerational conflicts which might have negative influences on them.

Chapter 3

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of 202 Asian students who are attending a college or university in the Silicon Valley area in Northern California. Of the total of 202 respondents, twelve were eliminated from further analyses because they were born in U.S.A. This resulted in a total number of 190 participants used for analyses in this study.

The mean age of the participants was 24-years-old, with ages ranging from 17-years to 35-years. Out of 190 participants, male students constituted 57% of the sample, whereas 43% were female students. Twenty eight participants (15%) immigrated to the U.S. when they were between the ages of 0 and 4, 16 (8%) did between the ages of 5 and 7, 37 (19%) did between the ages of 8 and 11, 31 (16%) did when their ages were between 12 and 14, and 78 (41%) immigrated to the U.S. when they were over 15 years old. Sixty participants (32%) were from South Korea, 52 (27%) were from Vietnam, 24 (13%) were from China, 13 (7%) were from Taiwan, 12 (6%) were from Thailand, 9 (5%) were from Japan, 7 (4%) were from Hong Kong, and 13 (7%) were from other Asian countries, such as Philippines, Burma, and Laos.

Materials

A questionnaire was administrated to Asian immigrant college students in order to investigate their experienced challenges in U.S. schools. The questionnaire consisted of 63 items asking participants' background information (e.g., age, gender, and native country), major in school, reason for choosing the major, grade point average,

supportiveness of school environment, attitude toward school, degree of educational and financial support from school, experience of admission quota in higher education, level of English and native language communication skills, anticipated restrictions or limitations, perceived racial discrimination, perceived linguistic or cultural discontinuity, and so forth. The questions consisted of multiple-choice, yes/no, and Likert-type formats on the Likert-type questions, students were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5) (e.g., I was provided enough assistance from teachers or other staff at school in learning English during my early years in the U.S.). There were also four open-ended questions (e.g., What is your current age?, In what country were you born?, What was the biggest barrier or challenge you had in U.S. schools?, and What or who helped you most with this challenge?) (see Appendix).

Procedure

Asian immigrant college students were recruited at college and university campuses in areas near San Jose, which includes San Jose State University, Santa Clara University, and San Jose City College. Potential participants were informed about the purpose of the study and they were told that the survey would take about 20 minutes to complete. Asian immigrant students who responded that they would like to participate in the study were asked to fill out a questionnaire anonymously, and sign two sets of consent form. Students were requested to return the completed questionnaire and one consent form 20 to 30 minutes after they started to fill out the questionnaire.

Chapter 4

Results

Table 1 presents the percentage of students who agreed, disagreed or were unsure in their response to the various items in the questionnaire.

Table 1

Frequencies of Variables

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Not Sure
Communication Conflicts with Parents	24.2%	60.0%	15.8%
Cultural Conflicts with Parents	35.8%	49.5%	14.7%
Traditional Behavior	23.2%	47.4%	29.5%
Difficulty due to Cultural Differences	23.2%	48.4%	28.4%
Perception of Unfair Treatment	30.5%	39.5%	30.0%
Perception of Racial Discrimination	22.6%	48.9%	28.4%
Perception of Hostile Attitudes	21.6%	50.0%	28.4%
Difficulty in Getting Along with Others	33.2%	45.3%	21.6%
Academic Assistance from Teachers	67.9%	15.3%	16.8%
Academic Assistance from U.S-born Friends	42.6%	34.7%	22.6%
Academic Assistance from School Programs	71.1%	14.7%	13.7%
Communicative Proficiency in English	80.0%	5.3%	14.7%

Table 1 (continued)

Frequencies of Variables

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Not Sure
Literacy Proficiency in English	74.7%	7.4%	17.9%
Getting a Good Grade is Important	87.3%	7.4%	5.3%
Math/Science Preference	80.5%	7.9%	11.6%
English/Social Science Preference	44.7%	36.3%	18.9%
Most of Friends are from My Ethnic Group	69.5%	22.6%	7.9%
Problem with Others due to Linguistic Difference	53.2%	23.7%	23.2%
Difficulty in Entering College due to Poor Verbal Score	27.4%	53.7%	18.9%
Difficulty in Entering College due to Lack of Information about Colleges	16.8%	62.1%	21.1%
Difficulty in Entering College due to Admission Quota	20.0%	51.1%	28.9%
Difficulty in Entering College due to Lack of Financial Aid	29.5%	44.7%	25.8%
Enough Academic Assistance from College	43.2%	26.8%	30.0%

Experiences of Cultural Differences and Their Influences on Educational and Interpersonal Experiences

Cultural Differences between Students and Parents

The participants who immigrated at earlier ages used more English at home compared to those who immigrated at older ages. As shown in Table 2, of those who immigrated between the ages of 0 and 11, 31% used only English and 51% used both languages at home, whereas only 8% of those who immigrated when they were over 12-years-old spoke only English and 27% both languages. Although only 19% of the “earlier immigrants” used only their native language at home, more than 65% of the “later immigrants” spoke their native languages at home. Over three quarters (81%) of those who immigrated when they were over 12-year-old stated that they could communicate in their mother tongues proficiently compared to only half (53%) of those who immigrated at younger ages.

Table 2

Immigrant Age and Language Usage at Home

	English	Native Language	Both	Proficient in Mother Tongue
Between 0-11	30.9%	18.5%	50.6%	53.1%
Over 12	8.3%	65.1%	26.6%	80.7%

As Table 1 indicates, a little more than a quarter of the participants (24.2%) stated that they had conflicts with their parents because of communication problems, whereas 60% did not experience communication conflicts and 16% answered “not sure.” When asked about cultural conflicts with parents, 36% agreed that they experienced cultural conflicts with their parents, whereas 50% did not perceive such conflict. Further, about 47% of the students stated that they behaved in ways that were different from the traditional ways of their native culture, 23% of the students did behave traditionally, and almost 30% of the students were not sure whether they behaved differently or not.

As Table 3 illustrates, the more students behaved differently from the ways of their native culture, they were more likely to experience communication conflicts ($\chi^2(1) = 26.4, p < .0001$) and cultural conflicts ($\chi^2(1) = 48.6, p < .0001$) with their parents. Among those who stated that they behaved in ways that were different from their traditional ways, 48% had conflicts with their parents because of communication problems and 70% often experienced cultural conflicts with their parents. Conversely, 98% of those who rarely behaved differently from their traditional culture seldom experienced communication problems with their parents and 95% rarely had cultural conflicts with their parents.

Table 3

Traditional / Non-traditional Behaviors and Conflicts with Parents

	Traditional	Non-Traditional
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Few Communication Conflict	97.6%	51.9%
Many Communication Conflicts	2.4%	48.1%
Few Cultural Conflict	95.3%	29.6%
Many Cultural Conflicts	4.7%	70.4%

However, experiences of difficulty due to cultural differences between home and school did not appear to influence the students' grades in math and science during high school. In the case of grades for English and social science, such cultural gaps influenced the students' academic performance to some extent in that a slightly higher percentage of students who did not experience cultural differences had grades of "mostly A's" or "A's and B's" than those who had experienced difficulty because of cultural differences. However, neither of these relationships was statistically significant.

Cultural Differences between Home and School

Close to a quarter (23%) of students agreed that they had had a difficult time at school because of cultural differences between home and school, though 48% did not agree with the statement and 28% were unsure about this (see Table 1).

As Table 4 indicates, almost three quarters (74.3%) of the students who experienced difficulties due to cultural differences agreed with the statement that they also had a hard time getting along with others due to cultural differences whereas 86% of those who did not experience cultural difficulties got along with others. This relation between experiencing cultural differences between home and school and difficulty in getting along with others was significant ($\chi^2(1) = 40.3, p < .0001$).

Table 4

Experiences of Cultural Difference and Getting Along with Others

	Cultural Difference	No Cultural Difference
Getting along with others	25.7%	86.1%
Not Getting along with others	74.3%	13.9%

In addition, among those who behaved in the ways of traditional culture, although a slightly higher percentage received “mostly A’s” or “A’s or B’s” and fewer traditional students received “B’s, C’s and D’s” or “C’s and D’s” in math and science, these relationships were not statistically significant.

Challenges in Elementary and Secondary School**School Environment**

As shown in Table 1, while there was a fairly high percentage of students (about 30%) who answered “unsure”, almost half (40% to 50%) of students did not perceive a negative school environment, though a quarter to one third of students perceived unfair treatment, racial discrimination, and hostile attitudes from other students. Further, the majority of the students (83%) recalled their relationships with other students as more positive during high school while only 17% of the students perceived these relationships as somewhat or mostly negative.

As Table 5 indicates, the students who perceived unfair treatment and racial discrimination, and felt alienated because of other students’ hostile attitudes were much

more likely to indicate that they had difficulties in getting along with other students compared to those who rated the school environment more positively. The relations between these variables were statistically significant: Experiencing unfair treatment and difficulty in getting along with others ($\chi^2(1) = 13.8, p < .0001$); Experiencing racial discrimination and difficulty in getting along with others ($\chi^2(1) = 11.6, p < .005$); and Experiencing hostility and difficulty in getting along with others ($\chi^2(1) = 35.9, p < .0001$).

Table 5

Perceptions of Unfair Treatment, Racial Discrimination, Hostility, and Getting Along with Others

	Getting Along with Others	Don't Get Along with Others
Unfair Treatment	40.0%	60.0%
Fair Treatment	75.0%	25.0%
Racial Discrimination	38.7%	61.3%
Not Discriminated	73.7%	26.3%
Hostile Experience	19.4%	80.6%
Non-Hostile Experience	78.5%	21.5%

Challenges in English Proficiency and Academic Assistance

As shown in Table 1, 80% of the students stated that they could communicate proficiently in English while only 5% said they could not communicate proficiently in

English and 15% were not sure. When asked about literacy proficiency in English, 75% of the students agreed that they could read and write proficiently in English and only 7% disagreed with the statement.

Generally, the majority of the participants felt that they were provided enough academic assistance from teachers, friends, or special programs in school. Frequency data showed that 60% of the participants received academic assistance from their teachers, and 43% obtained help from U.S.-born friends. Almost three quarters (71%) of all the students said they obtained help from special school programs, such as ESL or bilingual classes (see Table 1).

As Table 6 illustrates, students who were proficient in English were only slightly more likely to report receiving academic assistance from teachers, friends, and special school programs. These relationships were not statistically significant, except the relationship between literacy proficiency and receiving academic assistance from U.S.-born friends ($\chi^2(1) = 5.3, p < .05$).

Table 6

Receipt of Academic Assistance and English Proficiency

	Communicative Proficiency in English	
	Proficient	Non-Proficient
Academic Assistance from Teachers	80.8%	71.4%
No Academic Assistance from Teacher	19.2%	28.6%

Academic Assistance from U.S.-born Friends	56.6%	50.0%
No Academic Assistance from U.S.-born Friends	43.4%	50.0%
Academic Assistance from Special Programs	82.4%	83.3%
No Academic Assistance from Special Programs	16.9%	16.7%
	Literacy Proficiency in English	
	Proficient	Non-Proficient
Academic Assistance from Teachers	82.8%	63.6%
No Academic Assistance from Teacher	17.2%	36.4%
Academic Assistance from U.S.-born Friends	57.9%	20.0%
No Academic Assistance from U.S.-born Friends	42.1%	80.0%
Academic Assistance from Special Programs	82.4%	66.7%
No Academic Assistance from Special Programs	16.8%	33.3%

Interestingly, a slightly higher percentage of those who received academic assistance from teachers, U.S.-born friends, and special school programs were more likely to seek academic assistance from outside of school as well (see Table 7), although there were no statistically significant relationships between these variables.

Table 7

Receipt of Academic Assistance and Seek Assistance from Outside of School

	Seek Assistance	Did Not Seek

Academic Assistance from Teachers	34.4%	65.6%
No Academic Assistance from Teacher	20.8%	79.2%
Academic Assistance from U.S.-born Friends	41.1%	58.9%
No Academic Assistance from U.S.-born Friends	30.9%	69.1%
Academic Assistance from Special Programs	32.3%	67.7%
No Academic Assistance from Special Programs	17.4%	82.6%

Relation between English Proficiency and Academic Issues

Almost 70% of those who could communicate proficiently in English received “mostly A’s” or “A’s and B’s” in subjects like English or social science during high school, while half of non-proficient students received “mostly A’s” or “A’s and B’s.” Among proficient students, only 2% received “B’s, C’s and D’s” or “C’s and D’s” in such subjects compared to 30% of non-proficient students. Chi square analyses for communicative English proficiency and grades of the participants in English/social science ($\chi^2(2) = 20.6, p < .0001$) and literacy English proficiency and grades in English/social science ($\chi^2(2) = 9.3, p < .01$) were statistically significant but no significant relationship was found with math and science grades (see Table 8). It is clear from these results that students felt that grades were important: 87% agreed with this statement and only 7% disagreed.

Table 8

Grades and English Proficiency

		Communicative Proficiency in English	
		Proficient	Non-Proficient
Math/Science Grades	Mostly A's or A's and B's	82.2%	70.0%
	B's and C's	15.8%	20.0%
	B's, C's and D's or C's and D's	2.0%	10.0%
English/Social Science Grades	Mostly A's or A's and B's	69.7%	50.0%
	B's and C's	28.3%	20.0%
	B's, C's and D's or C's and D's	2.0%	30.0%
		Literacy Proficiency in English	
		Proficient	Non-Proficient
Math/Science Grades	Mostly A's or A's and B's	80.3%	78.6%
	B's and C's	18.3%	14.3%
	B's, C's and D's or C's and D's	1.4%	7.1%
English/Social Science Grades	Mostly A's or A's and B's	71.1%	50.0%
	B's and C's	27.5%	35.7%
	B's, C's and D's or C's and D's	1.4%	14.3%

As shown in Table 1, overall, a higher percentage of students preferred studying subjects like math or science to subjects like English or social sciences during high

school. While more than 81% of the students stated that they preferred subjects like math or science, fewer than 45% of the participants preferred subjects like English or social science (see Table 1).

Table 9 presents the cross tabulations of communicative and literacy proficiency with preference for English/social studies or math/science. Among those who stated that they could not communicate proficiently in English, 67% did not prefer English or social sciences whereas 62% of proficient speakers preferred English or social science.

Regarding subject preference for math or science, 80% of the non-proficient students favored math or science; however 92% of the proficient students also preferred math or science. In addition, none of those who stated that they could not read and write in English proficiently preferred English or social sciences during high school compared to more than 60% of literacy proficient students who preferred English or social science. Regarding subject preference for math or science, around 90% of both non-proficient (92%) and proficient (90%) students preferred math or science. Although there was a statistically significant difference between “proficient” and “non proficient” in relation to English or social science preference ($\chi^2(1) = 13.7, p < .0001$), no significant relationship was found with the subjects of math or science. However, it is important to note that because the result was based on a small sample of non-proficient students ($n=10$ for communicative proficiency and $n=14$ for literacy proficiency), this finding should be interpreted with caution. In sum, analyses for proficiency in English and subject preference showed that the students who had proficiency in English were more likely to prefer English or social science compared to the non-proficient students, while non-

proficient students were more likely to favor math or science than English or social science.

Table 9

Proficiency in English and Subject Matter Preference

	English/Social Science		Math/Science	
	Prefer	Not Prefer	Prefer	Not Prefer
Communicative Proficiency	61.8%	38.2%	91.7%	8.3%
Not Proficient	33.3%	66.7%	80.0%	20.0%
Literacy Proficiency	60.7%	39.3%	90.2%	9.8%
Not Proficient	0%	100.0%	92.3%	7.7%

Relation between English Proficiency and Interpersonal Relations

About 70% of the participants were in agreement with the statement that most of their friends were from their own ethnic group (see Table 1). Table 10 indicates that while 71.4% of English proficient students agreed with the statement that most of their friends are from their ethnic group, 90.0% of those who could not communicate proficiently in English agreed with the same statement. No statistically significant relationship was found between language usage with friends and proficient vs. non-proficient students.

More than half of the Asian immigrant students (53%) had experienced problems with other students because of linguistic differences (see Table 1). However, as Table 10 shows, there was no significant relationship between proficiency in English with experience of problems because of linguistic differences.

Table 10

Communicative Proficiency in English and Friends of Same Ethnicity, Language Used with Friends, and Problems with Others due to Linguistic Differences

		Proficient	Non proficient
Friends of Same Ethnicity		71.4%	90.0%
Friends of Different or Mixed (same and different) Ethnicity		28.6%	10.0%
Language Used with Friends	English	43.4%	40.0%
	Native Language	13.2%	20.0%
	Both	43.4%	40.0%
Problems with Others due to Linguistic Differences		67.8%	66.7%
No Problems with Others		32.2%	33.3%

Challenges in Higher Education

As Table 1 shows, about half of the students disagreed that they had difficulties entering college because of: poor verbal test scores (54%), lack of information about colleges (62%), admission quotas (51%), or lack of financial aid (45%). However, about

one fifth to one quarter of students experienced difficulties in entering college due to a low verbal test score (29%), lacking information about colleges (17%), felt there was an admission quota (20%), or lacked financial aid (30%).

In asking students about receipt of financial aid or scholarships, as Table 11 indicates, 35% received financial aid from schools or the government and 27% claimed they needed no such assistance. Twenty-two percent were denied financial aid because they did not have enough information about getting financial aid and 16% did not receive aid because they did not qualify for it. Overall, 31% of the participants evaluated the availability of financial aid of their college for Asian immigrant students as “excellent” or “good,” almost half reported it as “fair,” and 19% evaluated it as “poor” or “very poor.”

Table 11

Receipt of Financial Aid or Scholarship

	Received	Not Received		
		Not enough information	Not qualified	No need
Financial Aid or Scholarship	35.3%	21.6%	16.3%	26.8%

Proficiency in English and Choice of College or Major

Students' choice of a major was found to be somewhat restricted according to their proficiency in English. As Table 12 demonstrates, none of the students who were

not proficient in English chose Social Science, a major that requires the most verbal skills. Interestingly, students were more likely to choose Education if they were not proficient in English. Students were more likely to select Engineering if they lack proficiency in reading and writing, while students who had literacy skills in English were more likely to have a Business major than those who lacked literacy skills in English. It is also interesting to note that communicative proficiency was less influential in students' major choice than was literacy skills in English.

Table 12

Communicative and Literacy Proficiency in English and Choice of Major

	Communicative Proficiency		Literacy Proficiency	
	Proficient	Not Proficient	Proficient	Not Proficient
Business	23.7%	20.0%	23.9%	7.1%
Engineering	35.5%	30.0%	36.6%	50.0%
Physical Science	11.8%	10.0%	12.7%	7.1%
Social Science	11.8%	0%	10.6%	0%
Education	5.9%	10%	5.6%	14.3%
Others	11.2%	30%	10.6%	21.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

When students were specifically asked whether they chose their major because it did not require high English skills, 70% of those who could not read and write proficiently in English agreed to the statement compared to only 27% of the proficient students.

In addition, as shown in Table 13, 77% of the non-proficient students stated that they would have chosen a different major if they could communicate better in English compared to 32% of those who had proficiency in English literacy. This relation between proficiency and choice of major is significant ($\chi^2(1)= 10.1, p < .005$). Almost 73% of the non-proficient students agreed that they would have chosen a different college if they had better communication skills in English compared to 37% of those who had proficiency in English literacy. This relationship between proficiency of students and choice of college was also statistically significant ($\chi^2(1)= 5.3, p < .05$).

Table 13

Literacy in English and Different Major and College Choice

	Proficient	Non-proficient
If I could communicate better, I would choose different major	31.7%	76.9%
If I could communicate better, I would not choose different major	68.3%	23.1%
If I could communicate better, I would choose different college	36.7%	72.7%
If I could communicate better, I would not choose different college	63.3%	27.3%

Academic Assistance

When asked whether they had received enough academic assistance from their college, 43% of the students agreed that they received enough academic assistance, 27% disagreed, and 30% were unsure (see Table 1). Further, in evaluating the level of academic assistance at their college for Asian immigrant students, 37% of the participants felt the level was “excellent” or “good,” 50% evaluated it as “fair”, and 12% said academic assistance for Asian immigrant students was “poor” or “very poor.”

Overall Attitudes toward College and Career

Over half (54%) of the participants expressed mixed (positive and negative) attitudes toward their college, while 36% held positive attitudes and only 10% perceived

negative attitudes. As Table 14 indicates, proficient students were more likely to report mixed attitudes toward college (53%) whereas communicatively non-proficient students were much more likely to report positive attitudes (60%). Students who reported difficulties due to cultural differences, those who had difficulty getting along with other students, and those who felt they had received inadequate academic assistance in school were more likely to report negative attitudes and less likely to report positive attitudes than students who did not share these perceptions. These relationships were statistically significant: difficulty due to cultural differences ($\chi^2(2) = 8.1, p < .05$), difficulty in getting along with others due to limited proficiency in English ($\chi^2(2) = 7.7, p < .05$) and due to cultural gaps ($\chi^2(2) = 18.5, p < .0001$), as well as receipt of academic assistance ($\chi^2(2) = 7.5, p < .05$) in the relation with overall attitude toward college. Similarly, those students who did not anticipate limitations in further education or future career due to their ethnicity or language barriers were less likely to have positive attitudes toward college, although these relationships were not statistically significant.

Table 14

Overall Attitudes Toward College and Proficiency in English, Experience of Difficulty due to Cultural Differences, Getting Along with Others, Receipt of Services in Elementary and Secondary School, and Anticipate Limitations in Further Education or Future Career

	Positive	Mixed	Negative
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Communicative Proficient in English	37.5%	52.6%	9.9%
Not Communicative Proficient in English	60.0%	30.0%	10.0%
Literacy Proficient in English	40.1%	50.0%	9.9%
Not Literacy Proficient in English	35.7%	50.0%	14.3%
Difficulty due to Cultural Differences	25.0%	59.1%	15.9%
No Difficulty	48.9%	44.6%	6.5%
Difficulty in Getting Along with Others due to Limited Proficiency in English	22.2%	63.5%	14.3%
No Difficulty	41.9%	52.3%	5.8%
Difficulty in Getting Along with Others due to Cultural Gaps	20.4%	57.4%	22.2%
No Difficulty	45.7%	51.1%	3.2%
Receipt of Academic Assistance	45.1%	47.6%	7.3%
Did Not Receive	25.5%	54.9%	19.6%
Anticipate Limitations in Further Education or Future Career due to Limited Proficiency in English	29.6%	56.8%	13.6%
Not Anticipate Limitation	43.1%	47.7%	9.2%
Anticipate Limitations in Further Education or Future Career due to Ethnicity	35.7%	55.7%	8.6%
Not Anticipate Limitation	43.9%	47.4%	8.8%

The Greatest Challenge in U.S. Schools

The second to last item on the questionnaire asked students to respond to the question, "What was the biggest barrier or challenge you had in U.S. school?" Among the 148 students who wrote answers to this question, most of the students (62.2%) wrote that language barriers and/or cultural differences constituted their major challenges in U.S. schools. Other written responses included racism, discrimination, prejudice, conflicts with their parents because of cultural gaps or academic pressure, lack of sufficient services, adaptation in a diverse school environment, making a friend, and parents' lack of understanding of U.S. school and English. Thirteen students wrote that they had no major barrier in their education in the U.S.

The following are some examples of students' answers.

"Learning to write well in English had been a problem and it is still a problem."

"I have trouble with pronunciation."

"Removing accent from my English and learning to speak professionally in English."

"Balancing friends of different ethnicities was the most difficult thing for me (especially trying to mix non-Asian friends with Asian friends). From Asian friends, they would look down upon my friendships with other races. And non-Asian friends looked down upon my friends who thought that way and stereotyped them. Trying to fit in both, and trying to mix the two was the hardest challenge. As well, looking into everything on my own was hard (like college, and volunteer work...etc.). Not having a lot of people around me who had the 'hook-ups.' I had to look into everything."

“I think I am different from ‘Americans’ and ‘Korean.’ It was very difficult to break stereotype American had of ‘Asians,’ but at the same time it was more difficult to break from the typical ‘Asian’ conceptions that Asians had themselves. I could not be fully Korean or American and was looked down upon by both for not fully complying to one standard.”

“It was hard to go to a different school in a different country at my age (15-year-old). I left all my friends at home country and sometimes Americans looked down on me.”

“Growing up in a very diverse place where various ethnic groups exist... It was difficult to understand and balance friends of different ethnicities.”

“Meeting the grade expectations of my parents was very difficult for me. They always wanted me to be an “A” student, but they had to accept that I was only a 3.0 GPA student. My parents compared me to their friends’ children who were getting 4.0’s and 1500 SAT scores.”

“I was bullied by my classmates and neighbors for looking different and talking different. Not being accepted was also hard.”

“Parents lack education in U.S. and English to help me better succeed in school.”

“I am fairly westernized. My parents and older brother unsuccessfully tried to instill traditional Vietnamese values in me. I found these values archaic, narrow, sexist, racist, and unjust.”

“Finding enough resources to get information for what college is the best, where to go for more financial aid, and where to look for jobs.”

The Greatest Assistance with Challenges

The last item on the questionnaire was “What or who helped you most with this challenge?” Among 153 students who answered this question, fifty-two (34%) stated that their friends helped them the most with their challenges. Thirty-seven participants (24.2%) pointed to themselves as their biggest help in surviving in U.S. schools. Another thirty-three (21.6%) indicated that their family was their greatest assistance. Twenty-seven students (17.6%) stated that they received no assistance at all. Only seventeen (11.1%) students pointed to their teachers or professors as most helpful. Other responses included ESL classes, mass media (e.g., television, magazines, movies, or books), internet, sports, and God. The following are some examples of students’ responses.

“I found friends (who were both Asian and non-Asian) who had a similar mindset which helped me realize that some people are just shallow and ignorant. They helped me realize that a person does not need to be placed in a category or be branded with a label. My high school friends, specifically, showed me that one’s self is determined by not your physical attributes but by their realizations and self-actualizations.”

“No one. Basically myself.”

“Me, myself, and I.”

“Being confident and being ambitious.”

“A lot of hard work to get through school.”

“My older brother who was in the same situation helped me the most and I had my parents’ support, too.”

“Mrs. Hagstrom, my second grade teacher was very warm and supportive.”

“ESL program helped me a lot!”

“Mass media really helped me. I watched a lot of American TVs and movies. I also read many books and magazines in English.”

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine Asian immigrant college students' challenges in the U.S. educational system and to determine whether these challenges influenced Asian immigrant college students' academic achievement, relations with other students, and choice of major and college.

Almost half of the students in this study behaved in ways that were different from the traditional ways of their native culture. Those students who reported that they behaved in ways that were different from their native culture were more likely to experience communication conflicts as well as cultural conflicts with their parents. These results are consistent with previous studies that have pointed out that Asian immigrant students often experience conflicts with their parents when the students try to adopt the mainstream values and beliefs, while their parents often force them to maintain their traditional values and culture (Cheng, 1999; Chun & Sue, 1998; Gonzales & Cause, 1995).

Experiences of cultural discontinuity between home and school have a significant influence on Asian immigrant students' social development as well as school performance (Gibson, 1988; Yee, Huang, & Lew, 1998). The results of this study showed that the more students experienced difficulties due to cultural differences between home and school, the more likely they were to have a hard time getting along with others. However, results of the current study are contrary to previous findings with respect to the effects of experiencing cultural differences on students' academic achievement. Gibson

(1988) stressed that cultural discontinuities between home and school might affect academic achievement of immigrant students in negative ways, but results from this study found that cultural differences between home and school did not appear to influence students' grades during high school. In addition, although Gibson (1988) stated that immigrant students who identify with their ethnic group and who exhibit more traditional attitudes or behaviors are more likely to succeed academically, the analysis of this study found no difference between those who behaved in more traditional ways and those who did not.

The findings of this study suggest that most of the students perceived their relations with other students as positive during high school. While the immigrant students of Gibson's study (1988) reported racial hostility, prejudicial attitudes and behaviors of other students as their major difficulties at school, close to half of the students in this study did not perceive a negative school environment, although about one quarter of students reported hostility, discrimination and unfair treatment. However, the students who perceived unfair treatment and racial discrimination, and felt alienated because of hostility of other students, were much more likely to indicate that they had difficulties in getting along with other students and were more likely to lack English proficiency compared to those who those who rated the school environment more positively.

According to Weinberg (1997), Asian students have not received sufficient academic assistance because they are perceived as a model minority who do not have educational difficulties. Contrary to findings of previous literature, the majority of the participants in the current study recalled that they were provided enough academic

assistance from teachers, friends, or special programs in school. For example, half to two thirds of students reported receiving academic assistance from their teachers, U.S.-born friends, or special school programs, such as ESL or bilingual classes. However, students who received academic assistance were more likely to view college more positively than those who did not receive enough assistance.

Consistent with extensive literature (e.g., Karnow & Yoshihara, 1992; Pang, 1990), most students in this study agreed that getting good grades was important for them. Although there were only less than 10 percent of students who were not proficient in English, significant differences were found between English proficient students and non-proficient students in terms of their grades in English and social science during high school, but no difference was found in math and science grades. Similar results were reported by Lindholm-Leary and Borsato (2001) with immigrant Hispanic students.

While the majority of students had friends from their own ethnic group, most of the non-proficient students in the current study reported that their friends were from their ethnic group. Many researchers (Bennett, 1995; Dao, 1991; Huang, 1977; Novak, Schuler, & Watanabe, 1997; Pang, 1990; Suzuki, 1986, 1995) have also noted that most students with limited proficiency in English reported that they had had interpersonal problems with other students. In the current study, however, there was no difference between proficient and non-proficient students with regard to their experience of interpersonal problems, although half of students had experienced problems with other students because of linguistic differences.

Contrary to previous literature (e.g., Gall & Natividad, 1995; Hsia & Peng, 1998; Karnow & Yoshihara, 1995; Nakanishi, 1995; Peng, 1990, 1998; Sue & Abe, 1988; Sue & Zane, 1985; Wang, 1995), more than half of the students in this study did not experience difficulties in college entrance related to poor verbal scores, admission quotas, or lack of financial assistance.

A higher percentage of students preferred studying math or science to English and social sciences during high school, though non-proficient students were more likely to prefer math and science. Because many Asian immigrant students do recognize their lack of proficiency in English and become anxious about writing and speaking in English (Pang, 1995), they are more likely to favor math and science over the subjects of English and social science. Indeed, it has been pointed out by many researchers that such anxiety may lead a disproportionate number of Asian immigrant students to pursue degrees requiring less verbal fluency, such as engineering, computer science, mathematics, and physical science, while fewer Asian students choose majors that require strong verbal skills, such as English, humanities, and social studies (Karrow & Yoshihara, 1992; Pang, 1995; Sue & Abe, 1988, Suzuki, 1986; Wong, 1990). Among the participants of this study, the majority chose majors related to engineering, business, or physical science, while few selected social science or humanities as their majors. The choice of major was found to be restricted according to their proficiency in English, which is consistent with many previous research studies. None of the non-proficient students in this study chose majors that required more verbal skills, such as social sciences and half of these students were concentrated in the field of engineering, which requires relatively less verbal ability.

In addition, while half of the non-proficient students reported that they chose their major because it did not require high English skills, only one quarter of the proficient students agreed with the statement. The majority of the non-proficient students stated that they would have chosen a different major or college if they could communicate better in English compared to only about one third of the proficient students.

Even though previous literature has discussed Asian immigrant students' educational difficulties and needs and the lack of sufficient academic assistance due to the stereotype of model minority myth (Hune, 1998; Pang & Cheng, 1998; Weinberg, 1997), this study indicates that about one third of the participants evaluated academic assistance at their college for Asian immigrant students as "excellent" or "good," half evaluated it as "fair" and only 12% said academic assistance for Asian immigrant students was "poor" or "very poor." In addition, when asked actual receipt of academic assistance from their college, almost half of the students agreed that they received enough academic assistance.

When asked to write about their biggest barrier or challenge in U.S. schools, the majority of students mentioned language barriers and/or cultural differences as their major challenges in U.S. schools. Such perceived barriers of the participants have also been described in a variety of other studies. For example, Nakanishi (1995a) discussed language and cultural adjustment as challenges of Asian immigrant students in U.S. schools. In addition, adaptation to a new environment, anti-Asian as well as anti-immigrant violence in schools, feelings of alienation, lack of assistance and resources, parental pressure, and communicative as well as cultural conflicts with parents were

evident in previous research as other barriers faced by Asian immigrant students (Bennett, 1995; Chun & Sue, 1998; Gibson, 1988; Hune, 1998; Ima & Nidorf, 1998; Kim, 1983; Nakanishi, 1995a; Pang & Cheng, 1998; Young & Takeuchi, 1998; Weinberg, 1997) and were also found in this study.

In asking what helped the students most with their challenges, many students mentioned that their friends or their family assisted them the most. However, almost half of the students who responded said no assistance at all or pointed to themselves as their biggest help in surviving in U.S. schools, which is consistent with the argument presented in many research studies, which is that Asian immigrant students have been neglected in terms of their educational concerns and needs (Hsia & Peng, 1998; Hune, 1998; Nakanish & Hirano-Nakanishi, 1983; Pang & Cheng, 1998; Weinberg, 1997). Only about 11% of the students pointed to their teachers or professors as most helpful.

Limitations of the Study

There are some important limitations to consider in the current study. First, the population of Asian immigrant students in this study was highly selective. This study was designed to investigate challenges of Asian immigrant college students. Thus, those who are not attending college were excluded in this study. Because this study only included college students who most likely had overcome challenges and barriers that they had faced in the U.S. educational system, the findings cannot fully explain challenges that many Asian immigrant students who are not in higher education often face. There is a good chance that participants of this study received more assistance during their elementary and secondary education in the U.S. than did those who were not in higher

education. Due to inclusion of this selective population, many of the participants reported better experiences at school and had better attitudes toward college than would likely be true of a nonbiased sample of Asian immigrant students.

A second limitation of this study is that there were few students who were not proficient in English. The non-proficient students in this study were far less than 10 percent of all the participants. However, according to Pang (1990), a fairly high percentage of students are not proficient in English according to achievement tests. The low level of students who claimed to be non proficient may also be explained by the self-evaluation of the participants' proficiency in English. Wong (1990) argued that many Asian students failed to develop sufficient proficiency in English despite the fact they have succeeded in entering higher education in the U.S. However, less than 10% of the participants in this study evaluated themselves as non-proficient in English both in oral communication skills (5.3%) and in literacy skills (7.4%). Thus, the validity of the participants' self-evaluation regarding their proficiency in English may be questionable.

Third, according to Padilla and Lindholm (1995), it is crucial to understand the heterogeneity within ethnic minority populations. Although this study included Asian immigrant students who had various countries of origins, variations within different Asian immigrant groups were not recognized in the current study because the numbers were not large enough. Hsia and Peng (1988) point out that achievement differences within and among groups should be considered in terms of disparities in educational experiences and socioeconomic background. For example, Ima and Rumbaut (1989) add that East Asians, including Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and Southeast Asians are

different from each other in terms of not only the quality education that they received in their home country but also in the amount of educational disruption. In addition, Chan and Hune (1995) argue that although overall educational achievement of Asian Americans far exceed those of other ethnic groups, many recent immigrants do not reach this high a level of academic success.

Fourth, because levels of academic achievement might be affected by other variables, such as motivation, effort, or individual ability, it is necessary to consider such confounded variables when relations between proficiency and academic achievement are interpreted.

Suggestions for Future Research

These limitations point to the need for further research to provide a more comprehensive understanding about Asian immigrant students' challenges or barriers in the U.S. educational system. Future research should pay attention to the diverse Asian immigrant student population who are not attending in college and who are at risk in terms of their social and educational adaptation in the U.S. In addition, there is a need for research that provides a better understanding of experiences, needs, and concerns of the vast majority of Asian immigrant students who do not fit within the model minority concept.

Moreover, it is necessary to develop research in order to explain significant differences among diverse Asian immigrant student groups in their accessibility, experiences, and academic performance as well as their graduation rates in higher education.

Nakanishi (1995c) stressed that Asian immigrant students who are not proficient in English face barriers related to their English proficiency from accessing higher education until completing their degree. Although it was found that limited proficiency is related to students' academic achievement and major choice in the current study, there was not enough non-proficient students. Thus, it is likely that by including a larger body of non-proficient students in future studies, more reliable findings can be obtained. In addition, a more valid measurement of students' proficiency should be used in future studies.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

The following questions are asking some general information about you and your experiences in U.S. schools. Your answers will be valuable in understanding the challenges faced by Asian immigrant students in the U.S. educational system. The answers are confidential and will be used only for the purpose of this study. Please read and answer as carefully and truthfully as you can.

1. Check your gender. Male Female
2. What is your current age? _____
3. In what country were you born? _____
4. At what age did you immigrate to the U.S.? 0-4 5-7 8-11 12-14 15+
5. How much English did you know when you first started school in the United States?
 None Understood some but could not speak Understood some and spoke some
 Spoke some but could not write Spoke some and wrote some Fully literate
6. How do you describe who you are in terms of ethnicity?
 American Asian (e.g., Filipino/Chinese/Japanese/Korean/Vietnamese/etc.) Chinese American Filipino American
 Japanese American Korean American Vietnamese American If other, specify _____
7. What language do you usually speak at home?
 Mostly in English In my native language (specify _____)
 In Both native language (specify _____) and English
8. What language do you usually speak with your friends?
 Mostly in English In my native language (specify _____)
 In Both native language (specify _____) and English
9. What kinds of grades did you usually get in math and science during high school?
 mostly A's A's and B's B's and C's B's and C's and D's C's and D's
10. What kinds of grades did you usually get in English and social studies during high school?
 mostly A's A's and B's B's and C's B's and C's and D's C's and D's
11. Did your schools (elementary, junior high, or high school) have classes that taught about your native country (history, culture, or anything)?
 No Yes: WHAT was it about and WHEN (elementary, junior high, high school, or college)?

12. How much assistance did you receive in elementary and secondary school?
 I needed a lot of help but did not get it I needed some help but did not get it I did not need any help
 I needed some help and got it I needed a lot of help and got it
13. How were the general relations between Asian immigrant students and other students at your high school?
 Mostly positive Somewhat positive (with few tensions)
 Somewhat negative (with much tension) Mostly negative (with severe tensions)
14. Have you ever received any type of financial aid or scholarship from your college, other social agencies, or the state or federal government?
 Yes: WHAT kind of financial aid did you get, and from WHERE? _____
 No: WHY do you think you didn't? I did not need financial aid I did not have enough information about getting financial aid
 I applied, but was rejected If other, specify _____
15. What is your current or intended major?
 Business Engineering Physical science Social science Humanities
 Education If other, specify _____
16. How would you evaluate the academic assistance provided at your college for Asian immigrant students?
 (e.g., helping with English, helping with writing, proof reading, tutoring, etc.)
 Excellence Good Fair Poor Very poor
17. How would you evaluate the availability of financial aid of your college for Asian immigrant students?
 Excellence Good Fair Poor Very poor
18. What is your overall attitude toward your college?
 Positive feeling Mixed feeling Negative feeling

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
19. I was provided enough assistance from teachers or other staff at school in learning English during my early years in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
20. U.S.-born American friends helped me learn English during my early years in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Special programs or services at school (e.g., ESL/bilingual classes) helped me to learn English during my early year in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I or my parents had to seek academic support from outside of school because there were not appropriate programs or resources for Asian immigrant students.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Teachers or other staff members at school helped me adjust and feel comfortable at school during my early years in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
24. U.S.-born American friends helped me adjust and feel comfortable at school during my early years in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Special programs or services at school (e.g., ESL/bilingual classes) helped me adjust and feel comfortable at school during my early years in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I was provided enough assistance from teachers or other staffs at school in understanding school work.	1	2	3	4	5
27. U.S.-born American friends helped me understand school work at school.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Special programs or services at school (e.g., ESL/bilingual classes) helped me to understand school work.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I preferred doing subjects like English or Social Studies during high school.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I preferred doing subjects like Math or Sciences during high school.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Teachers or others placed too high an academic expectation on me since I was Asian.	1	2	3	4	5
32. It is very important for me to get good grades.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I have had problems with other students due to linguistic or cultural differences.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I have had experiences of unfair treatment by teachers or other school personnel due to linguistic or cultural differences.	1	2	3	4	5
35. If I could communicate better in English, I would have chosen a different school.	1	2	3	4	5
36. If I could communicate better in English, I would have chosen a different major.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I anticipate some restrictions or limitations in my further education or future career because of my communication problems (including accent) in English.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I anticipate some restrictions or limitations in my further education or future career because of my ethnicity.	1	2	3	4	5
39. I usually get enough academic assistance from my college.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I had a difficult time at school due to cultural differences.	1	2	3	4	5
41. I had a difficult time at school due to racial discrimination. (e.g., prejudice, ridicule, or hostile attitudes)	1	2	3	4	5
42. I felt alienated by unwelcoming/hostile attitudes of other students due to my language or culture.	1	2	3	4	5
43. I had difficulty in getting along with others due to limited proficiency in English.	1	2	3	4	5
44. I had difficulty in getting along with others due to cultural gaps.	1	2	3	4	5
45. I experience conflicts with my parents due to communication problems (e.g., I speak in English to them and they speak in the native language to me).	1	2	3	4	5
46. I often experience conflicts with my parents due to cultural gaps (e.g., They want me to act in a more traditional Asian way).	1	2	3	4	5
47. I behave in ways that are different from the traditional ways of my native culture.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
48. There are still times at school when I do not understand what is being said or done because of communication problems in English.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Most of my friends are from my ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5
50. I communicate in my mother tongue proficiently.	1	2	3	4	5
51. I read and write in my mother tongue proficiently.	1	2	3	4	5
52. I communicate in English proficiently.	1	2	3	4	5
53. I read and write in English proficiently now.	1	2	3	4	5
54. I had difficulties in entering college because of my poor verbal test score.	1	2	3	4	5
55. I had difficulties in entering college because of lack of information about colleges.	1	2	3	4	5
56. I had difficulties in entering college because I think there was an admission quota that restricted Asian students.	1	2	3	4	5
57. I had difficulties in entering college because I could not get enough financial aid.	1	2	3	4	5
58. I chose my current (or intended) major because I have interest in it.	1	2	3	4	5
59. I chose my current (or intended) major in order to get a good job.	1	2	3	4	5
60. I chose my current (or intended) major since it does not require high English skills.	1	2	3	4	5
61. I chose my current (or intended) major because my parents pressured me to.	1	2	3	4	5

62. What was the biggest barrier or challenge you had in U.S. school?

63. What or who helped you most with this challenge?

THANK YOU