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**The Good Teacher:  
A Qualitative Analysis of Perceptions of Asian American Parents**

**By**

**Mariam Qureshi**

**This Dissertation is Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for  
the Educational Doctorate Degree  
in Educational Leadership**

**Minnesota State University, Mankato**

**Mankato, Minnesota**

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## Abstract

This research study examined the general question “What do Asian American parents believe to be important characteristics of an effective elementary teacher?” In order to investigate this question, the researcher used a qualitative research design employing a semi-structured interview which probed into the personal perceptions voiced by a sample of twelve Asian American parents on the characteristics of good teachers. The twelve Asian American parents who participated in this study were from nine different Asian countries covering the three main regions defined as Asian according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Far East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Indian sub-continent. Also, the study was focused on the Asian American families living in the Southern region of Minnesota. It was discovered that there was a general agreement among the parents regarding the characteristics of good teachers.

The findings were arranged into two main sections, vision of education and characteristics of effective teachers. In the first section, vision of education, five aspects were revealed: 1) opportunity, 2) independence, 3) personal growth, 4) respect, and 5) negative consequences of not getting sufficient education. Parents revealed that the main purpose of education is to have opportunities to be independent and have high social status (financially and socially). Education, according to the Asian American parents, is immensely important for the growth of the individuals to live their daily lives because without education, life would be a struggle.

The second section, the characteristics of effective teachers, included fifteen themes. Out of fifteen themes, ten were found to be important features in effective

teaching. Those features were 1) teachers' expectations, 2) individualized instruction, 3) teacher as a person, 4) teachers' enthusiasm, 5) discipline, 6) relationship between students, teachers, and parents 7) interactional dynamics, 8) life skills, 9) school uniforms, and 10) classroom climate. The other five themes that emerged were of lesser importance to the parents for effective teaching. Those themes were 1) classroom management, 2) physical layout, 3) teachers' knowledge, 4) teacher's gender, and 5) racial/ethnic background of the teacher.

## **Acknowledgements**

Obviously, when one completes a task like this one, there are numerous people to thank. First and foremost, I want to thank Allah who provided me with this great opportunity, gave me strength to complete my task, and surrounded me with people who continuously supported me.

I am so grateful for the influence, support, and assistance of my advisor, Dr. Julie Carlson. It was through her infinite advice, words of wisdom, and patience that this enormous endeavor was made possible. Also, committee members Dr. Scott Wurdinger and Dr. Scott Granberg-Rademacker, each of whom in their very special way enabled the completion of this study.

I am especially appreciative to my husband, Fawad and my children, Fahad, Sarah, and Sofia, for their patience and understanding as I worked through this extensive research and writing project. Many times, they would have preferred a little more of my attention when I was instead reading research articles or writing this document. I hope that this accomplishment will serve as an example for my children to always set high goals and persevere until you attain them, and to never settle for less than your highest dream.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background of the Study**

Teaching was considered as the sole hope of human salvation by Bernard Shaw (2001). Teaching is considered to be one of the noblest professions in the world. It provides an individual the opportunities to show and have high moral character. Teaching is a profession with various demands that requires more than just transferring information to students; teachers are a source of the traditions of the community, a filtering system, and a reclamation project (Rogers, 1954). Teachers have the power to touch lives and instill greatness in many who will go on and do good things. The teaching profession is a crucial role as it influences both the form and the content of education (Hare, 1995). Children spend an immense amount of time with their teachers; and thus, teachers can do untold damage or immeasurable good to their students by shaping students' minds. Hence, having good teachers in our educational system becomes tremendously important, especially in elementary schools where children are the most impressionable. According to the American Psychological Association (2010), students who received supportive environments and high quality education in the early school years exhibited higher academic achievement, lower rates of grade retention, rare need for special education services, and higher rates graduating from high school. Raj Chetty and his team (2011) found overwhelming evidence of the influence of kindergarten teachers on their students. Students who were in higher quality classroom in kindergarten were found to be more likely to go to college than other students with

otherwise similar backgrounds. The probability of these students becoming single parents was also found to be low. Additionally, as adults, they were not only earning more, but also, more likely to be saving for retirement. Thus, it can be said that the quality of education and a supportive environment offered to students in elementary schools is extremely important.

A teacher plays a critical role both in school improvement and student success (Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011). Richard Riley (1998), former U.S. Secretary of Education discussed the importance of the role of teachers:

Providing quality education means that we should invest in higher standards for all children, improved curricula, tests to measure student achievement, safe schools, and increased use of technology .... but the most critical investment we can make is in well-qualified, caring, and committed teachers. Without good teachers to implement them, no educational reform will succeed at helping all students learn to their full potential. (p.18)

Assessing teachers' effectiveness is an old issue. Even in schools with only one room, teachers were evaluated on local standards; during this time, the purpose of their evaluations was to decide whether each teacher would be given an increase in pay or if their contracts would be continued (Markley, 2004). According to Borich (1996), over a century ago the description of a good teacher was one who was honest, friendly, hardworking, and a generous citizen. Educational philosopher William James (1890/1977) also examined the art and science of teaching and believed that good teaching was about engaging students. According to James, "in teaching, you must

simply work your pupil into such a state of interest in what you are going to teach him that every other object of attention is banished from his mind” (p. 24).

Nowadays, not only has the whole educational system changed, but the expectations from teachers, students, and their families have also changed. Hence, the description of effective teachers that was considered appropriate a century ago, may not be applicable today and may need some revision. Presently, teachers have to be very attentive to numerous factors when selecting their teaching style and classroom needs. Numerous studies have been conducted to explore various characteristics that may or may not be associated with being effective teachers. Wayne and Youngs (2003) studied teachers’ college ratings, test scores, degrees, course work, and certification status. Some of the other characteristics that have been studied are experience, race, communicational skills, ability to build relationships with students, and much more.

Additionally, there is an issue of what it means to be effective teachers. Teacher effectiveness has been measured by student engagement, student achievement, student growth, knowledge of content, being a good citizen, students’ feelings for the teacher, and work ethic. However, there is a diversity that exists within the educational community when it comes to defining effective teachers. According to Mackinnon-Ashby (2007), the early 20<sup>th</sup> century research was more focused on determining the qualities of effective teachers. While studies in the 1980’s tended toward measuring the effectiveness of teachers by student achievement or by students’ attitudes toward learning (Doyle, 1985). Wenglinsky (2000) insisted that teacher effectiveness plays the biggest role in student achievement and prevails over other factors like class size, socio-

economic status, and gender. Although many consider student achievement as an appropriate tool to define and measure teacher effectiveness, not all researchers are certain about this tool. Long (2000) suggested that there is no established association between learning and teaching. Goldstein (2001) argued that the growth of a student in any subject cannot be assigned to the teacher of that subject; there are many other factors that play a role such as other teachers, student's background, school setting, and others. Some scholars have argued that a teacher who creates bonds with students and also creates a caring environment for personal development is effective. Others have believed that effective teachers must love learning and must be able to motivate students to work toward human justice and social order (Arends, 1998).

In 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. It was the reauthorization of the existing Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). NCLB included significant new accountability measures for all public schools. The act was based on a very ambitious goal that all children must be proficient in reading and math by 2014. Each state needed to develop new tests in reading and math to measure students' academic progress. The act also put great stress on students being taught by highly qualified teachers. According to NCLB, a highly qualified teacher is one who is fully certified and/or licensed by the state he/she teaches in, holds at least a bachelor's degree from a four year institution, and also demonstrates competence in each core academic subject area in which he/she teaches. The goal of these requirements was to make sure that children who belong to a low socio-economic status had the same access to good teachers as other students. After more than a decade, the question is whether or not

highly qualified teachers, as defined by NCLB, are also effective teachers. Although the majority of public school teachers have now attained the NCLB's requirement of being highly qualified, there is no strong evidence to show that there is any improvement in teacher quality. NCLB requirements did not guarantee that the qualified teachers were actually effective teachers (Rothman, 2009).

Although NCLB (2002) has a particular definition for highly qualified teacher, research does not suggest a formula or a list of characteristics for teachers to follow to become effective. There is some research that evaluates students' opinions to assess characteristics of a good teacher. However, parents' opinions have rarely been recorded or evaluated as a way to assess characteristics of good teachers. Thus, there appears to be a gap in the scholarly literature on teacher effectiveness, especially the perception held by parents with diverse backgrounds.

This study focused on the perceptions of parents from Asian countries. Asian Americans trace their roots to any of dozens of countries in the Far East, Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Each country of origin subgroup has its own unique history, culture, language, religious beliefs, economic and demographic traits, social and political values, and pathways into North America. About five percent of the U.S. population are Asian Americans and 4.2 percent of the Minnesotan population is Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). U.S. elementary and secondary public schools cater to approximately 4.1 percent Asian American students (National Center Education Statistics [NCES], 2012).

Before describing this study's nature and intent, it is important to understand the concept that is being used in this study for the term "race". Asian Americans are people

who migrated or whose ancestors migrated from the countries of the continent of Asia. Asian American is not a race. Merriam-Webster (2013) defined race as “family, tribe, people, or nation belonging to the same stock” and “a class or kind of people unified by shared interests, habits, or characteristics”. As mentioned earlier Asian Americans are from different parts of Asia and have their own distinct historical, cultural, economical, and religious backgrounds. According to Merriam-Webster’s definition of race, there are many races in Asia such as Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, and many others. So, many experts argue that to consider Asian American as one race may not be completely appropriate. However, the term “Asian American” is used as a race in the U.S. census forms and other governmental reports. For this study, the researcher used the term “Asian American” as adopted in the U.S. census forms and governmental reports. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget defines Asian American as, “Asian refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand and Vietnam” (U.S. Census Briefs, 2012).

It is also important to understand that the researcher is exploring the perceptions of Asian American parents which should not be confused with perspectives. According to Nimis (2008), perspective entails embodied points of view and seeing and knowing that occupies a certain space, while perception is more abstract and mainly involves seeing and knowing in a way that escapes the somatic requirements. In simpler words, perspective is how things appear, in a way the reality of things or a realistic point of

view. On the other hand, perception is a more personal way of looking and judging things. The researcher explored the perceptions of Asian American parents about effective teachers that might have been influenced by their past experiences and their cultures.

### **The Intent**

The intent of this research study was to attempt to explore the perceptions of Asian American parents regarding education and teachers. It is important to study the Asian American population because not only do Asian Americans constitute the second largest foreign born population, but it also is one of the fastest growing populations in the United States (Pew Research, 2012). Moreover, in the last few years Asians have passed Hispanics as the largest group of new immigrants to the United States.

The academic achievement data for Asian American students in the U.S. public schools paints a bright picture of their academic performance. The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) (2011) data from 2000 to 2011 revealed that Asian American students persistently scored higher than students in other demographical groups, especially all the minority races, in critical subject matter areas such as reading, math and science. The ACT and SAT scores of the studied population also revealed a similar picture, where Asian American students persistently either scored higher or scored very close to the white students and always scored higher than all the other minority groups (ACT, 2012; NCES, 2012). The average academic achievement levels of Hispanics, African Americans, and American Indians were lower than those of both Asians and Whites. Moreover, Asian American students were over-represented in gifted

and talented (G/T) programs in almost all states (Hui, 2005). Even though the population of Asian American students is comprised of diverse cultural backgrounds, their academic achievement is extraordinary as a whole group. In a recent study by the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (2011), Asians were not considered under-represented in science and engineering fields because although they are a minority in the general population, their share in academic degrees and employment in science and engineering has been relatively much larger.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Question**

The purpose of this research study was to examine Asian American parents' perceptions of characteristics of effective teachers. As, early school years are very important years in students' lives, the researcher decided to focus only on parents of elementary and middle school students. This study utilized a qualitative research approach employing semi structured interviews. In particular, this research study attempted to answer the following general research question:

What do Asian American parents believe to be important characteristics of effective elementary and middle school teachers?

### **Significance of the Study**

In 1993, about 3.6 percent Asian/Pacific Islander students were enrolled in the U.S. public schools, while in 2008 the number increased to 4.8 percent; there has been a 33.34 percent increase in the Asian American student population. Furthermore, the literature indicated that the growth of the studied population will continue in the future (NCES, 2012). Thus, the size and growth of the Asian American student population in

the U.S. have emphasized its significance as a research topic. Findings of this study may be helpful to understand the particular needs of this rapidly growing population. Even more, the qualitative nature of this research study will provide a substantial opportunity to gain an in-depth knowledge of Asian American parents' perceptions of effective teachers and what they find to be significant in their children's teachers.

The academic achievement of the ethnic groups such as African Americans and Hispanics has been studied (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Ortiz, Valerio, & Lopez, 2012); however, the academic achievement of the Asian American population has not been studied to the same extent. It was worth finding out their educational perceptions, especially when their academic achievement is far superior to the other minority groups. Also, education and academic success of their children is extremely important for Asian Americans parents (Seal, 2010); thus, investigation of Asian American parents' perceptions of effective teachers will be very educational not only for scholarly reasons, but also for practical reasons. The gained knowledge can be used by policy makers, educational leaders, and educators to understand the needs of this rapidly growing population. Teachers provided with this knowledge will be able to achieve a greater level of effectiveness and will be able to make a significant difference in their classroom and their students' lives, Asian or otherwise.

The findings of this study were also helpful in revealing deficiencies in teachers of the U.S. public school system as perceived by the Asian American parents. The findings of the study are expected to be beneficial for the teaching, administrative, and leadership staff of the elementary and middle school education field. Additionally, this

study will be an addition to the current research on the topic of effective teachers which is crucial as there is a gap in the literature when it comes to the perceptions of parents and Asian American populations. It will also help in producing insight for future research in this topic.

A review of the literature on the characteristics of effective teachers reveals that very little effort has been put forth in exploring parental perceptions of effective teachers. Even more, this research study focuses on the specific parental perceptions of Asian Americans, which have been widely ignored by the researchers. One of the strengths of this study is that it represents an exploratory investigation into those specific perceptions. It was the intention of the researcher that this study would provide an insight into the educational belief system of Asian Americans by allowing them to have an active voice. A better understanding of their personal perceptions may eventually be a part of educational reform.

In conclusion, the knowledge gained through this research study may lead educators to have a greater understanding of how to better guide Asian Americans and other students. It will deepen their understanding of what Asian American students and their parents are expecting of them and the learning process. By making sure that all voices are heard, Asian American parents will no longer be absent in this particular area of research and as a result Asian Americans and other students may benefit from it. After all, students are the most impacted by the effectiveness of the teacher.

**Limitations**

Although, qualitative research is about the lived experience and is almost inescapable, it is possible that the researcher's presence may have affected the responses provided by the participants. Furthermore, as this study examined the Asian American parents' perceptions of effective teachers in the Southern Minnesota region through qualitative study, the findings may not be representative of other regions in the United States and may not be extended to wider populations.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations of this study include limiting analysis to only one region of the United States. The reason to limit the study to only the Southern Minnesota region is the researcher's proximity to and knowledge of potential study participants. The researcher had an opportunity to access several Asian American families in the studied area.

This study also focused only on one minority group, the Asian American population. There were two main reasons to study only Asian Americans. First, the Asian American population has shown remarkable academic achievement in the past several years. Secondly, the studied population has not been studied to the same extent as other minority groups. So, the revelations of their educational perceptions would be invaluable.

Furthermore, parents of only elementary and middle school students were interviewed for this study. Literature has revealed that the early school years are very important years of students' lives. Students may never achieve the most basic standards and may never realize their full potential if not provided a positive and supportive

environment in elementary schools (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). Thus, the researcher only focused on the elementary and middle school level.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

**Parents.** Parents are identified as the primary caregivers of children that include married or unmarried couples, single parents, step parents, grandparents, legal guardians, or other relatives who are taking care of children with permission of their parents.

**Asian American Parents/Families.** Parents/families that trace their roots from any of the many countries in the Far-East, South-East Asia, and the Indian subcontinent.

**Public School.** Merriam-Webster (2012) defines public school as a free tax supported school controlled by a local governmental authority. According to Chopp (2003), public schools are defined as schools that a) provide education to children, usually between the ages of 6 and 18, b) curriculum is delivered by a state certified teacher, c) keep track of student achievement, and d) are funded by public funds (tax revenues).

**Perspective.** Merriam-Webster (2012) defines perspective as the interrelation in which a subject or its parts are mentally viewed. In other words it means ones' views about a certain thing with respect to different opinions available.

**Perception.** Merriam-Webster (2012) defines perception as physical sensation interpreted in the light of experience.

### **Why This Topic was Chosen**

Even though I am studying educational leadership, I have multifarious interests as my educational background is diverse. It was very important for me to conduct a

research project for my dissertation that resonates with me and has some meaning to me. As a mother of three school-going children and also being a natural born citizen from an Asian country, I felt that it was a perfect project for me to pursue.

While my children have been attending public schools for the last many years, there have been some positive experiences and some negative experiences as well. My overall experience with the teachers of public schools has been good; however, there have been some instances when I really had to think about the effectiveness of the teachers including the quality of education provided, the student-teacher relationship, the learning environment created by the teachers, and other various aspects. Thus, it was important for me to explore a topic that could really help me understand how other people perceive teachers' effectiveness, especially those from Asian cultures.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher had several roles in this study. The first and foremost important role of the researcher was as a graduate research student pursuing a doctorate. As mentioned earlier, she had a great interest in the topic; she was determined to conduct a study that was a valuable contribution to the literature and also beneficial to educators. To do so, she was dedicated to follow the accepted educational, social, and ethical processes and standards. The aim of the researcher was to create a quality study that produced authentic evidence of the Asian American parents' perceptions of effective teachers.

The second role of the researcher was as a parent of children who attend the public schools in the Southern Minnesota region. Through this study, she was trying to

find out about a particular perception on the effectiveness of teachers. The researcher's process of judgment and thinking has evolved throughout her life. As a young single student, with no children, her perceptions of effective teachers were different than her perceptions as a mature student who is married and has children.

The third role of the researcher is as an Asian American. This was a qualitative study that was heavily based on the researcher's skills. There might be a possibility of this research being influenced by the researcher's personal biases or even researcher's peculiar habits as Asian American. Thus, it was important for the researcher to put aside her pre-existing knowledge about the studied population and try to really understand their perceptions. This can also be considered as a strength because as an insider it was easier for the researcher to comprehend the details and various aspects described by the Asian American participants.

Thus, there were biases in terms of personal experiences as a graduate student, as a parent, and as a person of Asian nationality that may have influenced the findings of this study. The researcher utilized the qualitative method of analysis for this study. Qualitative research relies on the researcher engaging in self-awareness and reflexivity throughout the research process. According to Creswell (2009), it is crucial that in the process of the qualitative study, researchers concentrate on details and meanings that are expressed by the participants, rather than focusing on details and meanings that the researcher himself/herself wants to express. The researcher's commitment to this topic led her to be constantly aware of her point of views in relation to the research and writing and to be clear where she stated her own position. Additionally, the researcher had

developed interpersonal skills that included empathy and the ability to analyze. Without highly developed interpersonal skills there was a good chance that the data collected may not have been reliable and too subjective.

### **Organization of the Study**

The remaining part of the paper will be divided into the following chapters. Chapter II, the literature review, will provide an extensive discussion of the Asian American population, Asian American student population, Asian American student academic achievement, Asian American educational views, and overview of characteristics of effective teachers. Chapter III, research design and methodology, will provide a synopsis of the sampling strategy, participants, human subjects safeguarding, research design, interview instrument, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedure that will be used to conduct this research study. Chapter IV, results, will provide a comprehensive report of the data collected from the interviews. The last Chapter V, discussion and conclusion, will provide a discussion of the results in context to the research topic and conclusions will be drawn from the results. Furthermore, it will also provide an interpretation of practical implications of the research. Recommendations for future research will also be highlighted.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this research study is to examine Asian American parents' perceptions of characteristics of effective teachers. The data that will be collected will be related to Asian American parents' past experiences, their cultural background, the concept of a teacher in their culture, and much more. Because the main focus of this study is Asian American populations, this literature review begins with an in-depth overview of Asian American demographics in the United States. Following sections will include Asian American student achievement, Asian Americans' parenting and educational views, and lastly, research on characteristics of effective teachers.

#### **Asian American Demographics in the United States**

##### **Asian American Population**

As a group, the Asian American population in the United States has increased rapidly during the last few decades (Hui, 2005; Schmidley, 2001). In 1990, there were 6.9 million Asian American individuals which can be translated into 2.8 percent of the total U.S. population (Reeves & Bennett, 2004). By 2000, the number of Asian Americans exceeded to 10.2 million individuals, or 3.6 percent and by 2012, the number of Asian Americans has come to 14.7 million individuals, or 4.8 percent of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Briefs, 2013). Moreover, the total U.S. population grew by 9.7 percent from 2000 to 2010; in comparison, the Asian population increased more than four times faster than the total U.S. population, growing by 43 percent from 10.2 million in

2000 to 14.7 million in 2010 (US Census Briefs, 2013). This group is expected to continue to experience rapid population growth in the future too (Pew Research, 2012).

For many years, in statistical reports and national documents, Asian Americans have been classified in the category called *others* (Hui, 2005). As mentioned in Chapter I even though, Asian American is not a race, the term has been and is still used in various studies and national level documents. The use of this term reflects the limitation of available literature addressing Asian American specifically (Hui, 2005). The term Asian American has been processed many times while the demographic characteristics of Asian Americans have continued to evolve. As mentioned in Chapter I, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget defines the term Asian American as, “Asian refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand and Vietnam” (U.S. Census Briefs, 2013). The majority of the scholars who have studied Asian American populations have concentrated on particular nationalities like Japanese, Chinese, or Korean. Very few scholars such as Ying Hui (2005) focused on the whole Asian American population in the way the U.S. Census Bureau describes Asians. For this study the researcher is particularly interested in families considered Asians by the definition of the U.S. Census Bureau. The participants can be from (a) Far East Asia, such as China, Japan, South Korea, and North Korea; (b) Southeast Asia, such as Cambodia, Laos, and Malaysia; or (c) The Indian sub-continent, such as Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.

Education and educational achievements have an important place in Asian American communities. In 2008, the percentage of Whites and Asian Americans with at least a Bachelor's degree was higher than all the other races. Forty-nine percent of Asian American adults over 25 years of age hold at least a college degree, compared with 28 percent of U.S. adults over 25. Additionally, according to Pew Research (2012), more than 50 percent of Asian American mothers held at least a bachelor's degree, which was higher than all the other races including white mothers (36 percent). The result of their high level of education resonates with their employment. Half of the Asian American adult population is in management and in professional fields (including science and engineering) that require advanced degrees (Pew Research, 2012).

Asian Americans living in the U.S. are outstanding as a whole, despite sizable subgroup differences. They maintain a higher socio-economic status than the other minority races. The median annual household income for Asian Americans is \$66,000, while for all U.S. adults it is \$49,800. The median household wealth for Asian Americans is \$83,500 and for all U.S. adults it is \$68,529 (Pew Research, 2012). This may be due to the fact that there are often more earning members present in a family, and that many Asian Americans are culturally willing to work long hours (Jang 2002; Waters & Eschback, 1995).

Jang (2002) contended that due to their collectivist culture, family stability among Asian Americans is higher than among other U.S. adults, which creates a nurturing environment for their children. Fifty-four percent of Asian Americans claimed that having a successful marriage is one of the most important things in life, while only 34

percent of all the U.S. adults believed the same. Family stability can be seen in their living arrangements as they are more likely to be married (59 percent), have lower rates of birth outside marriage (16 percent), and 80 percent of Asian American children are raised in a household with two married parents (Pew Research, 2012).

### **Asian American Student Population**

With the increase of Asian American populations, an increase in Asian student populations is inevitable. The number of Asian students has also increased at a fast pace. According to a report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2012), in 1993, around 3.6 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander students were enrolled in U.S. public schools, while in 2008 the number increased to 4.8 percent, a 33.34 percent increase in the Asian American student population. Asian American students represent complex and diverse characteristics, in terms of cultures, living styles, languages, religions, methods of immigration, ethnicities, socio-economic status, and academics.

Asian American students put more effort and time in their school work and activities (such as private tutoring, after-school study groups, and language and music lessons) that may strengthen their education. Moreover, they do not invest much time in activities that may interfere in their educational performance such as dating, sports, getting a part-time job, and performing house chores (Kao, 1995; Chao & Tseng, 2002). Furthermore, researchers agree on the significant impact of school attendance on student achievement (Paredes & Ugarte, 2011). Students who frequently miss school have been found to have low self-esteem, were socially less competent, and claimed less satisfaction with school (Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams, & Dalicandro, 1998). School attendance was

used as one of the measures of persistence, by the NCES report (2010), to explore which racial group may be academically at risk. It was found that students with fewer absences were more likely to score at or above basic on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics assessment. In 2009, 63 percent of Asian students reported zero absences from school, while only 11 percent Asian students missed three or more days of school, the best school attendance among their peers.

Furthermore, Jang (2002) asserted that criminologists display a general lack of interest in studying Asian American youth, as they were not quite visible in the crime statistics. Jang referred to the 17 year juvenile arrest trend reported by the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) from 1982 to 1998; according to which, the Asian American youth population was the least deviant than all the other races. This is not only true in the U.S., but also in other Western countries such as England, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Jang reported that on average, Asian/Pacific Islander juvenile arrest rates for total crimes were half of White and American Indian or Alaskan Native rates and one fourth of the Black arrest rates.

### **Asian American Student Achievement**

Often Asian American students are called model minority students as they do well in school and are academically successful. Asian American students tend to be over-represented in gifted and talented (G/T) programs; according to Hui (2005), one in 10 Asian American students were in G/T programs. The Asian region that is being explored in this research study is comprised of extensively contrasting cultures, living styles, languages, religions, and more. It is notable that even with such differences the group as

a whole does well academically because as a group they believe in hard work, strong family values, and merit (Wu, 2002).

In 2010, a report *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups* was released by the U.S. Department of Education with collaboration with the NCES. It examined the educational progress and challenges of students in the U.S. by race and ethnicity. This report showed that even though completion of high school and continuation of education in college rates have increased in each race and ethnicity group, differences in academic achievement among each race and ethnicity group remain an issue. Specifically, the NCES report (2010) discussed the findings of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Birth Cohort 2001. This study examined the ability of four year old children to identify letters, numbers, and basic geometric shapes. Thirty-three percent of the participating four years olds were found to be proficient in letter recognition. Asian Americans had the highest rate of proficiency (49 percent) than among the other groups. Sixty-five percent of the participating four years olds were found to be proficient in number and shape recognition. Once again, Asian 4 year olds had higher rates of proficiency (81 percent) than any other racial group.

Part of the NCES (2010) report also studied the various measures of academic achievement for students at elementary and secondary levels. According to this report, on the 2007 reading section of the NAEP, at both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels, higher percentages of Asian/Pacific Islander and White students were proficient or more than proficient. On the mathematics section, at both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels Asians/Pacific Islanders had the highest percentage of students scoring at or above proficient, followed

by White students. The achievement of White and Asian/Pacific Islanders was far better than the Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaskan Native 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

Blacks had the lowest percentage of 4th-grade students scoring at or above the proficient level of all groups. The NAEP data from 2000 to 2011 indicated that Asian American students are persistently scoring higher than students of other races, especially all the minority races, in critical subject matter areas such as reading, math and science.

In 2008, more than 1.5 million students took at least one Advanced Placement (AP) exam. Students who take AP courses in high school are eligible to take AP exams in order to earn college credits. Students who complete AP courses and successfully take AP exams are considered to be better prepared for college than their counterparts who did not take AP courses. A score of 3 or higher is considered a successful score by the College Board. In 2008, the average score for all exams was 2.83; the highest mean score (3.08) was obtained by the Asian American students, followed by the White students (2.96), Hispanic students (2.42), American Indian/Alaskan Native (2.39), and Black students (1.91) (NCES, 2010).

As a part of the college application process, students are required by many colleges and universities to submit their standardized assessment scores from either the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Testing (ACT). According to the NCES report (2010), the population of college entrance test takers is becoming more diverse in recent years. The SAT exam includes a mathematics section and a critical reading section; in 2008 Asian American students had the highest average score in the mathematics section and the second highest average score in the critical reading section.

The ACT exam includes four sections of English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science. In 2008, 33.34 percent of Asian American students met the college readiness benchmarks on all four sections of the ACT exam far higher than all the other racial groups. In general, the ACT and SAT scores of the studied population reveal an impressive picture, where they are persistently either scoring higher or very close to the White students and always scoring higher than all the other minority races (ACT, 2012; NCES, 2012).

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS, 2011) is an international comparative study that examines the mathematics and science knowledge and skills of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders of participating countries. The results of TIMSS also revealed a remarkable image of academic achievement of Asian Americans. NCES (2012) released a report based on the TIMSS 2011 findings. According to which, in 2011, the average mathematics scores for White, Asian, Hispanic, and multiracial 4<sup>th</sup> graders were higher than the TIMSS average score. However, within all the U.S. races, Asian American 4<sup>th</sup> graders scored the highest. While, at 8<sup>th</sup> grade the situation was quite similar where the mathematics scores of White and Asian American 8<sup>th</sup> graders were higher than the average TIMSS score; and again Asian American students' scores were the highest within the U.S. races.

Based on the TIMSS (2011) the findings NCES report (2012) also discussed the science scores of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders; Asian American students again scored higher than all the other U.S. races. The average science scores for White, Asian, Hispanic, and multiracial 4<sup>th</sup> graders were higher than the TIMSS average score. While, at 8<sup>th</sup> grade the average White, Asian American, and multi-racial students' science scores were higher

than the average TIMSS score. At both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels, the science scores of Asian American students were once again the highest.

Moreover, in a recent study by the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (2011), Asian Americans were not considered under-represented in science and engineering fields because although considered as a minority in the general population, their share in academic degrees and employment in science and engineering had been relatively much larger. A similar point is made by Pew Research (2012); Asian American students are over-represented in the awarding of U.S. advanced degrees. In 2010, Asian American students received 25 percent of more than 48,000 research doctorates in numerous fields such as engineering, math, computer sciences, physical sciences, life sciences, and social sciences.

Overall, Asian American students academically do well. However some disparities have been reported in academic achievements across the various ethnic subgroups. Some studies reported that the academic performance of students of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Indian sub-continent backgrounds had been better than students of Filipino, South-East Asian, and Pacific Islander backgrounds (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Kao, 1995).

### **Asian Americans' Parenting and Educational Views**

#### **Views of Education**

According to Asian cultural folk beliefs, there are two goals of learning, firstly, to explore inner self cultivation and virtue and secondly, to use the gained knowledge to provide honorable service to the community (Li, 1997). People's understanding of

learning (that includes beliefs, effects, processes, personal opinions, and social perceptions of learning) varies depending upon their culture and environment. These understandings impact people's motivation for learning (Li, 2001). Chao and Tseng (2002) explained an Asian concept of self perfection called "Confucian", which in simple words means to constantly work to improve one self and to achieve diligence and concentration. Educational achievement is Confucian for Asian Americans, meaning they consider education as a mean of self improvement. A study by Li (2001) explored the role of culture in shaping beliefs of learning. Li reviewed Western learning beliefs (that highlights the mind) and Chinese learning beliefs (that highlights personal value). Li found that most of the participating White college students defined knowledge as facts, information, skills, and understanding of the world around them. The majority of the Chinese students, on the other hand, defined it as a way to self-perfection and spiritual enrichment.

### **Asian American Views of Children's Education**

Interdependence and collectivism are common traits found in Asian communities; due to which the family unit is inseparable from the individual in Asian societies. Asian parents take serious responsibility of the actions of their children as they see their children as extensions of themselves and thus, in Asian communities, children's achievements demonstrate more about the worth of the family than the individual (Kim & Hong, 2007). Academic accomplishments by children are seen as the best way to bring honor and recognition to the family and also to return the favor of parents' sacrifices and efforts towards their children (Kim, Li, & Ng, 2005).

Ruth Chao is a psychologist and a leading researcher at the University of California. Her research extensively involves examining alternative conceptualizations and theories to comprehend Asian parenting styles and childhood socialization. Chao and Tseng (2002) in their study *Parenting of Asians* suggested that regardless of how academic success of Asian American students is portrayed by the research and media, Asian American parents are extremely concerned about their children's academic achievement. In many Asian cultures the competence of parents is measured by the academic achievements and cultural accomplishments of their children. Thus, children's schooling is regarded as the primary responsibility of the parents. Tu (1985) explained that this concept is related to the Confucian ideology in which a successful Confucian father is defined by the educational and cultural achievements of his family. Furthermore, according to Asian cultural folk beliefs, education of children is like the cultivation of a tree that starts its life with a seed and needs constant care by the planter in the form of trimming and watering. It is believed that early educational influence is vital to keep the child on the morally right path (Chao & Tseng, 2002).

Great emphasis has been given to hard work and applying effort in accomplishing educational achievement. Seven in ten Asian American adults claimed that one could excel if he/she works hard (Pew Research, 2012). Hess, Chih-Mei, & McDevitt (1987) studied the perspective of parents about the causes (effort, ability, school training, home training, and luck) that affected their children's performance in mathematics. The participating parents were Chinese American and European American. The authors found that although both groups of parents believed that effort was the most important

cause that affected their children's mathematics performance, the Chinese American parents put more emphasis on the effort than on ability, school training, home training, and luck. European American parents placed almost equal emphasis on the five causes. The attendance rate of Asian American students also resonates with their emphasis on effort; according to the NCES report (2010) the attendance rate of Asian American students was generally higher than all the other races, especially the minority races.

Some studies have suggested that Asian American make conscious choices to take steps that would lead them to high social status, honor, and financial freedom in order to overcome racial discrimination (Dundes, Cho, & Kwak, 2009). About one in five Asian American adults claimed that they have been personally treated in an unfair manner because of their race (Pew Research, 2012). Similarly, Xie and Goyette (1998) insisted that Asian Americans emphasize education because they see it as a way of upward mobility for their children. In 2007, the *Japan Institute of Labour Policy and Training* (JILPT) released a report describing the expectations and views of Japanese parents of their children's education, careers, and future. The expectations reported by the Japanese parents were for their children to get a job that their children want to have and for them to understand the importance of learning and working. As parents they felt that it was primarily theirs and secondarily their children's school's responsibility to instill habits and characteristics in their children necessary for getting and holding a job. For this purpose, they put emphasis on educational achievement, independence, and moral values such as communication skills, consideration for others, sense of responsibility,

cooperativeness, patience, and others. Overall, the two things that were the most important for the Japanese parents were vocational skills and high social status.

A study by Steinberg, Dornbusch, and Brown (1992) explored the views of education of high school students from various racial backgrounds such as Asian American, African American, Hispanic American, and European American. All the participating students reported that their parents believed that education was crucial for their future; however, Asian American students also reported that their parents strongly believed in the negative consequences of not getting an education. They believed that it would be extremely difficult to be successful without proper education. Dundes et.al. (2009) studied the educational and career choices made by the Asian American and White students. They found that Asian American parents put more emphasis on prestige than on happiness when choosing college. In career selection, Asian American parents preferred a career that would provide financial freedom, on the other hand White parents preferred career enjoyment.

### **Asian American Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement is one of the major variables that leads to academic success of a student; parental involvement includes providing support and resources, encouraging children, and instructing them at home, and maintaining communication with children's teachers (Mau, 1997). The research is inconsistent when it comes to the parental involvement of Asian Americans. Chao & Tseng (2002) explained that this may be due to the inconsistency of definitions of parental involvement. Asian American parental involvement includes teaching basic school readiness skills before their children start

school, purchasing extra workbooks and assigning them extra homework in the early school years, enrolling their children in educational activities such as language and music lessons, private tutoring, after school study group, starting a college fund, and closely monitoring the after-school time (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Huntsinger, et al., 2000).

Asian American parents are found to be less involved in participating in school activities such as involvement in PTA or seeking communication with their children's teacher. Asian American parents who heavily reinforce their Asian culture are more likely to participate in educational activities at home and less likely to get involved with the teacher, PTA, and other school staff (Sy, Rowley, & Schulenberg, 2007). Lee and Manning (2001) explained that Asian parents have such high respect for their teachers and school administrators, that they believe it is their duty to follow teachers' acumen. Seeking communication with teachers is considered as disrespectful and thus, they rarely offer a comment, ask a question, or initiate contact with teachers and school staff. Also, Asian American parents often hesitate to get involved in school functions due to their level of acculturation or lack of encouragement by other parents. At later school years, Asian American parents are found to be more involved in helping their children prepare for college that includes providing them a nurturing home environment, resources to prepare for ACT and SAT tests, planning for college, and providing a college fund (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Ho & Willms, 1996).

### **Research on Characteristics of Effective Teachers**

To maintain federal funding and their reputations, school districts need to have highly qualified teachers as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002). According to the NCLB act, in order for teachers to be considered highly qualified, they need to fulfill three requirements which are to hold a bachelor's degree, maintain state teacher certification, and demonstrate subject matter competence in each subject taught (United States Department of Education, 2010). The foundation of NCLB standards are mainly based on two points that are prior experience and education. The implications of these standards are that the school employers can select the best teachers by looking only at experience in the classroom and the number of degrees attained by the applicant. Unfortunately, there are no protocols for measuring personal or other important professional qualities.

At present the main criteria for measuring school and teacher effectiveness is by assessing student achievement. Even though schools should be held accountable for their students' education, student achievement should not be the only way to measure teacher effectiveness. Ability to communicate, ability to build relationship with students, having compassion, and various other such factors must be considered to assess teacher effectiveness. The problem is that government, school administrators, teachers, parents and students view teacher effectiveness differently. The interpretation of the characteristics of the effective teachers majorly depends on the perceptions of the individuals defining the term. These perceptions can be an important element of teacher training and professional development programs.

The literature shows that there are particular characteristics that can be identified as common among the effective teachers. According to Polk (2006), like the definition of effective teachers, the characteristics of effective teachers are also vague. Ramsden (2003) believed that there is no right answer to the question of how to teach students better; there are however, methods that may be better for each individual teacher.

Patrick O'Neill (1988) examined the research related to the topic. He divided teachers' characteristics into three stages: pre-active, interactive, and post-active stages. The pre-active stage was considered as the stage in which teachers organize and plan before executing curriculum. The four properties that he assigned in the pre-active stage are creating a learning environment, teacher knowledge, teachers' organizational skills, and curriculum materials. In the interactive stage in which the actual instruction takes place; O'Neill added teacher expectation, teacher enthusiasm, climate of classroom, classroom management, teacher clarity, organization in advance, instructional mode, level of questioning, direct instruction, time-on-task, variability, monitoring, and teacher flexibility. O'Neill added feedback, teacher acknowledgement, and criticism in the post-active stage in which teachers would analyze the growth of students.

Glen (2001) suggested that teacher quality is the most crucial factor for school effectiveness; he put together a list of qualities for school administrators to use when hiring new teachers and also to try to enhance these qualities in veteran teachers. Some of the qualities mentioned by him are being enthusiastic, making learning fun, knowing content, being organized, and more. At the same time he urged that there is no exact formula to provide education effectively; every teacher will have a different set of skills

and characteristics that usually depend on the mission and requirements of the school they work in. Allington (2005) and Glen (2001) insisted that there is no single method of instruction that would work efficiently for every student. Effective teachers observe their students, so that they could identify what method would work for their classroom.

Ramsden (2003) believed that most of the scholars work sought solutions to the problems in the field of education rather than actually discovering the causes of the problems. He asserted that one of the significant problems lies in the quality of the teacher. Ramsden pointed out six common characteristics of effective teaching: a) engaging students' interest in the subject matter by providing clear explanations, b) teachers should show respect and concern for students and their learning, c) providing students options in assessment, d) establishing clear goals and setting high expectations, e) utilization of differentiating instruction, and f) a teacher should be a lifelong learner.

Poplin et al. (2011) studied 31 highly effective teachers in low performing urban schools in Los Angeles County. They discovered some common features in the highly effective teachers which were a) strictness: these teachers believed that their strictness was essential for not only effective teaching and learning but also for safety and respect; b) instructional intensity: in the classroom of these teachers, instruction was always going on and teachers transitioned from one activity to another quickly and smoothly; c) movement: these teachers moved frequently around the classroom to assist each student; d) traditional instruction: the instruction used by these teachers was traditional, specific, understandable, and teacher-directed, e) exhorting virtues: these teachers encouraged their students to practice specific virtues such as respecting self and others, working hard,

and more, and f) strong and respectful relationships with students: these teachers respected their children as individuals (p. 41).

Aagaard and Skidmore (2002) asked undergraduate students to write a paper that explained their memories of their best and worst teachers from elementary and high school. Out of a total of 448 teacher descriptions, about 81 percent of the students declared that teachers who were student-centered were their best teachers. No significant difference was found between male and female students' responses. For the students of this study a personal relationship and caring attitude with their teacher was important.

In a study by Torff and Sessions (2005) principals of secondary schools were asked to explain what they perceived as qualities of an ineffective teacher. The top three qualities provided by the principals were inability to manage classrooms, inability to implement lessons, and inability to establish relationships with their students. It is quite clear that there are innumerable characteristics of effective teachers in the literature. Characteristics such as classroom management, climate, environment, enthusiasm, expectations, feedback, pacing, and pedagogical content knowledge will be reviewed.

### **Classroom Management**

Classroom management is often referred to as classroom discipline (Kratochwill, 2012). Classroom management defines the activities that teachers need to perform in order to properly teach their students, and this may involve keeping a classroom organized, running lessons smoothly, and keeping students engaged in learning. Evertson and Weinstein (2006) provided an outline on classroom management. According to them, there are two purposes of classroom management: a) it establishes and maintains an

organized environment and b) it strengthens students' social and moral development. They suggested some important knowledge and skills that need to be implemented in order to achieve a well-managed classroom, which are developing supportive relationships with and among the students, presenting instructions in a manner that enhances students' access to learning and also academically engages students, promoting students' growth of social skills and self regulation, and utilizing suitable interventions that will help students with behavior problems.

According to Wong and Wong (2004), too many teachers do not teach as they are not prepared; when the problem arises, they start disciplining and providing rules of the classroom. As a result, their classrooms are unmanaged and not much can be achieved in them. This idea is similar to Marzano and Marzano (2003), they also suggested that in poorly managed classrooms, instruction and learning both are affected which may influence student achievement negatively. If the teacher is organized and has built classroom rules and routines, the class will be well-managed; students will be able to learn and be successful.

Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011) explored classroom practices that make a good teacher. They examined classroom practices of effective versus less effective teachers. The teachers were categorized as effective and less effective on the basis of student achievement gain scores in mathematics and reading. The authors found that the most effective teachers scored significantly higher in classroom management. Managing the classroom included establishing routines, monitoring student behavior, and utilizing time

with efficiency. Due to adequate management during delivery of lessons, the effective teachers had fewer disruptions than the less effective teachers.

An effectively managed classroom provides students with the opportunity to efficiently study the school work and also learn discipline and self-control (Gordon, 2001). Classroom management is also important for the safety of the students and teachers; when classrooms are not properly managed, students may act dangerously and can become a threat to the school's safe environment. As teachers and administrators are responsible for the events that take place in the classroom, their accountability can become an issue (Gordon, 2001). Moreover, according to Wong and Wong (2004), if teachers do not manage their classrooms well, students will not pay attention to them and will not respect them, as a result of which teachers will continuously struggle with those students to gain control. Thus, it can be said that classroom management by teachers is an important characteristic of effective teaching that has a significant impact on students' achievement.

### **Climate**

According to Mary Blegan (former U.S. Department of Education Teacher-in-Residence), creating a climate for learning is the most important action that is taken by effective teachers (Starr, 2012). Classroom climate refers to teachers' skills to develop a positive student-teacher relationship that include many factors such as being empathetic, good communicational skills, creating an emotionally safe environment, and more (Hamre & Pinate, 2005). Weak classroom climate establishes an unfortunate cycle of bad behavior, where students misbehave in the classroom, the teacher tries to control that

behavior, students persist, then the teacher backs off leading to an increase in student misbehavior (Ratcliff et al., 2010). Weak classroom climate can also contribute to lasting increases in student aggression (Wilson et al., 2007). Learning can be seriously jeopardized in a classroom with weak climate. Bohn et.al. (2004) conducted an extensive research study to differentiate between the practices of exceptionally effective and less effective teachers. They concluded that exceptionally effective teachers established a positive classroom climate in which students enjoyed learning. The level of student participation, cooperation, and enthusiasm was much higher which led them to do academically well.

There are various aspects to developing a positive student-teacher relationship such as teachers' sense of humor, an ability to have fun and an ability to be empathetic. Sense of humor is one of the most powerful ways for teachers to build a connection with their students (Wolk, 2003). Kottler et al. (2004) argued that when students are bored with their lesson, they divert their attention to other things; it is crucial that the content presented to the students be interesting and relevant to students and that it embraces the funny moments occurring in the classroom. Students pay attention to teachers who are funny, hence leading to a positive student-teacher relationship which may also impact students' achievement.

According to Merriam-Webster (2013), empathy means "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another." The literature describes teachers' empathy as their ability to demonstrate to students that they honestly have interest in their

lives. Brown (2005) puts an emphasis on the communicational skills of the teacher; he argued that young students assess their teachers' verbal and non-verbal messages to see if their teachers really care for them. If the students think that their teachers care about them, they develop a mutually respectful relationship with their teachers which can have an impact on student achievement. Communication (verbal or non-verbal) determines the effectiveness of the teacher; communication is a tool that very easily establishes or ruins a relationship. Hence, it is important for teachers to use their verbal and non-verbal communicational skills to establish a positive student-teacher relationship. Furthermore, it is important that teachers' demeanor should be empathetic; that includes talking to students in private and listening to the students instead of lecturing them (Charles, 1999). Teachers who show honest concern for their students are able to develop a healthy student-teacher relationship.

The other aspect of the classroom climate, suggested in the literature, is the emotionally safe environment of the classroom. Research suggested that students' performance increases if they feel safe in their environment (Bernard, 2001). According to Desautels (2011), in adolescence, students' brains are more effectively connected for emotions than for logic. Consequently, as their logical thinking is not fully developed, they are more prepared to react to a situation with feelings. Desautels (2011) also suggested that due to the particular brain development of adolescents, the stimuli within and surrounding the learning environment can have a great impact on their emotions and can impact their learning. Bernard (2001) suggested that the classroom environment influences students even before the student-teacher relationship is established; thus it

becomes crucial to establish an environment where students can feel safe and succeed. Building community, modeling kindness and patience, setting clear boundaries, smiling and laughing a lot are additional aspects of classroom climate suggested by scholars (Alber, 2011).

### **Classroom Environment**

Classroom environment refers to the physical area within a classroom. A productive classroom environment includes effective floor plans, wall spaces, and furniture (Stronge, 2002). The research on classroom environment proposes that classrooms must be organized in a manner that teachers' instructional goals can be easily met (Savage, 1999; Trussell, 2008) and also support their teaching philosophy (Emmer & Evertson, 2009). Though research revealed that the physical environment of the classroom impacts student and teachers' behaviors (Simonsen et al., 2008), it does not directly influence student achievement (Stronge, 2002). Cotton (2001) concluded that student behavior and learning both are affected by their physical environment, especially heat, air, lighting, space, and access to supplies. Similarly, Mackinson-Ashby (2007) contended that the literature associating classroom environment and student achievement is quite ambiguous because of the presence of other variables influencing student achievement.

Classroom environment is very important in creating an effectively managed and a supportive classroom (Trussell, 2008). It shapes the way teachers and students establish their feelings, thinking, and behavior (Roskos & Neuman, 2011). The physical environment of an effective classroom may include clear and open walkways, desk

arrangement, and high traffic areas (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006), so that students and teachers can move easily without bumping into each other (Trussell, 2008) and can also work as a group or individually (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Classroom environment also includes décor; it is recommended that teachers should keep the classroom décor simple and use only those items that are going to be used by the students and the teachers and also are age and grade appropriate.

A purposeful classroom arrangement supports student learning. Trussell (2008) asserted that schools should implement classroom universal practices to provide positive behavior support in schools; classroom universal practices are organizational and instructional practices that help enhance academic performance and also limit behavioral problems in the classroom. The classroom universal practices include teachers using their students' work as décor to show that they are proud of their students; this will boost their self-esteem. A perfect classroom would not have any obstacles and would have sufficient space to walk. Supplies necessary to complete an assignment such as sharpener, paper, and garbage containers should be accessible to students, so that students can concentrate on their assignments and learning. Rules of the classroom should be posted and visible for students to see, as a clear and a constant reminder of what is expected of them in the classroom (Trussell, 2008).

Roskos & Neuman (2011) also talked about the same practices as Trussell (2008). They strongly believed that “it is the environment that informs and documents the social interactions that will go on there, the encounters, friendships, and learning that will occur” (p. 110). They asserted that to invite and motivate students to engage in learning

in a productive manner, learning spaces have to be flexible and not fixed; materials have to be organized well; and walls have to be used as texts that guide students through their day. They also talked about the greening of schools, which basically mean to use materials that are environmentally healthy and to use more natural lightings or better artificial lightings, better ventilation, and less toxic cleaning materials in schools. According to Loftness et al. (2002), “greening schools and classrooms improves environmental quality to the benefit of students and teachers”.

Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011) explored classroom practices of effective versus less effective teachers. The authors found that the effective teachers scored significantly higher in classroom organization. Classroom organization included making sure that the needed materials were available and accessible to students, the physical layout of the classroom was appropriate, and that classroom space was used efficiently. Physical space of the classroom needs to be designed in a way that resonates with teachers’ philosophy of teaching. It should reflect how they want to interact and build relationship with their students. It should help them to amplify student learning.

### **Pedagogical Content Knowledge**

According to Mackinson-Ashby (2007), Shulman introduced the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PKC) in 1987 and his work on PKC has been explored by many scholars in different fields. Shulman (1987) defined PKC as the combination of pedagogy and content that is specifically part of teachers’ own understanding. There are basically two parts to his idea of PKC. The first part refers to teaching strategies that means that the specific subject knowledge should be presented (by examples, diagrams,

explanation) to students in a way that is understandable to them. The second part refers to the specific teaching problems that emerge during the process of teaching.

Teacher knowledge, teaching styles, and teaching behaviors have been found to have an immense impact on student learning (Moats & Foorman, 2003; Stronge, 2011; Timmerman, 2009). The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) sponsors various research programs; the purpose of these programs is to explore the ways children learn to read, the various factors that lead them to failure, and the steps that can be taken to prevent those failures. Moats and Foorman (2003) discussed a NICHD research project in their paper which was a five year study of reading instruction in urban schools with high poverty rates, high percentages of diverse students and low performance scores. The NICHD project included various interventions such as professional development programs, classroom observations, various leadership programs, and consultants' visits. The data were gathered by surveying, interviewing, and observing teachers, and also by measuring students' growth. The results showed a significant association between overall teacher competence and students' end of year achievement. The results also revealed that teachers who attended professional development courses were scored higher on the knowledge survey than those teachers who did not participate in a professional development course. It was concluded that teachers' knowledge of content had an immense influence on their students' achievements.

Karp (2010) discussed an interesting point related to content knowledge and new teachers. He suggested that teachers, before starting teaching, are surrounded by their

peers and supervisors and are used to college-level or advanced knowledge. It is important for teachers to have school-level knowledge where the information could be easily understood by their students. This can be done by giving more time to new teachers so that they could familiarize themselves with the efficient ways to teach and also by giving them opportunities to collaborate with other experienced teachers. Karp concluded that the individuals who choose teaching as their profession need to understand that their education does not finish in college and that it is a life-long process of learning. The school where they work is not only a learning institution for their students, but is for them too.

A study that Mackinson-Ashby (2007) referred to by Mason et.al. (1992) described a case where average achieving eighth graders performed very well in a high-achieving class, as their teacher had a Master's degree in Mathematics and frequently attended professional development courses and workshops to improve his teaching skills. Overall, when teachers attend professional development courses and workshops they learn innovative teaching techniques and strategies that improve their pedagogical knowledge content. Consequently, they are able to influence student performance.

### **Expectations for Student Learning**

The concept of teacher's expectations refers to the "phenomena associated with the relation between what a teacher believes a student can do and what the student can actually do" (McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2002). Sixty years ago Merton (1948) revealed that when teachers had higher expectations from their students, they interacted with them in a way that led their students to do well (Rubie-Davies et.al, 2010). His

ideology inspired many scholars such as Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968). They described their experiment in their book, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*; the purpose of the experiment was to see if reality can be influenced by the expectations of others. For the purpose of their experiment, students of a California elementary school were given a covert IQ test. The teachers of that school were provided false information of their students' academic ability. Teachers were told the names of some of the students that were labeled as "spurters" (experimental group) and that they were doing academically well compared to other students (control group). In reality, "spurters" were just randomly chosen. The only difference between these "spurters" (experimental group) and the other students (control group) was in the mind of the teachers. At the end of the experiment, all students were tested with the same IQ test once again. The results suggested statistically significant gains favoring the experimental group of "spurters". The authors concluded that when teachers have high expectations, they encourage performance and growth, and thus students do well. When teachers do not have high expectations, they may be unintentionally discouraging their students in different ways.

According to Good and Brophy (2002), teachers interactions and expectations change with the background of their students. Teachers generally appreciate brighter students more than students not doing well academically. Good and Brophy also insisted that it is essential that teachers should overcome their previous beliefs about a specific student's capabilities. Oftentimes, teachers are unable to re-analyze the situation where a positive change may have taken place in a student's academic capabilities and they may still treat a student in an inappropriate manner.

Stipek (2012) discussed the variety of ways in which teachers' beliefs about their students affect their behavior toward them. The differential behavior may include different kinds of relationships, amount of interaction, amount of information provided to complete an assignment, calling on students during classroom discussion, wait time for students' response, amount of criticism or praise and many more. Some kind of differential behavior toward students who differ in academic achievement is appropriate and productive. However, oftentimes teachers are less patient and have low expectations of their low achieving students; in situations like this differential behavior may be inappropriate and detrimental to the students (Stipek, 2012).

In a study by Palardy and Rumberger (2008), the reading achievement of first graders was found to be lower when their teachers had low expectations. Vanfossen et.al. (1987) found that college track students were more likely than other students to explain their teachers' characteristics as respectful, patient, and clear. In some circumstances differential behaviors may be contributing to the existing achievement gap between high and low achievers. The influence of teacher expectations for student learning can be beneficial as well as damaging depending upon the category of the student.

Other than students' academic ability, there are other factors that may have an impact on teachers' expectations. Teachers shape their expectations through objective (students' previous academic achievement) and subjective (teachers' own prejudice) information (Trouilloud et.al., 2002). Many scholars have insisted that expectations are formed based on students' social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds (Auwarter et.al., 2008; Hinnant et.al., 2009). Clifton et.al. (1986), after controlling for students' socio-

economic status, intellectual ability, and academic performance, found that students' ethnicity and gender had the most effect on their teachers' expectations.

Speybroeck et.al. (2012) examined the role of teachers' expectations in the association between students' socio-economic status, gender, and academic achievement. Around four thousand kindergarten students were examined. Results of this study suggested that teachers favorably judged students with higher socio-economic status than students of low socio-economic status. They also found that students' socio-economic status had the most impact on the expectations of teachers, compared to students' ethnicities and their previous academic abilities. Moreover, with minority students, teachers made less distinctions between high and low socio-economic statuses; while with the other students teachers' expectations were formed on the basis of socio-economic status. Overall, the main factors that affected teachers' expectations were socio-economic status, ethnicity, intellectual ability, academic performance, and motivation.

### **Teacher Enthusiasm**

Merriam-Webster (2013) defines enthusiasm as "strong excitement of feeling." Research indicated that teacher enthusiasm is the teacher's excitement to teach. If teachers hate to teach something, their students will hate to learn it; if teachers love to teach it, their students will love to learn it too (Bulger et.al., 2002). Teacher enthusiasm comes from their content knowledge and experience and is one of the most common characteristics found in effective teachers, and yet enthusiasm training is very rarely discussed in the literature (Mackinnon-Ashby, 2007).

Enthusiasm has been discussed in different terms such as “presence”, a term used by Farber (2008). He commented that presence is not poise or confidence, but just being present. He compared teachers without presence with the guides in a theme park who tell the same story, same jokes, and ask the same questions many times in a day; one can see that they are speaking and that they are standing in front of them, but they are mentally not there. When teaching is scripted like the stories of the theme park’s guide, the students merely become spectators. Thus, presence that includes a sense of immediacy, spontaneity, and openness leads to a way of teaching that is alive and is extremely important for student learning.

Some scholars, such as Good and Brophy (2002), separated enthusiasm into two approaches; the first approach refers to teachers’ unadulterated interest in the subject, and the second approach refers to teachers’ “dynamic vigor” that they show through their excitement in their voices and body language. Similarly, Kunter et al. (2011) also discussed two distinct dimensions of teacher enthusiasm which are subject enthusiasm (topic related enthusiasm) and teaching enthusiasm (activity related enthusiasm).

A study by Patrick, Hisley, & Kemplar (2000) explored the relationship between teacher’s enthusiasm and student’s intrinsic motivation. Ninety-three undergraduate students took a survey that compared several teacher variables that were related to intrinsic motivation. Enthusiasm was found to be most strongly related to intrinsic motivation. The authors concluded that students feel highly intrinsically motivated, empowered, and stimulated regarding the subject matter and class when they perceived their teacher as enthusiastic. They also asserted that in a way enthusiasm is infectious to

students and that it may not be a cure for the motivational troubles; however it is an important tool to initiate interest, thrill, and eagerness to learn.

Mackinnon-Ashby (2007) also found similar results. The purpose of her study was to investigate qualities of effective teachers through students' perspectives. More than 200 students took the survey. The survey included many characteristics of teachers such as classroom management, environment, pacing, and others. Enthusiasm in this study referred to teachers' excitement in class and their attitude. It was found that the majority of the students in her study felt that their teachers' enthusiasm influenced their attitudes towards learning.

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement conducted a study in 1997 in which around 160 high school students participated in focus group discussions to talk about their everyday school experiences. All students declared that classroom teachers are the main channel to learning. They also stated that students learn from those teachers who display enthusiasm for what they teach, are patient, have a sense of humor, and are willing to take time to help their students after school (as described by Sanchez, 2008).

Polk (2007) provided a very intriguing explanation about teacher enthusiasm. He suggested that enthusiastic teachers are considered as effective teachers not because the lesson they are delivering is of good or bad quality, but because they are displaying excitement which forces their students to engage in learning. Thus, the learning experience of the students is strengthened. At the end, the main purpose of teacher enthusiasm is to encourage students to take interest and value the subject matter; however enthusiasm is not for entertainment purposes (Good & Brophy, 2002). It is uncertain

what methods can be used to display enthusiasm, but it is clear that enthusiasm has a positive impact on student motivation and eventually their achievement.

### **Interactional Dynamics**

Interactional dynamics may include speaking skills, communication, clarity of rules, discussions, listening, and more. Charles (1999) emphasized this quality by stating that the foundation of establishing relationships is based on an individual's communicational skills and thus, the effectiveness of the teachers can be decided by the way they communicate. Mackinnon-Ashby (2007) insisted that teachers must learn communicational skills as they are vital in creating positive student-teacher relationships. Brown (2005) had an intriguing perspective on communication; he claimed that students examine if their teachers care about them by analyzing their teachers' verbal and non-verbal messages; and if they feel that their teachers care about them, they will make an effort to build a respectful relationship with their teachers.

A good quality of interaction between students and teachers is extremely important (Kinchin, 2003). This includes open discussion that displays the understanding nature of teachers resulting in a culture of appreciation of diverse perspectives. Kyriakides (2005) claimed that interactional dynamics are not minor, but vital in effective teaching. Effective teachers encourage their students by asking them a lot of questions, clearly communicating with them, and never speaking in ways above their comprehension.

Additionally, feedback is discussed by many researchers. Giving feedback means giving students a neutral, non-emotional response about their work; it examines students'

deficiency or success on their assignments. Students believe that when feedback on their work is given to them quickly, there is more probability of their success (Mackinnon-Ashby, 2007). At the end, it is very important for teachers to recognize their interactional dynamics when trying to establish positive relationships with their students.

### **Relationship Building**

Positive relationships between teachers and students have been considered a vital element of effective teaching and learning. In a study by Torff & Sessions (2005), principals of secondary schools were asked to explain what they perceived as the qualities of an ineffective teacher. The principals explained that the primary reason of teachers' inefficiencies is their inability to establish good relationships with their students. Similar findings were revealed by Crow (2004) and Aagaard and Skidmore (2002). Both studies explored students' perceptions of effective teachers. In Crow's study students considered teachers effective who were caring individuals. Students of Aagaard and Skidmore's study considered a good teacher as one who has the ability to connect with his or her students. Stronge, Ward, and Grant (2011) explored classroom practices that make a good teacher. The authors found that effective teachers scored significantly higher in fairness, respect, and creating a positive relationship with their students. Imber (2006) asserted that one of the most critical qualities of effective teaching is treating all students with equality, regardless of their academic ability, gender, race, religion, culture, or socio-economic status.

## **Matching Gender**

It is a common assumption that students learn best from teachers of the same gender. However, the literature is quite inconclusive about this assumption. Dee (2007) found that the gender of a teacher was positively related to students' academic scores, the teacher's perceptions of student performance, and student engagement. Butler and Christensen (2003) evaluated the impacts of matching students and teachers by gender. They studied more than six hundred political science undergraduate students and found very limited support for the claim that students learn more from the same gender teachers. Dropout rates were lower in the female students who were taught by female teachers, but there was no significant impact on their academic performance. Similarly, a study by Carrington, Tymms, and Merrell (2008) that included nearly nine thousand elementary school students found no empirical evidence to support the claim that same gender teachers influenced the educational performance of their students. Lingard, Martino, Mills, and Barr (2002) conducted a study in which more than six hundred young students were surveyed and interviewed. They found that for these students, gender of the teacher was not identified as a feature that impacted their achievement; however they mentioned that they would prefer a same gender teacher when talking about personal issues. Cho (2012), who studied young students of the OECD countries, also found that there was very little credibility in the hypothesis suggesting student teacher gender matching would have an impact on student performance. At the end, the verdict on same gender teacher is not conclusive.

### **Matching Ethnicity**

Dee (2005) explored the assumption that minority students learn more when they are matched with teachers of same race or ethnicity. He found hefty evidence to support the assumption and concluded that the academic performance of both white and black elementary level students was enhanced when matched with the same race teacher. He stated that just the presence of a teacher of similar racial or ethnical background led minority students to feel comfortable in their classroom and centralize their attention. Another study that examined the impact of student-teacher ethnic matching found that the mathematics achievement improved for students (K – 5<sup>th</sup> grade) who had at least one teacher of their same ethnicity (Eddie & Easton-Brooks, 2011). Downey and Pribesh (2004) asserted that teachers' race matters in the classroom. They explored the assumption that black students are not as good of citizens in the classroom as their white counterparts. The findings of their study revealed that when black and white students were similar on other variables and were placed with teachers of their same race, classroom behavior of black students was viewed as better than the behavior of their white counterparts. It was concluded that racial matching of students and teachers may be a good way to create a productive learning environment.

On the other hand, Howsen and Travick's (2007) findings were different. They extended Dee's (2005) work by including the effects of students' innate ability and the gender of teachers on students' academic performance. They discovered that when the added variables were considered, matching the race of students to teachers has no impact

on student achievement. Thus, the case for educational outcomes of racial match of student to teacher remains unclear (Hotchkiss, Raths, & Glutting, 2006).

### **Other Characteristics of Effective Teachers**

The review of literature revealed several other characteristics of effective teachers including instructional delivery. The use of direct and individualized instruction is common in effective teachers (Stronge et al., 2011). Kinchin (2003) asserted that the foundation of effective teaching is built on preparedness of the teacher. Preparedness includes knowledge of the curriculum and information of the students' prior knowledge of the content. The more the teacher knows about the content and student, the more effective the teaching will be. Moreover, pacing was suggested as an important aspect by the students of Mackinnon-Ashby's (2007) study. For the students it was essential that before moving to the next lesson, teachers checked that every student comprehended the material. A majority of the students stated that pacing impacts their academic achievement.

## **Summary**

### **Asian American Parents and Students**

The purpose of this research study is to examine Asian American parents' perceptions of characteristics of effective teachers. For the purpose of this study, an Asian American refers to a person who lives in the U.S. and has origins to any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian sub-continent. The total U.S. population grew by 9.7 percent from 2000 to 2010; in comparison, the Asian population in the U.S. increased more than four times faster than the total U.S.

population. This group is expected to continue to experience rapid population growth in the future too.

With the increase of Asian American populations, the number of Asian American students has also increased at a fast pace. From 1993 to 2008, there has been a 33.34 percent increase in the Asian American student population in U.S. schools. Often Asian American students are called model minority students as they do well in school and are academically successful. The NAEP data from 2000 to 2011 has shown that Asian American students have persistently scored higher than students of other races, especially all the minority races, in critical subject matter areas such as reading, math and science. The ACT and SAT scores and advancement placement scores have also shown a similar level of achievement by the Asian American students.

Scholars have referred to education and the educational achievement of Asian Americans to the concept of Confucian that means to constantly improve oneself; it is believed that Asian Americans use their academic achievement as a tool of self-improvement. Moreover, the foundation of Asian communities is based on the features of interdependence and collectivism. Asian American parents see their children as extensions of themselves and thus, in Asian communities, children's achievements demonstrate more about the worth of the family than the individual. In Asian communities, children's schooling and education is regarded as the primary responsibility of the parents.

Although, the research is inconsistent regarding parental involvement of Asian American parents, scholars explained that this may be due to the inconsistency of

definitions of parental involvement. Asian American parents are less involved in school activities and events. Their involvement includes teaching basic school readiness skills before their children start school, enrolling their children in educational activities such as language and music lessons, private tutoring, after school study group, starting a college fund, closely monitoring the after-school time, and helping their children prepare for college.

### **Effective Teachers' Characteristics**

Previous research has investigated the various characteristics common in effective teachers. Included in these investigations are efficient classroom management, classroom climate, classroom environment, pedagogical content knowledge, and expectations. Classroom management, also known as classroom discipline, helps teachers in establishing and maintaining an organized environment. It also strengthens students' social and moral development, and provides students opportunities to efficiently study the school work. In addition, classroom climate, that is teachers' skills to develop a positive student-teacher relationship, is important to avoid students' undesirable behaviors and also helps in making learning fun for students. Moreover, the classroom environment (the physical area within a classroom) may not directly impact student learning, but it influences student behavior and also teachers' classroom management. An effective classroom arrangement promotes student learning.

Pedagogical content knowledge has also been considered as an important quality of effective teachers. Teachers' knowledge, teaching styles, and teaching behaviors have been found to have an immense impact on student learning. Teachers who make efforts

to learn more through professional development courses and workshops tend to positively influence their students' academic achievement. Furthermore, teacher's expectations for student learning are also considered a vital characteristic of effective teachers. When teachers have higher expectations from their students, they interact with them in a way that leads their students to do academically well. Teacher enthusiasm has also been suggested as a common characteristic found in effective teachers. Enthusiasm of teachers forces students to engage in learning and encourages them to take interest in the subject matter.

Scholars have stated that teachers' interactional dynamics (speaking skills, communication, clarity of rules, discussions), are the foundation of establishing relationships with their students. Students learn immensely from the feedback provided by their teachers. Discussion allows them to open their minds and accept the diversity of thoughts. This also leads to the creation of positive relationships between students and teachers. Some experts have asserted that the primary reason of teachers' efficiency is their ability to establish good relationships with their students.

Matching gender had also been discussed by many experts. There are some studies that pointed to the fact that students learn better from teachers of the same gender. While other studies revealed that the gender of the teacher does not have any impact on student learning. The literature is inconclusive about matching the gender of students and teachers. Moreover, some scholars have found that teacher's race matters in the classroom. It has been revealed that minority students learn more from teachers of their same ethnicity/race.

The characteristics of effective teachers have long been discussed, scrutinized, and evaluated. Unfortunately, there are no immediate answers. To complicate matters even more, many experts have claimed that teaching is an inherent capability that cannot be learned; on the other hand, other experts have insisted that effective teaching is a skill that can be gained by personal exertion and can be improved or diminished with time. The literature is saturated with many strong arguments related to effective teaching. One thing is guaranteed that the topic of teacher effectiveness will continue to be debated and analyzed for many years to come.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Methodology**

The purpose of this research study was to examine the Asian American parents' perceptions of effective teachers' characteristics. In order to investigate this, the researcher utilized a qualitative research design. According to Merriam (2009), qualitative researches involve an understanding of how people construe the experiences of their lives and the world around them. Domegan and Fleming (2007) explained that "qualitative research aims to explore and to discover issues about the problem on hand, because very little is known about the problem." The qualitative nature of this study helped to understand the Asian American perceptions that were formed as a result of participants' experiences.

According to Creswell (2009), "the research process for qualitative researchers is emergent" (p. 175). In other words, it can be said that prior to conducting a qualitative study, its processes and plans cannot be described in an absolute or fixed manner, as there is a good chance that those processes and plans (such as nature or number of questions, participants, number of participants, etcetera) may change. The researcher conducted this qualitative study through employing semi-structured interviews which explored the personal perceptions voiced by a sample of Asian Americans parents on the characteristics of effective teachers. The study was conducted in the Southern region of the state of Minnesota that includes cities such as Mankato, North Mankato, Rochester, St. Peter, Prior Lake, and many others.

### **Sampling Strategy**

As mentioned in Chapter II, the Asian American population is a diverse population culturally, religiously, and ethnically. Similarly, the Asian American parents participating in this study were culturally diverse and were coming from different countries, speaking different languages, following different religions and cultures, acculturating at different paces. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit participants. A purposive sampling technique was used because it was specifically helpful in exploring the specific perceptions, Asian American parents' perceptions. A snowball technique was also used because the studied population was difficult to identify through other means. The researcher knew a few Asian American parents who agreed to participate in the study; the researcher asked those parents to guide her to other Asian American parents who were interested in participating in this research study.

### **Participants**

Twelve parents from Southern Minnesota region served as participants in this research study. The researcher strived to achieve a gender balance in the sample. Initially, it was considered ideal if there was an equal number of mothers and fathers participating in the study. However, the researcher was able to get only four fathers and eight mothers as the participants of this study. The participants belonged to various Asian countries such as China, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, and others. The participants belonged to multifarious educational backgrounds, experiences, socio-economic status, gender, age, and have a varied number of children.

Additionally, specific research criteria were used in choosing participants. The first requirement to participate in this study was that the participants were from one of the Asian countries and were living in the U.S., either as immigrants or were born in the U.S. Secondly, the participants must have had at least one child in elementary or middle school at the time of interview. It was also required that the participants spoke and understood the English language. Finally, the participants needed to sign the consent letter to participate in the research study. Though it was not the researcher's intention to target the immigrant Asian Americans rather than Asian Americans born in the U.S., most of the participants were immigrants, as the majority of the population of Asian Americans in the U.S. is immigrants. Around 74 percent of Asian Americans were born in their home country (Pew Research, 2012).

### **Human Subjects Safeguarding**

According to Punch (2005), it is imperative that the researcher predict and take care of the ethical issues that may emerge during the study, when the research is concerned with collecting information of people. Silverman (2000) too insists that it is absolutely crucial for researchers to remember that while they are conducting their research, they are entering into their participants' private lives which will lead to various ethical issues that should always be addressed during and after conducting the study. The researcher of this study adhered to all necessary elements of the ethical conduct of human subject's research study. These considerations included the issues of informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and disposition of data. To meet informed consent standards, the researcher secured a signed letter of consent from each participant (see Appendix A).

This letter informed the participants the nature and purpose of the research study, the use and disposition of the data, and also that the interview would be recorded for transcription. The participants were also informed that in this study they will not be put in a situation where they may be harmed as a result of their participation.

To maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the participating Asian American parents, names were not included or identified in the reporting of the findings; instead each participant was given a two-letter identifying code to retain their anonymity. Despite all the steps that were taken to ensure that all the ethical considerations were being followed, the participants were clearly told that the study was for only academic purposes and that their participation in the study was voluntary. Additionally, it was made clear to the participants that there was no financial compensation for participating in this study.

The recorded interviews and transcripts are being kept in a locked electronic file, accessible only to the researcher. It is the intent of the researcher that all the data materials will be destroyed after a period of three years upon completion of the dissertation. Moreover, before collecting data, the researcher applied for approval to engage in the investigation effort from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Minnesota State University, Mankato. No data was collected until full approval was received from the committee of IRB at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

### **Research Design**

To understand the participants' perceptions, it is necessary to capture the varied meanings and details of their stories and experiences. Thus, the researcher proposed a

qualitative approach employing semi-structured interviews. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were utilized to interview twelve Asian American parents. The researcher tried to arrange interviews in a natural setting as recommended by Creswell (2009, p. 175). A natural setting for this kind of topic would be homes of the participants. However, any private location (such as home of the researcher or a conference space at the library) was considered suitable. The researcher gave multiple options to the participants for the location of the interview, so that they would be comfortable. Nine interviews were taken at the researcher's home and the other three were taken at the participants' work places. Each participant was interviewed individually. Interviews can be burdensome for the participants, therefore, the researcher made sure that all information was collected in only one session of interview. The interview time ranged from 45 to 90 minutes. The participants were provided information about the researcher in case they wanted to contact her to add something else after the interview. Also, the researcher followed-up with the participants after transcribing the data. The transcription of the data was presented to the participants to make certain of the validity of what was said in the interview by the participants. At that point, they were once again given the opportunity to make an addition to their input if they wanted to. Each interview was recorded for later transcription; permission to record the interview was taken in the consent form.

### **Interview Instrument and Data Collection Procedures**

A semi-structured interview method, including a series of guide questions, served as the fundamental data collection instrument for this research study. A semi-structured

interview has features of both closed and open ended questions (Thomas, 2012). The specific interview guide questions were developed by studying interview questions that were part of the other similar studies reviewed by the researcher. These studied interview questions were redesigned in order to make it appropriate for the requirements and conditions of this research study. The interview questions were divided into two sections. The first section included questions that helped in identifying the general background of the participants of the study (See Appendix B). It allowed the subjects to be categorized by variables such as their race/ethnicity, education, marital status, age, number of children, and more. The second section included questions that allowed the participants to identify their perceptions of characteristics of effective teachers (See Appendix C). The first few questions in the second part were general, and then more specific questions were posed.

It was important that the participants completely comprehend the nature of the questions. They were given ample time to think and answer the interview questions. To be consistent with all the participants the researcher asked the same set of guide questions, so that the same areas were covered with each participant (Thomas, 2012). However, the researcher changed the order or the wordings of the questions to obtain a deeper reflection. All guide questions were open-ended and encouraged reflection and descriptions of beliefs, observations, and understanding of the effective teachers. Also, prior to the interview process, the guide questions were presented to other adults, who were not part of the study. The purpose was to confirm that the guide questions were easy to understand.

All the interviews were personally conducted by the researcher, as suggested by Creswell (2009), “qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants” (p.175). The researcher started the interview by introducing herself and explained the purpose of the interview. The researcher made clear to each participant that they could stop the interview at any time. Prior to the actual interview the researcher devoted some time to talk about other things, so that the participant would feel at ease. Creswell (2009) recommends ice-breaker questions at the beginning of the interview to make participants feel comfortable. The researcher asked questions about children, general life, weather, television shows, and movies. After a couple of minutes, the researcher started posing the actual interview questions to the participants. However, the interview was being recorded for later transcription; the researcher took few notes of each interview. The purpose of note taking was to immediately document an important point to focus on or any major theme that was observed by the researcher during the interview. According to Creswell (2009), “qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than rely on a single data source” (p.175). In a way, note taking was the first step of data analysis. The notes taken during the interview also served as a data source for later analysis. All data was collected after the research was approved by the researcher’s dissertation committee and the IRB at the Minnesota State University, Mankato.

All the consent forms were delivered to the Principal Investigator of this study, Dr. Julie Carlson. As mentioned in the letter of consent, the letters will be kept in Dr.

Carlson's office on the Minnesota State University, Mankato campus. Moreover, the data collected will be kept in a locked electronic file.

### **Data Analysis**

All the data that was collected for this research study was analyzed by the researcher. The management of the qualitative data sets can be challenging; therefore, the researcher followed the appropriate strategies mentioned in the research (White, Oelke, & Friesen, 2012). In order to properly manage the data, interviews were transcribed and coded as recommended by Creswell (2009). Each participant was given a two-letter identifying code to retain their anonymity. Firstly, the data for analysis that included transcribing interviews and typing up the notes taken during each interview were organized. The second step was to read through all the data to get an overall impression of the general ideas, tones, and usability of the data.

The third step involved coding which was basically divided in three steps of coding (open coding, axial coding, and selective coding). Approximately 300 general responses regarding characteristics of effective teachers and other themes were extracted from the transcribed interviews for coding. Firstly, open-coding of all data was conducted. According to Creswell (2012), "it involves taking data (e.g. interview transcription) and segmenting them into categories of information"(p.287). The researcher in this process noted and labeled all the specific characteristics of the effective teachers mentioned by the participants. Creswell (2012) recommends developing around 30 codes which are combined into major themes in the following steps of coding. The researcher ended up developing around 42 codes in the first stage of coding.

Next, axial coding was conducted in which various characteristics were grouped together on the basis of their similar image and opinion. This step led to reduction of categories of characteristics and the data became convenient to manage. The overall purpose of axial coding is to relate the categories of information to the central theme of the study (Creswell, 2012). After grouping together the various themes and characteristics the researcher was able to reduce the codes to around 30 themes. The final step of coding was selective coding of the data in which categories of characteristics were reduced one more time to produce more refined categories. Initially, it was the researcher's intention to produce at least five or six general categories of perceptions, as a result of this last step. However, the researcher eventually developed fifteen themes. The final list of characteristics and themes were established based on the number of participants and the number of times each participant mentioned those aspects.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Interpretation**

The main question driving this research study was “What do Asian American parents believe to be important characteristics of an effective elementary teacher?” This chapter presents the major findings derived from the analysis of the data. The foremost concern for the researcher was that the perspectives, attitudes, and values of the Asian American parents be faithfully represented in the study. Thus, as a part of this explorative process, the researcher engaged the data generated from the interviews with careful attention to detail and consistency. It is the desire of the researcher to give voice to the Asian American parents’ views on the qualities of effective elementary teachers. Participants not only reflected on their own educational experiences of their childhood, but also reflected on their children’s educational experiences in the U.S.

The interview included two sets of questions; the first part of the interview included twelve basic questions inquiring about participants’ demographic information. All participants were comfortable answering all the demographic information questions, except two participants who did not feel comfortable disclosing their ages. The second part of the interview included 19 questions; however it was a semi-structured interview, thus the researcher ended up asking around 20 to 31 questions exploring participants’ perceptions of good teachers. It was surprising for the researcher to observe that many participants had a hard time discussing their favorite teacher. A total of 12 Asian American parents were interviewed for this research study. The interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes.

A list of the characteristics of good teachers and other concepts was compiled based on the responses of all 12 participants. As mentioned in Chapter III, there were three stages of coding, open, axial, and selective. In the open coding process, the researcher identified all the individual qualities of effective teachers and any other thoughts or subjects suggested by the Asian American parents. In the open coding process of the data analysis, approximately 300 general responses regarding characteristics of effective teachers and other themes were extracted from the transcribed interviews. In the axial coding process, the researcher grouped similar concepts together which filtered the categories of responses. In the last stage of selective coding, the general categories identified by the axial coding were constructed into 15 concepts based on the characteristics discussed in the literature review and that emerged during the interviews. First, a profile of the sample is given. This is followed by interpretation of the data.

### **Profile of the Sample**

All participants were from the same city in a southern region of the state of Minnesota. For this study, the researcher was particularly interested in families considered Asians by the definition of the U.S. Census Bureau. The participants could have been from (a) Far East Asia, such as China, Japan, South Korea, and North Korea; (b) Southeast Asia, such as Cambodia, Laos, and Malaysia; or (c) the Indian sub-continent, such as Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. The researcher attempted to cover as many Asian countries as possible. The 12 participants interviewed were from nine different Asian countries: Bangladesh, China/Taiwan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, South

Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam; the nine countries covered the three main regions defined as Asian according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Far East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Indian sub-continent. Two individuals were interviewed from each of the following backgrounds: Chinese/Taiwanese, Indian, and Pakistani. One individual was interviewed with backgrounds from each of the remaining countries. Also, two individuals, FQ and NT received their education from other Asian countries as young students. FQ originally from Pakistan received his secondary education in Japan and NT originally from Sri Lanka received part of her elementary education from China.

Initially, it was considered ideal if an equal number of mothers and fathers would participate in the study and even though the researcher strived to achieve a gender balance in the sample, there was a higher female to male ratio. Of the twelve participants, only four were fathers and eight participants were mothers. The ages of the participants ranged from 30's to 50's. Four participants were in their 30's, five participants were in their 40's, only one participant was in his/her 50's, and two participants chose not to answer the age question. As predicted by the researcher, there was a higher immigrant to non-immigrant (born in the U.S.) ratio; only two participants, KS and WH, were born and raised in the U.S.; all the other participants had migrated from their native countries to the U.S.

Out of twelve participants, eleven were married and only one participant was divorced. Four participants were married to individuals from a different nationality. The number of children ranged from one to three. Two participants had only one child, six participants had two children and four participants had three children. The ages of

children of the participants ranged from four months to nineteen years. Out of twelve participants, eleven had at least one child going to elementary school; only one participant had one child in middle school and another in high school.

Out of twelve participants, six had studied medicine, two had doctorates, three had Masters, and one had unspecified college education. Out of twelve spouses of the participants at least seven had professional degrees (medicine, dentistry, and engineering) and others had Masters and Bachelors degrees. Nine out of twelve households in this study had both mother and father working as physicians, university professors, or involved in different kind educational institutions.

Seven participants spoke English as well as their native language at home, almost all of them explained that it was immensely important for them that their children learn, understand, and speak their mother tongue. The other six participants spoke only English at home; four participants explained that because they were married to individuals of a different nationality, they have to speak a common language, English, at home. One participant and her spouse were born and raised in the U.S. and even though they know how to speak their parents' native language, they felt more comfortable speaking English at home. At the same time, they wanted their children to learn their native language.

Except one, all the participants had their children involved in sports, language, music, math tutoring, and competitive extra-curricular activities in school (in programs such as Math Masters, Math Counts, Knowledge Bowl, or Student Council).

## **Interpretation of the Data**

Questions asked during the interview were meant to explore the Asian American parents' perceptions of effective teachers. The data collected for this research was divided in two different categories: *Vision of Education* and *Characteristics of Effective Teachers*. Each theme will be described in the following sections and supported by narratives from various participants. Firstly, the *Vision of Education* section, discussed in detail below, focuses on Asian American parents' concepts of the purpose of education and what they want out of it. Understanding of this concept maybe helpful for teachers to cater to the needs of Asian American students. Within this category, five themes emerged from the data: opportunities, independence, personal growth, respect, and negative consequences of not getting sufficient education.

Secondly, the *Characteristics of Effective Teachers* section includes fifteen themes. Some of these themes are teachers' expectations, individualized instructions, teacher as a person, teachers' enthusiasm, discipline, and more. These resulted from three different kinds of questions discussing the parents' opinion of U.S. teachers, open ended questions exploring characteristics of effective teachers, and lastly, questions exploring specific characteristics of effective teachers that were discussed in this study's literature review.

### **Vision of Education**

To collect information regarding the concept and purpose of education among the Asian American parents, the following questions were asked:

1. What is the purpose of education in your culture?

2. What is the purpose of education for you?

Information derived from the above interview questions was always very pertinent to the purpose of the question. Participants responded in a germane manner, revealing the general and specific purposes of education. Although there were two separate questions asking about their culture's impression of education and their own opinion of purpose of education, the answers were very similar for both inquiries. Parents were very quick in responding to both these questions that reveals that they were certain about the purpose of the education. There were basically five main aspects that parents talked about which were 1) opportunities, 2) independence, 3) personal growth, 4) high social status, and 5) negative consequences of not getting sufficient education. Moreover, four female participants specifically mentioned girls' education; they strongly believed in the necessity of their daughters' education for opportunity, independence, growth, and high social status.

**Opportunities.** Almost every participant emphasized having opportunities to have good jobs, good money, flexibility, and a better life. Asian American parents in this study strongly believed that being educated would lead to better opportunities and that in return would lead to a better life. A parent (NT) stated,

*...the better educated you are, the better prospect you have in life.*

Another parent's (WH) statement was very similar,

*I think the purpose of education means opportunity.*

It was also important for Asian American parents that their children do better than they themselves and that their children are provided with many opportunities for upward mobility.

**Independence.** One of the other aspects as a purpose of education that was discussed during the interviews was independence. Education not only can develop one's mind to think freely, but also equips people with independence to choose a lifestyle of their liking. For Asian American parents this independence to choose makes life spectacular. One parent (UK) talked about her and her mother's opinion of the purpose of education as,

*...the purpose of education is to be able to have a respectable career that can guarantee independence and financial freedom.*

It is important for them that their children have their own good status, be prosperous, and be financially and otherwise independent. Asian American parents in this study talked about providing the best for their family; they strongly believed that it can be done only through proper education. One participant also spoke about women's education; she stated that women need to be educated otherwise they would not have freedom to live their lives according to their liking. She strongly believed that women's independence is directly related to them being educated.

**Personal growth.** Asian American parents strongly believe that education will make them better people and better humans and because of the many life skills that they learn through education they would be able to contribute to society in a better way. Some of the many life skills that Asian American parents mentioned were work ethic, critical

thinking, problem solving, and analyzing information. One parent (KS) stated regarding the purpose of education that,

*It is not just a means to get a job but a way to develop a work ethic and problem solving, so you know how to tackle any problem that comes up throughout life.*

Also, there is some role of religion in achieving education; the two parents from Pakistan mentioned that one of the reasons they get education is because in Islam it is a must to be educated for all Muslims. Thus, to be a better Muslim they have to get education. One parent (FQ) stated that,

*Pakistani culture is greatly influenced by religion Islam and so being a Muslim I have to educate, myself and my children and anyone who I have authority upon because Islam says so. It is a must to get education for every Muslim regardless of gender, age, or financial status.*

Two other parents (one from Sri Lanka and other from Nepal) mentioned that historically, education was achieved by the religious scholars to better understand and preach Buddhism and that is one of the reasons that educated people are so respected in their communities. One parent (NT) stated that,

*Education has been very important for a very long time, for centuries. What I understand is that they started with Buddhism and for people to understand Buddhism, they taught the teachings of Buddhist.*

**Respect.** To be respected was also an important aspect of the purpose of education. It seemed that having a high social status and to be respected was very important for the Asian American parents in this study. Their responses revealed that in

Asian cultures, people who are educated are highly regarded and highly respected. Asian American parents also mentioned that many times being educated does not entail having lots of money, but it certainly entails having a lot of respect in the society. These individuals strongly believed that proper education would easily lead them to achieve a higher level of respect from people and from the society in general. One parent (SS) stated, regarding the purpose of education and respect,

*...I knew if I get educated, I will be respected by the society.*

Another parent (WH) stated, regarding education,

*Mainly it is about the respect and prestige you receive as a result of being educated.*

In addition, Asian American parents insisted that women's education provides women a respectable status in the society where their voice would matter.

**Negative consequences of not getting sufficient education.** The negative consequences of not getting an education were also discussed by at least five Asian American parents in this study. One parent (UK) stated,

*Good education is like a financial stock, if you invest in it, you will almost always get good returns and if you don't invest in it then you will almost always get nothing out of life.*

Asian American parents in this study believed that education is crucial for them and their children's future success; without education, life would be filled with hurdles. One parent (SS) stated,

*When you are not educated your opinion does not matter, you are a nobody, you don't have opportunities, no options, no good money, and life in general becomes a struggle.*

One parent suggested education as necessity to survive in the world and compared it with food and clothing.

### **Characteristics of Effective Teachers**

To collect information regarding the Asian American parents' perceptions of effective teachers, three different types of questions were asked. The questions related to the opinions of U.S. teachers were specifically targeted towards Asian American parents' experiences with American teachers and American educational systems. The open ended questions were meant to encourage a full and meaningful response of the Asian American parents and were meant to be less leading. The questions related to the specific characteristics of effective teachers included questions that were meant to gather participants' opinions on some very specific characteristics of effective teachers that were discussed in the literature review. The intention was to explore how Asian American parents view those particular aspects and also to encourage them to elaborate.

Participants shared many personal stories and experiences while responding to the interview questions. All participants were quick to respond almost all the time except for one question; it was very surprising that many participants had to pause for a while and think really hard when they were asked about their favorite teacher. For all of them it had been a quite a while since they were in their elementary or middle school, so it was a bit challenging for them to go back in time and think about their personal experiences.

Otherwise, participants revealed many characteristics that they believe to be important for effective teachers. Asian American parents in this study mentioned almost all of the characteristics that were included in the literature review of this research study such as classroom climate, classroom environment/physical layout, relationship between teachers and students, teachers' enthusiasm, teachers' knowledge, interactional dynamics, feedback, teachers' genders, teachers' expectations, individualized instructions, diversity of teachers, and classroom management. Other features that were mentioned by Asian American parents were teachers' abilities to recognize students' weakness and strengths, teachers' ability to push their students, going the extra mile to help students, being a role model and much more.

**Teachers' expectations.** The most important characteristic for all twelve Asian American parents in this study was teachers' expectations. They strongly believed that American teachers should have higher expectations for their students and should push and challenge them. They believed that when students are pushed more, they are able to achieve more. One parent (KS) discussed Indian teachers by stating,

*I think they push kids harder, they expect more and are able to pull more out of the kids.*

They expressed disappointment when they observed that their children are not being challenged according to their academic capabilities. Parents appreciated teachers who assign more homework or assign homework every day as it keeps their children busy and challenges them. They believed that higher expectations entail challenging, motivating and guiding students in a direction that leads them to success. Additionally,

participants of this study also mentioned creating healthy competition among students; they considered competition as a crucial tool to create an understanding that students are expected to work hard and also create drive among students to be on top. It helps them be aware of their standing among their peers and create goals and a drive to fulfill those goals. One parent (AH) emphasizing the importance of competition stated that,

*.....competition is the only way human species have survived.*

Another parent (FQ) stated that,

*...I think in most Asian countries like Pakistan and Japan, competition teaches you to be responsible quite early in life; students are aware of the expectations their teachers and parents have for them and they take responsibility for those expectations.*

Moreover, Asian American parents in this study also believed that setting expectations based on students' racial background, financial status, or parents' occupation is not right. At least seven participants mentioned that teachers have certain expectations of their children because of their racial background, parental educational background, or parental occupation.

**Individualized instruction.** The second most important characteristic for Asian American parents in this study was the teachers' ability to recognize students' weaknesses and strengths and then providing them with individualized instructions. All twelve Asian American parents expressed multiple times that they feel that it is necessary that teachers should be able to recognize their students' needs and individualities. They

asserted that treating each student in a same manner academically was wrong. One parent (FQ) stated that,

*A classroom is not a factory where robots are being created. Each student is a unique individual who would be requiring a unique way of teaching so that they can excel.*

It was very important for all the parents (with children of various academic capabilities) that their children are provided with an individualized study plan that caters to their specific academic capabilities so that they are not bored, frustrated, or overwhelmed. Ability grouping or clustering was much appreciated by the parents in this study. One parent (AH) discussed ability clustering by stating that,

*So because of clustering now my son is feeling challenged.*

Parents also emphasized small class size as it can help teachers to better recognize their students' weaknesses and strengths. Because they will have less students to handle, they will be able to give individualized attention to their students' needs.

**Teacher as a person.** Qualities that define a teacher as a person were the third most prevalent sub-theme of effective teachers in this study. Out of various terms parents used to express teachers' personal qualities, the following terms were used the most: kind, caring, patient, friendly, funny, approachable, open minded, inclusive, and decent. They strongly believed that the manner in which teachers present or relate themselves to their students impacts students' experience in class and also in general. The personal qualities mentioned by the parents not only helps teachers in creating a good relationship with their students but also helps them in establishing a positive learning environment

where students can come and feel safe and enjoy learning. Both relationships and a positive learning environment were considered important by Asian American parents in this study. Parents insisted that if students have a good relationship with their teacher and feel comfortable in their classroom or school, they are going to have a good school year and will be interested in learning. Additionally, the data indicated that parents wanted teachers to be good role models. They insisted that students, especially at the elementary level, are very impressionable and thus it becomes even more crucial that teachers should be people who students could admire and aspire to be like. Teachers, through their great personalities, should be able to inspire and encourage their students to strive for greatness, learn to the fullest potential, and see the best in themselves. One parent (NT) stated that,

*The most important thing is to be a role model. Students are very impressionable and it is important that they have teachers that they can look up to and follow their way of life.*

All the personal qualities mentioned by the parents also make teachers a good role model for their students.

**Teachers' enthusiasm.** Teachers' enthusiasm was also one of the most important characteristics of effective teachers for Asian American parents in this study.

Participants used a variety of ways to describe enthusiasm such as passion, driven, dedicated, love for teaching, and others. All participants believed that students respond more to teachers who have a greater level of enthusiasm. One parent kept relating enthusiasm with different other characteristics of effective teachers such as, teachers'

enthusiasm leads to better speaking and listening skills, teachers' willingness to make extra effort, teachers' willingness to make sure that students are learning, teachers' willingness to spend an extra time with their students. One parent (FQ) suggested that when teachers are enthusiastic and dedicated to teaching, they take students' success or failure as personal success and failure. He stated that,

*A very good example is a mother, you need your mother regardless of her educational level because she is dedicated to you, she wants the best for you, and truly tries to listen to you; she takes full responsibility of whatever happens to you.*

**Discipline.** Discipline was also considered important by Asian American parents in this study. Discipline was mentioned in a variety of ways such as teachers' strictness or firmness, students' awareness of consequences, and also negative and positive reinforcements. Most of the parents in this study attended schools that were extremely strict; they believed that strictness is a necessary tool for effective teaching and learning and also for safety and respect. One parent (KS) stated,

*.....I think American teachers could learn something about being firm. Their job as a teacher is to teach and they don't have to be friends to their students.*

One parent claimed that culturally, teachers are authority figures and students have to respect them and follow their instructions. Another (NT) parent compared good relationships and being firm by stating that,

*Having a good relationship is crucial but at the same time teachers need to be firm too.*

Teachers should not allow their students to dictate over their rules; they are the professionals, they should be able to create an understanding among their students that when missteps occur, correction is due. At the same time, all parents were completely against corporal punishment. Most of the parents in this study experienced or witnessed corporal punishment, as it is very common in Asian countries. They strongly believed that physical punishment does not work and that there are better ways to control such situations such as communication with students and parents and also taking away something that students enjoy such as recess time or free time. Parents in this study did not support harsh punishments, but advocated for immediate consequences for bad behavior.

Parents also appreciated teachers who were able to enforce not only firmness, but were also able to positively reinforce students by a variety of ways. For the parents in this study it was important that students know that there are consequences to their actions, positive or negative. The data revealed that for parents in this study, negative and positive reinforcements are both significant parts of discipline. Asian American parents in this study also mentioned teachers being good role models, which is parallel to having a disciplined classroom. When students look up to their teachers they will have respect for their teachers; respect leads to well-behaved and submissive students.

**Relationships between students, teachers, and parents.** Relationships between students and teachers was also considered crucial by the parents in this study. They claimed that students respond better when they have a good relationship with their teacher. It was important for the parents that students should feel comfortable and

relaxed with their teachers. Most of the participants revealed that they did not have a friendly relationship with their teachers; however the relationship between them and their teachers was of respect that led them to follow their teachers' instructions and desire to keep them pleased. They believed that teachers do not have to be students' friends; teachers should be an authority figure and students should respect them. One parent (KS) stated that,

*...culturally you want your teacher to like you; they are an authority figure, if they ask you to do something, you are going to do it.*

At least nine parents insisted that students must respect their teachers because culturally teachers are authority figures and are highly respected by students and their parents as well. Thus, teachers with the combination of authority, respect, and friendliness would be able to produce positive results, according to the parents in this study.

Additionally, Asian American parents also believed that it is important that teachers should have good relationships with parents too. They felt that, especially at the elementary level, teachers should be welcoming. Parents and teachers both need information and feedback from each other regarding children's social and academic progress to help them succeed. The partnership between parents and teachers will make children feel that the most important people in their lives are working together for their academic and social development. All parents expressed that monitoring their children's school and after school life is immensely important to them. A couple of parents expressed their frustration with the U.S. educational system and felt that either teachers

do not have a welcoming attitude or the school system is such that they are unable to have a good relationship with their children's teacher.

**Interactional dynamics.** Interactional dynamics were also considered very important characteristics by the participants in this study. Interactional dynamics included a variety of features such as teachers' listening and speaking skills; parents not only emphasized the importance of teachers' ability to successfully interchange thoughts, opinions and information, but also advocated for effective listening skills. One parent expressed that many times students have so much to say but they don't feel comfortable in expressing themselves and so it is the teachers' responsibility to make sure that those students are heard.

Interactional dynamics also included feedback. Teachers' ability to provide parents with feedback regarding their children's performances was considered very important. Some parents appreciated the three yearly parent teacher conferences as they kept them updated about their children academic and social progress. For other parents those three parent teacher conferences were not enough to have full knowledge about their children's performance; they expressed that it was extremely important for them to monitor their children on a daily basis. Thus, they stressed wide open communicational paths between parents and teachers. Moreover, parents felt that students should receive constant feedback from their teachers; however, the purpose of the feedback should be to improve students' academic success and to resolve their issues rather than to criticize them. One (FQ) parent stated that,

*Every student is unique, some will do really good with mainstream education and*

*some will not and without constructive feedback from all parties involved, we cannot improve our children's education.*

One parent revealed his experience in studying in Japan where the last class would be about discussing the activities of the whole day and receiving and providing feedback from teachers and also from other students. He explained because of that feedback and discussion, students always were worry free and they knew exactly what their goals were and how to reach those goals. Teachers would also help students discuss any issues or conflicts among each other; therefore, they were never distracted by insignificant issues and were able to focus on their studies. Parents also mentioned that feedback is not only for students, teachers also should be open to feedback and suggestions in order to improve themselves. One parent (UK) stated that,

*...I think teachers need feedback too because like students it is crucial that they should know how they can improve their teaching style and better help their students to do well.*

**Life skills.** Asian American parents in this study considered that it is the teacher's responsibility to not only teach students academics, but also equip them with skills and habits that they can use when managing personal affairs or encountering everyday life. Many life skills and habits such as time management, organizational skills, preparedness, punctuality, responsibility, critical thinking, hard work, and socialization were mentioned by parents. They asserted that as students spend a long period of the day in schools, it becomes immensely important that they are exposed to an environment where they can observe and develop good habits and skills during that time. Therefore,

in order to teach students life skills it becomes even more important that teachers themselves are good role models and set an example for their students because it would not only help them teach effectively but they would be able to pass on those skills to their students. One parent (SS) discussing the punctuality of one of his principals stated that,

*...if there was rain, a storm, or a tornado, he used to be at school before any kid arrived. We used to talk about him and used to challenge each other to arrive at school before him.*

**School uniforms.** The analysis of data revealed a very interesting point that school uniforms are not directly related to effective teaching but to effective learning. At least seven participants mentioned their support for school uniforms. Except for two participants, who were born and raised in the U.S., all of them had school uniforms as young students. They promoted school uniforms by suggesting that they create a positive uniformity and a distraction free learning atmosphere where there are fewer chances of bullying and students worrying about what to wear the next day. Having the same clothes will lead to students being united as a school community. Parents also mentioned that school uniforms create a standard of being presentable which was important for Asian American parents in this study. One (KS) parent expressed that she did not have school uniforms and she was careless about clothes as a child; therefore, she was rarely in presentable condition. If she had a school uniform, her appearance would have been standard. She continued by saying that usually school uniforms are proper dresses, thus, it helps student to behave properly such as a little girl would act like a lady when dressed up in a dress. One parent also suggested that even though school uniforms are a good

idea, they should be free like transportation to school because school uniforms can be expensive. In addition, teachers' appearance was also pointed out as important for gaining respect, authority, and also to pass on a good habit to students.

**Classroom climate.** Asian American parents in this study considered classroom climate as an important feature for effective teaching and learning. It was mentioned in a variety of ways. It was important for them that teachers have the ability to create a positive learning atmosphere where the students are relaxed and are open to learning. They expressed that classroom climate should not only be academically stimulating but also be fun so that students are constantly interested in learning and are not bored; students should love school and want to come and learn in school. The parents also talked about the importance of distraction free classrooms. One parent stated (KS) that,

*They (teachers) need to eliminate unnecessary distractions because otherwise kids cannot focus.*

Bullying and internal conflicts were also mentioned by the parents; they felt that an effective teacher should have the ability to not only recognize such issues but also should have the ability to resolve them quickly and create a safe space for students to learn and explore.

**Classroom management.** Not too many management skills were discussed until parents were specifically asked. Teachers' abilities to set and enforce ground rules early on were considered crucial in order to spend time on productive activities rather than trying to control students' behavioral issues in the classroom. Parents also pointed out

teachers' organizational skills and preparedness as crucial features for effective teaching, as it would help them keep students on task.

**Physical layout.** Classroom environment or physical layout of the classroom was not considered too important for most of the Asian American parents in this study. Almost all of them mentioned it only when it was specifically asked. Most of the parents shared that they studied in very structured classrooms and that they mainly had desks, benches, and boards; even with such boring and dull physical layouts of the classrooms they did well. According to one parent, if important features like students' drive and teachers' dedication and passion to teach are missing then physical layout and other factors can be important. One parent shared that he did not even have any proper classrooms, or pen, pencils, and papers but because academics was a priority at his home, he did well. Although physical layout of the classroom was not very important for Asian American parents in this study, they did talk about the importance of well organized classrooms. They believed that an organized classroom would help teachers to eliminate distraction; teachers should decorate the classroom in a meaningful way that is educational and stimulating and makes students interested in learning. One other aspect of physical layout was discussed by the parents, the seating arrangements. They believed that students in elementary school should be facing teachers and not hallways, as it could be extremely distracting. They also believed that teachers should keep rotating students, so that they should be able to mingle and have a relationship with all their classmates.

**Teachers' knowledge.** Eight Asian American parents believed that it is not important for teachers at the elementary level to be extremely qualified or knowledgeable

and that it is more important that teachers have other skills to be good with children. They believed that teachers should have the ability to find resources that would help them to better teach their students at their level. One parent mentioned that a teacher with a triple Ph.D. in physics cannot be a good teacher because he/she would not have the capability to teach students at their level. They also believed that teachers should get some training in how to teach; they strongly felt that learning for teachers does not end with their acquisition of a degree and that they need to keep improving themselves and keep them updated. One parent (IKA) compared teachers with physicians, she stated that,

*They [teachers] have to keep up with new things; it is just like physicians they have to keep themselves updated about the new development in medical field.*

*They cannot stop their learning in medical school. The teacher should be doing that too.*

**Gender of the teacher.** Although most of the participants did not consider gender of the teacher important for effective teaching, there was an implication by at least three participants that female teachers are better teachers because they have motherly instincts and thus they are able to nurture better. One parent mentioned that as a mother she has more patience and is able to understand her kids better. Moreover, parents also mentioned that their daughters feel more comfortable with female teachers; however their sons are fine with either gender. It can be said that teachers' abilities to teach effectively may not be impacted by their gender; however students' gender may impact their learning process from specific gender teachers.

Another interesting point was raised during the responses to gender-related question; at least three participants mentioned single gender schools. All of them had attended single gender schools and had very high regards for it. They believed that it is natural to be distracted if the other gender is present and the experience of sisterhood/brotherhood is great.

**Racial/ethnic background of the teacher.** The race or the ethnic background of the teacher was not important for the participants in this study. It was understood that because they are raising their children in the U.S., they should not have the expectations of their children being taught by teachers of same ethnic or racial background. However, it was mentioned that the race or the ethnic background of the teacher may be impactful if they teach very specific cultural material such as Thai language or Thai culture. Participants strongly believed that there should be diversity among the teachers and that it would be wrong to limit the pool of teachers by hiring teachers with specific racial and ethnic backgrounds. They expressed appreciation for teachers with diverse backgrounds, not only of race, but also of religion, experience, and education. It was important for the parents that their children learn different points of views of the world from diverse teachers.

Furthermore, parents believed that it is important that teachers should embrace diversity of students and be culturally sensitive. One parent expressed that it is natural to have biases against others, but teachers should never act on those biases and be open minded. Parents appreciated teachers that make efforts to understand their culture and

norms so that they can have a better understanding of the students and teach them accordingly.

### **Summary**

In this chapter the results of the two interviews (demographic information and semi structured interview) with the Asian American parents were reported. The results indicated that there was a general agreement among the parents belonging to the nine different Asian countries. Participants not only reflected on their own educational experiences of their childhood, but also reflected on their children's educational experiences in the U.S. The findings were arranged into two main sections, vision of education and characteristics of effective teachers. In the first section, vision of education, parents revealed that the main purpose of education is to have opportunities to be independent and have high social status (financially and socially). Education, according to the Asian American parents, is important for the growth of the individuals to live their daily lives because without education, life would be a struggle.

The second section, the characteristics of effective teachers, included mainly fifteen themes. It was important for Asian American parents that teachers set high expectations for their students and based on those expectations develop an individualized plan of study according to the needs of each student. For Asian American parents, teachers who push and motivate their students through positive and negative reinforcements were effective teachers. It was also indicated that teachers are people with excellent personal traits; so they are not only treating their students nicely, but also being a good role model. They also pointed out that a disciplined environment is crucial,

where teachers are authority figures, students have respect for their teachers, and time is spent on productive activities.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusion**

This study examined Asian American parents' perceptions of effective teachers' characteristics. The focus of this study was on elementary schools, as elementary level students are the most impressionable. This research study began with an examination of the general question "What do Asian American parents believe to be important characteristics of an effective elementary teacher?" In order to investigate this question, the researcher used a qualitative research design employing a semi-structured interview which probed into the personal perceptions voiced by a sample of twelve Asian American parents on the characteristics of good teachers. Although this study employed purposive and snowball sampling techniques and its findings cannot be generalized to a larger population in the same way research findings derived from a probability sample might, the findings of this research study allow for inductive reasoning. The findings led to the comprehension of the Asian American parents' personal perceptions of the purpose of education and the attributes of good or effective teachers. This comprehension can be a very useful tool in catering to Asian American students' specific needs. All parents that were interviewed were enthusiastic to share their opinions; it was a rare occurrence when they did not want to answer a question. It was revealed that many similarities existed between the Asian American parents (with diverse cultural and educational background). Following is the interpretation of the two sections of the data, vision of education and characteristics of effective teachers.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The detailed interpretive findings of this study were presented in Chapter IV with quoted narrative sections provided for supporting evidence. In the section that follows, the major themes that were prevalent in those findings were identified and summarized.

### **Vision of Education**

The data from the study offered mainly five aspects regarding the purpose of education for the Asian American parents. First, having opportunities is extremely important for the Asian American parents of this study, and according to them, education is a means to have access to various opportunities to be successful in life. The world is open to those individuals who are educated, and they are able to achieve whatever they want from their lives. Secondly, having independence to choose a lifestyle of their liking is also immensely important to parents of this study. The independence aspect includes freedom to choose lifestyle, having financial stability, and having multiple professional and personal options to choose from. Both of these aspects were discussed in the literature review and were expected findings. Asian American parents insisted that education should provide opportunities for children to become independent.

The third aspect that was revealed as a purpose of education for Asian American parents was personal growth. Asian Americans use education as an instrument to better themselves and to achieve life skills; this finding is not surprising at all because the literature reviewed for this study revealed that the Asian concept known as Confucianism basically means to constantly work to improve oneself and to achieve diligence and concentration. The literature review also revealed that Asian Americans consider

education as a means of self improvement. In addition, at least four parents mentioned the role of their religion in getting education. Thus, it can be concluded that education is considered as an instrument to not only become a better person but also to become a better religious person.

Next, respect and high social status have great value in the Asian American communities; education provides respect. Many times Asian Americans refer to a person by their degrees and their professions such as “Mr. Doe the physician” or “Ms. Doe the doctorate.” Thus, education becomes extremely crucial for Asian American individuals. Lastly, it was revealed that Asian Americans view a life without education as an unsuccessful life that will have no opportunities, no financial stability, no respect, and life will have no meaning. The only way to succeed in life is by achieving education according to the Asian American parents of this study. The negative consequences of not getting sufficient education were also discussed in the literature review of this study and were an expected finding.

### **Characteristics of Effective Teachers**

The data from the study offer a number of insights into the Asian American perceptions on the characteristics of effective teachers. Approximately 300 general responses regarding characteristics of effective teachers and other related themes were initially extracted from the transcribed interview in the open coding process stage of the data analysis. Similar sentiments were clustered together to establish specific categories based on the Asian American parents’ personal perceptions of effective teachers. The most important categories established were teachers’ expectations, individualized

instruction, teacher as a person, teachers' enthusiasm, discipline, relationships, interactional dynamics, life skills, and school uniforms.

**Teachers' expectations.** Teachers' expectations played the most important role in the perceptions of effective teachers for the Asian American parents. It was not too surprising, as teachers' expectations were found to be one of the most important characteristics of effective teachers according to the literature review. Also, as discussed in the literature, interdependence and collectivism are common traits found in Asian communities, and so Asian American parents take serious responsibility for their children's actions. Also, Asian culture considerably emphasizes effort and hard work and because of these characteristics Asian American parents expect a lot from their children. Therefore, they want their children's teachers to adapt similar approaches when dealing with them. All parents felt that good teachers have high expectations of their students and they push, motivate, and encourage students in a way that helps their students to fulfill those expectations. They strongly believed that with high teachers' expectations, students are able to create high goals for themselves and then are able to work hard to achieve those goals. Parents believed that students like it when teachers have high expectations for them; they like being pushed and motivated. One parent stated that, "I remember it was just mesmerizing, they just pushed and I don't remember it being a bad thing. I remember it being incredibly stimulating as a kid." It was also indicated that many times teachers create expectations on the basis of students' racial background, parental educational background, parental occupation, and parental financial status, which is not a suitable approach.

**Individualized instructions.** The second most important characteristic of effective teachers according to the Asian American parents of this study was individualized instructions. One parent (AH) stated that, “students are really not an assembly line. They are actually an important part of society, each of them is an individual and they have their own strengths and weaknesses. So a teacher should provide instructions and adopt his or her style according to the student’ needs.” All parents felt that effective teachers have the ability to recognize and understand their students’ personalities, their strengths and weaknesses. They use the knowledge of their students’ positive and negative traits to create an individualized plan of study for their students and also to create expectations for their students. It was mentioned again and again that each student is unique and thus all students cannot be forced to learn the same things. Effective teachers provide instructions according to the unique needs and requirements of the individual student. They help students to exploit their strengths and also work on their weaknesses. Finding individualized instruction important for this population was a bit unexpected because it was not much discussed in the literature reviewed by the researcher. However, it resonates with the findings of the vision of education of Asian American parents, which revealed that opportunities, independence, and personal growth are very important for Asian American parents. It can be concluded that according to Asian American parents, effective teachers through individualized instruction provide educational opportunities that allow students to enhance their strengths, improve their weaknesses, and develop personal growth skills.

**Teacher as a person.** Moreover, the parents in this study considered teachers' personalities and various personal characteristics very important to be good teachers. The importance of this personal opinion to the Asian American parents in this study can be found in the fact that all 12 parents used various terms such as nice, kind, tender, fair, patient, approachable, fun, open-minded, respectful, and many more. Parents based their perceptions on their own elementary education experiences such as one parent FQ. Although a successful person now, FQ still has very strong negative feelings about his elementary school teachers. He stated that, "I hated all of my elementary school teachers and I still hate them." He mentioned that his teachers were not kind to him and did not treat him fairly. Parents who liked their elementary teachers stated that the main reason for this was related to their teachers' personal traits. For example, WH mentioned that one of the reasons she liked her elementary school teachers was that they were kind; she stated that, "I remember this fourth grade teacher who was just kind. I don't remember the things she taught me but I do remember her kindness." It can be said that the reason why all the parents indicated various personal traits of teachers is that these characteristics create the most immediate and day to day experiences that demonstrate that they are cared for and are respected as individuals. The personal traits mentioned by the Asian American parents of this study can be considered as important for a good person; thus it can be concluded that for them effective teachers are good people or have good personalities. Looking closely, this aspect resonates with one aspect of the vision of education in which Asian American parents revealed that being respected was very important in Asian cultures. They have strong desires to achieve higher levels of respect

from society. Thus a teacher who is a good person will respect his or her students as well, and that is why it is important for Asian American parents that effective teachers are good people.

**Role models and life skills.** Additionally, Asian American parents in this study insisted that teachers should be good role models which can be linked with the characteristic, teacher as a person. According to Asian American parents, effective teachers are good role models. They have to dress properly and professionally, so that their students are educated about the proper and professional way to be dressed. Effective teachers always behave properly and always use proper language. Parents stated that children learn quickly, and once they like a teacher, they try to copy them. One parent explained the importance of a teacher being a good role model by stating that, “In my personal philosophy if you look at children’s lives, they (children) are influenced by parents first and then by their teachers. So a teacher should be a role model for kids after parents. If parents are bad you cannot expect the kid to be good in the future and same thing for teachers, if a teacher is bad you cannot expect a student to be good. A teacher has to be a good and positive role model.” One other interesting point was raised by the Asian American parents; as good role models effective teachers teach life skills to their students. Life skills included critical thinking, problem solving, time management, punctuality, dealing with different relationships in general life, and other skills to live day to day. It can be assumed that possessing life skills is very important for Asian American parents because it was mentioned in both categories of this research study, vision of education and characteristics of effective teachers. Thus, for Asian American parents a

set of life skills is a necessary tool to live a successful life and teachers who are effective not only demonstrate those skills but also impart those skills in their students.

**Teachers' gender and racial/ethnic background.** Characteristics like teacher's ethnic or racial background and teacher's gender are not significant at all for the academic success of children according to the parents of this study. Teachers' ethnic and racial background is meaningful only when the teacher is teaching ethnic or racial elements such as teaching language other than English or teaching about the culture of a particular country. Also, very few parents considered that teacher's gender may help students, especially female students, to bond better with their teachers. If teachers possess personal and professional traits important to be effective (that are mentioned in this study), then teachers' gender has no significance. However, according to the Asian American parents of this study, effective teachers embrace diversity and try to accommodate the different cultural aspects of their diverse student population.

**Relationship between parents and teachers.** Moreover, Asian American parents want a productive and interactive relationship between teachers and parents. Effective teachers have good speaking and listening skills, they keep an open path of communication and keep parents and students updated about their students' social and academic progress. The emergence of this point is a bit surprising because even though feedback and communication skills are considered important characteristics according to the literature reviewed for this study, the literature review also revealed that Asian American parents have so much respect for teachers that questioning them or initiating a conversation with them is considered disrespectful. Parents and students are supposed to

follow the acumen of the teachers. It can be said that they have adjusted to the American culture and are comfortable in questioning or communicating with the teachers.

**Teachers' enthusiasm.** Asian American parents also felt that effective teachers are enthusiastic teachers. They believe that enthusiasm comes from their urge and passion to teach. "I think it (teaching) has to come from within, it is a gut reaction" says one parent (NT) regarding teaching. Parents felt that if teachers are enthusiastic and passionate about teaching, they will be dedicated to their students' success just like a mother is dedicated to her children. They felt that enthusiasm and passion makes other features better too, such as they will be better speakers and listeners, they will put more effort towards their students' academic achievement, they will make sure that each of their students is learning and growing, they will take personal responsibility for their students' success, and in general they will create an environment for their students where they can develop. It was indicated that American teachers lack enthusiasm because the profession of teaching in the U.S. does not entail much respect, financial or other benefits. Thus, for many teachers, teaching profession is not their first choice and that means that they are not passionate or enthusiastic about teaching.

**Relationship between students and teachers.** Furthermore, Asian American parents want a positive relationship between students and their teachers. Clearly the parents in this study evidenced that desire in a variety of ways. For example, they stated that teachers establish a positive relationship with their students, students should be comfortable with their teachers, good teachers are approachable, good teachers do not yell at students, good teachers have a sense of humor, and good teachers are not

intimidating. These statements reveal something very fundamental and significant about their personal educational experiences. Most of the parents revealed that either they did not have any relationship or they had negative relationships with their teachers. Most of the parents reported that their teachers were very strict; some of the parents discussed in detail the punishments they received. As these parents had teachers who yelled at them, punished them, and were not kind to them, establishing a positive relationship between students and teachers was considered as an important characteristic among Asian American parents. Many personal traits discussed by the Asian American parents can be identified as features essential to creating positive relationships. Conclusively, it can be said that for Asian American parents of this study, without a positive and caring relationship between student and teachers, learning becomes a dreadful experience.

**Respect for teachers.** It was interesting to observe that even though most of the Asian American parents of this study had strict teachers and they revealed that they did not enjoy the strictness and punishment of their teachers, most of them suggested that teachers should be an authority figure and should be respected by the students. The literature reviewed for this study revealed that this approach resonates with the Asian culture where there is extremely high respect for teachers. Asian parents of this study too revealed that they (as students) and their parents had such high respect for teachers that they followed their instructions and judgments blindly. Although as parents themselves and living in the U.S. they don't want to follow teachers blindly, they do want their children to respect teachers. In conclusion, it can be said that for Asian American

parents, effective teachers have friendly yet respectful relationships with their students, as students would respond more to such teachers.

**Discipline.** The concept of teachers being respected and authority figures resonates with the discipline aspect which was also very important for Asian American parents. According to Asian American parents, effective teachers create a disciplined environment where students understand that their teachers have the right to punish them and that there are immediate consequences for their every behavior. Effective teachers discipline their students by positive and negative reinforcements. This aspect resonates with the aspect discussed in the previous category of vision of education (negative consequences of not getting sufficient education). In both aspects Asian American parents want their children to learn that there are consequences for bad behavior that can include not behaving in the classroom or not working hard in their studies; in a way they want their children to have understanding of short term and long term consequences of their actions. Also, most of the parents experienced or witnessed corporal punishments; they were extremely against it because they felt that it actually repels students from school and teachers. According to them, parents should be supportive of teachers' authority, and they should be working as a team with teachers to help create a disciplined environment in the classroom and in the school. Also, parents in this study did not mention many classroom management skills; however, disciplined environment cannot be created without these skills. It can be assumed that even though they did not exactly name many management skills, they do believe that effective teachers have established management skills.

**School uniforms.** Asian American parents also are in favor of school uniforms which resonates with their wanting a disciplined environment. The emergence of the issue of school uniforms was a bit unexpected, but not too surprising because most of the parents, especially those who are immigrants in this study, had school uniforms as students. Thus, they are not only very comfortable with the idea of school uniforms; they have high regards for it. According to them, it helps in creating a disciplined environment, eliminating bullying incidents, eliminating distractions, forcing students to focus on their studies, and preparing students to be dressed professionally for their future jobs.

**Classroom climate.** Also, according to the Asian American parents in this study, effective teachers create and provide a stimulating, productive, fun, and comfortable learning environment for their students, so that students are interested in school and studies and not boring. This aspect is much expected because according to the literature reviewed for this study, Asian American parents put great efforts towards creating learning and nurturing environments for their children at home.

**Teachers' knowledge.** According to the findings of this study, Asian American parents do not believe that a good teacher must present pedagogical competence, at the elementary level. This is rather an unexpected finding. It was more important to parents that teachers possess admirable personal qualities than to be highly educated, as children at the elementary level need nurturing more than facts to learn. However, almost all parents identified that teachers at higher levels must present pedagogical competence because at that level they need facts and knowledge.

**Physical layout.** Furthermore, physical layout being an unimportant factor was not surprising at all because most of the parents (born in their native countries) mentioned that classrooms are very structured and simple. To be successful, students need other aspects mentioned in this study; characteristics such as physical layout or pedagogical knowledge are extra or additional factors that may help students be successful in their studies.

### **Implications**

The review of the literature revealed a surprising fact that very few scholars have made an effort to discover parents' (especially Asian American parents) perceptions of effective teaching. Researchers have mainly explored students' and teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers. However, parents' opinions have rarely been recorded or evaluated as a way to assess characteristics of good teachers. Thus, there is a gap in the scholarly literature on teacher effectiveness, especially for perceptions held by parents with diverse backgrounds. This research study conducted an exploratory investigation into those perceptions that can be regarded as one of the strengths of this study.

### **Increased Knowledge for Educators**

There has been a sharp increase in the Asian American student population in the U.S. in recent years. Moreover, the literature indicated that this growth of the Asian American population will continue in the future. Findings of this study will be immensely helpful for educators (especially for those teachers/educators who are teaching in schools that have a large Asian American student population) to understand

the particular needs of this rapidly growing population. Even more, the qualitative nature of this research study has provided a substantial opportunity to gain an in-depth knowledge of Asian American parents' perceptions of effective teachers and what they find to be significant in their children's teachers. With the gained knowledge, educators and parents can work together in a better way towards the academic success of their students and children.

As mentioned in Chapter I, the academic achievement of ethnic groups such as African American and Hispanic students has been studied by various scholars; however, the academic achievement of the Asian American population has not been studied to the same extent. Studying the educational perceptions of this population was much needed, especially because their academic achievement has been found to surpass other minority groups and also because education and academic success of their children is extremely important for Asian American parents. The gained knowledge can be used by policy makers, educational leaders, and educators to understand the needs of this population. Teachers provided with this knowledge will be able to achieve a greater level of effectiveness and will be able to make a significant difference in their classroom and their students' lives, Asian or otherwise.

### **Application in Teachers' Education Program**

The findings of this research study can be used in teacher education programs to help future teachers to better understand what is expected of them from the Asian American parent population, how to keep them satisfied and happy, and be aware of what Asian American parents are looking for in an effective teacher. As a result, not only can

teachers strengthen their capabilities and expertise, but they can also cater to the needs and requirements of the Asian American students.

Teacher education programs should design their teaching and professional development courses in a way that enhances the characteristics and other features that emerged as a result of this research study. Furthermore, teacher education programs and schools should encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching styles through different habits such as journaling, making checklists, discussing with their peers and supervisors, or encouraging students and parents to give them feedback.

Most of the characteristics important for effective teachers that are desired by the Asian American parents are ones that are not acknowledged enough in teachers' education programs. For example, having high expectations, pushing students, being nice or firm, or being enthusiastic are some simple changes that teachers can make in their teaching style and in their day to day interactions. It would be very beneficial for not only Asian American students but for other students as well. Other characteristics, such as creating an individualized plan of study and creating a disciplined learning environment, may be acknowledged in the teachers' education program, but it becomes vital that future teachers are notified of the necessity of these characteristics, so that they can improve and enhance their capabilities.

### **An Active Voice for Asian American Parents**

The intent of this research study was to provide an insight into the expectations of the Asian American parents and to provide them with an opportunity to practice an active voice regarding their children's education. As a result of the better understanding of their

collective personal perceptions, Asian American parents could become more insistent on being adequately included in designing or deciding the nature of their children's learning process; likewise teachers could become more likely to seek out parental involvement. Furthermore, such efforts will help in the establishment of mutual respect between teachers, school administrators, parents, and students. It is educators' and school administrators' duty to constantly make efforts to improve their effectiveness in order to better prepare students and help them be successful in their studies and in their future as well.

### **System-Wide Concerns**

One of the intents of this study was to reveal any deficiencies in teachers of the U.S. public school system as perceived by the Asian American parents. The findings of this study revealed certain deficiencies, mainly in the U.S. public school system.

**Low expectations.** The Asian American parents were not satisfied by the low teachers' expectations and low rigor in the classroom. They felt that U.S. teachers are not hard enough on their students and that they need to push students more.

**Insufficient teacher salaries.** Furthermore, Asian American parents of this study strongly believed that the quality of U.S. teachers could be improved if the government gives better salaries to teachers. The rationale behind this argument was that better salaries will attract high achieving students to the teaching profession, and that will lead to a better teacher performance and eventually better student learning.

**Lack of respect for teaching profession.** Moreover, Asian American parents of this study were quite displeased with the fact that teachers are not much respected by the

students here in the U.S. They asserted that teachers are authority figures, and they need to be respected by both the students and their parents. They insisted that teachers would be unable to create a disciplined environment (which is a very important aspect of this study) without being respected by the students.

**Few opportunities for parental involvement.** The last deficiency that was revealed was that there are not many opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's school lives. According to them, education of their children is immensely important to them, and they would like to have more opportunities to be part of their children's school activities.

### **Specific Recommendations for U.S. Educators**

The findings of this study demonstrate that Asian American parents have very firm and fixed expectations regarding the effectiveness of teachers. Some of the main features Asian American parents wish to see in effective teachers are: they have high expectations for their students, they push and motivate students, they provide individualized instruction, they have good personal traits (such as kindness, open mindedness, humor), they have ability to create disciplined learning environments, and they create good relationships with students and with parents as well. After the analysis of the findings of this research study, the first recommendation would be that teachers need to be fiercely aware of the students strengths and weaknesses and design an individualized plan of study that is not only based on the needs and capabilities of each student, but also is based on their high expectations of the students. Secondly, teachers need to be kind yet firm with their students; they need to be enthusiastic and have other

personal and professional traits that make it easy for students to have a good relationship with them or be comfortable with them. Teachers' personal and professional traits would also lead to the establishment of a disciplined, nurturing learning environment for their students. The mentioned actions have great significance in the eyes of the Asian American parents.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

While this research study investigated the personal perceptions of a small sample of Asian American parents on their views of what constitutes a good or an effective teacher, future studies could enhance a wider understanding of this issue in several other ways.

#### **Multiple Methods**

Other attempts of qualitative and quantitative design studies would be very helpful for the better understanding of the Asian American parent population. Using quantitative approaches to further study expectations and perceptions of Asian American parents would help in yielding a result that could be generalized to larger populations, while qualitative approaches will help in confirming the results of this study.

#### **Asian American From Around the U.S.**

This research study was limited to Asian American parents living in the Southern region of Minnesota. There must be more voices of Asian American parents from around the U.S. and not only from Southern Minnesota to determine if these findings can be upheld in other areas of Minnesota or the U.S.

### **Asian American Parents with Varied Backgrounds**

Due to the limited access to the general Asian American population, the researcher was able to interview only financially stable individuals who were mostly highly educated professionals such as physicians, professors, or leaders of educational institutions. Thus, there is a need to examine perceptions of parents with a variety of family structures, different socio-economic backgrounds, and different educational backgrounds. Doing so could provide significant discoveries regarding effective teachers.

### **Larger Sample**

Additionally, attempts to study larger sample populations of Asian American parents are greatly needed. Larger numbers could reveal a deeper and extensive range of perceptions and other themes that may have not been evident in this study.

### **Sub-Groups**

Furthermore, as discussed in the literature review, Asian Americans trace their roots to any of dozens of countries in the Far East, Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Each country of origin subgroup has its own unique history, culture, language, religious beliefs, economic and demographic traits, social and political values, and pathways into North America. It would be useful to study each subgroup separately. Some differences were observed in this study too. For example, Pakistani participants, the Nepali participant, and the Sri Lankan participant mentioned their religion as an important factor to achieve education, while Chinese parents mentioned cultural aspects such as Confucianism.

**Other Racial/ Ethnic Groups**

Additionally, there is a tremendous need to study other groups of parents such as White, Hispanic, and African American. It would be extremely educational to conduct a comparative analysis to see how different groups of parents perceive effective teachers. In particular, such research should evaluate fields of intersection and divergence in views on what entails a good teacher.

**High School Parents**

Parents of elementary school students were interviewed for this study. It would be enlightening to study the perceptions of parents of high school students. Even in this study one difference was noted when many parents suggested that teachers' pedagogical knowledge is not important at elementary level, however at the high school level, they said teachers need to be highly educated.

**Students' Perceptions**

Furthermore, there is a tremendous need to study students' perceptions, Asian American or otherwise. It would be extremely educational to conduct a comparative analysis to see how different groups of students perceive effective teachers and also what differences lie among the perceptions of parents and their children.

**Final Thoughts**

At the end, it is hoped that the findings of this research study will instigate discussion. Educators are role models for their students, and in many cases they are the second most important people in their students' lives. Educators need to understand the influence they have on their students' lives. Students deserve to be taught by the best

teachers who are not only highly trained but also fulfill the expectations that students and their parents have from them.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Minnesota State University, Mankato**

#### **Consent Form**

#### **The Good Teacher: A Qualitative Analysis of Perceptions of Asian American Parents**

##### **Introduction**

You are invited to participate as a subject in a research study exploring Asian American perceptions about effective teachers. You are being requested to participate because you represent Asian American population and your responses will be valued highly. This research is being conducted by Mariam Qureshi, toward the completion of her doctorate, and is being supervised by Julie Carlson, Ed.D., in the Department of Educational Leadership at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

##### **Procedure**

If you agree to participate as a subject in this study, you will be asked a series of questions in an interview. The interview will take about an hour of your time and will be recorded for later transcription.

##### **Potential Risks of Participation**

There are less than minimal risks in participating in this research study. The risk may include an emotional reaction to the interview questions. You do not have to answer to such question and have the right to stop at any time.

##### **Potential Benefits of Participation**

Participation in this study will help us to better understand the Asian American perceptions. And as a result of this study the Asian American voice may eventually become part of educational reform.

##### **Statement of Confidentiality**

Participation and the resultant data in this study will be kept confidential. Your names, identity, location, and any other personal information will be kept confidential. Your

responses to this interview will also be anonymous. Assigned pseudo-names will be used if a direct quote is included in the final study.

All the consent forms will be kept in the office of the Principal Investigator and advisor, Julie Carlson, on the Minnesota State University, Mankato campus. The data collected will be kept in a locked electronic file. All the data materials will be destroyed after a period of three years upon completion of the study.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study**

This study is being conducted for academic purposes and your participation is only voluntary. There will be no financial compensation to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you are completely free to withdraw at any time. Your withdrawal from the study will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato.

### **Contacts and Questions**

Questions can be addressed to Mariam Qureshi  
507-720-0955  
mariam.queshi@mnsu.edu

Questions can also be addressed to Julie Carlson, Ed.D., Advisor:  
507-389-5441  
julie.carlson@mnsu.edu

If you have questions about the treatment of human subjects, you can contact the IRB Administrator at 507-389-2321.

### **Statement of Consent**

I have read the above information. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I am 18 years of age or older, and I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Today's date : \_\_\_\_\_(Month/day/year)

**Appendix B**  
**Demographic Information**

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. What Asian country do you belong to?
3. What is your visa status?
4. What is your gender?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Male      \_\_\_\_\_ Female
5. What is your age?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Marital Status  
\_\_\_\_\_ Single      \_\_\_\_\_ Married      \_\_\_\_\_ Other
7. What is your educational background?
8. What is your spouse's educational background?
9. What is your profession?
10. What is your spouse's profession?
11. How many children do you have and what are their ages?
12. What language is spoken in the house?
13. Are your kids involved in any after-school activities? If yes, what activities are they involved in?

## Appendix C

### Guide Questions for Interview

1. What is the purpose of education in your culture? What is the purpose of education for you?
2. What does “highly qualified teacher” mean to you? What does “effective teacher” mean to you? Do you think there is a difference between “highly qualified” and “effective” teacher?
3. If there is a difference between “highly qualified” and “effective” teacher, which would you choose for your children?
4. What do you think makes a good teacher? Or what are the characteristics of a good teacher?
5. Who was your favorite teacher? And why?
6. Can you describe a really good teacher for your children? This teacher doesn't have to be a real person; it can be someone you are imagining.
7. Give me some examples of an incident that describes a good teacher.
8. What is the position of teacher in your culture? What is the position of teacher for you?
9. Do you think that classroom management and climate promotes student success?
10. Do you think your child will learn better from a teacher of the same gender or same ethnicity as your child?
11. Do you think relationship between student and teacher is important?
12. Coming from an Asian American background do you think that the teachers' expectations from your children are different? Do you think teachers' expectations matter?
13. Is it important to you what kind of instruction is provided by the teacher in the classroom? Instructional delivery includes pacing, direct instruction, individualized instruction, or differential instruction.

14. Do you think it is important to provide students with opportunities of open discussion and feedback in the classroom? Do teachers' speaking and listening skills matter?
15. What are your views on classroom environment? This includes physical layout or accessibility to materials.
16. Do you think teachers' characteristics such as content knowledge and enthusiasm must be present in effective teachers?
17. Can you please rate the following characteristics from most important to least important?
  - Classroom Management
  - Classroom Climate
  - Classroom Environment
  - Pedagogical Content Knowledge
  - Teachers' Expectation from your children
  - Teacher Enthusiasm
  - Interactional Dynamics
  - Instructional Delivery
  - Relationship Building
  - Matching Gender
  - Matching Ethnicity