BENEDICTINE UNIVERSITY

BECOMING A LEADER IN A NEW LAND: SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES OF FIRST GENERATION ASIAN INDIAN LEADERS ON THE U.S. SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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ABSTRACT

*A nation’s culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people.*

- Mohandas Gandhi

The bell tolls for United States (U.S.) higher education to embrace a global perspective essential to future survival (Lynn & Salzman, 2006). Reports show increasing Indian prominence on the world stage, including a call by President Obama and India’s Prime Minister Singh to join efforts in educational advancements. Over the past century, Indians have slowly migrated (diaspora) to the U.S., increasing student enrollment and dramatically increasing faculty from 1960–1970 in America’s colleges and universities. For Asian Indians entering U.S. post-secondary education, very few have made it to the rank of president. This dissertation begins with a review of existing scholarly work on leadership evolution since the Industrial Revolution and includes considerations of U.S. higher education leadership. The study then continues where earlier inquiry leaves off by focusing on the leadership experiences of Asian Indians at the executive level in U.S. higher education. A qualitative ethnographic approach was employed to answer the question: How do Indian expatriates view their highest professional attainments in U.S. higher education from their sociocultural perspectives? Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with five university and college leaders of Asian Indian descent along with researcher field notes, artifacts, and documents (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 174). The goal was to
offer a lantern that sheds light on this unchartered territory with resulting insights for future Indians seeking a similar path.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

What do I think of Western civilization? I think it would be a very good idea.

In truth there are as many religions as there are individuals.

- Mohandas Gandhi

News briefs forecast the coming of China and India as the next superpowers in a world of constant change. Inherent in these messages is the necessity for the United States (U.S.) to foster relationships with other nations aimed at building a future based on collaboration through education (Duncan, 2010). Lynn and Salzman (2006) posit that instead of America maintaining a global dominant stance, U.S. universities and colleges need to include curricula around cross-cultural differences, work in global teams, and incorporate an international focus. Responding to this call to action requires individuals to journey outward and become immersed in other cultures in order to build trust that leads toward symbiotic and interdependent relationships.

I have a nomadic spirit, an indelible curiosity to discover other walks of life unlike my own. Living to learn in another part of the state, country, and world has formed who I am today. Of these influences, none had a more profound impact on my life than the time I spent in India immersing myself in its culture. The people,
aromas, food variations, music, religious festivals, chaotic but organized traffic, colors, elephants in the streets, and so much more triggered an indescribable passion within me to learn more. Subsequently, my India persuasion led me to this academic juncture of exploring the individual perspectives of Asian Indians in their interpretive journey that brought them to serve as leaders in what to them was a foreign country—the United States of America. While I have a desire and appetite to discover the ways of life of peoples in lands unlike mine, I wondered whether Asian Indians had the same compulsion with regard to the U. S., with, moreover, a drive to become a leader.

Linkages between the U.S. and India trace back to the American post-colonial era as migrants from India sought a better way of life. Representative groups came from farming and professional sectors. Today, as documented in a 2011 special report by the U.S. Bureau Labor Statistics on Asian populations in the U.S., 11.2 million Asians lived in the U.S. in 2010 with Asian Indians making up 18% of the group, the second largest behind Chinese immigrants (Allard, 2011, p. 3). The same report indicated Asian Indians are the most educated among all Asian foreign-born peers entering the U.S. with college degrees. Recent Census Bureau data shows the total Asian Indian population tipping at 1.8 million (ages 16 and older), with 75 percent possessing a bachelor degree or higher (United States Census Bureau, 2010, p. 5). In addition to resident Asian Indians, students enroll in U.S. colleges and universities in large numbers. A publication by Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange ascertained 104,000 Indian students enrolled in U.S. institutions during the 2009–2010 academic year, contributing nearly $3.1 billion to the U.S. economy (Institute of International Education, 2010).
In 2009, President Barack Obama and India’s Prime Minister Singh created the Obama-Singh 21st Century Knowledge Initiative promoting greater cooperation among higher education backed by $10 million (USD) (Knowledge Initiative, 2009). Over 300 education, government, and business leaders from India and the U.S. met at Georgetown University on October 13, 2011, continuing the Obama-Singh initiative of pledging more collaboration in areas of cross-country research, joint-degree programs, and the potential for on-line learning and open courseware (McMurtrie, 2011).

One can easily recognize a growing emphasis on higher education collaboration between the US and India. A striking feature of US higher education already is the high participation rate of Asian Americans as professionals in that sector of employment. As of 2010, Asian American Pacific Islanders made up 7.2% of the total faculty population inclusive of Asian Indians, comparatively better than all other faculty of color (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2010, p. 11). In terms of Asian Indians employed in U.S. higher education, there are over 5,000 serving as faculty in U.S. post-secondary institutions (United States Census Bureau, 2004). With all this effort to attract Asian Indians to U.S. colleges and universities, less than 1% of all institutional presidents are of Indian descent (Yamagata-Noji, 2011). Why is this the case? And, for those Asian Indians who made it to higher education leadership roles, what were the contributing factors? What might the implications of these factors be for other Asian Indians who may aspire to similar positions of leadership?
The Indian Diaspora

Migration Patterns

Central to this study is an inquiry into a complex and dynamic relationship that exists between the Indian culture and its particular representatives. To what extent are we really shaped by our cultural roots or specific sociocultural contexts of our lives? What is at the crux of relations between an individual and his or her culture? To begin with, it is important to understand the place from where Asian Indians have their cultural grounding prior to their arrival in the U.S. Asian Indians have been migrating to the U.S. since the 19th century, bringing with them a life frame construction typically referred to as diaspora. At the foundational level, the “diaspora” concept originates from the “the scattering of the Jews to countries outside of Palestine after the Babylonian captivity” (Diaspora, n.d.). Diaspora, as a concept, has since gained traction to include other ethnic and religiously affiliated groups, picking up roots from one established societal domain and trans-locating to another. Persons originating from India who homestead in another country often carry with them the “Indian way of life,” sometimes referred to as Indian-ness or Hindu-ness (though not synonymous), where migrants assert Indian National identity by holding on to sovereign ways of life construction (Bauman & Saunders, 2009; Kakar, 2007; Neusner, 2009). The concepts of Indian-ness and Hinduism are frequently assumed to be one and the same since nearly 80% of Indian’s identify as Hindu. However, as we consider the Asian India diaspora in the United States, it is well worth noting that not all Asian Indians are Hindu and that there are important distinctions along the lines of caste or religion among Indian migrants.
True diaspora is comprised of three conditional elements, including dispersion across borders, harboring homeland orientation where one’s loyalty and identity reside, and a sense of boundary-maintenance preserving one’s identity to a host society (Brubaker, 2005). The Indian Diaspora is distinguishable by three separate waves of mobility, spanning ancient times, European colonialism, and the post-Colonial period. Early historical accounts trace Buddhist bhikkus in Central and Eastern Asia, and islands off of South-East Asia, including Thailand where Hindu and Buddhists have survived over the centuries (High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, 2002, p. xi). During that time, the Indian Diaspora evolved as the result of Indian traders establishing posts along the Pacific and Indian Ocean coastlines, traversing as far as East Africa.

The second wave, the Colonial era, reflects the changes experienced as the East India Trading Company gained eventual control of India, making it a British colony from 1757–1947 until its Independence and separation from West and East Pakistan. Slavery was legal in Britain until 1833 when abolitionment, soon followed by other European powers, created a need for additional labor. In 1834, the British Raj (empire) began exporting Indian labor to fill the labor gap experienced in countries like Mauritius, the Netherlands, and France and by 1878 Indians were working throughout South Africa, Fiji, and the Caribbean (Migration Information Source, 2011). This practice ended in 1920, but other forms of migration took place with countries like Burma, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, to which Indian laborers were recruited in exchange for living and working accommodations.
The post-Colonial era triggered the third wave of the Indian diaspora. Anglo-Indians relocated to England or Australia; professionals moved to North America and England; and skilled laborers migrated to West Asia. Immigration to the U.S. was very low (approximately 13,600) until the passing of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, making it possible for Asian Indians and their families to enter the country (Bauman & Saunders, 2009, p. 117). Until that time, the Asian Indian immigrant populations was 98% male, arriving as either an unskilled laborer (75% of the entire Indian diaspora) or one educated in a wide number of professional areas, and most likely a lower class Sikh from the northwestern India region called Punjab (Das, 2002, p. 4; High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora, 2002, p. 161). Post-1965 through the 1980s, immigration trends profiled typical entrants as professionally elite, representing medical, science, engineering, and technical fields, and mostly coming from the middle and upper caste echelons.

The Asian Indian diaspora in recent decades has experienced a noticeable shift from the more educated and financially equipped, particularly in the 1990s. During that time a distinction between well-paid white-collar employees working in the technology industry and blue-collar workers, namely in the service sector, began to emerge. This growing trend of Asian Indian blue-collar workers is the direct result of having to compete for coveted technical jobs during tight economic times, migrating with non-transferable skills or academic credentials, or simply coming with poor English skills and a lack of understanding of “U.S. governmental policies and regulations” (Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 77; Das, 2002). As of 2010, there are nearly 2.73 million Asian Indians living in the United States (United States Census, 2010).
Making the Leap

Indians who make the conscious decision to fully embrace the American way of life still find some link to their cultural roots (Kakar, 2007). As I reflect on my own experiences working in India as both a team leader and trainer, I found it necessary to delve into the cultural nuances of Indian culture if I expected to achieve any level of success in communication and mutual teamwork. In essence, making this cross-cultural leap required recognition and effort to learn cultural norms and mores (Hofstede, 2001), incorporate a genuine willingness to learn the unspoken (tacit) culture (Li & Scullion, 2010), and embrace leadership competencies on both local and global dimensions (Cohen, 2007). What does this cross-cultural leap look like for Asian Indians coming to the U.S.?

Understanding the cultural context of the migration that Asian Indians involved in higher education made from India to the U.S. offers a platform for this inquiry.

Problem and Rationale

The study of leadership within the context of U.S. higher education covers the gamut from trait, contingency, and behavioral theories to modern frameworks, including transformational, collaborative, and social constructivism. Particular to Asian Indians in higher education, the bulk of research focuses on the influx of Asian Indian students, and where the focus on leaders does occur, studies tend to aggregate all Asians with Caucasian or Other designations (Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009). In fact, Museus states, “Asian Americans in the field of higher education […] have been relatively excluded from higher education research and
discourse” (Museus & Chang, 2009, p. 95). This study sets out to isolate Asian Indian leaders with a focus on leadership phenomenon specific to their perspective.

There is a call to strengthen educational ties between the U.S. and India. While Asian Indian student enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities continues to climb, the number of representative Asian Indian leaders in U.S. higher education has not. However, there exist elite few who navigated this divide from Eastern to Western culture. Understanding the sense of self influenced by Eastern and Western cultural roots provides the foundation for this study.

We do not really know much about the subtleties and peculiarities of the sociocultural contexts of specific subgroups of persons (e.g. Indian expatriates) who pursue leadership positions in American higher education institutions. Better understanding of these persons and the contexts in which they develop their leadership prowess has the potential to enlighten aspiring Asian Indians at the dean and associate provost levels who have migrated to the United States. A qualitative ethnographic approach is chosen for this study because it intends to provide “a holistic understanding of how individuals in different cultures and subcultures make sense of their lived reality” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 193). As a researcher, I bring a unique perspective to this study given my many years of engagement in Indian culture, my experience as a professional in training and development, my work in U.S. higher education, and being an American, all of which, in my view, contribute to the significance of this investigation.
Purpose and Related Questions

The purpose of this study is to acquire an in-depth understanding of a complex world of sociocultural influences and interactions in which Indian expatriates pursue positions of leadership in American higher educational institutions. I seek to answer the question: “How do Indian expatriates view their highest professional attainments in U.S. higher education from their sociocultural perspectives?” In an effort to unpack this main question, I am led to the following questions:

- What are the defining features of the Indian expatriates’ backgrounds that sustain their shakti (“life-force”) in India and especially in the U.S.?
- What ultimately motivates them to pursue higher education positions of leadership in the U.S.?

Dissertation Outline

This dissertation is comprised of six chapters. Chapter Two examines the history of leadership research dating back to the Industrial Revolution. A comprehensive review of leadership theoretical frameworks is presented originating in a trait perspective evolving to contemporary positions, including complexity, shared, and sociocultural approaches. Leadership in the context of higher education is examined combined with the advent of global and cross-cultural leadership. Finally, scholarship around Asian Indian leadership in United States higher education is explored. A convergence of all these components illustrates a need for further exploration into the research question driving this study regarding how and why Asian Indians make their way to the United States and lead at executive levels.
Chapter Three outlines research design and methodologies guiding this study. Theoretical grounding is procured substantiating the qualitative stance for understanding leadership given that it is a human-driven phenomenon. Additional support is provided for the ethnographic nature of this study, weaving my personal reflections and observations of Indian culture and presenting and interpreting the sociocultural insights provided by the interviewed Asian Indian participants. An explanation about the role of the researcher as a “complete participant” is articulated. Methods for ensuring trustworthiness and credibility along with research bias are discussed, culminating in a robust argument for leadership phenomena open to discovery.

Chapter Four unfolds the stories of five Asian Indian leaders contributing to this study. The participants paint their lived experience from residing in India, coming to America, and their career and leadership paths in U.S. higher education.

Chapter Five sheds light on the emergent themes pertinent to their sociocultural experiences that shaped their thought patterns, behaviors, and decisions. Consistent with ethnographic inquiry, my voice is heard juxtaposing my Indian culture interplay and the lessons I learned, adding texture to the cultural nuances. Artifacts and documents are included to provide an overall picture of the cultural elements at play.

Chapter Six posits conclusions with interpretations for relevance to Asian Indian leadership in U.S. higher education. An emergent evolutionary framework articulating the Asian Indian leadership phenomenon is presented with in-depth
analysis of the findings presented in Chapter Five along with recommendations for practical application.

This project is just the beginning—interpreting the underpinning motivations that drive Asian Indians, influenced by higher education, to the “land of the free and the home of the brave,” distilling potential patterns, messages, and themes for the benefit of and perhaps as a model for subsequent followers.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes.

- Mohandas Gandhi

This chapter begins with the analysis of the historical developments of leadership studies in the United States dating back to the Industrial Revolution when leadership theories were categorized under two generalized eras of evolution—traditional heroic (transactional) and post heroic (transformational) approaches. The leadership role is explored from a multicultural globalized perspective where the study of Asian Indian leadership is then considered. The final section examines leadership in American higher education and presents the case for Asian Indian leadership inquiry contextualized through an American higher education lens.

Leadership Studies: Historical and Theoretical Overview

The Study of Leadership

The study of leadership may be traced back to the inception of civilized societies where the principles of leadership maturated into a social science, going beyond a historical reflection of events (Bass, 1990). The propensity for classifying leadership as a phenomenon underpins the complexity of how to define it. A phenomenon is “an observable fact or event; an object or aspect known through the senses rather than by thought or intuition; a rare or significant fact or event”
It seems appropriate that “phenomenon” encapsulates the essence of leadership; we as humans know it when it is present. But, describing the roots of what it is, how it is constructed, and why it exists has spurred voluminous theoretical postures for its root genesis. The “it” of leadership manifests into a cadre of evolutionary explanations posturing leadership in early examination at the individual level, describing leadership as a composite of traits and characteristics, developing into explaining it as an inter-relational dimension among leader and follower (goal-path, transactional and transformational, charismatic, authentic, servant leadership, et al. theories), and more recently, characterizing it as a process of social construct—a shared, collaborative entity derived from the power of the whole group or organization embracing a globalized perspective. In the words of Warren Bennis (2009), “to an extent, leadership is like beauty: it’s hard to define, but you know it when you see it” (p. xxx).

The historical evolution of leadership study can be broken down into two main eras identified as Traditional Heroic Leadership (Industrial Revolution to the early 1980s), often referred to as “transactional leadership,” and Post-Heroic Leadership (mid 1980s to the present) typically referred to as “transformational leadership.” Within each era, various schools of leadership study surface, many of which build off the other. A fundamental shift in leadership inquiry occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s when scholars moved from examining the leader holding ultimate power in achieving goals to viewing leadership as a social construct, incorporating the motivations, values, and experiences of all towards something greater than the task at hand.
Traditional Heroic Leadership—Transactional Leadership: Industrial Revolution to early 1980s

The era of Traditional Heroic Leadership, “Transactional Leadership,” witnessed the evolution of leadership study in three main areas: trait, behavioral, and contingency. The progression of leadership research cannot necessarily be defined in linear terms; rather, in many ways it was an iterative process where one school of thought influenced the other. The overriding element pervading all leadership postures during this time frame is that each leadership explanation contains a transactional element, an exchange between leader and follower.

Trait Theory. The early days of leadership theory regarded leadership as an individual aspect. According to Raelin (2005), the early Western Traditional Heroic model described leadership in four aspects: serial, individual, controlling, and dispassionate. Serial meant that once a person achieved a certain status, whether through a promotion at work or election to office, the person would remain or increase power without sharing it because that would be viewed as giving up, a sign of weakness. The position of leader was believed to be individual, a solitary role, where any attempt to delegate power was viewed as confusing. The leader controlled the organization, was the spokesperson, and only shared deepest thoughts with close confidants. Finally, the leader was there to make the difficult decisions in a dispassionate approach without regard for the feelings of the people who reported to the leader.

Initial leadership research assumed leaders were born, not made, focusing on the “great men” over time that rose to the occasion to make history (Burns, 1978).
Believing these men of power possessed innate abilities, leadership research during the Traditional Heroic period focused on trait models, examining power and authority. Up through the 1940s and 1950s, personal characteristics were identified to separate leaders from followers. Two influential reports, one by Stogdill in 1948 and one by Mann in 1959, correlated specific traits, such as dominance and intelligence, to identifiable leadership traits. However, “trait research, for most intents and purposes, was shut down following the rather pessimistic interpretations of these findings by many leadership scholars” (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternberg, 2004, p. 6).

**Behavioral Theory.** The move from trait identification led researchers to examine what leaders do, a shift toward leader behavioral factors, and how they treat followers. Research at the University of Michigan (Katz, Maccoby, Gurin, & Floor, 1951) and at Ohio State (Stogdill & Coons, 1957) endeavored to isolate general leadership behaviors called “consideration” and “initiating structure.”

“Consideration” referred to the extent a leader displays concern and respect for employees, while “initiating structure” addressed how a leader defines and structures all roles towards goal attainment (Yukl, 1971, p. 415). The notion here is that leadership is neither something one is born with nor something requiring a set of leadership traits; rather, effective leadership is dependent on the right behavior. The Managerial Grid, later changed to the Leadership Grid (Blake & Mouton, 1961), posited that the level of attention leaders pay to one or the other, concern (y-axis) or structure (x-axis), determines whether they employ an impoverished, country club, middle of the road, authority-compliance, or team management leadership style.
Leadership involves interactions with other human beings, meaning an exchange between equals maturing towards an ultimate goal resulting in a state of satisfaction, peace of mind, and a sense of accomplishment or meaning. Perhaps one of the pivotal turns in leadership study came about with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, which explored leadership influence in conjunction with follower motivations (Maslow, 1954). Maslow hypothesized that every human is motivated by a hierarchy of needs with the most fundamental representing physiological, security, and social (intrinsic) needs. Once basic needs are met in the workplace, Maslow contended that productivity is only possible when the leader focuses on employee ego and self-actualizing (extrinsic) needs. Herzberg’s (1966) Dual Factor Theory took Maslow’s theory a step further by proposing that both intrinsic and extrinsic needs could and should be addressed together through hygiene (environmental factors such as company policies, working conditions, etc.) and motivators (factors involving the job itself).

Each person is uniquely different. Thus, what works for one person does not necessarily resonate with the next. The 1960’s experienced a shift in leadership research when concentration moved to examining the leader’s concern for people and the expectations they had for their followers. McGregor (1960) proposed Theory X and Theory Y, a management theory based on assumptions about human nature and motivation. Theory X was first developed with the underlying belief that money, fringe benefits, and the threat of punishment are what motivate individuals, assuming above all that people are lazy and require direct managerial control. Drawing from Maslow’s (1959) Hierarchy of Needs, McGregor later introduced Theory Y which
recognized that not all humans are lazy and that management has the potential to further motivate self-directed individuals by employing a leadership style linking individual goals with organizational goals resulting in greater potential from workers (Pugh & Hickson, 1993).

**Contingency Theory.** No situation where leader and follower engage in an activity or task is ever the same, meaning leadership effectiveness is contingent upon the situation. Fiedler (1967, 1971) proposed the “situational contingency” construct which moved the focus from individual leadership traits and characteristics to examining the demands of the situation in relation to task-oriented and relations-oriented leaders. This theory, also known as Least Preferred Co-Worker (LPC) Theory, postulates that the effectiveness of a leader is the result of the interaction between “leadership style” and “situational favorableness” (later called situational control). Situational favorableness can be determined measuring three elements: Leader-member relations—referring to the degree of mutual trust and respect; task structure—referring to the degree to which the task at hand is low in multiplicity and high in verifiability, specificity, and clarity; and leader position power—referring to the power inherent in the leader's position itself and confidence between the leader and the subordinates. Ultimately, there is no ideal leader per se; but leaders can be effective when their leadership orientation fits the situation (Fiedler, 1967).

Following a leader means much more than an attraction to individual traits, style, or the situation at hand; leadership is also about achieving a goal. Path-Goal Theory, first coined by Robert House (1971), posits that effective leadership means determining the strategy to assist followers along a path for them to achieve their
goals by removing roadblocks and increasing rewards (Evans, 1970; House, 1971; House & Mitchell, 1974). The underlying assumption is that there is one right path for goal achievement, which the leader can see and the follower cannot. The leader may choose from one of four leadership styles—supportive, directive, participative, achievement—to match the level of the follower’s motivation and capability for the given situation. In this scenario the follower is dependent on the all-knowing leader, assuming that the follower is rational and, depending on the given situation, the appropriate methods can be selected. Scholars were onto something here and the evolutionary study realized that there exists a certain chemistry, a charisma possessed by the leader, that when done effectively, results in desirable outcomes for both.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, psychoanalytical taxonomies and personality typologies evolved to describe leadership types and descriptors such as charismatic and consensus leaders began to emerge. Zaleznik’s (1974) work juxtaposed “charismatic” versus “consensus” leaders posing that charismatic leaders are inner directed and father figures whereas consensus leaders are more like peers or brothers. Kets de Vries and Miller (1984, 1986) examined executives and proposed a fivefold psychopathological classification—persecutory preoccupation, helplessness, narcissism, compulsiveness, and schizoid detachment—to describe dysfunctional performance.

Work conducted by Hersey and Blanchard (1977) and Lord, DeVader, and Alliger (1986) examined the linkage between leadership traits and behaviors resulting in ideal leadership examples. Termed “situational leadership,” Hersey and Blanchard posited that leadership is dependent upon the situation, when it is up to the leader to
consciously modify his or her style given the subordinates’ level of competence and commitment in relation to the task at hand. The transaction of behaviors between the leader and follower, when done correctly, results in goal achievement regardless if the task are in line with the follower’s goals. The difference between situational leadership and Fiedler’s (1967) situational contingency construct is that the situational leadership leader can adjust style for the individual, whereas Fiedler’s model attempts to predict “favorable situations” in which the leader could achieve the best results and adapt his or her style for the group. The leadership style employed by the leader (directive, coaching, supporting, laissez-faire) is reflective of Lewin, Lippitt, and White’s (1939) earlier work called “participative leadership,” also referred to as “behavioral leadership,” positing that in group-related decisions, the leader can either do it alone (autocratic leadership style), consult with others (democratic leadership style which often results in group consensus), or let the group decide independent of the leader (laissez-faire leadership style).

**Leader and Follower Dynamics**

Trait, behavioral, and contingency leadership theories are considered “transactional.” Transactional leadership is based on reciprocity, specific exchanges that occur between leaders and followers (Burns, 1978; Heifetz, 1994). Transactional leadership is dependent on the leader and follower agreeing to a contract of established tasks and prescribed steps. The follower agrees to follow instructions to execute a particular task and the leader then rewards the follower for abiding by orders and completing the task. Transactional leadership implies that individuals complete tasks only when external rewards exist. Through these exchanges, the
follower then gains influence over time, while the leader gains influence by modifying his or her style to meet the expectations of followers.

**Summary of Traditional Heroic Leadership—“Transactional Leadership”**

The Heroic Leadership model assumes that only select individuals have the right mix of ability, traits, style, and personality to fill the leadership role. The phrase “it’s lonely at the top” directly links to this belief, and the value system inherent in Western culture for the person leading the way is encumbered with ultimate decision making. The leader is charged with delivering results and subordinates follow orders whether these are the result of customized leadership or pure management prowess. Where one person is tasked with leading and making the final decision, one can surmise that the outcomes may not be shaped by input from the followers since they are not part of the decision making process.

**Post-Heroic Leadership—Transformational Leadership: Mid-1980s to Present**

As U.S. culture grew and matured, at a rather accelerated pace, the call for a metamorphosis towards a democratic approach took hold on many fronts, from a national perspective to local activism. Leadership theories earmarked during the post-heroic era illustrate a shift in the leader’s intent towards the follower and is referred to as “transformational leadership.” Burns’ 1978 seminal book entitled *Leadership* separated leadership into two distinct approaches called transactional and transformational; transactional refers to how the leader rewards follower performance, and transformational relates to how the leader motivates the team towards organizational vision. Burns contends transactional leadership is the most prevalent and heavily relied upon leadership approach. Transformational leadership
Leadership is much more than the singular leader; it is about motivations of leader and follower, the context in which a task must be accomplished, the cultural context in which leadership is necessary, and an underlying sense of the greater good, inclusive of authenticity, spirituality, ethics, and values. Burns accelerated leadership beyond known research paradigms, raising trait, contingency, and other transactional frameworks to a higher level with the underpinning that leaders are meant to rise above the needs of the self and focus on a higher order of aspiration, an ethos of a greater good. Burns (1978) defines leadership as:

leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motivations (p. 19).

The conceptual and theoretical posture of transformational leadership is commendable, but the true question is how to know when it is happening. If a transformation happens to people and eventually the organization, how does one know the pragmatic actions required to execute such a process? Bass (1985) advanced transformational learning to practical application via the development of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which relied on psychological dimensions to explain the difference between transactional and transformational
leadership. In his explanation, Bass identified four dimensions of transformational leadership including individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. Bass believed leaders require both transactional and transformational aspects of leadership depending on the situation and needs of the followers.

Leaders who subscribe to something greater than themselves must fully regard the needs of others to ultimately become effective. Servant leadership, coined by Greenleaf (1977), and authentic transformational leadership paradigms (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; George, 2003) support this notion that leadership is a “reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow” (Pierce & Newstrom, 2005, p. 281). Simply put, subordinates will contribute to the goals of the organization when personal aspirations are in alignment and leaders seek ways to motivate followers toward goal attainment. Transformational leadership relies on the leader to mobilize outcomes and this is often done through coaching and mentoring techniques. Role modeling is a key component of authentic transformational leadership when “leaders who have a great deal of idealized influence are willing to take risks and are consistent rather than arbitrary. They can be counted on to do the right thing, demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6).

The transformational framing of leadership ignited a number of research endeavors aimed at understanding the extent to which one person in relation to others may ultimately change a system of being. To accomplish this, the leader must have the drive, personal conviction, and insight regarding specific techniques to make
change happen without creating the feeling or interpretation of purposeful manipulation and deceit. Kouzes and Posner (1995) set out to isolate specific, observable, and measurable behaviors, which indicate a transformational leader with the premise that leaders can learn how to be better by changing their own behavior. In their book *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner identified five exemplary dimensions of transformational leadership where the leader mirrors psychosocially researched traits of a trusted leader. These traits include the ability to: inspire a vision (paint a picture of the future), challenge the process (think out of the box), enable others to act (provide support with resources and training), model the way (demonstrable through one’s own actions), and encourage the heart (personalized motivation). This framework has become widely embraced and popularized in modern leadership development because of its simplicity and applicability.

The tenets of authenticity and trust emerge as seamless ingredients in leadership study over the past decade. Luthans and Avolio define authentic leadership as “a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both great self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development” (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009, p. 423). Bill George’s (2003) *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value* elevated the moral disposition of integrity as key to being one’s own person as a leader. Composed of five dimensions—purpose, values, heart, relationships, and self-discipline—George contends that all experiences authenticity when a leader not only employs a “moral compass” of right and wrong, but leads with heart, mind, and
intellectual aptitude. The leadership journey requires self-discipline; a journey of personal growth recognizing strengths and weaknesses, developing a unique leadership style that is authentic to each person consistent with individual character and personality (George, 2003). In this age of globalism which requires managing and leading across cultures, the extent to how authentic leadership, grounded in values and ethical decision making, is realized will require further analysis given its positivistic roots.

To think and act as a leader requires the ability to connect with others, which can only be achieved through genuineness. Warren Bennis (2009), a transformational leadership authority, contends, “all authentic leaders have a distinctive voice. By voice, I mean a cluster of things—a purpose, self-confidence, and a sense of self, and the whole gestalt of abilities that, thanks to Daniel Goleman, we now call Emotional Intelligence” (p. xxv). Much has been written about emotional intelligence and its alignment with effective leadership. Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer (1990) define emotional intelligence as, “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (p. 5). Here, genuine leadership is guided by emotional intelligence requiring self-reflection, which then leads towards a capacity to connect with followers.

Leading others towards a greater cause connotes elements of divinity or the supernatural, introducing a new perspective for viewing leadership outside the traditional empirically based approaches. Louis Fry, a leading investigator in the construct of spirituality in the workplace, states: “The ultimate effect of spiritual
leadership is to bring together or create a sense of fusion among the four fundamental forces of human existence (body, mind, heart, and spirit) so that people are motivated for high performance, have increased organizational commitment, and personally experience joy, peace, and serenity” (Avolio et al., 2009, p. 437). This approach takes the study of leadership phenomenon out from under the scientific umbrella and casts it into a personal exercise exploring beliefs, values, and ethics.

An undercurrent rippling throughout post-heroic leadership research paradigms is an element of trust. Once gained, trust fuels positivity in relationships resulting in greater outcomes. As early as 1956, Rosenberg postured that leaders without trust are less likely to form lasting relationships and are most prone to delegation with a watchful eye (Bass, 1990). As post-heroic leadership research continues to build on the premise that it is about building relationships working towards a greater cause, trust must be reinforced daily through transparency in word and actions (Biech, 2010).

The study of leadership up to this point has focused on individual attributes, the impact of the situation, or the extent to which a leader incorporates the motivations of others towards a greater cause. Increasingly, groups of people coming together to achieve a goal is represented not simply by a mix of people in one place, but rather by displaced individuals representing multiple cultures from around the world. With the advent of globalization, the leadership phenomenon is called upon to manifest itself across levels within an organization, borders, time zones, cultures, and through technological advances little known just a decade ago. This cross-cultural group interplay consisting of leader and follower has resulted in leadership study that
seeks ways to maximize team effectiveness through other fields of study and theoretical lenses.

**Collaborative, collective, shared.** Over the last decade, the concept of shared leadership based on a collectivist construct has emerged, emphasizing empathy, vulnerability, and skills of inquiry and collaboration with a focus on growing people for a greater good (Bennis, 2009; Burns, 1978, 2003; Drath, 2001; Goethals & Sorenson, 2006; Raelin, 2005). Raelin (2004) states that collaboration is further elevated in work-based learning environments where the free exchange of ideas results in participants learning “situation-specific principles that can attend to the variability in work demands [and] over time appear to surface a different form of leadership that is less characterized by the “great man” model and more by a collective form” (p. 133). The foundation for work-based learning is found in Senge’s (1990) learning organization research. Change can be mobilized by a culture in which all members participate in the learning process. The fundamentals of this collective approach encourage everyone, regardless of formal role designation, to participate. All members of an organization have the potential to lead when the occasion arises.

Collectivist leadership is a construct that builds on these concepts of shared learning and leading. According to Goethals and Sorenson (2006): “The work of leadership is the work the community achieves together in setting direction, creating and maintaining commitment and facing adaptive challenges” (p. 194), and leadership is about people making sense of community activities and how to collectively pursue them. The belief here is that one person cannot possibly lead in all aspects of the
organization; rather, different individuals lead when skills and knowledge fit the situation.

When groups of people are collectively leading, four tenets are at play that are also referred to as the Four Cs. According to Raelin (2005), leadership is concurrent when “leaders willingly and naturally share power with others” (p. 22). Second, it is collective in the sense that, since a community can have multiple leaders, they are operating a plural phenomenon. The collective view means that leadership derives from the process of people working together for a common purpose. This unique dimension surmises that a person is not dependent on another for approval to act since the permission to do so is granted by the organization. Third, collaboration exists where all members of the community may support a point of view they believe contributes to the common good. True collaboration means everyone willingly shares values and beliefs and it is here that collaborative leaders sincerely depend on the input of everyone to make an informed decision. The fourth “C” represents compassionate when “one extends unadulterated commitment to preserving the dignity of others” (p. 22). This dimension of collectivist leadership disregards role, social status, and background and compassionately focuses on the point of view of others from a learning standpoint. When compassion is part of the equation, all members are able to contribute and will know their perspective is factored into the final decision. Even Fiedler (1967) declared in his contingency studies that “almost everyone should be able to succeed as a leader in some situations and almost everyone is likely to fail in others” (p. 247).
Individuals have the potential for influencing system-wide change through the smallest of actions without officially being labeled the “leader.” Meyerson’s (2001) book *Tempered Radicals* introduces a perspective where nonconformists existing in a strong culture can influence transformation not through radical episodes of activity but rather on a daily basis through small actions tightly linked to personal values and beliefs. As in the collectivist construct, tempered radical leadership can happen at any level of the organization, relying on relationships with others promoting a nurturing environment of trust, motivating action, viewing every moment as a choice to act, while pushing others around them to learn. Meyerson points out that influencing change requires persistence, remaining true to thyself, and building community by inspiring others with truth through daily actions no matter how big or small, and no matter the setbacks that may occur along the way.

The science of complexity-based research, grounded in a wide range of fields including math, science, and others, posits leadership a function of any person involved where actions result with the desire for improvement. According to Hazy, Goldstein, and Lichtenstein (2007), leadership, in its purest form, “can be enacted through any interaction in an organization [and thus] leadership is an emergent phenomenon within complex systems” (p. 2). The authors contend that effective leadership “leads to increased fitness for that system in its environment” (p. 7). The uniqueness of complexity leadership theory is that leadership is absent of roles or titles; rather, it is about the actions that occur between individuals resulting in an outcome. As Hazy, Goldstein, and Lichtenstein purport, leadership is the result of an interaction between parties, making it a “verb not a noun” (p. 8).
The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen, 1976; Graen, Novak & Sommerkamp, 1982; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991; Graen & Wakabayashi, 1994) posits that leadership can “include the leader, the follower, and relationship” (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Central to effective leadership is the value of trust. The evolution of effective relationship building is based on dyadic dimensions. The model depicts the LMX relationship as beginning at the “stranger stage” and, through social transactions, advancing to the “acquaintance” stage, and then moving on to “partnerships” culminating at the highest level to “transformation” (moving beyond the self to a greater purpose) (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995, p. 238). The importance of this model is that it signifies leadership traversing dimensions of both transactional and transformational. It is ultimately up to those involved in the dyadic relationships to determine where leadership falls on the spectrum.

**Social Constructivism.** The experience of leading others through a position of influence means there is an individual interpretation of self, others, and the circumstance at play. Recent contextual and cognitive frameworks have been introduced in the study of leadership, namely social constructivism, focusing on the leader’s thoughts, intentions, and perceptions used to explain organizational interplay (Kezar et al., 2006). Sociologists define social constructivism as a social setting where groups construct knowledge together representing shared artifacts and meaning. According to Crotty, three assumptions underpin constructivism in which meaning is constructed by individuals engaging “with the world they are interpreting,” attempting to “make sense of it based on their historical and social
experiences,” and resulting in “basic generation of meaning” that “is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community” (as cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 8). Introducing this framework into the study of leadership opens an entirely new dialogue for how leadership is perceived and how it is defined.

Unlike other leadership paradigms, social constructivism relies on the interpretations of both the leader and followers that ultimately create reality, the phenomenon of leadership. Further, Kezar et al. (2006) state that context is key in relation to leadership interpretations; thus leadership must be studied in a particular context to understand leadership effectiveness given the influence of organizational culture and the experiences each person brings to the situation. Far from the early days of leadership research when the quest was to find a universal prescription of traits and behaviors fit for all situations, social constructivism unearths a completely new paradigm, suggesting leadership is personal, individually interpreted by all involved and bound by context.

**Summary of Post-Heroic Leadership—“Transformational Leadership”**

Post-heroic leadership theory embraces the interactions among all humans involved no matter title or level within the group. Burns (1978) opened the door by introducing the concept of transformational leadership. Subsequent paradigms, contributed new dimensions reasserting the power of influence when goals and motivations are genuinely in line with one another. The move towards more collaborative, collective, and shared leadership underscores the belief in every member of one community, creating one culture working together to make sense of community activities with the opportunity to lead at any given time. Strong values
and beliefs foster trusting relationships promoting change at any level in the organization as a result of contextual relationships. Recent examination shows leadership is much more than formula; it is about individual interpretations in relation to known culture, values, and beliefs. The dialogue regarding leadership effectiveness is entering a new era of discovery with the advent of new frames from which to challenge and test known and unknown dimensions.

**Intercultural Leadership in a Global Context**

A surge in “cross-cultural,” “intercultural,” and “multicultural” research reflects the very nature of the business model morphing into a trans-continental fact of life while still under the umbrella of “Transformational Leadership.” Relocation to another country is becoming more commonplace for people as part of a work assignment or simply to pursue other endeavors. Particular to the United States, the demographic picture continues to shift from what was predominantly Caucasian to a richer blend of cultures (United States Census Bureau, 2010). The literature is beginning to scratch the surface of the effectiveness of leadership approaches among different cultures.

Depending upon who is asked, the concept of culture can be defined many ways. Edgar Schein (2010), considered by many as the guru of organizational culture, defines culture as:

…a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems (p. 18).
Immersing oneself in another culture means experiencing rituals, values, and beliefs to the point of naturally integrating them into one’s thinking and engagement with others. Wilson, Hoppe, and Sayles (1996) simplify the complexity of culture in the following analogy: “Culture is to a group what personality is to an individual” (p. 2).

The current trend for effective leadership, termed global leadership, requires cultural savvy combined with technological best practices. Global leadership, according to Kezar et al. (2006), may be traced back to the transformational leadership work of Burns (1978) and his focus on purpose and values. At the core of global leadership is having an acute understanding of the culture in which followers belong, which means understanding “the underlying assumptions, beliefs, and values of their followers, and thereby develop greater awareness about the followers” (Singh & Krishnan, 2007, p. 220). Some researchers such as Van Dyne and Ang reason the only way for a leader to achieve this level of awareness and be fully equipped to successfully lead in another culture is to actually reside in the culture of followers for a duration of time (Avolio et al., 2009). Leaders may also develop a broad set of competencies, a sense of cultural intelligence (Earley, Murnieks, & Mosakowski, 2007; Avolio et al., 2009). A study by Goldsmith, Greenberg, Robertson, and Huchan (2003) asked leaders to rank 100 leadership attributes in the order of importance for the next generation leader. The results, in order, highlighted a need to (1) consistently treat people with respect, (2) understand the impact of globalization on the business, and (3) create and communicate a clear vision for the organization. The remarkable aspect of this study is that the dimension of globalization advanced from
71st in rank all the way to second in terms of importance, illustrating a future beyond a domestic leadership focus (p. 15).

Global leadership will likely call for leaders to adopt more than one cultural profile in order to aid assimilation and effectiveness. Brannen and Thomas (2010) state there are significant populations among developed countries where individuals are bicultural, meaning they “internalized more than one cultural schema” (a socially constructed cognitive system). Of particular interest for leadership study are “biculturals” who have internalized two conflicting cultures, requiring greater effort and “complex sense-making, resulting in higher levels of cognitive complexity” (Brannen & Thomas, 2010, p. 9). Further, expatriates who have the most difficult time adjusting, but commit to integration, often become “most effective in a variety of cross-cultural contexts” (p. 9). Their experiences propose a positive by-product of cross-cultural engagement involving leaders relocating to a culture that is substantially different from their native culture.

Casimir and Waldman (2007) attempted to identify optimal leadership traits for expatriate leaders working in China and Australia. Results indicate that important leadership traits are influenced by both the leadership role itself and “partly by culturally endorsed interpersonal norms” (p. 56). The outcomes showed that Australia, considered to be an individualistic society, regards communication as key; but the Chinese, identified as a collectivist society per Hofstede’s (1980, 2001) work, revere modesty as pivotal to effective leadership. While the results may not be surprising, a layer of complexity exists given the tool used (Likert scale) since the Chinese participants are culturally unlikely to choose extremes as compared to their
counterparts. These findings illustrate fundamental challenges to cross-cultural leadership when the identification of traits, personalities, and styles may be limited to Western-based methodologies.

Related to traits is the concept of global leadership competencies. The Human Capital Institute and Development Dimension International (DDI) conducted a qualitative study of 25 senior human resources and operations executives representing 22 global organizations across multiple industries resulting in 10 global leadership competencies:

1. People black belt—inspire and bring out the best in others;
2. Master mobilizer—execute for results;
3. Visionary—create strategy through ambiguity with flare;
4. Contextual chameleon—cultural dexterity depending on people, location, and the situation;
5. Intellectual grunt—conceptual and strategic decision making;
6. Humility—self-aware, learning oriented, and open to feedback;
7. Global explorer—actively seeks to understand other cultures;
8. Solid as a rock—authenticity and sound judgment;
9. Company poster child—maintain executive modeling balancing cultural needs with results; and
10. Unbridled energy—motivate with enthusiasm no matter the circumstance

(Keys & Wellins, 2008, p. 38).
Strong correlations exist between the competencies listed above and the characteristics, traits, and components introduced by trait, contingency, and transformational theorists over time.

Global leadership calls for navigating societal values and cultural influences, ultimately impacting the dynamics of cross-cultural teams, not to mention virtual working teams. Walumbwa, Lawler, and Avolio (2007) explored the effectiveness of transactional versus transformational leadership in relation to individual versus collective cultures. The study revealed that transactional leadership works best among individual-based cultures and transformational leadership among collective-based cultures. The implications illustrate the need for global leaders to not only understand the cultural context, but to make a conscious decision about leadership style adjustment to enhance commitment and goal attainment by cross-cultural teams.

As current and future leadership studies weigh social constructs, collectivism, and globalism, the escalation of technological advancement will demand leaders have a propensity to navigate the digital age. Goldsmith, et al. (2003) contends that in this burgeoning world of global leadership presence, leaders will need to use technology to “extend presence throughout the organization” (p. 54). Since the new millennium, communication channels have spanned the gamut from outlets from cell phones, handheld devices, to the Internet and more, with instantaneous effects and with most occurring in a virtual environment. The concept of e-Leadership is beginning to take hold, given the prevalence of virtual teams, and initial studies are examining engagement, styles, and trust building (Balthazard, Waldman, & Atwater, 2008; Kahai & Avolio, 2008; Xiao, Seagull, Mackenzie, Klein, & Ziegert, 2008). As the
momentum of digital and technological advancements continues, leaders will need to find ways to empower others to understand this expanse of offerings and make recommendations for the most effective means to promote their leadership effectiveness (Goldsmith et al., 2003). Peculiar to e-Leadership are the tenets of defining leadership as not necessarily isolated to individuals, but rather influenced by the limitations of current-day communication channels which may lead to greater exploitation of the strengths and weaknesses of all involved.

**Summary of Intercultural Leadership in a Global Context**

The face of America is changing from a Caucasian image to a representative blend of heritages spanning the globe. For leaders, this requires empathy on an emotional and intellectual level when connecting with others in the culture of higher education. Connecting with others requires competency development, bicultural assimilation, value-savvy awareness, and universal transformational leadership adeptness for globally responsible leadership, including cross-cultural team effectiveness, and technological agility when leading virtual teams. Intercultural leadership used to mean going to another culture and leading people. Now the requirements are far greater considering the expectation for team achievement in a fast moving environment where technology drives not only the speed of work, but the dynamics of human interaction.

**Expatriate Leadership: Asian Indians in the United States**

A dearth of leadership research exists concerning expatriate Asian Indians leading in the U.S. However, inferences about Asian Indian leadership can be made based on the global leadership research in the corporate sector. This section
highlights key insights related to effective leadership elements particular to Asian
Indian expatriate leaders migrating to the U.S.

The consideration of local culture and global leadership has existed for some
time. Geert Hofstede (1980), an organizational sociologist, attempted to
contextualize the interaction between national and organizational cultures with direct
implications for outsiders considering entry. In his study on values conducted
between 1967 and 1973, Hofstede surveyed thousands of IBM employees
representing over 70 countries. From this data and sequential studies, Hofstede
identified five cultural dimensions of difference—power distance, individualism,
masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. Power distance refers
to the extent the less powerful accept the fact that power is distributed unequally.
Individualism embodies the extent to which a culture promotes self-manifestation
against societal collectivism, the strength of one versus the strength of all.
Masculinity describes the power of the male dominant versus the role of the caring
female. Uncertainty avoidance poses the level of comfort with uncertainty of the
future (ambiguity). Long-term orientation is related to the deferment of gratification
(Hofstede, 1980).

Specific to cultural dimensions in the United States and India, Figure 1
juxtaposes the value placed on each dimension with considerable differences among
power distance, individualism, and long-term orientation.
This model has been criticized because of its limited population sampling and gross generalizations made about countries, especially for countries the size of India which, represent vastly different populations composed of divergent religions and rituals. However, Hofstede (2011) was able to frame and delineate culture into understandable references. He offers implications for cultural outsiders to consider upon entry, as well as for leaders engaging more than one culture. A recent study by Leong and Fischer (2011) proved that Indian leaders working in egalitarian countries,
such as the U.S., must exercise key transformational elements: “inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence (charisma)” (p. 164).

The Global Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness project (GLOBE), established by Robert House in 1993, sought to examine the universality and globalization of transformational leadership across 62 countries (Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2008). According to Kezar et al. (2006), universal attributes “associated with leadership include foresight, trustworthiness, and the abilities to encourage, motivate, build others’ confidence, and communication” (p. 87). To some extent these dimensions reflect trait and personality leadership dimensions. However, to be globally savvy means relying on outsiders to move an organization forward. Rhinesmith emphasizes this point, describing when Steve Jobs returned as the CEO of Apple and encouraged employees to reach outside the Apple culture to cultivate new ideas of innovation and thus forged a new leadership trend to move the organization forward employing a global lens (Biech, 2010, p. 340). The Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative, a partnership formed by business, academic, and centers for leadership representatives in 2004 states that “the global exercise of ethical, values-based leadership in pursuit of economic and societal progress and sustainable development” equal globally responsible leadership (p. 351).

Findings from the GLOBE initiative contrast the value of leadership between populations in the United States and India. The ideal American leader is one who values individualism over collectivism, inspires through optimism, stands up for beliefs, focuses efforts on an achievable vision, strives for excellence by going “the
extra mile,” seeks change by taking risks and making mistakes, acts quickly through quick decision-making, promotes team spirit by communicating goals and instilling pride, encourages participation through informal work environments, and cares about people (Chhokar et al., 2008, p. 525). Comparatively, the ideal Indian leader is action oriented with a display of charisma harboring “communication, direction, vision, and change orientation” characteristics (p. 1005). Further, effective Indian leaders are described as “bureaucratic, autocratic, and collectivistic” (p. 1005). A distinct theme separating the two cultures is the importance Indian culture places on introspection, the processing of “external experiences” (p. 996). In American terms, action is preferred over reflection and leaders are “measured on the degree to which they exert control and are forceful, decisive, quick, and assertive” (p. 484).

The work of Li and Scullion (2010) sets out to emphasize that while a leader may have the right set of traits and cultural savvy, explicit (outward display of culture) versus tacit (local unspoken culture) knowledge can be quite different. This study focused on multinational company expatriate leaders working in China. The authors contend that an expatriate leader’s success is dependent upon cultural immersion through socialized activities when trust is key for true understanding because company culture and local culture may not always be in alignment (Li & Scullion, 2010).

Given the cultural differences illustrated thus far in explicit and tacit dimensions, one anticipated outcome among Indians migrating to the U.S. is to experience a shift in values. Budhwar, Woldu, and Ogbonna (2008) compared the cultural dimensions of two separate groups of Indians, 429 Indian natives and 151
Indian migrants living and working in the U.S. Results confirmed significant cultural value differences between both populations on a number of dimensions indicating a shift in how Indians perceive working and living after migrating to the U.S. Indians who migrated to the U.S. favored less hierarchy, valued financial and material accomplishments over quality of life, were more cautious about decision making, were less harmonious, tended to hold on to traditions (male migrants), and viewed human nature as changeable (Budhwar, Woldu, & Ogbonna, 2008).

Subsequent research supports the notion that Indian and U.S. leaders vary in approach as reported by their followers. Through the lens of Kouzes and Posner’s Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), a comparative look at Indian leaders versus U.S. leaders illustrates style differences as reported through self-assessments, their subordinates, superiors and others with whom they engage. The LPI measures five dimensions including inspiring a vision, enabling (providing resources and support for followers), encouraging (genuinely connecting with and supporting followers), challenging the process (thinking out of the box), and modeling desired behavior (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Kakar, Kakar, KetsdeVries, and Vrignaud (2002) surveyed a group of leaders located in India and another group located in the United States with results showing that Indian leaders scored higher than American leaders on all dimensions except for encouraging. The researchers do caution that there exists a culture of idealizing the leader, but the sense is that followers in India are more satisfied with their leaders than Americans are with theirs.

Expatriates to a certain extent translate their leadership aptitude, which is grounded in their home country values and mores, into a set of amended and
customized skills for application in their newly adopted country. Dalton and Wilson (2000) attempted to operationalize personality testing using the five-factor model for expatriate management assignment. This model measures the words used by individuals over time to discover a structure of personality traits (p. 251). Research results were inconclusive among host-country bosses and their assessment of expatriate managers’ personality and job performance. The implication here is that Western style personality tests may not accurately measure job performance success among Asian Indian leaders migrating to the United States.

**Contemporary India-based Leadership Models**

In contrast to Western-based leadership inquiry, leading Indian scholars posit leadership frameworks with some similarities to what has been covered, but with some notable distinctions. Balasubramanian (2007) contends Indian leadership is strongly influenced by the country’s culture representing the following characteristics:

1. Hierarchical, conscious of positions, demanding respect;
2. Cannot ignore the need to involve others in decision-making process; consensus building, participative;
3. Male domination of positions of authority and power;
4. Entrepreneurship, risk-taking and enjoying uncertain challenges;
5. Visionary, long-term orientation; and
6. Be founded upon a set of values and value system (p. 99).

Balasubramanian supports Hofstede by emphasizing India’s dramatic change over the last decade given its economic boom with global influences changing the workplace
in ways never felt until the lifting of the Licence Raj in 1991 (rigid governmental laws enacted after 1947 to regulate the economy), and opening trade and commerce in ways never before experienced. With this recent global evolution, emphasis on having a global mindset is gaining traction; but at the core, Indian leaders, even though they may engage with global counterparts by speaking the language (English), act with a local mindset.

Peter Church (2010), in his book *Added Value: The Life Stories of Indian Business Leaders*, posts a number of key elements that drive effective leadership such as sound analytic and problem-solving skills, a high level of people skills, and innovation. A striking difference from Western leadership inquiry is the influence of “joint family,” meaning all members of the family live together, share the same kitchen, and represent up to three generations. This is important because inherent in this construct is the influence of family hierarchy where traditionally the eldest male, whether capable or not, takes over as the next leader and is guided by the principles articulated by Balasubramanian (2007). In the recent decade, India is experiencing family division, given the lifting of the Licence Raj and external influences from Western culture, which is testing known methods for running the family business.

The call for today’s Indian leaders is to shift from a top-down hierarchical approach to one based on experiential learning so as to build the next generation. The *Lessons of Experience: How Successful Executives Develop on the Job-India* study conducted by the Tata Management Training Center and the Center for Creative Leadership-India surveyed top leadership from eight global Indian corporations to
develop training for up and coming managers (Wilson, 2010). Results indicate that upcoming Indian leaders need to:

- Gauge motivation and readiness to learn;
- Nurture ability to learn;
- Engage with experiences, and build and broaden the lessons you learned; and
- Use leadership lessons to benefit yourself, others, and your organization, and society (p.146).

With economic proliferation, Indian leadership inquiry has experienced a dramatic shift over the past decade. What was once an economy focused on maintaining the status quo has morphed into a society competing on a global scale. The recognition of organizational hierarchy is changing from anointing the next familial descendant, typically the oldest male son, to one recognizing the best leader who may come from other avenues. Recently, the head of India’s largest business group, Tata Sons, announced a non-family member to succeed the current chairman, Mr. Tata, in December 2012 (Bajaj, 2011). With this changing regard for leadership comes the emphasis on learning and leading with a global mind-set.

**Summary of Expatriate Leadership: Asian Indians in the United States**

Cultural values serve a fundamental role in how leaders engage their followers. The work of Hofstede shows a stark contrast between Indian and United States culture with impact on how organizations are constructed and leaders are viewed. The GLOBE initiative parallels similarities, but also shows fundamental differences, primarily in how Indians value relationships resulting in a collectivist approach whereas the United States embodies self-motivation to achieve success.
Kouzes and Posner (1995) highlight that Indian leaders score rather well compared to their United States leader counterparts when it comes to exhibiting four out of the five dimensions of exemplary leadership. Budhwar et al. (2008) purport that Indians who migrate to the United States experience a shift in their values compared to their colleagues who remain in India. Recent India-based leadership research shows conflict between the old ways of leading, namely hierarchical, with the call for learning and assuming a global mindset. The discourse around the ideal personality of expatriate leadership is inconclusive, but there exists an element that calls for the leader to learn the culture on an explicit and tacit level.

**Higher Education Leadership and Asian American Indians**

The challenge with conducting scholarly leadership research in the context of U.S. higher education is that higher education is comprised of a conglomeration of institutions, which represent divergent missions and are populated by diverse populations, culminating in a multiple-form culture. Tierney (2008) argues that higher education culture is socially constructed, requiring researchers to view them as “dynamic environments and proceed from the notion that our interpretation of environmental change occurs […] through […] participants’ construction of the environment” (p. 21). In essence, higher education, because of its complexity, requires that leadership research go beyond the skills of the individual (trait) and examine leadership as a collective in order to meet the constant rhythm of change (Tierney, 2008).
Traditional Heroic Leadership—Transactional Leadership

The study of leadership in American higher education spans most of the major theories described up to this point, and with similar results. However, criticism about higher education leadership research centers on the fact that most of it is either descriptive or prescriptive with reverence given to the leader guiding the institution (Birnbaum, 1992). Trait, power and influence, behavioral, contingency, cultural and symbolic, and cognitive theories were first pulled together by Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum (1989) to illustrate the applications over time of leadership research in relation to higher education.

Higher education leadership study naturally lends itself to an examination of the titled leader—the President or Chancellor—with regards to personal attributes when it comes to organizational mobility. Lovell and Kosten (2000) conducted a meta-analysis spanning over 30 years of research about student affairs (SA) administrators to answer the question: What characteristics are necessary for success as a student affairs administrator? The findings resulted in a series of trait-based qualities including cooperation and integrity, knowledge of student development theory and functional responsibilities, along with skill-based dimensions from human facilitation to administration and management. Considering the earlier discussion, this meta-analysis shows the bulk of SA leadership research comes from the Traditional Heroic Model (transactional) of leadership representing masculine qualities.
**Post-Heroic Leadership—Transformational Leadership**

Other research, such as the work by Schuh (2002) which focused on how senior higher education leaders use servant leadership, is beginning to surface and indicates higher education leadership theory is moving into the Post-heroic Leadership model. Schuh suggests, through analysis of interviews with senior leaders, that principles of successful leadership incorporate having a vision, focusing on accomplishing for the greater good, maintaining integrity and honesty, being human, and finding life balance. Stephenson (2001) mirrored some of the components identified by Schuh in that leaders need to “develop a compelling vision, exercise appropriate power, insist on authenticity, nurture entrepreneurship, and work at transforming our colleges in the service of our communities” (p. 200).

**Collaborative, collective, shared.** The success or failure of an organization is more than the sole effect of one person; rather, it is the result of all. Peter Senge’s (1990) concept of the learning organization describes successful organizations in which learning serves a critical component involving ongoing feedback, dialogue and member engagement fueling forward progress. A sense of shared ownership manifests itself into a concept of shared leadership, collectivism, and collaboration.

As stated earlier, collectivist leadership is a construct that builds on these concepts of shared learning and leading. According to Goethals and Sorenson (2006): “The work of leadership is the work the community achieves together in setting direction, creating and maintaining commitment and facing adaptive challenges” (p. 194), where leadership is about people making sense of community activities and how to collectively pursue them. The belief here is that one person
cannot possibly lead in all aspects of the organization; rather different individuals lead when skills and knowledge fit the situation.

Shared leadership research is emerging among higher education scholars. Komives, Woodard, and Associates (2003) identified competencies based on the work of Drath and Palus (1994) for Student Affairs leaders within higher education to promote a collaborative environment: ongoing self-development and change, building authentic relationships with diverse others, structuring a collaborative learning environment, sharing power, engaging in creative conflict conducted with civility, forging shared purposes, asking critical questions, and developing a systemic view.

A study conducted by Eddy and VanDerLinden (2006) speculates that while the focus on leadership development in community colleges across the country has moved more towards shared governance, leaders still view themselves as leaders due to their role, and not necessarily due to the perceived merits of a collective or shared approach.

As higher education becomes more capitalistic and moves away from the traditional, formalized shared governance approach, faculty and staff increasingly have the capacity to make change only through grassroots efforts (Kezar & Lester, 2011). Examining higher education through the lens of Meyerson’s (2001) *Tempered Radicals* framework, Kezar and Lester contend informal leadership from the bottom-up among community members representing different departments can promulgate positive change when done through subtle rather than radical means. While individual, group, and organizational level dimensions influence the tactics employed,
Kezar and Lester illustrate leadership emergence among individuals sharing common goals with potential for campus-wide change.

**Social Constructivism.** The evolution of leadership study incorporating interpretation of the self in relation to external surroundings is gaining momentum in understanding higher education leadership. In the late 1980s into the early 1990s, higher education leadership researchers such as Birnbaum (1992) viewed colleges and universities from a cultural (and social constructivist) perspective posturing a constructivist approach as the optimal mode for understanding the true nature of leadership. In the context of higher education, leadership can be difficult to isolate since the culture itself is often a conglomeration of factions where multiple kingdoms are cobbled together to form an institution, each with its own ethos and goals towards intellectual awareness and discovery of truth. A constructivist approach personalizes the dimension of leadership and digs deeper into the understanding of leadership in the context of this special and somewhat unorthodox form of community and organizational context.

**Asian Indian Higher Education Leadership**

As indicated earlier, leadership research and trends on Asian Indians in higher education is limited, but exists. Trends reported in the 2010 American Council on Education show rates across all minorities in higher education leadership positions steadily increasing since 1997 from 14% to 18% by 2007 (Ryu, 2010). However, Asian American representation at the administrator level, of which Asian Indians are a sub-group, increased slightly by 1% during the same time frame, moving from 1.9% representation in 1997 to 2.9% in 2007. Data presented at the 2011 Leadership
Development Program for Higher Education illustrated that Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) administrators at the president level represented less than one percent across all Carnegie classifications with just 35 presidents of Asian descent leading 18 community colleges, and 17 leading university and professional schools (Yamagata-Noji, 2011).

A deeper investigation into research of Asian Indian leaders in higher education becomes even more daunting. One contributing factor is that AAPIs are not directly isolated when examining college executive levels, but are aggregated with Caucasian or other designations (Teranishi et al., 2009). Teranishi (2007) goes so far as to say “Asian Americans possess a paradoxical position as a highly visible and successful group in attaining higher education, yet invisible in education research and policy” (p. 38). Across the Asian American higher education leadership spectrum, concern is increasing that current leadership is not preparing the next generation of leaders, creating a perpetual gap that will only increase over time.

The pathway to college or university president tends to come from within the faculty ranks. However, when comparing the number of AAPI presidents proportionate to AAPI faculty numbers, representation is miniscule. The 2010 National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) report that AAPIs represent 7.2% of the total faculty population. However, the breakdown to tenure and leadership roles indicate that of that 7.2%, “AAPIs had a lower proportion of faculty with tenure (36.3%), a higher proportion of faculty who were on the tenure track, but not tenured (25.4%), [and] a higher proportion of faculty who were not on the tenure track (20.9%)” (pp. 11–12). This trend is also exhibited
in management and professional sectors where just under half of all AAPIs are employed, yet 1.5% are represented on Fortune 500 Board seats (C, 2010).

Considering Asian Indians are part of the overall AAPI population, the numbers indicate a less than proportionate representation at the presidential level compared to other population designations.

Another important fact to consider is that while Asian American leadership representation is decreasing, Asian American postsecondary attendance and graduation completion are increasing. In 2006, beginning at the secondary level, the United States Department of Education reported that while Asian American students represent four percent of the total student population, representative Asian teachers make up just two percent. The CARE released its 2010 report showing that nearly 70% of all Asian American Indian students attained a bachelor’s degree from 2006 to 2008, leading the pack of all other Asian designations.

Of the research that does exist on Asian American leadership in higher education, much of it tends to combine cross-Asian cultures to represent the career path of this targeted higher education leader group. For example, familial influences or personal aptitudes correlated to career paths are a common theme and are generalized for all Asians (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009, p. 84). Other comparative studies that have been conducted for comparison between Caucasian and Asian American career trajectories demonstrate little differences, again generalizing across Asian populations (Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009, p. 84).

Neilson and Suyemoto (2009) found in their research that Asian American higher education administrators typically do not plan to become administrators.
Instead, most choose to follow other occupational career paths, a majority engages in outside professional opportunities, and many identify mentors as strong contributors to their success. A recent dissertation study by Li-Bugg (2011) concluded that Asian Americans working in community colleges experience a sense of in-betweenness, the phenomenon of living in the space between East and Western cultures. Racism and prejudice was found to exist in higher education against Asian Americans and that along these lines, Asian Americans, in Li-Bugg’s study, developed a social consciousness at an early age given the family and societal structures imprinted on them as children in their native countries. Being student centered, leading as a change agent, possessing emotional intelligence and people skills, always learning, and retaining the importance of “joy at work” are key to successful leadership as Asian Americans in a community college setting (Li-Bugg, 2011).

Particular to Asian Indians, the information is thin. Inferences can be made based on information presented in an amalgamation between general Indian leadership data and what is positioned under higher education. This hole in the literature illustrates the need for more data to understand what it takes to not only increase, but also replenish Asian American Indian leadership at executive levels as the current leadership population continues to move on or retire.

**Summary of Higher Education Leadership and Asian American Indians**

While the research is somewhat sparse, examination of leadership in America’s higher education field reflects an evolution of scholarly research dating back to the Industrial Revolution. Believing that a leader possesses a certain combination of skills, abilities, and attributes, early studies restricted focus to the
“head” of the institution, namely the president. Over time, leadership inquiry has moved from a focus on the singular leader to a collectivist examination to recently applying other constructs such as cognitive models for deeper understanding. Given the changing demographics in American higher education, the growing reality of a global market, and the pace of technology advancement, the 21st century continues the quest for discovering the truth that underpins leadership effectiveness in this complex world of higher education.

Particular to the AAPI segment in higher education, research has surfaced over the years, but not necessarily to the degree matching enrollment numbers across America’s higher education institutions. Some contributing factors were identified as to why data is not present, and, in cases where it is, the information does not always discern the breakdown of Asian descent under the “American Asian” umbrella. While Asian Indians have increasing presence among faculty, and in management and professional occupation sectors, those reaching executive level are not proportionately representative. Specific to this dissertation, more research is merited to understand the critical paths taken by Asian Indian executives in higher education.

**Summary of the Chapter**

The objective of this dissertation is to explore the journey Asian American Indians have taken to achieve executive levels within American higher education. History shows waves of Indian diaspora over time steadily manifesting into sizeable populations across the United States with recent reports of nearly three million Asian Indians in the country. Over the years, American colleges and universities have benefitted from the best of Indian minds participating in academic prowess,
particularly in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields.

Ironically, as the number of Asian Indian students has grown, equivalent numbers of Asian Indians ascending to academic leadership roles has not. The number of Asian Indians among faculty, with a proportionately higher representation compared to other persons of color, is representatively low in the realms of tenure and subsequent executive leadership.

The stretch of leadership research spans a rather short period of time, since the Industrial Revolution. The early years of inquiry focused on deliberate traits, the one-man, hero approach to defining leadership. Soon thereafter, the shape of leadership study began to explore the interchange between the leader and follower with the eminent goal for the leader to get the follower to achieve something under the headings of behavioral and contingency theories. Leadership study from the Industrial Revolution up through this period, from approximately 1830 to 1978, can be defined as the Transactional age.

Scholarly leadership investigation began to assume a rather radical evolution as the basis for leadership became more than just the skills and abilities possessed by one person in the equation. The late 1970s and early 1980s ushered in the value of all working together towards a common goal. The debate as to who plays the true influential role in this configuration, the motivations at stake, and the most effective approach continues with further examination; but one thing is certain—leadership no longer is a title-honored concept. This period of inquiry from 1978 to the present day is generally called the age of Transformational leadership.
Increased globalization has presented opportunities and challenges for leaders to construct the appropriate approach in the face of cultural disparateness. Across the gamut of leadership qualities, global leadership has risen prominently to the top of virtually every scale, calling for leaders to adopt more than one cultural profile. As cross-cultural teams become more commonplace, leaders will not only need technological savvy, but also an acute aptitude for style adjustment as they work with cross-cultural teams representing individual and collective cultures.

Turning to leadership studies of Indian leaders migrating to the United States, research conducted in recent years shows from a business perspective that concerted effort is required for leaders to make the successful leap. The work of Hofstede, though with limitations, illustrates five cultural dimensions of difference—power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty, avoidance, and long-term orientation—where Indian and United States cultures differ most notably in the dimensions of power distance and long-term orientation. Results from the GLOBE initiative describe both American and Indian leaders as action-oriented with similar approaches to work; but what is distinctly different between the two cultures is the value Indian leaders put on self-reflection compared to their American leader counterparts. Studies indicate Asian Indians migrating to the United States experience a shift in values, while other research shows that Western tools for testing may have limitations in accurately measuring leadership style and performance.

The United States higher education leadership inquiry landscape covers a number of theoretical frameworks from trait to social constructivism. The extent of research is growing, with recent trends indicating education leaders will need to
demonstrate a set of nimble characteristics as technology and global influences pressure the academy. Recently, research is beginning to take shape with an eye on Asian leaders in U.S. higher education. Taking this a step further, Figure 2 illustrates leadership evolution to heed as inquiry isolates Asian Indian leaders in the Academy.

**Figure 2.** Existing leadership inquiry and Asian Indian leaders in U.S. higher education, Retrievable from Woolsey website, www.matthewallenwoolsey.com

From transactional to transformational, individual to global, cultural to cross-cultural, leadership remains an indelible fixture of organizational survival or defeat. Leadership is a phenomenon not clearly understood given the historical progress from isolating specific individual traits and characteristics to examining the “whole” of
leadership shared by many with a common goal in mind. Over the last century, the Indian diaspora has increasingly grown in America with greater proportions attending postsecondary institutions, yet very few aspiring to become college or university executive leaders. Here is the intersection of scholarly scrutiny—to explore this cross-cultural leadership phenomenon among Asian Indian expatriates in U.S. higher education.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

What you think you become.

- Mohandas Gandhi

This chapter describes theoretical orientations of the study, its methodology and research design as well as the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Ethnography as the major research design is addressed, including epistemological and sociocultural elements within the ethnographic qualitative tradition. I conclude this chapter with my considerations of the researcher’s self and reflexivity.

As a frequent visitor to India (at the time of this dissertation I made 18 separate trips spanning two to three weeks over a six-year period of time), I became affectionately connected with and inquisitive about the Indian people, culture, and ways of life, so much so that my Indian friends and colleagues say that I am natively Indian at heart. My introduction to the Indian culture began as a work obligation and quickly evolved into a total immersion, having participated in religious activities such as: Holi (celebrated in the Maharashtra region by covering each other in colored powders revering Prahlad who came out of a fire unharmed, in recognition of good over evil); observing the celebration of Ganesh Puja (celebrated as the remover of obstacles); and viewing reverence for Lakshmi (the goddess of good luck). Likewise,
the relationships I built with locals led to home invitations where I partook in family meals while broadening my web of relationships based on the trust built with individuals I call my friends; trust is fundamental to relationship building in India. Formally introduced through employment obligations, I have also gained an appreciation for how business is conducted the “Indian Way,” resulting in an empathic view generated from the lived perspective of people. My personal disposition for a culture that is almost the opposite of my Western roots drives my desire for knowing, understanding, and interpreting the underpinning reasons that drive Asian Indians to lead in a world figuratively and literally opposite from their own.

The purpose of this study is to acquire an in-depth understanding of a complex world of sociocultural influences and interactions in which Indian expatriates pursue the positions of leadership in American higher educational institutions. I seek to answer the question: How do Indian expatriates view their highest professional attainments in U.S. higher education from their sociocultural perspectives? At a cursory glance, this question is rather wide-open and open ended for a specific reason. As Creswell (2009) points out, “the central question is a broad question that asks for an exploration of the central phenomenon,” which in this case is leadership. Creswell goes on to state “the inquirer poses this question, consistent with the emerging methodology of qualitative research, as a general issue so as to not limit the inquiry” (p. 129).
Theoretical Approaches

Qualitative Inquiry: Uncovering the Meaning of Leadership Phenomenon

To examine the leadership phenomenon of a specific group of Asian Indians in United States higher education, I employ qualitative methodology, which deals with “multiple realities” and is flexible in nature to address the “shaping influences and value patterns experienced by the researcher” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 40). While describing the experiences of a group of Asian Indians as they see it, I will attempt to create a “holistic account” and reconstruct the reality of cultural influences on their leadership journey (Creswell, 2009). Through these multiple forms of realities, the result will be an emergent framework or structure that renders this phenomenon meaningful and of practical value.

Qualitative research has been identified as a preferred method tool for leadership studies (Drath, 2001; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Yukl, 1989; Parry, 1998). Through the Relational Leadership Theory (RLT) approach, Uhl-Bien (2006) posits a framework “for the study of leadership as a social influence process through which emergent coordination (e.g. evolving social order) and change (e.g. new approaches, values, attitudes, behaviors, ideologies) are constructed and produced” (p. 668). With this premise, the discovery of context as it pertains to leadership further supports the need to deeply explore perceptions and interpretations through a qualitative approach.

Yukl (1989) suggests that questionnaires and rating forms are too limiting for respondents when asked to rate specific behaviors of a leader by reflecting over a period of time. Although qualitative methods “are also susceptible to biases and
distortions” (Yukl, 1989, p. 278), they offer a more comprehensive exploration of leadership dimensions.

Leadership research should consider study beyond what the leader does (singular), and explore the processes inherent in leadership within the organization (plural) (Parry, 1998). To do this effectively, Parry (1998) posits that researching leadership as a process requires the observer to conduct analysis without consideration for existing leadership theories; leadership theory generation is much more likely because qualitative inquiry provides opportunity for a breadth and depth of data. Conger (1998) purports that when attempting to collect a leader’s displayed specific behaviors connecting to the underlying deep emotions, feelings and thought process of followers, qualitative research is the optimal method.

I am curious about the sociocultural peculiarities of Asian Indian leadership phenomena in relation to education. Higher education is a unique, complex culture in which academic leaders fill a critical and influential role (Bensimon et al., 1989; Kezar, 2009; Rhoads & Tierney, 1992). To do this effectively, qualitative epistemology requires me to seek understanding that goes beyond making causal linkages. Lincoln and Guba (1985) make it clear that the dialogue between the research participants and me brings to the fore “myriad mutual shapings” where my understanding is reliant on an appreciation of the descriptive structures that emerge from our interactions (p. 152). I have challenged myself to persist with genuine curiosity, to dig deeper opening myself to other “forms of order” about Asian Indian leadership in higher education (Shank, 2006, p. 208).
Since qualitative inquiry is reliant upon the researcher’s ability to interpret emergent themes as a result of participant interviews, potential exists for researcher bias and judgmental declarations through word selection. To counteract this, Leedy and Ormrod (2010) recommend the researcher quell any verbiage such as only or few since these imply judgment references as to “insufficient” or “disappointing” (p. 141). I have given participant voice through the use of direct quotes and summarize themes absent of judgmental words or phrases as a result of in-depth dialogue for understanding their path to leadership.

**Ethnography: Describing the Journey**

Broadly conceived, qualitative research intends to describe, understand, and endow particular phenomena with meaning. The phenomena to be investigated may include people, attitudes, settings, and so on, which serve a variety of things that Husserl (1859–1938) terms “lifeworld.” In this study I employ ethnography as the approach that examines the human experiences of their journey to leadership as described by the participants, requiring extensive observation and field notes along with collecting artifacts and representative cultural materials. Ethnographers are the recorders of life activities for those under study where inquiry is intimate, focusing on life influences like family, friends, socioeconomic structures, and religion (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Ethnography derives from the field of anthropology where researchers went “native” by immersing themselves in the foreign culture, seeking understanding of customs, cultural patterns, norms, beliefs, and behaviors. Since then the concept of “culture” has migrated to the study of “cultures” representing a group sharing
common values, beliefs, and life experiences (McMillan, 2008). Flick (2009) emphasizes the criticality of the researcher “going native” to gain an inside perspective of the studied culture while systematizing “the status of the stranger at the same time” (p. 229). The common ground for this study is lived experience as a member of Indian culture and the impact these life experiences made on the selected individuals.

Ethnography is reliant on observation over an extended period of time during which the subjects engage in their natural settings. The researcher may experience a shift from that of complete participant, when it is not known that I am a researcher fully participating as a group member, to participant observer when my presence as a researcher is known and I am fully engaged with the group (or the other way around) over time (McMillan, 2008). This is a natural evolution as the researcher’s level of observation and engagement can change depending on the group dynamics with the researcher or the nature of the research question (McMillan, 2008). In my case, I travelled to India over the past six years with the intent to immerse myself in the culture and to engage with locals in their time and space without disclosing any research motivation (complete participant). As my research objectives have crystallized with this study, I was humbled to become part of their culture and have open opportunity for candid conversations under the realm of natural inquiry (participant observer). My position within the context of Indian culture took me from an “outsider” to an “insider” perspective which, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), will most likely offer insights that may not have happened otherwise.
An ethnographic design is certainly vulnerable given the interpretative and observational methods employed by the researcher. However, Leedy and Ormrod (2010) point out that some qualitative researchers argue that in cases where “interpersonal relationships, social structures, creative products, and so on […] are under examination, quantitative methods simply are not appropriate” (p. 135). Further, the ethnographic design is useful for educational research when it is incumbent on the researcher to collect “multiple sources of information and [spend] considerable time in the field” gathering information when evaluating the credibility of findings purported by the study (Creswell, 2008 p. 493).

**Sociocultural Lens: Interpreting the Experiences**

Understanding the sociocultural perspectives of the Asian Indian expatriates’ leadership journey interviewed for this project is central to learning how they interpret their experiences in relation to their career path. I anchored the interview questions in three specific cultural dimensions for participant self-reflection and interpretation as it pertains to their leadership journey: Indian, American, and United States higher education.

The aspect of cultural influence, as it pertains to India and America for this study, has been explored given the distinct cultural differences between India and the United States illustrated in Hofstede’s work (2001). Further, an exploration into United States higher education illuminated a specific cultural context concerning what it takes to navigate to executive levels. As discussed in Chapter Two, the sociocultural perspective is a derivative of social constructivism defined as a social setting in which groups construct knowledge together representing shared artifacts.
and meaning. The process of finding meaning implies a learning process. Wertsch (1985) states that sociocultural perspectives take this a step further where “social contexts and interactions play in the construction of meaning […] we cannot understand the individual without understanding the social and historical context in which he or she lives” (as cited in Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p.156). Sense-making, self-interpretation, and language are all influenced by culture where “cognitive processes are […] cultural processes because they are situated in, and thus created by, relevant interpersonal, social, cultural, institutional, and historical contexts” (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 156).

Much of the sociocultural research tends to focus on the interpretation of identity formation after joining a community (Lewis & Moje, 2003, p. 1979). The intent of this project is to examine participant self-reflection and interpretation first from an Indian perspective, and then moving to their adjustment to American culture and their experience in United States higher education. By doing this, the discovery not only addresses past experiences, but also explores “how they shape identities related to the conflict and tension that is always present in such communities” (Lewis & Moje, 2003, p. 1979).

The participants of this study were asked to reconstruct their life stories, or narratives, through a semi-structured interview. Essentially, I drew from their stories, points of view, and narratives to create a rich and thick description of the phenomena under investigation. I anticipated that several themes pertaining to the leadership framework would emerge as a result of data analysis and interpretation. The understanding of participant social realities is the key to this study. Throughout the
inquiry, I continued posing these questions to myself: “What happens in the translation of reality into text? What happens in the retranslation of texts into reality or in inferring from texts to realities?” (Flick, 2009, p. 75).

As Flick (2009) describes, there exist three levels of mimesis when an individual is asked to describe and interpret past events. The term mimesis “refers to the transformation of (originally, for example, in Aristotle, natural) worlds into symbolic worlds” (pp. 78–80). Figure 3 illustrates the interplay of mimesis and the understanding between life construction and interpretation:

![Figure 3. Mimesis—Process of Mimesis adapted from Flick, 2009, p. 78.](image)

Relying on mimesis through construction, interpretation, and experience elevates the text beyond just words, but presents the participant’s reality in a multi-layered approach. Much like theater or drama seeks to interpret, reconstruct, and cast
an experience replicating real life, so does the premise of mimesis theory. In other words, according to Gebauer and Wulf (1995):

The individual “assimilates” himself or herself to the world via mimetic processes. Mimesis makes it possible for individuals to step out of themselves, to draw the outer world into their inner world, and to lend expression to their interiority. It produces an otherwise unattainable proximity to objects and is thus a necessary condition of understanding (as cited in Flick, 2009, p. 79).

While the researcher is dependent on the subject’s narrative, the aim is not to discern factual processes. This biographical narrative “becomes a mimetic presentation of experiences, which are constructed in the form of a narrative for this purpose-in the interview” (Flick, 2009, p. 81). Instead of mirroring reality, applying mimesis means interpretation happens from not only the subject’s narrative, but a construction by the researcher and reader as well.

Data Collection Strategies

Interviews

A major source of data collection for this study came from semi-structured interviews typical of ethnographic inquiry because these offered more information than simply relying on field observations (McMillan, 2008). Interviews provided me the advantage of asking the respondent to “reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273). The interviewer in a semi-structured approach uses open-ended questions to set the general direction of the dialogue, but the participant controls the discussion, requiring flexibility on the part of the interviewer (McMillan, 2008; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008).

I interviewed five Asian Indian expatriate college and university leaders at the vice president and presidential levels. Given the nature of this study where human
interaction between the researcher and participant is necessary, it makes sense to select a small sampling for in-depth analysis until reaching a saturation point (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Clark, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillan, 2008). Creswell recommends a range of from four to ten participants, which is typical of ethnographic research (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 174).

The target group is very specific. Individuals were identified using the resources of Asian and higher education-specific organizations, including the Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics (LEAP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the National Asian/Pacific Islander Council (NAPIC). Relying on connections with members of my dissertation committee, a draft list of potential participants was generated and then, through snowball collection, additional names were added. All college and university Asian Indian executives thus identified fit the criteria that they were born, raised, and graduated from high school in India before migrating to the United States. Given the limited pool of potential participants, respondents comprise a mix of male and female representatives from private and public higher education entities. To foster open dialogue about their personal life experiences for a robust set of data, all participants were guaranteed anonymity and will be presented with pseudonyms absent of specific identifiers.

Preparing for the interviews involved me conducting three mock-interviews with colleagues in my doctoral cohort. After the first test-interview, I realized my original questions did not necessarily glean information particular to the overall research question guiding this inquiry. I referred back to a number of resources and specifically applied Spradley’s (1979) methodology by labeling each question as
“descriptive”—questions for understanding the language used by my participants, “structural”—questions targeting the activities of the participant, and “contrast”—questions identifying distinctions between categories through the participants’ own language. With a refined interview guide in hand, I conducted two more practice interviews. Resultant responses conjured information much more appropriate to the impetus for this study.

Since all research participants have experienced life in India, America, and in United States higher education, questions were designed to target each of those influences on their life journey to leadership. Appendix A contains the interview guide with the questions I posed for the participants. With each interview, I described the overall flow, but explained that the guide was simply a guide and that I was more interested in hearing their genuine stories. I explained my hope that our discussion may take on a life of its own—and in most cases it did!

Field Notes

The aspect, which positions this study through an ethnographic lens, is my engagement with the culture of India, the home country of all participants to be interviewed. Over the years, I have grown accustomed to and have become rather versatile when it comes to understanding and interacting with Indian peoples. Part of my own sense making is the journaling I do to capture specific events, ponder the context of a given situation, or to merely remind myself about the feelings going through me at a particular point in time. Field notes, in the form of journaling, “are the data that you gather to make sense of your research setting, and they serve as an aid in writing your research results” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 216).
As a researcher, I journaled reflections from my multiple introductions and immersions in Indian culture through on-site, in-country work, along with day-to-day interactions, mostly through work-related activities, with Indians who migrated to the United States. My journal entries contain both retrospective memories and most current descriptions of the events and encounters. While in India, dating back to 2006, I witnessed a myriad of activities, events, and celebrations transforming life, perceptions, and beliefs about the Indian way of life. I adopted the methodology proposed by Van Maanen (1988), a highly respected ethnographer and author of many articles and books, called ethnographic impressionism. Van Maanen posits that time away from the field results in a more holistic and complete picture of experiences. Entering and exiting the "Indian field of study" has afforded me ample opportunity for reflection and interpretation of my experiences regarding work, friendship, culture, religion, social activities, leadership, education, and much more. My intent was to provide “thick descriptions” incorporating direct quotes, sensory observations such as smells and visuals, along with my feelings and emotions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). I currently have a leadership website (matthewallenwoolsey.com) where I continue capturing my memories, thoughts, and self-interpretations along with other artifacts.

**Documents and Artifacts**

Ethnographic study lends itself to multiple forms of data, enriching the overall contextual interpretation of the phenomenon in question. Some argue there is not really one way for recording field observations. Thus, pictures, documents, and even video are considered other elements of valid data collection methods (Hesse-Biber &
In addition to my journal entries, documents such as pictures, Internet resources specific to India, a video I recorded featuring a typical drive to work each morning in India, and other leadership resources are contained on my website as a portal to centralize my own learning journey through this process.

**Data Analysis: Connecting for Understanding**

In this study, I followed typical steps of qualitative data analysis, which began with transcribing the interviews and coding for themes and categories. From the onset, this exercise seemed somewhat rote and rather straightforward; but early on I realized to accurately capture every word, phrase, and audible sound required 100% concentration and multiple replay for just about every participant utterance. Many times, after transcribing a paragraph and re-listening to the words as I followed along with my typed transcript, I found the mind has a way of overlooking filler sounds (e.g. “uh,” “so,” “and”) used with great repetition and I would unconsciously edit them out of the text. Additionally, I learned that my mind automatically corrects grammar issues, causing me to pause and exercise extra caution so as to accurately record their words as stated in written form. To compound my challenges, while all participants have command of the English language, their native accent at times factored into my inability to clearly identify the expressed word or phrase. A specific example, when Indian references combined with the accent posed challenges, occurred when the participant listed various Hindu gods and related festivals. In cases where I struggled with understanding the word, I would phonetically write it down, and quickly go to the Internet and enter the word as I heard it to conduct a
search. In nearly all cases, I was able to determine the exact expression, and, through member checking, my participants confirmed my interpretations.

I did my first round of coding manually by hand, adjusting the text by creating a three-inch margin of white space on the right for notation ease (Saldana, 2009). After going through the first round of coding, I then went back and adjusted codes for consistency. I then transferred all 240 codes called “nodes” into NVivo9, a qualitative data analysis software tool designed specifically for qualitative research to assist in categorization of content. Digital audio recordings from participant interviews were subsequently uploaded. Field notes and artifacts were added, resulting in a multi-dimensional picture for analysis. The amount of dialogue netted nearly 150 pages of text for coding purposes. This approach benefitted me as a kinesthetic learner since this process helped me internalize the information given over the 60 hours required for interview transcriptions. The added time dedicated for coding permitted a process to manage the plethora of data involved with hearing and reinforcing the themes and messages that emerged.

Information was categorized as either emic or etic data. “Emic data contain information provided by the participants, in their own words. By capturing language, actions, expressions, terms, and explanations as communicated by the participants, the richness and depth of the findings can be summarized” (McMillan, 2008, p. 283). The richness of this study is the result of sophisticated analysis where I attempted to go “beyond description and theme identification and into complex theme connections” (Creswell, 2009 p. 189), resulting in an emergent leadership model.
Next, I interpreted the emic data and created themes and conclusions resulting in etic data referred to as coding (McMillan, 2008). The emic and etic data were then assembled into “families of codes” representing “setting and context subjects’ definitions of a setting, subjects’ perspectives about other people and aspects of a setting, process changes over time, activities, events, techniques subjects use to accomplish things, and relationships and social structures” (McMillan, 2008, p. 284). The key here was to let the data form the codes, beginning from the specific and moving to the general as multiple layers of analysis were required for robust results (Creswell, 2009). Researcher interpretation required me to go beyond describing the complex themes and digging deeper for understanding. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that it is the researcher’s role to determine the “lessons to be learned from the study…that these lessons are not generalizations but ‘working hypotheses’” (p. 362).

**Evaluating Ethnographic Research: Ethical Considerations**

Qualitative research has multiple sources of support for its use in leadership research. However, qualitative inquiry inherently comes with some known concerns which must be recognized and all efforts put forth to mitigate impact on the eventual findings of this research. Shank (2006) recommends the researcher pursue the study with confidence, trust that the data will guide findings, and have courage to go beyond “safe” dimensions and search for the “surprise” (p. 212). He goes on to promote empathy and compassion when engaging others so as to see the phenomena from their perspective, untethering personal needs for the sake of research (Shank, 2006). For me, being genuine throughout the process was important and I used this as my guiding compass not only in the interviews, but also in how I viewed all data.
and communicated it to the reader. I also imposed dimensions of trustworthiness and credibility to insure the integrity of my research findings.

The concepts of research reliability and validity are generally equated with quantitative research. With qualitative research, trustworthiness, or credibility, is what gives the study merit. To be deemed trustworthy, the study must be transparent, have consistency-coherence, and have communicability (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Transparency relates to the manner in which data were collected; consistency references the extent that the researcher investigated inconsistent responses, achieving coherence by describing conflicting points of view; and communicability means that the reader is able to contextualize the experiences as described by the subjects (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Merriam and Simpson (1995) explain that qualitative research assumes multiple realities and it is the researcher’s role to interpret the interpretation of the subjects being studied. Internal validity guided my data analysis. The ultimate goal is to present that reality as accurately as possible by implementing various procedures such as triangulation, member checking, thick descriptions, colleague examination, and by me providing a statement of my own assumptions and biases.

One way to ensure the credibility of research is through triangulating data sources and research techniques. Interviews, documents, and artifacts are meant to triangulate my data sources and to illuminate themes of discovery pertaining to events, facts, and interpretations about key factors and competencies for future Indian natives in pursuit of United States higher education leadership to consider. Hesse-
Biber and Leavy (2011) recommend looking for emergent themes within the text, then comparing artifacts and field notes to confirm consistency.

I also made use of member checking after the interviews were transcribed and themes identified. Member checking is a common practice requiring the researcher to compile interview results and to ask participants to confirm if their reflections have been accurately captured (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Member checking is the most valuable approach to establishing credibility, and can be done in both formal and informal methods and can take place continuously through the data collection process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As referenced earlier in my approach to journaling, I used thick descriptions to enhance trustworthiness. Thick descriptions obliged me to provide context, feelings, and sensory descriptions. The purpose was to “provide a sufficient base to permit a person contemplating application in another […] setting to make the comparisons of similarity” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 359–360). An account of my reflections, perceptions, and involvement with India are captured on my personal leadership website along with other artifacts and documents.

I also sought feedback from a colleague, which proves to be an effective way to ensure credibility (Flick, 2009). I engaged a colleague to independently review the anonymous transcripts and that colleague subsequently confirmed my results (McMillan, 2008).

I embarked on this study with some preconceptions about Indian culture given my engagements through employment, interactions with Indians in their home dwellings, and my exploration of the Indian way of life. More specifically, I entered
this process believing all Indians in some professional mode regard family highly, engage in some form of religious reverence, and pursue career goals with relentless energy towards achievement. As the data show, my preconceptions were fairly accurate and articulated by the words of the participants’ descriptive of their life journey and actions.

As an American, I perceive life realities with my own Western frame influenced by my upbringing and values as well as life experiences. My website contains multiple entries about my self-pondering in terms of who I am in relation to my life travels, experiences, accomplishments and moments of self-doubt. I recognize my frame is influenced by a society where individualism reigns supreme. Ever since I can remember, my goal was to achieve so as to reach the next goal. I am never satisfied with what I have accomplished; rather, once one goal is attained, I focus my sights on the next goal, always striving to move up in whatever structure I may be operating. Additionally, I recognize my roots in a nuclear family and being raised in Christianity have influenced how I see the intersection of the two, and the impact it has on the children and how they view the world. Over time, through education, interactions with others, self-education, and world travels, my frame about family and religion have evolved into a more inclusive definition versus a closed mindset about the meaning of God. My Western frame has limited me somewhat regarding the norms and mores of other cultures, but my willingness to explore new worlds has enlightened how I perceive interactions between people when surface level behaviors may not necessarily reflect the underlying intentions. Other things, like the concept of personal space, loomed large and became quite obvious to me
when I first entered this world called India. There the concept is virtually opposite. I had to challenge myself to be comfortable in close proximity to others. As I amass my list of Western-filters and frames, I do not consider these to be shortcomings, but rather one life perspective in a world of many, where my willingness to become vulnerable has afforded me genuine immersion and true understanding of the “why” behind Indian life customs and deeds.

My tenure in higher education, as a student through to becoming a full-time professional spanning a period of ten years from 1988 to 1998 (not to mention my current doctoral experience beginning in 2009), has impressed upon me a certain lens through which to view culture and shaped my understanding of what makes higher education work. My undergraduate and graduate years in large research institutions instilled in me that higher education is a place to discover knowledge and truth; but I also know the vision and mission of all institutions has a practical side where politics and bureaucracy cloud the optimism I had as a young professional working in the Ivory Tower. My work at small, private institutions enhanced the personalization higher education can afford, but also emphasized the demands students have of faculty and staff. I firmly believe most members of the academic community are committed to doing the right thing whether it is academic inquiry or how to address a student. My educational experience has shaped me into the person I am today, filled with an unquenchable thirst to discover new knowledge and always asking “why” when presented with something new.

In sum, I am cognizant of the fact that I have my own perceptions, which required careful regard and recognition through the data collection and analysis
portions of this study. Time and again I typed away on my laptop, contemplating what certain episodes or events in my personal and academic avenues meant to me. My website lists a number of entries from current day events, including the death of a family member, to retrospective moments where minor occasions at the time dramatically impacted me later in life. My growing self-awareness demonstrated to me the power of “bracketing,” a guideline for qualitative researchers to be transparent about one’s own perspective entering data collection with potential to “color what they see and how they interpret” (McMillan & Wergin, 2010, p. 91). This research endeavor has unveiled many facets of my life, adding clarity about my sense of self as I explored and got to know each participant who shared their narrative for this inquiry.

**Researcher’s Self: Reflexivity**

My passion for deeper understanding of Indian culture and my drive for education culminated in the platform for this dissertation. Clearly, my engagement and participation in higher education, which has brought me to the phase I am currently in as a doctoral candidate, indicates my desire for learning. My career path of educating in higher education and the corporate environment prove the high value I place on education and all that it brings. My cultural immersion in the Indian culture awakened an internal motivation to continue ongoing observation and learning—a quest for deep understanding of what it means to be Indian. This then triggers speculation and curiosity on my part as to why Indians choose to leave a culture I am intrigued by and relocate themselves to my home turf in the pursuit of a career in my chosen field of education.
By nature of ethnographic inquiry, I as the researcher harbor my own perceptions, realities, and threaded through those mental frames, my own set of biases and assumptions. This study brings together my experiences in India, living in America, and working in higher education, all of which have influenced how I perceive reality within each of those cultural settings. Thus, my role as an instrument in data collection and analysis is central to this study. As a “successful investigator” I made every attempt to be “empathetic, bright, flexible, energetic, imaginative, and adventuresome” (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 107).

Through the course of this study, I engaged Asian Indian participants who spent their formative years in one culture prior to their translocation to the U.S. I bring my own sense of reality to this inquiry; likewise the participants also perceived their own realities and may have acted differently in my presence (Cohen et al., 2008). Ethnography is more than a set of techniques for data collection; it is about using a sociocultural framework for data interpretation (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). Further, ethnographic inquiry does not insert an intervention for study; rather, the research is a combination of the researcher’s subjectivity and those being studied (Flick, 2009). The interplay described here is what adds richness to the study, and with careful measures for securing trustworthiness, the results elicited formidable outcomes. My ultimate goal was to gain reader empathy by contextualizing what it means for Asian Indians to become leaders in higher education (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

In an effort to maintain a balanced way of my own engagement in the study, of who I am, what I am experiencing, and my subsequent interpretations of the
information before me, the recommendation is to maintain some form of reflective
dialogue; this approach is often termed “reflexivity” (Flick, 2009; Lincoln & Guba,
recommend the researcher engage in daily journaling, capturing logistical
observations, reflecting on self in relation to values and areas for further exploration,
and recording on-going decision making about methodology. I am keenly aware that
putting my thoughts into written form provides clarity and a sense of structure. Since
this research is not only about discovering themes and motivations for Asian Indians
seeking leadership in U.S. higher education, this also taps into personal dimensions
that make me uniquely human. As I identified earlier, I maintained journal entries
specific to the data collection and analysis as prescribed here on my personal
leadership website. Personal reflections through the written word added to the
collection of data for triangulation and illuminated places where I potentially may
have been self-imposing my own sociocultural perspective on my subjects. Figure 4
provides a visual roadmap to the methodological approach for this study.
Summary

This chapter describes the qualitative research design selected for this study. An ethnographic approach examining sociocultural perspectives requires rigorous attention to how the data are collected, analyzed, and presented for the reader to gain understanding of the group under study. The end goal is to provide an interpretation of the life worlds of Asian Indian Americans who achieved leadership roles at the vice president and presidential levels in United States higher education. This interpretation conceptualized an emergent leadership framework descriptive of their collective interpretive experiences.

I am thrilled given the new terrain this study uncovered. The elements of India, leadership, education, and America coming together strike at the core of who I am, and conversely, I set out to materialize the narratives of those I engaged. The genuine interest expressed by leaders at a recent Leadership Education for Asian
Pacifics (LEAP) conference I attended regarding my study assures me there is something here to be shared, and there are many eager to learn the findings.

Chapter Four provides detail about participant recruitment, the interview process, coding techniques and the participant demographic profile. I then present participants beginning with their formative years in India and ending with where they are today.
CHAPTER FOUR: BECOMING A LEADER IN A NEW LAND—THE BIOGRAPHICAL

Truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by truth as one sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of the truth.

- Mohandas Gandhi

Looking to shed light on phenomenon never before discovered among a specific community of practice can be exhilarating for both the researcher and those participating in the inquiry. Chapter Four paints a picture of those individuals central to this investigation who came to America with an eye on education and navigated their careers to collegiate leadership roles. Across all research participants, the commonalities are striking, but each has a unique aspect to their story. The question I set out to answer was the following: How do Indian expatriates view their highest professional attainments in U.S. higher education from their sociocultural perspectives? Further underpinnings to this question led me to explore the subsequent questions:

- What are the defining features of the Indian expatriates’ backgrounds that sustain their Shakti (“life-force”) in India and especially in the U.S.?
- What ultimately motivates them to pursue higher education positions of leadership in the U.S.?
The ethnographic qualitative methodology was implemented given its versatility for the researcher to experience the culture of these participants. This methodology offers exploration capabilities to unpack the experiences and perceptions harbored by these research participants who came to America focused on academics and found their way to leadership roles. An interview guide was used as a framework for these semi-structured interviews to target key themes; however, each interview deviated in ways that added rich texture to the overall interpretation of their life narrative. Chapter Four unfolds each of their personal stories beginning from their early years growing up in India, their migration to North America, and their roles as leaders in U.S. education. Consistent with the consent forms, personal and institutional identities are concealed to protect participant anonymity given the nature of the stories and scenarios disclosed for added contextual meaning.

**Data Collection**

Recruiting and securing interviews with Asian Indian American higher education leaders proved challenging given the low number of individuals matching the criteria for this study. The criteria required that participants must have

- grown up in India at least through their secondary education, meaning they basically graduated from high school prior to coming to the United States; and
- served at the vice president level or higher in U. S. higher education.

A potential candidate list was generated from the personal contacts of my dissertation committee combined with the snowball technique where additional participants were identified along the way. Twelve individuals matched the above criteria and of these seven were invited to participate via phone call and a follow-up electronic
introduction through e-mail (see Appendix B). One university president declined because scheduling did not allow for an interview until well beyond the timing of this project, and a vice president withdrew feeling the approach was “too formal.” Five individuals were interviewed within a four-week period employing audio digital recording for all five, and three of the five also permitted additional video recording, which enhanced my interpretation of verbal context through visual cues. All five participants either signed the consent form in advance, or on the day of the interview (see Appendix C).

Data collection involved interviews ranging from one to two hours each and took place within the confines of the participant’s office space, except for one who was in-between positions at the time of data collection. Institutions were located in the East Coast and Midwest. Participant composition included a female at the vice president level, a female president, and three males at the president level. In addition to individual interviews, researcher notes, documents, and artifacts were collected and captured on my password protected leadership website (matthewallenwoolsey.com).

In preparation for the participant engagements, I conducted practice interviews to evaluate and refine questions with the goal of teasing out informative and insightful dialogue; mock interviews were conducted with members of my doctoral cohort. With each interview, questions were refined to elicit the most data-rich responses. Hours before each interview I chronicled my thoughts and emotions and followed suit post-interview with a reflective narrative of my impressions and insights. I then transcribed all interviews within a couple days of the actual meeting so as to maintain familiarity with the content, relive the emotional connections made
during each interaction, and aid in my overall impression of the meaningful points for each person.

Once transcription was complete, all text and recordings were loaded into NVivo9, a software program designed specifically for qualitative data collection, along with documents and artifacts. As a novice to qualitative data coding, I first coded all manuscripts by hand, employing the Descriptive Coding methodology described by Saldana (2009) to summarize key passages and phrases. All codes were then transferred to NVivo, culminating in data trees and other methods for visualizing the data and emerging themes. To bolster trustworthiness, all codes were examined and evaluated by a colleague without disclosing participant identity and codes and emergent parent themes were confirmed. Additionally, all individuals interviewed for this inquiry were subject to member checking of the data; only one interviewee returned the transcript with minor changes.

Each participant’s account is revealed in the order the interviews were conducted. As indicated earlier, individual names were replaced with a pseudonym and institution affiliation was concealed as outlined in the consent form.

**Participants**

Table 1 provides a summary of the participants’ demographic information broken down by their gender, degree earned, and level of administrative position. Participant narratives that put flesh and blood into their stories follow the summary.
### Table 1

**Participant Demographic Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Rajan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Physiology</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Gupta</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>English Literature</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Moorthy</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Clinical Psychology</td>
<td>President</td>
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<td>Dr. Arora</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Neuroscience</td>
<td>President</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Agarwal</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dr. Rajan

**Growing Up in India**

Dr. Rajan grew up in Bangalore, now called Bengaluru, was raised by parents from two distinct communities who married in 1945 and became the “talk of the town” because, while they were in the same caste and came from two well-recognized communities, inter-marriage was not considered an option. Religious activities through the year recognized a variety of Hindu festivities, which reflected both parents’ gods and rituals. When it came to punishment for deviant behavior, in a declarative tone Dr. Rajan indicated:

Mother first! And then if it got serious enough, then it was father. And I lost my mother when I was 15, so after that it became only father. But really, I don’t know, we just did naughty things; we didn’t really do illegal things. It was pretty bland I must say.

Dr. Rajan attests that her mother drove her and her older sister to achieve academically, disavowing any talk about an arranged marriage until advanced education was complete. “My mother made it very clear to my sister and me that…the minimum education we needed to get was a master’s degree” because that provided insurance for them to be able to teach and not rely on a husband to sustain
them. The family moved to live with her grandmother and eventually settled in Delhi where Dr. Rajan finished her final two years of secondary education before going to university.

**Coming to the United States**

With a focus in the sciences, Dr. Rajan completed her master’s degree at the University of Delhi in the early 1970s and was contemplating what to do with her career. She participated in a competitive one-year program offered by the Indian Institute of Science called the *Diploma Molecular Biochemistry*, a refresher for all people with teaching degrees in the sciences, motivating them to pursue a PhD in an Indian institution. Dr. Rajan “bucked” the system and used the program to focus her intentions on an overseas education.

Coming to the Midwest in the middle of winter to attend university introduced Dr. Rajan to snow patches she mistakenly regarded as salt flats—much like the ones she viewed from the train in the Gujarat region where Gandhi held the famous Dandi march. Dr. Rajan’s preconceptions about what she might find in America were heavily influenced by U.S. propaganda:

> When you are in India, especially in those days, what you saw about the U.S. was highly stylized through a magazine called Span. [...] It had glossy pictures; it had nice things. Everything as wonderful, hunky dory, land of milk and honey, and when they showed you snow, they never showed you yellow snow and all the rest of it. They showed you all this fluffy, you know, reindeer and grandmother’s baked pies. So that was my first experience with snow, and you know what you do when you slip on the ice and you look around to see who’s looking at you? I had the same feeling. I looked around to see who was looking at me thinking this woman thinks this a salt plant; it is actually snow.
The first week of classes were challenging because Dr. Rajan’s advisor refused to speak with her until she called him by his first name rather than the formal “sir” used in India out of respect. Other cultural things that caught her off-guard included her advisor’s sideburns and torn jeans, along with how clean she found America at that time. “Tooting” her own horn was and remains a cultural challenge for her because she believes when “you do a good job, your boss should be able to recognize that.” Additionally, she had to learn to keep up with the required daily reading because in India “you sort of studied then just before the exam and you had just one big final exam.” With support and help from her peers, Dr. Rajan successfully graduated, leading her to pursue post-doctoral work in the Midwest.

**Career and Leadership**

Dr. Rajan has received awards for academic achievements both in India and in the U.S. Honors include recognition as Fellow of the Year, Woman of the Year, and multiple teaching accolades. She has served on a number of national and regional committees, including the National Institute of Health, Veteran’s Administration, and a variety of medical and science institutions. Dr. Rajan is an editorial reviewer for leading scholarly journal publications and is a member of professional societies while serving on institutional committees, including the College of Medicine, Physiology, and Graduate School Executive Committee among others. She presents at national and international forums related to biology and physiology, has guest lectured at U.S. and international educational institutions and received numerous grant awards from organizations like the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of
Health. With over 90 peer reviewed journal publications, Dr. Rajan has mentored and advised many doctoral candidates who went on to receive scholarship recognition.

Dr. Rajan joined the faculty ranks at a large research institution in the Physiology and Biophysics Department as an assistant professor. Her career then progressed from assistant professor to tenured professor within a six-year period. Her venture into administrative work began with a stint as Director of Graduate Studies and she was later “lured” into the associate dean role, which consumed 50% of her time. Dr. Rajan was later “persuaded” to become Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs where she oversaw faculty development. In 2007, Dr. Rajan once again was “persuaded” to look at the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPA) position and filled the role until the summer of 2011.

As the VPA, Dr. Rajan said, “the pluses were that you had a much broader arena to look at and make a difference. But, the minuses were that you were a little bit further removed from the faculty and the teaching, and there was a lot of change in administration, so it involved a lot of flexibility and getting used to.” Throughout the time in all of her administrative roles, Dr. Rajan maintained her research program and her teaching obligations up until she assumed the VPA role where she held onto research because “it gives you credibility […] where you need to have your pulse of what’s happening.” This made the transition to her current state easier now that she is back on the faculty side of the institution.

Dressing the part is key to Dr. Rajan’s effectiveness in circumventing any unconscious bias and, in spite of efforts to not let it derail her, she affirmed there exists a “brown glass ceiling” in present day higher education. However, Dr. Rajan states
that “you can’t let that consume yourself, you can’t let that—danger of it is it becomes a safety net for […] excuses if you don’t get something. How do you distinguish that you didn’t get something? […] Is it because you’re Indian, or because you’re not good, or is it because of something else?” She did say that when you are from a particular ethnic category and you experience success, there is a bit of an “ego-boost” when other Indians express pride in you as a fellow Indian.

Regarding tactics to circumvent any perceived bias or challenges to ability, Dr. Rajan relies on inclusivity and collaboration, particularly when it comes to decision-making, but cautions that she is not a “pushover.” At the core, Dr. Rajan affirms that, as the leader, responsibility for decisions made is hers and hers alone because “ultimately, if you’re at the top, you have to be the one to take the blame.” Combining good listening with transparency is part of Dr. Rajan’s recipe for developing trust because in higher education “academicians should hold themselves to a higher set of values of integrity and ethics than anybody else […] after all, we are training the future of tomorrow.” Dr. Rajan pointed out the realities of leadership are that inevitably someone will “stab you in the back.” She went on to say that “at the end of the day you have to be comfortable about who you are and what your values of integrity are.” Her advice in managing all constituents is to treat every individual with respect and to be sure personal values are aligned with values the institution wants to portray.
Dr. Gupta

Growing Up in India

The older of two girls, Dr. Gupta grew up in the southern part of India in what was then called Madras, but has since been renamed Chennai. The recognized language was Tamil, though all school instruction was in English. From kindergarten through the 12th grade, she attended an all-girl’s school founded by an Irish woman. While in school, Dr. Gupta was captain of her school house, which was named after the first principal of the school. She was quite proud of this because “early on I had a sense of tradition and the importance of founding moments or first persons.”

Growing up in the Christian faith, her father an Orthodox Christian and her mother a Catholic, Dr. Gupta was pressured by her parents to go into medicine or science, but actually studied philosophy, history, and English at a four-year women’s college. When asked what her parents thought of her decision, she said, “they thought it was such a waste of my talents to go and read poetry.” After completing her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English, she felt her parents pressuring her into an arranged marriage because “22 was the marriage age that was regarded as ideal for women, and if you crossed it then you were too old.” Following her own ambition, she applied for her doctorate in English and left for the United States.

Strong, independent women significantly influenced Dr. Gupta in her formative years. Most prominent, her grandmother was married at the age of 12 and widowed at the age of 18. The father’s family took the son and left the daughter, Dr. Gupta’s mother, in the care of her grandmother since the daughter was of “no value” to the family. Dr. Gupta’s grandmother looked toward the future and realized
education was the ticket for her daughter to make something of her life. With this
notion, her grandmother packed her bags, moved from Kerala to Madras with Dr.
Gupta’s mother, and worked for another woman, a nun who took in orphans, in
exchange for teaching her daughter.

While grandmother instilled the value of self-worth and education, Dr.
Gupta’s mother inculcated values of “traditionalism.” Another prominent role model
in Dr. Gupta’s life was her godmother who was a professor of English at Women’s
Christian College in Madras and a self-described feminist. Over the years, Dr.
Gupta’s godmother spent countless hours reading Victorian novels and romantic
poetry, kindling Dr. Gupta’s later academic aspirations in English Literature. Dr.
Gupta most admires her godmother’s strength in divorcing her abusive husband that
left her ostracized in the community, raising two children as single parent, and later
coping with the loss of her daughter in a motorcycle accident.

While strong, independent women inspired who Dr. Gupta is today, she also
describes how her values reflect the intersection of multiple religions. As a student at
the non-denominational undergraduate women’s college, she attended assembly every
morning where someone read from different religious texts, including Hindu,
Muslim, and Christian among others.

My exposure to values I would say is more a consequence of […] the
consciousness about value systems, including religion, and the result of
knowing that what is important is that your life have some element—that you
be sensitive to all aspects and dimensions of life including the spiritual.

Coming to America

With a focus on integrating into American culture, Dr. Gupta took her maiden
flight bound for the U.S. to pursue a PhD in English and on her own—something
typically unattainable for young women in India at that time. Her academic environment provided a safe venue for her to acclimate to the American way of life and is where many of her friendships were formed and remains today. In the beginning some self-doubt lingered, but quickly dissipated:

My image of America was of great libraries, and books, and everybody would be far ahead of me on everything, and to discover that that was not the case; that my education had been strong […] I knew just as much about English literature, and that I could compete successfully; all that was sort of an awakening.

Coming from a rigid culture of hierarchy, where each person has a role within society, proved the starkest difference for Dr. Gupta. Additionally, India is a culture where people are “standoffish” and hearing someone address her as “honey” while in the hospital confused her. She soon learned such language nuances were not necessarily out of affection, but rather habit.

Adjusting to American dining was considerable since her Indian way of life was centered on families gathering to share food, and very rarely did they “go out” to eat. Coming to America meant she had a number of fast food chain options. Ordering food was quite intimidating for her given all the choices. For example, she finally made a resolution to order a hamburger after watching someone else do it. Full of courage, she ordered a burger; but when the waiter asked what she wanted on it, she went blank.

Dr. Gupta made the decision to forego living in areas with high Indian Diaspora opting to move around, explore, and discover the country. In 1984 she and her husband moved to a southern state where she experienced her first brush with
racism. While attempting to sublet her house, Dr. Gupta received an angry call from the owner:

“You should have known that she was African-American when she called you.” He didn’t call her African-American; I think he said Black. “And you should never have let her into my house; that house belonged to my father and I would never rent it to her.” So I mean it became a stark message in the sort of hierarchies that underlie everything that still persists.

From afar, Dr. Gupta was aware of the civil rights movement and assumed integration was solved, but as she said, “I think you have to be within to realize that people’s attitudes don’t change overnight.” This insight would later become her reality as the president of a college.

Career and Leadership

An English literature scholar to the core, Dr. Gupta has published two books, produced nine peer reviewed articles (with others in progress), and serves as a peer reviewer for book and article publications. She has presented on topics such as the Renaissance, Shakespeare, and related genres at a wide range of conferences and scholarly venues. Dr. Gupta has actively engaged with a variety of organizations, including the English Department Alumni Advisory Committee, local community Performing Arts Center, and the ACE Leadership Forum for Women in Higher Education. She has accumulated a cadre of accolades in her research and fellowship work and accumulated grant funds from organizations like the FIPSE Grant for Science, $3MM from a private donor for the Latino Institute and Latino Studies Program, and other grants tailored toward institutional priorities.

Dr. Gupta was hired as a teaching assistant with the Department of English while pursuing her doctorate at a large, public research institution. Upon graduation,
she accepted an assistant professor position with an East Coast school before going to the Midwest where she took an assistant/associate professor role with the Department of English. Over the next five years, she became a permanent lecturer in the Department of English and Film Studies with a Scottish university and made the decision to return to the U.S. because the position was “very limited.” Passionate about the liberal arts, Dr. Gupta was hired as professor and chair of the Department of English at a large, public university in the Southwest. Two years later, she became the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at a leading East Coast Catholic institution where she remained for four years before moving to the Midwest where she became the provost and vice president for academic affairs, and professor of English while serving as special adviser to the president. From there she assumed the presidency at a small, religiously affiliated institution in the Northeast where she recently resigned. With each leadership position, her values and priorities sharpened.

Investing in and developing faculty are central to Dr. Gupta’s leadership. She proclaims one of her greatest pleasures is looking down and pulling others up to leadership opportunities. She actively nominates prospective faculty into the American Academic Leadership Institute program, promotes faculty in programs designed to groom individuals with high potential for college presidencies, mentors others internally, and coaches visiting fellows from other institutions.

Drawn to private institutions with strong missions, Dr. Gupta views students and learning as the core of her motivation, realizing her impact will be felt by students in the prime of their careers 20 plus years later. Additionally, other stakeholders including faculty, staff, alumni, parents, the Board, and local community
loom large in her quest for transparency and as a steward for the institution. Her
drive for doing the right thing over the easy way out has served her well in protecting
students and institutional values.

Dr. Gupta credits her cultural upbringing with the ability to remain calm in
times of crisis. “I never pump my fist; I never raise my voice; I never yell […] I
don’t register real anger and frustration in a very visible way” said Dr. Gupta. As
president, she was charged with elevating the colleges academic standards, addressing
enrollment and tuition rates, smoothing over relations with the surrounding
community, and pulling the institution out of probationary status with a number of
external agencies. Equipped with the confidence of past success, she believed in her
abilities to turn the institution around. As she became more intimately aware of the
college’s problems and resistance to change, it was inevitable for her to make
enemies along the way. As progress was made lifting the institution to better
standing, she encountered what she perceived as sabotage, which Dr. Gupta chose to
ignore, ultimately undermining her ability to effectively preside. While she attributes
her being Indian as some of the provocation behind the perceived harassment, Dr.
Gupta was quick to say that at some point one must not blame ethnicity for one’s
successes or failures. She subscribes to having a strong sense of core values with
clear lines that are not to be crossed. This self-awareness means knowing personal
shortcomings and surrounding oneself with others “whose strengths are exactly in
your gap areas.”
Dr. Moorthy

Growing Up in India

Dr. Moorthy’s early years were spent in Madras, India until the age of 18 when he came to the U.S. for college. The youngest of five children, he grew up in a home with two older brothers and two sisters. Raised in the Catholic faith, he stated religion has been a central force motivating decisions throughout his life. His parents filled a prominent role when it came to instilling morals and values. However, he proclaims his mother is most influential in keeping the family “on task” resulting in a brother who is a successful heart surgeon, a sister who is an OB/GYN, and another sister who runs a nuclear medicine lab. The value of education propelled Dr. Moorthy to an eventual terminal degree and a life in academia.

As for role models, Dr. Moorthy said, “developmentally, I was 17, 18 when I left [India]—those were the times when the Beatles, Cliff Richard, and those people were on the stage even in India.” Western movies and other pop culture influenced him more so than any one person. Over the years, his appreciation for all kinds of people has shaped him:

A lot of people have somebody that rises up to that role of role model, but to me, if you ask me, who are your role models? I have so many. I tend to pick characteristics out of individuals that I value, rather than have one person who personifies everything that’s important to me.

Coming to America

Dr. Moorthy was motivated to pursue postsecondary ventures in the U.S., successfully achieving an Ed.D. in clinical psychology. Making the transition to America was smooth, but some cultural factors did cause him to pause. For example, his first college roommate was a big man on the football team with an odd personal
habit of taking off his clothes and walking around naked. Another conundrum was the fact that people drank milk cold. “How could you do that?” he asked.

Dr. Moorthy described Americans as “far more accepting, far more tolerant, and far more open-armed” than any other place. He embraced this approach and quipped that as long as an immigrant is willing to fit in and “wants to assimilate,” Americans “try to make that happen.” The problem, he said, comes in when a foreigner wants “to be part of, but separate.”

Since his arrival, Dr. Moorthy affirms shedding many of India’s cultural paradigms such as arranged marriages and hierarchy. With pride, he said he is married to a white American, has raised two children, and adheres to aspects of Indian constructs inclusive of religion, food, and family historic traditions. Emphasizing dietary habits, he makes sure to have an Indian meal once a day. Over the years he has made frequent trips back to India, establishing academic agreements between his current institution where he is president and Indian colleges, and with that, he has maintained his native language of Tamil.

**Career and Leadership**

Throughout his career, Dr. Moorthy has devoted time as the president of a Christian affiliated faculty organization. He also served on multiple planning teams with his institution’s affiliated college system. Dr. Moorthy has established local charities near the college campus, extending the focus of the college mission. The recipient of a variety of awards over the years, he received a Doctor of Divinity degree from an international theology-based organization, and a Doctor of Letters degree from a Midwest affiliate college among others. He has written a book and
published a number of articles related to U.S. higher education, India, and other topics. Dr. Moorthy actively officiates over seminars and conferences, addressing global issues and the Christian faith.

“I’m a sort of lifer in this institution,” Dr. Moorthy reverently noted. He joined the faculty ranks over 30 years ago at the same college where he is currently employed. His career progressed from associate to tenured professor and migrated into administrative roles, including dean of students and assistant to the president before eventually becoming president.

In his 12th year as President, Dr. Moorthy attributes his long-term success to the energy he devotes in building relationships and investing himself in learning. Dr. Moorthy is a fervent advocate of what he calls “horizontal leadership,” a style attributable “to who we are as a visible minority.” He explained that many Indians realize, because others are different, there exists a need to be persuasive, to find the commonalities between mission and objectives and “work where those circles overlap.”

Dr. Moorthy employs pragmatic measures in building personal connections with all segments of the organization. Most notably, he is a believer in what he calls “sneaker-net”—walking to the place employees work instead of calling them to his office. He emphasizes the value of knowing people with whom he works, being present, celebrating success, and learning about things important to them. Dr. Moorthy cautions that this skill set does not come easily to most Indians and encourages breaking out of that mold by fostering collaboration and being relational.
Building the confidence required to form meaningful relationships requires a strong sense of self composed clear values and ethics to guide decision making. Dr. Moorthy maintains one is called upon at any given moment to engage stakeholders—students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni—making the role very “taxing.” Without a strong core and “a stomach to be able to deal with all those kinds of aspects [...] will always get hurt and it is not always personal.” Relationship building has its limits so as not to cause what Dr. Moorthy calls “unwarranted compromises.” To balance the self, Dr. Moorthy recommends every leader maintain a solid intimate relationship along with an external network where “you can be self-revealing.” He contends these types of support are necessary, particularly when making difficult decisions impacting direct reports.

Being mission driven, his faith informs him that all of us, no matter our role in society, are called to serve. Dr. Moorthy describes this as a “pull,” something that typically happens in one’s mid-40s. With this mindset, he reminds others not to work for the position to achieve self-edification. Dr. Moorthy relishes the variety each day brings to his role. He assertively states he is visibly American and does not recall a time where he thought being Indian prevented him from achieving something.

In moments of crisis, Dr. Moorthy credits his “immigrant mentality.” He recently navigated the institution through a financial crisis. Given his Indian roots, Dr. Moorthy said, “we don’t like to spend every penny we got [...] and neither do we like to borrow too much,” which he attributes to the institution’s solid fiduciary standing. However, while he is careful with institutional finances, realizing the
potential for economic relapses, he affirms taking risks are also part of the equation, but must be done in measured approach.

This “immigrant mentality” carries over into how Dr. Moorthy views physical space and the treatment of others. “You will notice” he said, “that if you go to most immigrant homes, their home is a place of pride […] they pay attention to it.” For Dr. Moorthy, that pride is reflected in the care given to maintaining facilities. Likewise, as the institution recently rebounded from a financial crisis with surplus funding, he quickly shared that back with the college community and sent a note and gift certificate to all faculty and staff saying: “Hey, we’re all part of a family, we have a few extra bucks through God’s grace, and here’s something so that you know we’re thinking about you.”

Dr. Arora

Growing Up in India

Dr. Arora grew up on the west coast in Mumbai, which was known as Bombay during his time there in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Born of an Indian father and American mother, Dr. Arora was the youngest, having two older sisters. His educational experience was somewhat unconventional compared to “typical” middleclass families since Dr. Arora’s parents joined others in the community to establish their own school. The school mission was to break away from traditional rigid pedagogy filled with tests and exams and focus it on a progressive, creative thinking, and a science intensive curriculum. Dr. Arora attended that same institution, which incidentally was one of the first co-educational schools in the city, up through graduation at the age of 18.
As for role models, Dr. Arora speaks with great adoration of his father, a “person of discipline and frugality” and with deep interests in science and technology. Both parents were influential in teaching him right from wrong, and mother filled “a very important role” igniting a passion for music. His mother played piano and organ at Bombay area churches where he would accompany her on the violin.

**Coming to America**

In 1974, Dr. Arora chose the United States over Great Britain for advanced studies because he wanted to “achieve at the highest levels” with a liberal arts education. Following in his older sisters’ footsteps, Dr. Arora applied and received a full sponsorship at the same Northeast college to pursue his undergraduate degree in biopsychology. However, once he arrived at college he “got swept up by philosophy and other subjects and psychology.” He eventually settled on neuroscience, satisfying his father who pressed him to take up Engineering; but later his father relented saying, “that this was real science, it wasn’t some fluffy stuff.” He went on to complete a master’s in philosophy and a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology.

Making the move from East to West offered some cultural jolts that Dr. Arora was not necessarily prepared for because he had images of the “streets being paved with gold in America, that the land of opportunity and everything is big and beautiful, and clean, and prosperous.” These preconceptions were put to the test in 1974 when he entered the U.S. through JFK International Airport and took a train bound for New York City’s Grand Central Station. Having a few hours to spend, he exited the train terminal onto 42nd street and discovered it was a red light district filled with “triple X-rated movies, peep shows, and drug dealers.”
Other cultural adjustments centered on pop-culture. While India had all the popular music and movies, television shows had not made their way to the India airwaves. This challenged Dr. Arora because as he said, “a lot of the idiomatic speech I didn’t know.” Language nuances such as humor and conversational icebreakers preempted him from a natural dialogical flow. Paradoxically, Dr. Arora finds himself challenged when he returns to India because the language has morphed into what he calls “Hinglish”—“It’s like Hindi idiom followed by English idiom and so on with a mostly Hindi syntax, but with a lot of English words and expressions thrown in.”

Upon reflection, Dr. Arora concedes he was navigating multiple identities causing him to question who he was—“so, are you really Indian or are you really American?” His American colleagues would naturally say he was an Indian because that was his “primary identity.” Even though his father was Indian and his mother American, his formative grounding in the Indian way of life aligned with other participants in this study in that he experienced a cultural shock upon entry into the U.S. However, his cultural sense of self experienced a shift after his first trip back to India five years later where he didn’t “feel it”—being solely Indian. He now self-identifies as more American than Indian.

Philosophically, Dr. Arora asserts he is not religious, but reveres ancient Indian philosophies, Hinduism and Buddhism, as a source of strength. The Buddhist philosophy he subscribes to is about overcoming craving or desire, which can make one free and clear the mind—“not just in a narrow sense, be even sort of the desire or craving for an idea, or for an outcome or for money, or certain kind of life.” Hindu
philosophy derived from the Bhagavad Gita that inspires Dr. Arora is about overcoming an anxious desire for outcomes and, when achieved, makes one more authentic and less desperate. He references a Bhagavad Gita scholarly article by Mohandas Gandhi which countered the prevailing thought that one is born into a role with certain duties; rather “we have to act, and we want good actions, actions to bring about good […] you shouldn’t be too desirous of the outcomes.” Additionally, Dr. Arora regards the notion of “Satyagraha,” which he describes as “truth force; it’s truth struggle.”

Career and Leadership

Dr. Arora’s interests in music and neuroscience have resulted in numerous peer-reviewed publications on auditory cognition in journals like Psychological Science, Journal of Experimental Psychology, and Science. His passion for higher education is reflected in a number of articles focused on globalization and the impact of technology on education through venues such as Times Higher Education, Inside Higher Education, and the Chronicle of Higher Education. Dr. Arora, considered one of the pioneers in his field, is often sought out for public commentary on topics around sound and cognition, and has served as editor of an interdisciplinary journal. He was a Fellow and has received a wide-array of awards including Distinguished Alumni and the Undergraduate Teaching Initiative Award.

With his doctoral program complete, Dr. Arora assumed an assistant professor role at an elite Northeast university and progressed through the faculty ranks to tenure. A rising star, he was “invited” to join administration as an associate dean of the faculty of Arts and Sciences. While at the same institution, he then became
deputy provost and then dean of the faculty of Arts and Science, serving a cumulative duration of 19 years. Dr. Arora was then recruited to the provost position at an elite, private Northeast institution where he remained for the next nine years. Recognition and feedback from mentors and others reinforced Dr. Arora’s internal motivations to “making a contribution than occupying a particular position.” He says people who “are thinking about the broader good of the institution, about the future, who have big visions, are open to new ideas, [and] are willing to entertain challenging ideas” are a small minority. Throughout his career, he looks for individuals who execute at high standards of excellence, are positive, adaptable, and innovative.

When asked about factors contributing to his success, Dr. Arora humbly replied it is having the ability to balance good empathetic listening skills with action and to act boldly when bold action is called for, “even if not everybody’s going to like you.” Underpinning these skills for maximum impact is to perform with temperament, according to Dr. Arora, which tones down the Western approach he defines as the “table pounding, the stereotypic American leadership narrative […] snapping short commands” with the Eastern narrative of a more “professorial,” “erudite” style. Further, he professes that trust is paramount to achieving objectives and is built on transparency, revealing decisions flowing from articulated principles. He employs a soft touch, but with a firm style which he calls a “steel hand in the velvet glove.”

Sometimes when people feel the velvet glove they think that you’re going to be easy to push around, and then they get surprised. My instinct is to be as conciliatory as possible on the things that aren’t central principles or central goals. But when it comes to the important things, you really have to stick to the principle and not be folding and compromising.
The days are long and filled with meetings among various stakeholders, including alumni, faculty, and staff. Dr. Arora consciously remains connected with students, allotting time for student presentations and teaching. Teaching “connects me with the students and the faculty,” emphasizing the importance of relationship building.

Dr. Arora credits his ethnic background for giving him a unique perspective on how to engage, manage, and lead others. He does counter this by saying that until recently, “the image of the academic leader was a certain kind of person and at many institutions it still is”—namely reflective of the governing board. However, he firmly asserts the “glass ceiling has been smashed,” providing ample opportunity for Indian deans to chart their career path.

**Dr. Agarwal**

**Growing up in India**

Dr. Agarwal grew up in a small village 120 miles east of Lucknow in the Uttar Pradesh province of northern India, the same region as Agra, home of the Taj Mahal. He was there until the age of 13 when he finished the 10th grade and moved to the district headquarters, known as the government inter-college, for 11th and 12th grades with an emphasis on science. Dr. Agarwal “went alone” and stayed in an all-boy’s dorm housing about 100 other students out of a total student population of 1,000. During his early years, he learned the village dialect called “Odhi” and did not acquire conversational Hindi until attending undergraduate studies.

Raised a Brahmin, the societal expectation was that he would study and not do anything “bad.” He was surrounded by prominent figures in his family who highly
regarded education. His grandfather was a Sanskrit scholar, his uncles became lawyers, and his father was a high school principal but later joined the central government; from sixth grade on, his father was often away from home for government work. When asked who influenced him most about going to college, he said his mother. Most all of his siblings followed suit and pursued academic careers as well.

Brought up in the Hindu faith, Dr. Agarwal said his family participated in a number of celebrations, including Diwali, Holi, Dussehra, Krishna’s birthday, and others mostly dominated by worshiping a local Brahma. Ten to 15% of his local village was Muslim; thus his family observed other celebrations. He now describes himself as “personally spiritual” rather than linked to a particular religion.

At the age of 19, Dr. Agarwal finished his undergraduate degree in statistics, got married, and had his sights set on America. While in India, he took one year of computer science that would dramatically impact his career path, changing it from aspirations of being a high school teacher to being a leader in one of America’s premier research institutions. With lessons imbibed from a close family and a sense of life expectations from his community, Dr. Agarwal began the academic application process and was bound for America.

**Coming to America**

Dr. Agarwal departed India for North America in 1972 and took a week with stops in Tehran, Beirut, Istanbul, and London before landing in Canada. Upon arrival, he found the university system to be large, where one could easily get lost;
but he felt “as prepared as any other student” and surrounded himself with a good support system of Indian students.

If somebody comes as an immigrant, it’s much harder; but when you come as a student, the infrastructure is pretty good. I had to switch from the study habits in India where you have final exams at the end of the semester or something to sort of daily homework and all that; so that was really an interesting switch to make.

Dr. Agarwal earned a master’s degree in statistics, graduating top of his class.

Intrigued by developments in the field of computer science, he took a “risk” and accepted an offer to the Computer Science Ph.D. program at a neighboring Canadian university.

In terms of culture shock, Dr. Agarwal’s greatest concern was to not “make a fool” of himself because of things he didn’t know. “I always had a handicap,” he said, because although he studied English, he had never engaged in conversational dialogue. Further, most other Indians coming from Indian cities had already acquired the British accent. He credits his ability to adapt and adjust to the time spent away for 11th and 12th grades, a time when he had to work a “little harder than others” to overcome these “handicaps.”

The preservation of Indian culture was important to Dr. Agarwal and his wife in raising their two boys. One dimension meant instilling the value of a broader network of family, reinforcing hierarchy. The second dimension involved mixing Hindi and English in the home. The third was consuming traditional Indian cuisine, which, he emphasizes, was challenging as a vegetarian in the early years. Since his induction into America, Dr. Agarwal avows he is more American than Indian.
However, he qualifies this assertion by saying that he is probably more Indian in how he interacts with family, but more American when it comes to decision making.

As for religion, Dr. Agarwal refers back to Hinduism in the sense that he and his siblings knew the celebrations and the readings, but regard it as a ritualistic religion “where people have their own freedom to do whatever they want to do.” Revering Hinduism, a belief absent of rigid rules, he lives his life on his own accord. Dr. Agarwal went so far as to say, “you do your meditation if you need to, but don’t tell me what do.”

**Career and Leadership**

A computer science expert, Dr. Agarwal has received over 40 grants related to computing research with awards ranging from $15,000 to $2.5 MM. A prolific writer, he has contributed book chapters and written over 100 journal articles in publications like the *International Journal of High Speed Computing*, *Journal of Parallel and Distributed Computing*, and the *Journal of Wireless Communication and Mobile Computing*. Dr. Agarwal is a founding member of an editorial board for a leading computing publication and has served as co-editor or guest editor for 11 separate publications. Awards range the gamut from multiple Fellowships to being the recipient of an honorary doctorate and the Eminent Alumni award from his undergraduate institution. His presence at symposia and conference proceedings numbers well over 100, all related to computer science advancement. Along the way, Dr. Agarwal has coached dozens of master’s, doctoral, and post-doctoral students.

Dr. Agarwal became an assistant professor at a Northeast U.S. state school regarded as having one of the top 10 computer science programs in the country.
There he traversed the academic route to tenured professor and was asked to chair the department. He accepted the opportunity, describing it as being in the right place at the right time because he “was able to move the department in the right direction.” Within a year, he was approached with the opportunity to build a computer science program from the ground up as dean at another institution on the West coast. Over the next seven years, he led the program, culminating in renewal and continuance as dean, which was unheard of in this particular university system, and propelled the program to one of the top in the country.

Settled in his role as dean, Dr. Agarwal received a call from a trusted colleague to consider a provost position at a large state research institution on the opposite side of the country; he was ultimately offered the position and he accepted. In this role, Dr. Agarwal was the chief budget officer over all campus areas, including academics, student affairs, finance, and administration. Driven by mission and doing what’s right for the institution, he made the decision to eliminate a school that was failing due to the lack of collaboration between departments. The decision was tough, but in the end he was commended for his actions. In his sixth year as provost, Dr. Agarwal became an internal candidate for the presidency, describing his career progression as “being in the right place,” believing all are called to work hard and not focus on the next job. He justifies his reasoning that had he been determined to be president, he might not have terminated the failing program for the sake of future career aspirations, thus negating the call to serve the best interests of the institution.

On a daily basis, he meets with his provost and convenes standing vice president meetings so that everyone is “on the same page.” Communication and
transparency are fundamental to Dr. Agarwal’s success, along with giving freedom over micromanaging others. During periods when on campus, he takes time to walk to others’ offices to simply say “hi” and meets weekly with colleagues over lunch. Dr. Agarwal values trust and ethical behavior, carefully separating personal relationships by maintaining an external network of peers. When time permits, Dr. Agarwal teaches because that passion is a core motivator for his life in academia.

In times of crisis, Dr. Agarwal prefers not to “shout and react,” but rather reserves himself to observe, listen, and take in as much information as possible with the mindset to understand before responding. He said “some people might feel that I’m weak because I do that […], but at the end of the day, I want to see what happened as opposed to me shouting or using bad language for anybody.” Further, he refrains from criticizing people in public, preferring to meet in private, coaching them on alternate means to approach the given situation, allowing them to take full ownership. These approaches afford him perspective and peace of mind, which gives him the ability to sleep at night.

Dr. Agarwal affirms that his Indian roots have some link to his life successes and cautions fellow Indians not to blame discrimination when things don’t turn out as planned. He reminds “others and especially Indians to” stay focused, work hard “in the position you are in,” and keep a positive mind because, Dr. Agarwal concludes, “discrimination is everywhere […and…] at the end of the day, the positive attitude will take you to the next stage, not the negative.”
Rich Life Experiences

The narratives shared by these five participants illustrate life rich with values imbibed during their formative years, moments of successful and challenging cultural shifts in the U.S., and career evolution founded on extraordinary academic achievement concurrent with leadership progression. Each speaks with a voice of conviction regarding the joys and influences encountered along the way, describing a sense of who they are in relation to the world around them. From the interviews through transcription and compilation of each participant story, I marvel at the tenacity, motivation, and determination emanating through their lived experiences.

The confluence of cultural underpinnings and leadership role evolution indicate peculiarities exclusive to first generation Asian Indians in U.S. higher education. Chapter Five explores deeper the phenomenon unique to this community of practice, distilling the hidden and obvious insights tucked away between the thin veneer between the conscious and subconscious. Now that they have told their stories, the examination begins to contextualize and distill the lessons from their lived experiences for others to realize.
CHAPTER FIVE: SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES OF FIRST GENERATION ASIAN INDIAN LEADERS IN U.S.

HIGHER EDUCATION—DISCUSSION, AND ANALYSIS

There are times when you have to obey a call which is the highest of all, i.e. the voice of conscience even though such obedience may cost many a bitter tear, and even more, separation from friends, from family, from the state, to which you may belong, from all that you have held as dear as life itself. For this obedience is the law of our being.

- Mohandas Gandhi

Exploring the Other Side, Alone

Exploring “the other side” is a vital aspect with this group of Asian Indians. Filled with an exploratory spirit, these individuals sought to reach a new land and simply soared in their new environment. Not only did they literally travel the expanse from East to West, they also embraced the American form of higher education and crossed the chasm from the academic to administrative side. Through each lived experience, the texture of each person’s journey became vivid, revealing challenges and triumphs, testing and developing methods for navigation. Warren Bennis (2009) positions voyagers in the following:

Henry Thoreau wrote that one sees the world more clearly if one looks at it from an angle. In a foreign land, one sees everything from an angle. […] The stranger in a strange land sees more and sees fresh. Being on the road not only requires the full deployment of one’s self, it redeploys one, tests one’s
strengths and weaknesses, and exposes new strengths and weaknesses. [...] Those who travel farther from home learn even more. (p. 84)

This group of Asian Indians chose to make United States higher education their sojourn, a place where they blossomed and realized a life and career serving others.

Chapter Five sets out to isolate peculiarities about this community of practice as contributing factors to their journey that are reflective of sociocultural influences in the world of higher education. Along the way, I have incorporated my personal anecdotes while in India, adding texture to various points (See Appendix D for additional personal stories). Cultural roots and their subsequent influences factor large in how this community of practice operates in U.S. higher education.

The term “leadership” has a history of inquiry and study, but none specific to Asian Indian leaders in U.S. higher education. This conjures the question, “how did they make it and what separates them from others?” At closer examination, seven dimensions merit deeper understanding because they are distinctive to Asian Indian ascendance to higher education executive roles:

- Immigrant Mentality: Asian Indian Self-Identity;
- Work Hard: Pull to Serve and The Power of Encouragement;
- Education: Constant Learner;
- Credibility: Links to Teaching and Research;
- Intolerance for Risk Aversion: Principles and Values;
- Permeate Boundaries: Relational Constructs; and
- Velvet Glove, Steel Hand: Communication With Action.

Before delving into each dimension, attention must be paid to the aspect of doing it alone. A number of participants used the word “alone” when describing
elements about themselves whether it was their travels to America, leaving family as a child to attend school, or the work they enjoy as executives here in U.S. higher education. On surface value this makes sense, but in some ways it points to their ability to navigate between groups while preserving their individual identity. To move from where they were in their life required a strategy to permeate any perceived boundaries. A solo-spirit may just be one secret ingredient to their life success.

According to Hofstede’s (1980; 2001; 2010) work, India is a collectivist society where people help each other and do everything possible to save face. American culture is much more individualistic. Could there be an insight here for Asian Indians who describe themselves as “alone?” Perhaps this descriptor has been part of who they are from birth, which, even though living in a collectivist society as defined by Hofstede (1980, 2001), gave them the skills needed to navigate the Indian ways before moving to the U.S.? In essence, relocating to the U.S. provides the perfect entre for them to preserve the “alone” dimension, but successfully navigate boundaries to get things done, bolstering their impact as leaders in Western culture. Each participant shared stories and techniques used to better understand American culture and gain a sense of cultural intelligence. For them, becoming vulnerable, realizing skill strengths and gaps, and approaching the challenge with an eagerness to learn served a transformative platform into a new life construct.

**Seven Dimensions of Asian Indians’ Perspectives on Leadership**

**Immigrant Mentality: Asian Indian Self-Identity**

Dr. Moorthy introduced to this study the term “immigrant mentality” in jest as he reflected on his approach to managing a budgetary campus crisis. Further
discussion peeled away layers about what he believed immigrant mentality to be and how it impacts his leadership approach—reverence for home and family in personal and professional dimensions. A plethora of research has been conducted over the years about what happens when foreigners enter a new land, and that is where this study proposes a contrary perspective to predominantly believed assumptions about first generation Asian Indians residing in the U.S. To understand immigrant mentality requires a deeper exploration into the concepts of acculturation and ethnic identity particular to first generation Asian Indians in the U.S.

Learning the ways of daily life from birth and relocating to another country has spurred investigation into the acculturation processes for first generation Asian Indians in the U.S., especially since 1965 with the lifting of U.S. immigration laws. Acculturation is defined as “how ethnic minority individuals adapt to the dominant culture and the changes in their beliefs, values, and behavior that result from contact with the new culture and its members” (Farver, Xu, Bhadha, Narang, & Lieber, 2007). The Farver et al. article goes on to assert that minorities can choose to:

a. Assimilate (identify solely with the dominant culture and sever ties with their own culture);
b. Marginalize (reject both their own and host culture);
c. Separate (identify solely with their group and reject the host culture); or
d. Integrate (become bicultural by maintaining aspects of their own group and selectively acquiring some of the host culture) (p. 187).

Among first generation Asian Indians in the U.S., most tend to integrate, resulting in less acculturative stress (Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002). Dr. Moorthy noted problems arise when Asian Indians fail to openly embrace American culture:

You see, I think, one of the things about America, I believe, is that once—and, now I am making these distinctions between Americans and immigrants—but when Americans get a sense that you’re willing to fit in, and want to fit in,
want to work in, want to assimilate, they try to make that happen. The problem comes in when all of a sudden they realize you come in and want to be part of, but separate.

Dr. Moorthy goes so far as to imply that assimilation is required in order for one to fully know and live within American culture.

At the individual level is the concept of ethnic identity, the extent oneself identifies with a particular culture. Phinney (1990) explains that ethnic identity not only encompasses a sense of belonging, but the commitment one has “to the group’s values, beliefs, conventions, and customs” (Dasgupta, 1998, p. 955). Among first generation Asian Indian immigrants, ethnic identity comes heavily influenced by the collectivist ways of life as described by Hofstede (1980, 2001). According to Bacon (1999), Asian Indians come with a sense of duty where “good” Indians reflect the Gandhian model and act in the best interests of the collective group rather than for self-ego; this is a direct carry-over from when India strove to define itself as a nation following independence. In essence, research indicates most first generation Asian Indians in the U.S. migrate to urban settings, reside in sub communities, and act in accordance for the best of the community, recreating a construct of India, as they remember it, in their new land (Farver et al., 2007).

While Asian Indians have successfully migrated and established communities across the U.S., there exists a commonality among the majority of first generation Indians at the intersection of acculturation and ethnic identity. The concept of allocentrism factors into first generation Asian Indians “where the self and the family are integral, rather than separate, concepts. Among Asian Indians, individuals of all ages are expected to make sacrifices on behalf of the group, and the welfare and
integrity of the family always supercedes [sic] individual needs and self-identity” (Farver et al., 2002, p. 340). Raman and Harwood (2008) found that Indians with stronger ties to family in India and group identity in the U.S. had a more challenging journey to full acculturation.

A good friend of mine, standing in the middle of the picture in Figure 5 holding his daughter, is married to a devout Hindu who is pictured to the left of him. He explained to me that it is the mother’s role to keep the family together and instill the values of being a good Hindu. As my friend says, the mother is the glue, the soul of the Indian family.

Figure 5. Out for dinner with a colleague and family in Pune, India, June 2009

To accommodate this delicate balance between self-ethnic identity and group affiliation with other Asian Indian Americans in the U.S., many first generation Asian
Indians have adopted a bicultural behavioral pattern. Dr. Agarwal described his approach to managing relationships from a family and work perspective:

What it means really if you think about the physical spaces, if you think about how I live in my family and how I interact with my family and so on, that probably is a lot more Indian. But if you think about how I make my decisions, and how I […] expect my kids and their decisions, I’m a lot more Western in that sense. So, […] the expectations in India are different; here they’re different. So I think that part I have shifted, but of my relationships with people I had in India are still the same, haven’t changed there really.

People in India think I am really more of American in terms of how I answer the questions, how I behave in terms of research or evaluating somebody, or those kinds of things. But, in terms of the social stuff and so on, they still feel I’ve got all that.

Dr. Agarwal self-identifies the shift to a Western frame, but is able to engage with his Indian peer group as he did prior to his arrival to the U.S. Inman, Howard, Beaumont, and Walker (2007) term this a compartmentalized approach maintaining two cultural identities, bicultural, by acting “Indian at home and American at work” (p. 99).

Affirming one’s sense of self-ethnic identity and the extent to which acculturation is adopted, based on Phinney’s (1990) four levels, the literature demonstrates that first generation Asian Indians consider themselves more Indian than American (Farver et al., 2002; Farver et al., 2007; Hickey, 2006). In many ways this translates into preserving food, religion, and familial structures as prescribed by Indian culture. All participants identified to a certain extent links back to Indian culture where food, religion, and other modes impacting decision making remain an integral part of who they are today. However, contrary to other findings where first generation Asian Indians self-identify as Indian first, Dr. Arora stated:
I think I’m more American than Indian right now. I’ve lived most my life in the United States and all of my adult life. So, India is a harder switch right now. Plus, the country has changed so much, and it’s changing so fast, and I don’t get back often enough.

Once Dr. Arora fully immersed himself in American culture, going back to the Indian way of life seemed foreign to him. Dr. Gupta actively engaged in integrating with U.S. culture, chose to live on her own, left the U.S. for five years, and returned because of the strong affiliation she felt with the U.S. way of life.

My brother lives in Edison, New Jersey. He lives in a very Indian community, everybody around him is Indian and the place looks like little India if you know what I mean—you walk in and its Indian stores and Indian things. I didn’t do that; and so on some level, my integration into the culture at large was, you know, through academic life. […] I did not want to be isolated within an Indian-only community. I was so eager to sort of learn everything about America I think that I, in fact I had moved around a lot, in fact because I see every part of the U.S. as worth exploring.

Dr. Arora asserts he is more American than Indian, even though he grew up with an Indian father and American mother, considering he moved to the U.S. straight out of standard school, the 12th grade.

These insights suggest that first generation Asian Indians who pursued a life in America within the structure of higher education developed an independent sense of ethnic identity, attaching themselves more to the American versus Indian way of life. Moving and living in locations without strong Indian communities in place (Dr. Gupta), opening one’s self up to assimilate (Dr. Moorthy), and fully asserting being “more American than Indian” (Dr. Arora) formulates the position that Asian Indian higher education leaders may lean more towards full assimilation on the Phinney scale. This community of practice exemplifies education a significant factor in how
one acculturates and solidifies self-identity. The term “immigrant mentality” for this community of practice means firm inculcation of American ways, but with flavors of Indian cultural influences shaped in a world of higher education.

The participants seem to have found a way to merge elements they regard important from their Indian roots into American life. From the outset, this group is somewhat of an “anomaly” given their independent spirit to explore new worlds on their own, demanding coping mechanisms for survival. Equipped with solid intellectual capabilities and a drive to find truth through advanced education, each became immersed in the world of higher education, working hard to master the challenges before them in the classroom and navigating the culture. As each rose to levels of leadership, they took on the characteristics of a culture that favors individualism and wove in their sense of living in a collectivist society which resulted in a new form of leading. Dr. Moorthy said his immigrant mentality frames how he leads in the academic environment by tending to home and family. For him, home meant having facilities that all can be proud of while treating everyone in the community as a family, thus respecting and treating others with dignity no matter their role, title or rank. These aspects of home (extrinsic) and family (intrinsic) link to Herzberg’s (1966) Dual Factor Theory which asserts that leaders will have higher follower productivity when motivators address both dimensions.

Given the size of this participant pool, it is not possible to transfer these insights to the rest of the first generation Asian Indian population in higher education executive roles. However, there exists enough contrary information between the way this community of practice asserts self identity compared to literature about other first
generation Asian Indians to warrant further investigation. The net result is that this community of practice harbors a distinct quality about whom they are adding to the texture of the American tapestry—visibly they are a minority, but behaviorally they live as Americans.

**Work Hard: Pull to Serve and the Power of Encouragement**

Across all participants, a resounding message came forth regarding how one should frame higher education career progression in literally two words—work hard. Dr. Arora went into great detail about Ancient Indian philosophies derived from Hindu and Buddhist faiths. Mixed in with these religious stories is the influence that the transformational leader Mahatma Gandhi exerted during the critical time of liberating the Indian peoples from years of British rule. But why was this message prominently consistent with every participant? A closer look at Indian culture and the nature of being sheds some light on how leadership is viewed and who is often destined to fill such roles.

Over 80% of Indians identify with the Hindu faith followed by Muslims (13.4%), Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.9%), Buddhists (08%), Jains (0.4%), and other affiliations (0.6%) (Government of India, 2001). While India boasts it is home to many world religions, with Hinduism ranking as the third largest world-wide, no religion has had more impact on the constructs driving India’s cultural patterns than Hinduism (Kakar, 2007).

The term Hindu is believed to have evolved from the Sanskrit word *sindhu*, meaning river, where the ancient Persian language would replace the ‘s’ with the ‘h’ thus rendering the word into Hindu, referencing all non-Muslim people living beyond
the Sindhu River (Keay, 2000). Hinduism is typically referred to as a pantheistic religion since there exists reverence to a variety of gods depending on where one lives, but believing in God and the universe are one in the same. Hinduism is comprised of four main sects called Vaishnavism, Saivism, Shaktism, and Smartism which all contain a common thread regarding the trinity of Brahma (Lord of the Universe), Vishnu (Preserver and Protector), and Shiva (Creator and Destroyer) (Veylanswami, 2009). Similarly, there exist four pillars underpinning Hinduism subscribed by most if not all believers (Bhattacharya & Schoppelrey, 2004):

1. Dharma refers to rules that depict virtuous and appropriate behavior. The duty of parents to care for their children is based on the belief that God has entrusted the parents with the care of those children; the reciprocal duty and honor due to parents from children arise from the belief that the parents are acting as God’s earthly representatives;
2. Karma is about fate where one’s behavior in past incarnations as well as in the present life will determine future events and fate not only in the present lifetime, but in future incarnations as well. Karma thus serves to reward those who fulfill the obligations of dharma and punish those who do not;
3. Maya refers to distorted perceptions of values and reality that can destroy the development of an individual; and
4. Atman refers to a concept of positioning one not as an individual but a part of the family, community, and the universe. Thus, a child is a part of the family that includes other family members—past, present, and the future—and it is his or her obligation to pursue activities that will honor parents and the entire family (p. 85).

Within Hinduism exists what is known as the “four purposes of life” and the “four stages of life.” The concept of Dharma was first introduced in the Upanishads, ancient texts shared verbally and later written down, which addresses varna, also known as caste, meaning each person has certain duties and rights, specific occupational roles, and comes with dietary guidelines (Butt, 2004). The caste system is not solely regarded in just Hinduism; it exists among other religions within India, each with its own version (e.g. Muslims have Ashrafs, Azlabs, and Arzals from the
highest to lowest). The implications of a caste system are to maintain societal order where each person has a role, a “duty” to fill. The Hindu caste hierarchy has four levels with Brahmins (priests) at the top who are considered to be the most pure and educated families, succeeded by the Kshatriyas (“warriors”) who are responsible for governance, then the Vaishya (“belonging to the people”) who engage in daily commerce and business, followed by the Shudra (“servile”) who make up the lowest caste of servants and wait upon the upper castes (Neusner, 2009). A separate class of people, formally known as Dalits (also referred to as “the untouchables,” “Harijan,” or “Pariah”), is considered polluted based on the activities they conduct such as cleaning sewage and removing dead animals (Neusner, 2009). While Indian law has denounced the caste system through legal channels, the pervasiveness remains today with career paths influenced by birthrights. However, “…while an individual’s caste is set at birth, his or her socioeconomic class can be altered…[because]…education is regarded as a critical means of overcoming traditional social inequalities” (Bhattacharya & Schoppelrey, 2004, p.85).

Hinduism is an amalgamation of teachings that have evolved over the years from the ritualistic spoken word, Upanishad Vedas which were later transcribed, to the Bhagavad Gita contained in the Mahabhrata epic among others. Depending on sect, family, and location, various gods serve as symbols Hindu’s choose to revere in their ritualistic practices. The element of heroic leadership emerges as a common theme across many of the stories and depictions across all Hindu sects.

Perhaps two of the most prominent Sankrit epics in Hindu teaching are the Ramayana and Mahabhrata. The Ramayana epic is about Prince Rama, the oldest
son, who was to become king of Ayodhya once his father retired. Rama’s stepmother wanted her son, Bharata, Rama’s younger stepbrother, to become king. The king granted his wife her wish and appointed Bharata as king and banished Rama. Sita, Rama’s wife, begged Rama to accompany him, arguing it was dharma for them to be together. Rama and his brother, Lakshman, along with Sita went into the wilderness to live. Upon learning what his mother did, Bharata sought out Rama and begged him to return as king, but Rama refused, because it was dharma to obey the wishes of their father. While in the forest, the sister of Ravana, Surpnakha, tried to seduce Rama, but Rama refused professing his love for Sita. Surpnakha sought revenge and enlisted the help of her brother, Ravana, who kidnapped Sita and took her to Lanka. Rama, Lakshman, and an army of monkeys crossed from India to Lanka where a battle ensued, culminating in a final match where Rama killed Ravana. Rama freed Sita but challenged Sita to prove her purity after living with Ravana for a year. Grieving, Sita chose to end her life in a fire, but the God of fire, Agni, lifted her from the flames and presented her to Rama as pure. Rama and Sita then returned to Ayodhya to rule for many years. The Ramayana emphasizes one’s dharma and through each person illustrates those who choose whether or not to follow their duty in life.

The Mahabhrata is a story of violence between cousins, the Pandavas (the heroes) and the Kauravas (the antagonists). One of the Kauravas brothers, Duryodhana, is jealous of his cousin’s success and challenges the oldest of the Pandavas brothers, Yudhishtira, to a game of dice where Yudhishtira gambles everything away. The Pandavas go into exile, but return to engage the Kauravas in
battle. Lord Krishna, the eighth avatar or incarnation of Vishnu, fights on the side of the Pandavas and the words of Krishna are captured in the Bhagavad Gita; the Bhagavad Gita captures the essence of karma and yoga (Neusner, 2009). The Mahabharata emphasizes heroism, determination, and the role of karma.

Many symbolic gods worshipped for various virtuous qualities, which serve as a link to how Hindus perceive life and where value is placed, represent Hinduism. Some of the gods include:

- Lakshmi, the Goddess of prosperity, represents material wealth and well-being while modeling the ideal Hindu wife and fertility;
- Shiva, the creator and destroyer, represents polar energies that sustain the universe;
- Saraswati, the Goddess of human intellect, inspires culture, the arts, sciences and poetry; and
- Ganesha, also known as Lord Ganapati, is the son of Shiva, and is the remover of all obstacles. Lord Ganesha “…provides steadfastness, control, and direction” (Kishore & Ganpati, 2003, p. 152–155).

Hindu constructs factor into the perceptions of what it means to be Indian and who in the hierarchy fills the leadership role. Here, the family structure is critical as outlined by the four pillars regarded by all Hindu sects and where children view them as their god on Earth. Within the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, heroism is influenced by dharma and karma, reinforcing societal values. And, depending on sect, various gods of worship shape the values to which a person adheres.

I shared with Dr. Agarwal my experiences in Hindu celebrations, including
Ganesh and Holi, which helped me internalize a better understanding of what it meant to be part of the culture engaged in something deeply rooted throughout society. In 2006, my company hosted a Holi celebration on the office building rooftop complete with all the required Holi elements—music, food, and the powdered “colors” made out of indigenous flowers. I fully engaged in the event, coloring people with the powders as I too was colored by all of them. Several months later my friend commented on my participation where he told his mother, a very devoted Hindu, about my involvement. He said I earned a tremendous amount of respect from his mother and the people I worked with in the office. I had the opportunity to observe Holi the next several years in other parts of India, including Mumbai and Goa, although Goa is predominantly Catholic. Figure 6 is a picture of me with my colleagues following my first induction to Holi.

*Figure 6.* Celebrating Holi in Pune, India, March 14, 2006

I have also observed a number of other Hindu religious activities including Ganesh Puja (see Figure 7).
The participants contributing to this study all affirmed that no matter the faith
to which they subscribe, each celebrated rituals with friends and families from other
religions. Given India is a society heavily influenced by Hindu teachings and
principles, the inevitable shaping of how one perceives life, roles, and positions is a
natural extension when the overarching mantra is to work hard within your role
(dharma). Dr. Arora stated that:

Gandhi has a brilliant essay on the Bhagavad Gita, one of the finest scholarly
works on the Bhagavad Gita, that talks about how, contrary to a common
perception that the Bhagavad Gita is a justification for just throwing up your
hands and saying, “well, that’s just the way it is,” you know, “you got to do
your duty, you were just born this way, and that’s what you have to do.” […]
Gandhi said “No, we are creatures of action.” The Bhagavad Gita makes that
perfectly clear, we have to act, and we want good actions, actions to bring
about good. But, you shouldn’t be too desirous of the outcomes and if you
aren’t it will set you free.

Modern day belief is that education serves a pivotal role in moving one up within the
caste hierarchy (Bhattacharya & Schoppelrey, 2004). For all higher education leaders
participating in this research, education was seized as insurance for future investment, which carried through as a key component of who they are as people to the present day.

Through every participant story, new opportunities presented different challenges where ingenuity, an entrepreneurial-mind, and commitment to serving others proved beneficial for them and others around them. Implicit in their messages is that leading is not a simple recipe of actions, but an alchemy of values, purpose, heart, relationships, and self-discipline, all core elements of authentic leadership (George, 2003). One central Bhagavad Gita teaching widely taught and cherished in families that transcends Hinduism is: “Thine is the task but not the fruits thereof.” Leadership for these Asian Indians is about humbly committing their all to doing the best in their role and responding to the “pull” when it is their time to serve others, and doing so with a reciprocal mind-set (Greenleaf, 1977). Dr. Moorthy sees the call to serve as something far greater than merely good intentions with a solid resume of skills to lead:

It is all a calling from God to serve others. And, as you see it that way […] then moving up in a leadership role is not as much aspirational, but something that sort of tends to pull you, you know, vocationally to a place where you say, “these are the skill sets that I have, and I can make a difference.” You know, that tends to be the kind of thing. So, for me I never aspired to become the CEO or anything, it’s just that as I discovered who I was and what I was capable of doing and seeing that here are things that I can do, that’s really what led me to where I am.

Elements of authentic leadership (George, 2003) are quite vivid among this community of practice since each puts forth a “moral compass” leading with intellect where true understanding of personal strengths and skill gaps enables them to lead
with true genuineness. Further, qualities such as having a long-term orientation, teaching others, finding ways to engage while listening are key to their success and strongly aligned with values-based leadership (O’Toole, 1995). Bolman and Gallos (2011), in their book *Reframing Academic Leadership*, call this concept of working hard and listening to the pull a “Sense of Calling”:

1. Common to all the definitions of calling is the importance of listening to one’s life and surrendering to a deep sense of mission;
2. There is energy and passion in aligning our action with our deepest talents and strengths; and
3. We touch and inspire others when we lead with an authenticity rooted in our best gifts (p. 207).

However, while working hard and paying attention to the pull is recognized, external encouragement was cited a key stimulant to pursuing the next level or career move. In fact, Dr. Rajan explicitly stated it was not her nature to “toot” her own horn and went on to say, “you do a good job, your boss should be able to recognize that.” In some ways, this mindset represents a behavioral-based approach where it is incumbent on the leader to recognize when one has excelled or failed and to offer the right level of challenge and support (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977; McGregor, 1960; Blake & Mouton, 1961; Yukl, 1971). Words or phrases by the participants such as “I was asked” or “I was persuaded” are telling that in their well intended and humble approach to working hard, the proactive nature often exhibited among American employees may not be a cultural nuance fully understood and embraced by Asian Indians. Further, as cited in Chapter 2, Kakar et al. (2002) surveyed a group of leaders located in India and another group located in the United States with results showing that Indian leaders scored higher than American leaders on all dimensions of exemplary leadership, except for encouraging others. This disconnect illustrates a
conundrum for potential Asian Indians. Whereas they require encouragement to advance, they tend not to encourage others as much as do their American counterparts. However, encouragement is not completely absent, as described by Dr. Gupta who relished the moments of looking down to pull others up in the organization:

    I think for me, one of the most satisfying things about leadership was recognizing among the faculty people who could be leaders in the future and I nominated them for—I nominated one faculty member for […] the American Academic Leadership Institute.

While Dr. Gupta and others among those interviewed cited examples of looking for other leaders, there exists a disconnect considering the number of Asian Indians entering the Academy and the paltry representation rising to leadership.

    Hard work, paying attention to the “pull” to serve others, with a dose of encouragement, netted outcomes greater than any one participant would have perceived. For each of them, coming to America was a challenge. They relied on intellectual muscle knowing much would be required of them to learn the culture by working hard. Coming to the U.S. with ancient cultural Indian lessons, influenced by Hindu constructs infused with a strong moral compass, and not focusing on the end product but doing the best possible job in the here-and-now, eventually paid off academically and in ensuing career opportunities. Dr. Agarwal, a self-identified Brahmin, stated more than once that one must work hard “in the position you are in” and keep a positive mind.

**Education: Constant Learner**

The drive to learn is an absolute among this community of practice. In every self-account, education was viewed the key for them to achieve whatever the next
life-phase presented in their growth trajectory. Lawrence and Nohria (2002) equate learning to one of the four pillars driving human beings to ultimate survival.

Over the millions of years of hominid evolution, the emerging drive to learn undoubtedly fostered the evolution of additional innate skill sets. Consider, for example, these skills: manipulating tools, creating all kinds of mechanical devices, muscular coordination or athletic ability, painting, dancing, creating and performing music. […] As the learning process progresses over the life cycle, individuals accumulate their own increasingly comprehensive and coherent worldviews, as well as complex set of beliefs about themselves that has been called a self-concept or self-identity (pp. 116–122).

The genesis for academic achievement in each participant’s story was fueled by external stimuli, namely their mother, who positioned education as a form of insurance toward a future of guaranteed income and prosperity. Dr. Rajan articulated education and mother’s role this way:

Mother made it very clear to my sister and me that we had to; the minimum education we needed to get was a master’s degree. She had gotten a bachelor’s degree, and she had fought to get to that stage. She really wanted a master’s degree. That did not happen. So for her, in her books, for us to get a master’s degree each was critical. Because my parents’ philosophy was they didn’t have a lot of money and that in order to have insurance of some kind, a woman needed her own resources—to be able to stand on her own feet. And since they were not very wealthy, that insurance for us was our education. And, so, both of us got our master’s degree, and one of the practical reasons was that once you got a master’s degree in India, you could teach in college. You could teach in college and then […] teach at the university level you had to get a Ph.D.; but you could teach in college and have a very nice career as a consequence.

As time marched on, the subtleties of education’s role within each of their lives emerged as a common thread along their life journey, but perhaps not quite what they initially framed it to be. In essence, what began as an obligation of insurance for
a secure future morphed into a vestige towards something greater as described by Dr. Arora:

There’s this notion of “Satyagraha”—which is the truth force, it’s truth struggle. You have to constantly work to seek the truth whether it’s in my case, scientific truth, or truth about society, or even closer to home in an organization, truth about the organization. People’s desires about certain outcomes and certain kinds of ideas makes it very difficult for them to accept the truth if it’s revealed, or to even want to seek the truth because it can be scary, and it can be difficult to deal with.

The concept of “Satyagraha,” which literally means “insistence on truth,” was one element contributing to the non-violent protests in India during the freedom struggle against the British and is a mantra underpinning present day thinking regarding social justice issues (Chhokar et al., 2008, p. 979). Not surprisingly, role models identified by participants included Nelson Mandela, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jesus Christ, and others who in the face of injustice stood for what was right in search for truth. Chhokar et al. (2008) identified a number of qualities equating an Indian leader as outstanding and having the ability to be “a change agent and challenging the status quo” (p. 984). For Dr. Gupta, being a change agent requires patience:

I think you have to be within to realize that people’s attitudes don’t change overnight. I mean people who felt that segregation was right don’t wake up one morning cause the country went along another path and say “okay, now I’m changing my mind” right? […] My experience of life showed that that march towards liberal thinking would take several generations and that it would take time and it would not be replaced easily by tolerance and, and inclusion and all of those things.

Every participant chose an educational path demanding the search for truth. Epistemologically speaking, the search for truth, uncovering the unknown, drives the mind to look for answers in pursuit of the terminal degree. Their search for truth
propelled each one of them in their respective academic fields to achieve full professorship with tenure. This quest to seek the truth fueled a drive to make a difference, to improve status, or to build something from nothing. Dr. Rajan affirmed her vice president role gave her a “much broader arena to look at.” Dr. Gupta said she took on the president role because she knew she could turn the college’s poor performance around. Dr. Moorthy said he listened to the “pull” and assessed his skills with the mindset to make a difference. Dr. Arora thrived as an academic leader where he could get new things going in an effort to make a difference. And, Dr. Agarwal only took the president position because he saw an opportunity where he could build and make a difference.

In the beginning, education was positioned as a security net for all participants; but with time education evolved into something bigger with truth as the driver building towards a way for them to change the worlds around them for the better. This desire for continual renewal through learning and service places all these leaders squarely under the transformational umbrella of servant leadership (Avolio et al., 2009; Burns, 1978; Greenleaf, 1977). Their personal self-awareness in relation to the world around them has enabled them to make a difference and represents elements of constructivism and collective shared leadership (Bennis, 2009; Burns, 1978, 2003; Drath, 2001; Goethals & Sorenson, 2006; Kezar et al., 2006; Raelin, 2005). With each participant, I believed in their genuineness and their drive to be authentic (George, 2003; Luthans & Avolio, 2003) not only in their words, but in their positive attitudes about what they do and their actions for ongoing rejuvenation.
Credibility: Links to Teaching and Research

The higher education landscape is changing the coveted presidential role charged with charting the course and leading the way. Internal and external forces are at play impacting governance and accountability. The demand for a more business-like approach to remain competitive in the marketplace is impacting institutional structure and decision-making (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Waugh, 2003). The recent trend among postsecondary institutions is to seek out institutional leaders from the corporate sector (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Kezar et al., 2006; Waugh, 2003). As this metamorphosis unfolds across the country, the link between faculty and administration is eroding (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Waugh, 2003). Leading with credibility comes into question when teaching and research serve a critical dimension to administrator effectiveness (Balkin & Mello, 2011).

“Source credibility” is what communication experts use to describe a leader who is “honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent” (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 26). Establishing credibility means the leader is an expert and finds ways to remain engaged as new knowledge emerges. This engagement is evident given each participant is an accomplished researcher, publisher, speaker, or educator in their own right. In essence, when leaders become distanced from the core drivers of higher education existence—learning and unearthing new findings—the danger of “source credibility” erosion may occur.

The paradox academic leaders face is maintaining credibility in an environment pressured to act more like a business. How should administrators preserve scholarly presence in the midst of burgeoning demands? As bureaucracy
increases, the fear is that American higher education will soon be managed by individuals with no academic experience, thus lacking understanding about the intricacies of the academic enterprise (Waugh, 2003). Effective leadership calls for administrators to remain connected with their constituents (Del Favero, 2003). And, when administrators remain connected, colleague’s notice. “Activities such as these send strong messages about teamwork, collegiality, and equity as well as illustrate the kind of leader the administrator actually is” (Balkin & Mello, p. 16).

Dr. Arora, in the midst of managing a financial crisis, stays grounded in classroom activities. “I’m teaching. […] That connects me with the students and the faculty.”

Dr. Rajan identified that the issue of credibility and scholarship becomes particularly critical when the administrator’s role is directly responsible for academics.

It was a choice, I could either sort of work it around and do my teaching, or the research. I couldn’t do both, so I decided, opted to keep the research. So, I’ve been very fortunate in being able to do that. And I think it was very important for the job because as the vice president of academic affairs, you need to; it gives you credibility. And you need to have your pulse of what’s happening, and so that’s what I did.

Dr. Gupta and Dr. Agarwal profess their admiration for learning and teaching and see these as critical parts of who they are. As president, Dr. Agarwal never really left teaching. He says, “I, at some point, I thought that it, if I don’t switch I will go back [to] faculty because that I enjoy. I still teach sometimes.” Managing these connections to students and faculty through scholarly work requires proactive measures. Dr. Rajan blocks time on her calendar every Monday and dedicates it to
her laboratory research team. Another measure involves team teaching and is affirmed by Dr. Rajan and Dr. Agarwal. Dr. Moorthy remains engaged as a guest lecturer and publishes.

This community of practice illustrates teaching and research as something to be valued, linking to the heart of their motivations, seeking truth in education, and in the eyes of their colleagues, building greater credibility. A colleague told Dr. Rajan: “you don’t think like an administrator; you think like a faculty member.” With pride, Dr. Rajan asserts that administrators should never neglect the voice of which they represent—“the two most important constituents are the faculty and the students because without faculty and students you don’t have a university.”

As the higher education terrain endures the gravity of myriad influences, all participants affirm education at the core and with it the leader and institution have credibility. Credibility is something easily attributed in the beginning, but may quickly erode if the leader’s actions refrain from scholarly activities. Tension mounts as leaders have significantly more impact on institutional policies, yet the opportunity to produce scholarly work becomes more distant with mounting responsibilities (Mathie, et al, 2004). Navigating these pressures requires intentional actions, strategically structuring one’s schedule and finding ways to remain attached through avenues such as team teaching, writing, or research activities.

**Intolerance for Risk Aversion: Principles and Values**

I recall, in the midst of deciding my academic future, a friend telling me that a person gets nowhere in life without taking risks. That phrase has stuck with me over the years and resurfaces and is particularly strong at critical points in my life where a
decision will fundamentally alter my current state of being. Whether that statement is true or not, the weight of risk taking comes in many forms with minimal to potentially hazardous outcomes, yet some people are willing to gamble everything.

Risk is defined as exposing oneself to the “possibility of loss or injury; someone or something that creates or suggests a hazard” (Risk. Merriam-Webster.com, n.d.). At first glance the concept of risk implies injurious consequences, which in career terms, translates to the potential of losing credibility, loss of trust or faith, or even to the extreme where continued employment is no longer an option. What are the underpinnings feeding the confidence for one to assume high-level risks, understanding the outcomes can surpass all expectations towards greatness, or end in tragedy?

Bubbling to the surface across all participants is this aspect of putting everything on the line to achieve something beyond the constructs of their current state at the time. While each points to parental, mentor, and role model influences to do well in school, this still doesn’t answer the “why” or “what” for how these individuals faced considerable hurdles to get where they are today. Upon closer look, there are contributing factors voiced explicitly, but underlying the words come forth other messages.

On an explicit level, every person carried out activities outlined for him or her with little to no pushback, which is very much in line with Indian societal compliance as a collective society (Hofstede, 1980; Strohschneider, 2002). Academically, all spent the time required to master their studies in order to ace the exams administered at the close of each term. They listened to those most influential to them, heard the
message, and acted on the directions or advice to do their homework or whatever task at that time. And, each adhered to societal expectations in terms of where they fell within hierarchical structure, norms, and mores.

However, implicitly there exists an explorer component in each of them that drove them to leave the comforts of known life constructs and seek new locations and places with the intent to conquer the “new world.” “Entrepreneurial,” “rebel,” and “competitive” were some of the self-subscribed descriptors about who they are. In many ways, to explore in a highly rigid and structured society such as India is not commonplace since one typically lives within their birth role in a given community (caste) (Chhokar et al., 2008). This has changed considerably since the lifting of Licence Raj in 1991 (government laws established in 1947 composed of strict business regulations to control the economy), but for each of them, such exploration was rather novel in the 1960s and 1970s. Dr. Arora referenced Gandhi’s essay on the Bhagavad Gita that explained while life may be predestined (dharma), all of us are still active participants and through good actions, actions will bring good. The implication here is that action requires risk taking, a concept strongly promoted by Gandhi’s leadership during the liberation movement.

Pragmatically, the opportunity for exploration was bolstered with the easing of U.S. immigration laws in 1965, the point in time when all participants were nearing or at the juncture for making decisions among postsecondary options. Certainly, realizing these urgings to explore became an option, but not everyone at that point in time took the opportunity. Satisfaction with the status quo, however, was simply not a part of the make-up of these participants. As one of them said, “I’ll
go to a place where I can really do something and improve the place as opposed to just being…” (Dr. Agarwal). Another participant observed that his role created the “chance to do some big things” and, as his career progressed, it was fundamentally important as an academic leader to engage in “getting new things going in making a difference” (Dr. Arora).

Among all participants, there exists a lack of tolerance for those who are risk-averse, particularly when decision-making pits values and principles against public perception. This concept echoes the tenets of India’s collectivist approach where leadership requires risk taking based on high moral ground (Chhokar et al., 2008). Morality, values, and regard for the common-whole are paramount to leaders acting with an interdependent rather than individualistic perspective since decision making is regarded as an obligation to the betterment of the group replete with long-term implications. Societies representing an individualist mind-set like the U.S. tend to make decisions based on short-term resolution with self-gratification valued over the collective whole (Falk, Dunn, & Norenzayan, 2010). Personal behavior among collectivist societies is to be spiritually correct, not necessarily by religious affiliation. Determinations are grounded in what is fundamentally good and morally right and take account of other’s needs and perspectives (Bacon, 1999; Falk et al., 2010; Miller, 2000). Additionally, Miller (2000) compared the U.S., a society heavily influenced by Christian doctrine with prescriptions for an idealized afterlife, to those affiliated with an individualized form of religion like Hinduism and Buddhism found in present day India, and concluded Americans have a greater propensity for risk-averse behaviors (Miller, 2000). This equates with Hofstede’s (1980) tolerance for
ambiguity where Indians are able to navigate life given their openness to various roads to spiritual fulfillment, whereas Americans tend to follow strict rules with a much lower preference for uncertainty.

In academia, the pressure to keep the institution from public scrutiny and in good standing increases as one progresses higher in the organization. Dr. Arora said such strictures will cause leaders to avoid decisions where the right thing to do is trumped by the easier solution (risk aversion). This can become a slippery slope, especially when the “leader” makes independent decisions absent of reason. Acting as the dominant, intelligent one solving problems without follower input is in line with early authoritarian leadership trait theory which counters the spirit of open discourse and dialogue in U.S. higher education (Bass, 1990; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993).

Dr. Gupta gave an example as dean when one of her faculty members, a protected minority, was brought up on charges of harassing a first year student. As the investigation ensued, it was discovered the offender had been previously reprimanded multiple times for the same infraction. Past leadership responded by placing a formal letter in the personnel file. This short-term resolution was an act to gratify the dean that action was taken, thwarting potential for subsequent and unwanted actions like litigation or additional formalities. Faced with doing the right thing versus protecting the image of the institution, Dr. Gupta recommended to the provost that the faculty member lose tenure. The provost, in an attempt to prevent legal entanglement and public scrutiny, offered to permanently remove the person from the classroom with pay. Dissatisfied with this risk-averse approach, Dr. Gupta
requested her recommendation go to the president. The president supported Dr. Gupta’s principled, value-based recommendation in which the careful balance of morality justified the high-risk decision culminating in the right outcome.

Simply put, Asian Indian higher education leaders take risks to do the right thing and have intolerance for individuals who choose the easy route to avoid any potential for external enquiry. The courage to take risks stems from early grounding in a place of strong morals and values imparted in filial and societal conditions. Concurrently, the accepted societal norm was to let life be as it is, to consent to the laws of hierarchy and live within their birth role (dharma). However, with India’s societal liberation from the British, Gandhi’s view that all are active participants to create good, and the easing of U.S. immigration laws, conditions became prime for this community of practice to explore beyond known-life constructs, necessitating risk taking. Dr. Gupta noted that the courage to take risks requires a strong sense of self, knowing the core principles and values one upholds with uncompromising regard for personal ethical boundaries. The challenge is to communicate rationale and not act in a vacuum so followers can make their own determinations concerning the leader’s actions. Ultimately, the underpinning goal for these leaders is to make a difference, and to do so requires self-confidence and taking risks cemented in high morals and values.

**Permeate Boundaries: Relational Constructs**

Each participant proclaimed a large part of their success was due to relationships built across numerous stakeholders, including students, staff, alumni, community, and the Board. Clearly, relationship building is paramount to successful
integration and leadership effectiveness featuring elements of trust and reciprocity (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Bass, 1990; George, 2003; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Meyerson, 2001; Pierce & Newstrom, 2005). To do this effectively requires a certain level of comfort in socially engaging with others, which is not necessarily a natural talent for American born citizens let alone for immigrants entering the country as young adults. Dr. Moorthy proclaimed:

Building those relationships at the ground level, it gets critically important. And, I think [...] that is not a skill set that is, comes easy to most Indians, you know—they tend to be shy; they tend to be reserved.

Each participant’s life story has the element, common to all, of leaving their homeland for America, which naturally lends itself to this concept about having success with permeating boundaries (or borders). However, buried deep in their narrative is a foundation based on pure life existence within India’s borders. Most notably, all lived amidst multiple religions where ritualistic activities occurred constantly, especially if they were Hindu. But, no matter the religion, in some way or other everyone shared activities to varying degrees. Of the five participants, one proclaimed Hinduism as her primary faith, but merges it with Christian-based doctrine. Out of the remaining participants, two proclaim non-religiosity but cling to Hindu philosophical teachings illustrated in the Bhagavad Gita, and the other two participants raised Catholic in the southern India region continue religious observance. Selectively choosing various religious attributes to fit one’s needs is consistent with Eastern religiosity (Miller, 2000). The key takeaway is that while one may be of a specific religious persuasion, recognition and engagement in the ritualistic celebrations and customs of others allows for members across perceived
different factions to live in harmony within a community. Dr. Rajan and Dr. Gupta described exposure to multiple religions through school assemblies and activities as strongly influencing their sense of values elevating sensitivity for all walks of life.

Adaptability rings through four out of the five stories because each lived away from home at some point while growing up to pursue academic studies. This is an important concept because moving away and living with a group of strangers at a formative stage in life development has potential for all sorts of outcomes. Here we see them grasping onto the opportunity and excelling in their studies.

The Hindi phrase, *Vasudheive Kutumbakam*, means the “whole world is my family.” The role of family is paramount to Indian existence. Extended family is simply part of life where multiple generations may live in one dwelling and family members frequently visit and maintain communication. As Dr. Agarwal pointed out, Americans are more isolated and focused on immediate family, missing out on the virtues of a large network of blood connections. Dr. Rajan emphasized that “being an Indian you are used to larger groups, larger interactions and networks.” The four participants with families indicated they raise their children with an appreciation for maintaining networks because one never knows when a need might arise to call on them, or vice versa. The value of networks is key to Indian survival and is a cultural carry-over in their professional lives.

The primary key to success among this community of practice is applying their family frame to their academic community. Dr. Moorthy went so far as to say one’s responsibility is to take care of home and family first, “first-things-first.” How this translates is making sure the campus is well kept, facilities up-to-date, and
improvements made to instill pride for all to experience. The family dimension plays out in recognizing, thanking, and sharing institutional success with everyone across the spectrum. Kezar and Lester (2011) contend that embracing an informal leadership approach from the bottom-up among community members representing different departments can promulgate positive change when done through subtle rather than radical means. While individual, group, and organizational level dimensions influence the tactics employed, Kezar and Lester illustrate leadership emergence among individuals sharing common goals with the potential for campus-wide change.

Participants described various methods by which relational leadership can be nurtured. “Sneaker-net” is described by Dr. Moorthy and Dr. Agarwal as physically going to places where others work rather than asking them to come to the leader’s office. Other examples include going to lunch with peers and finding ways to be in the space where learning happens (Dr. Arora) because this is the fundamental reason for postsecondary education, attending student exhibitions, and remaining visible. Forming relationships by genuinely getting to know others has resulted in overlapping spaces, allowing them to bring together people from different departments and functions and tackle problems where support becomes a system-wide realization, rather than acting in a vacuum. Dr. Moorthy said he works to:

Find ways of finding commonality between our mission and objectives, and work where those circles overlap, other than at the fringes; and we generally tend to come at things that way, and that really is, I think, a huge factor in why some of us, you know, move along in the continuum.

According to Dr. Gupta, meal times were designated as time set-aside for family members to reconnect, a social experience. I can certainly relate to the food
shock the participants must have experienced, considering American fare is rather bland compared to the expansive varieties of spices and curries available in typical Indian cuisine. Figure 8 captures a typical scenario I experienced on every trip to India with the team eating together over food laced with indigenous spices. It was a time where we socially connected with one another reinforcing relational bonds.

Figure 8. Team dinner in New Delhi, April 2009

Permeating the boundaries on the surface calls upon leaders to navigate between groups and find ways to bring different factions together. We see here this value harkens to deeper values instilled from a cultural sense. Indian life exposed them to multiple walks of life, breeding a genuine sense of value for differences. Working in the overlapping spaces involving differing roles and departments is a natural extension of grassroots leadership where positive change has the greatest potential (Kezar & Lester, 2011). Nurturing relationships across boundaries requires diligence for honest and unpretentious motivations, getting to know others often done
through small acts requiring time such as going to their space, engaging in meaningful dialogue, and treating all with respect and dignity.

**Velvet Glove, Steel Hand: Communication With Action**

Chhokar et al., (2008) assert the ideal Indian leader is action oriented with a display of charisma harboring “communication, direction, vision, and change orientation” characteristics (p. 1005). All participants affirmed they led with a tempered approach, refrained from raising their voice, and spoke softly infused with elements of focused listening before taking action. Communicating with intention balancing action and empathy is a delicate act as described by Dr. Arora:

> Understanding how to balance listening with action. I think actually that is a key to leadership. Some people are good listeners, but they don’t act or they don’t act boldly when bold action is called for. Others act without having listened and that’s bad. But I think in an academic environment in particular, listening and learning enables you to get much more buy-in than you otherwise would have gotten. And then having the courage, and the strength, and the spine to do what’s right, even if not everybody’s going to like you, is very, very important in leadership. I think temperament is important.

Dr. Rajan said that listening means hearing the message before acting:

> I would like people to feel that I listened to them. I may not have always followed their advice, but I would tell them why I didn’t follow their advice and why I thought it was just necessary to go another way. Or I would modify my decision based on some of their input, so at least it had a flavor of what they were hoping to achieve.

Dr. Gupta tempers outward display of emotional and dialogue:

> I never pump my fist; I never raise my voice; I never yell. […] It has something to do with my culture attitude, [my] upbringing, and I think that stood me in good stead in moments like that crisis that I mentioned […] where you really have to sort of be calm and deal with the crisis.
Dr. Agarwal believed he owed it to his faculty to provide honest and straightforward conversation when communicating difficult information:

The point is that […] I’m going talk to them and tell them we are not going to promote you; we’re not going to give you tenure. I think that was one of the toughest things to manage for me. So, not a crisis, but personally a crisis because you really are looking at […] these people and telling them although they’re good, but we’re not going to be able to get them to the next level. That’s something I guess was tough for me to do, […] personally to sit down with each one of them and tell them why and why the decision has been made. And, they’re all good people.

Dr. Moorthy communicates with everyone because it’s a way to humanize him and connect with people in any role within the academic community:

Yesterday I was walking by, went to get a cup of coffee and I saw this basketball player, Black basketball player, sitting there with this huge pile of French fries; that’s what he was eating at six o’clock in the evening. But you see, I stopped and sort of tapped him on the shoulder, because he was at dinner at the house just a couple days ago, and said to him, “Hey, you know, what are you doing?” He just looks at me; he smiles and says, “I know, I know, I shouldn’t be doing …” and I said to him, “You know, the number one cause of death of Black males is heart attack.” So, the point I’m trying to make is that we don’t have a lot of lines in our community.

In times of crisis the president is the face of the institution. Dr. Gupta went to great lengths customizing her communications for every stakeholder key to the institution, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the Board. In the wake of an on-campus crisis, maintaining a calm demeanor and careful attention to messaging was paramount for her to instill a sense of safety among all community members in a time of uncertainty.

With each testimony, participants addressed the need for transparent communication from a personal to system-wide stance. Transparent leadership is critical in building trust no matter the constituent (Bass, 1990; Biech, 2010). Across
the leadership gamut of inquiry, communication indelibly takes center stage (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Bennis, 2009; Burns, 1978; Chhokar et al., 2008; Hofstede et al., 2010; Kezar, et al., 2006).

Unfortunately, quiet demeanor can sometimes be translated from the Western perspective as low-key, passive, and non-confrontational. Asian Indians may be “viewed as unsuitable for the decision-making roles and leadership qualities demanded by American organizations” (Varma, 2004, p. 301). And, when a leader suddenly speaks with authority, he or she may be perceived as autocratic or directive, resembling early contingency theorist paradigms (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977; Lewin, Lippitt, & White 1939). Bennis (2009) states that transformational leaders have voice—“Leading through voice”—and it is used to inspire trust and integrity (p. 159).

To circumvent negative perceptions by others about his composed communication style, Dr. Arora said that leaders require a consciousness about the principles at stake as a gauge for implementing a firm communication approach:

A former mentor […] who was president […] described me to myself as the “steel hand in the velvet glove.” I don’t mind that description. Sometimes when people feel the velvet glove they think that you’re going to be easy to push around, and then they get surprised. My instinct is to be as conciliatory as possible on the things that aren’t central principles or central goals. But when it comes to the important things, you really have to stick to the principle and not be folding and compromising.

Asians communicating in Western culture enter the environment with radical challenges ahead of them since the styles of East and West are seen in direct contradiction (Varma, 2004). What this group has successfully accomplished is a fusing of Eastern style composed of listening and learning before acting with the Western style of acting boldly with conviction. Communication components
illustrated in these stories portray a sense of listening with empathy (key to emotional intelligence), tempered outward display of emotionality, honesty in times of delivering difficult information (integrity), ignoring any lines and approaching all stakeholders with intent and clarity, and using voice appropriately to uphold principles core to the mission of the institution.

**Navigating Cultures to Higher Education Leadership**

The seven peculiarities specific to first generation Asian Indians shed light on how they view their navigation of cultures and influences impacting the way they lead. From the Immigrant Mentality and Work Hard dimensions to commitment to Education, the establishment of Credibility, Intolerance for Risk Aversion, Permeating Boundaries, and communicating with a Velvet Glove-Steel Hand approach, each in their own way has achieved leadership levels at echelons unlike many of their Asian peers. When executed well, the potential for transformational leadership is great with hints of transactional elements; the challenge is to achieve the right balance. Chapter 6 pulls from these findings and creates a leadership framework summarizing the profile of the first generation Asian Indian leader in U.S. higher education, followed by areas for future inquiry and concluding insights.
CHAPTER SIX: VISUALIZING THE JOURNEY AND IMPLICATIONS

*Be the change you want to see in the world.*

- Mohandas Gandhi

**Asian Indian Leadership Theoretical Underpinnings**

This first generation Asian Indian community of practice has revealed peculiarities setting them apart as a distinct group of higher education leaders. In the beginning, self-actualization through acculturation and the refining of self-identity coalesced into an immigrant mentality of being American first. This insight bucks research findings asserting first generation Asian Indians identify as Indian first. Born into a society with pre-determined roles and a set of societal expectations, all formed an affinity for collectivism, maintained allocentric components in America, but naturally absorbed elements of the individualistic American way of life. This assimilation into American culture netted the best of their Indian roots and positively impacted U.S. higher education leadership execution—leading with care for the home and family.

Working hard, focusing on the task at hand, and responding to the “pull” gives these leaders the resolve that they are fulfilling their calling by not dwelling on the next strategic career move. This Gandhian approach links tightly back to Indian culture heavily influenced by Hindu constructs where one’s role is assigned, all reinforced through ancient Indian teachings of heroism in the Ramayana and
Mahabharata epics. Steeped in a life with values for doing the right thing, education was a catalyst for each person to elevate their role within society. By working hard and doing the right thing, all participants subscribed that the “pull” to the next life challenge presented itself, but all in one way or the other had to be encouraged before pursuing the next career move. This need for encouragement poses an incongruous paradigm since Asian Indians tend not to encourage others, unlike their American counterparts.

Parents, particularly mother, filled the influential and critical role of instilling education as insurance for future returns. Wrapped in this motivation to succeed academically, education was a source credited for shaping their self-identity. This identity resulted in a search for truth as they migrated to the U.S. becoming scholars in their academic fields. As life experiences synthesized, the “pull” factored into their work ethic, and education served as a catalyst by which each assumed formal administrative posts that led toward executive leadership positions. For each participant, making a difference was a fundamental and critical component for making the leap to lead others.

Leading U.S. higher education institutions demands leaders skilled across a portfolio of competencies, many of which are considered corporate, business-savvy dimensions. This community of practice emphasized that while leadership roles can be taxing, maintaining credibility through continued scholarly actions like teaching or research efforts was paramount for them. The challenge is for the leader to make scholarly activity a priority and strategically demark and allocate time specific to scholarship and academic activities.
Asian Indian leaders are intolerant of academic leaders who avoid risk as the easy way out to avoid potential of public institutional scrutiny. Propelled by a spirit of exploration into new worlds, all participants spoke fondly of their formative years in India where they assumed their predestined role and achieved academic success while absorbing fundamental lessons shaping their values. Even with dharma and karma, critical Hinduism components with hierarchical implications heavily influencing Indian culture, Gandhi challenged the people to create good through actions, because it is the right thing to do. As U.S. immigration laws loosened and provided greater possibility of transferring to U.S. higher education, every participant coming from India’s collectivistic society, as defined by Hofstede (1980, 2001), entered with a drive to absorb and learn in this new land of individualism. Research indicates people living in cultures with strict prescriptions for life activities and requirements for achieving favor with God, like Christianity in the U.S., tend to be risk averse. Asian Indians come from a society where religion tends to be more fluid and one’s religious journey offers more options about how to achieve a happy life on Earth and after. Thus taking risks is more acceptable as long as decisions are moral and value-laden.

Living in a land interfacing with and engaging in the customs and traditions of multiple faiths blurred boundaries for the Asian Indians, allowing for different religions and faiths to manifest together. Additionally, the consideration of the “whole world is my family” influences their perception about the concept of networked relations that extend beyond the immediate, nuclear construct. Asian Indian executives consider all members of the academic community family—
students, staff, faculty, alumni, neighboring community, and the Board. Permeating these boundaries requires work, but with concerted efforts to personally know people, an environment is fostered for them to bring different roles and departments together for real change. Ultimately, leading across disparate groups within the same institution requires respect for all no matter the role, position, title, or any other designation, in essence leading absent of community lines.

Communicating with conviction, maintaining a tempered demeanor, fully listening to all the contrasting points of view, and making bold moves based on core principles is an earmark approach for this community of practice. The velvet glove-steel hand concept serves this group of participants well because it brings together East and West communication strengths—listening with intent, acting boldly with transparent communication—and allows them to command presence by leading through voice. Across the painted scenes of lived experiences, every participant communicates by appealing to the senses of their constituents in a genuine and value-based approach.

From a Traditional Heroic Leadership point of view, Asian Indian leaders exhibit fundamentals that are enticing to follower motivation. Paying attention to the home and family elicits intrinsic and extrinsic motivators key to Herzberg’s (1966) Dual Factor Leadership Theory. When it comes to encouraging others, the mind-set among Asian Indians leans toward a Behavioral Leadership frame where the leader is to determine the best approach for supporting, challenging, and motivating the follower (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977; McGregor, 1960; Blake & Mouton, 1961; Yukl, 1971). In times when quick actions are required, the rationale must be shared so as to
prevent followers from feeling uninformed and powerless (Bass, 1990; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Coupled with that concept, a leader who suddenly speaks with authority may be perceived as autocratic or directive, resembling early contingency theorist paradigms (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977; Lewin et al., 1939).

Under the Post-heroic Leadership Transformation Leadership umbrella, Asian Indian leaders have enacted leadership in a manner that can be considered ahead of current theory. From the beginning, each chose to travel the world in their quest for career evolution, supporting Bennis’s notion that those who travel the farthest from home learn more (2009). The convergence of values, purpose, heart, relationships, and self-discipline—all core elements of authentic leadership—all congealed during their formative years (George, 2003). Responding to the “pull” in relation to serving others earmarks servant leadership characteristics (Greenleaf, 1977). Leading with intellect supported by a strong “moral compass” and a principle-laden approach indicates an authentic and values-based leadership approach (George, 2003; O’Toole, 1995). According to Bolman and Gallos (2011), this “sense of calling” is imperative to modern-day academic leaders. The drive for continual learning is key to making a difference in their call to leadership (Avolio et al., 2009; Burns, 1978; Greenleaf, 1977). Having a strong sense of self-awareness has contributed to their career trajectory as well as fundamental elements of constructivism and collective leadership—leading frames in modern leadership thinking (Bennis, 2009; Drath, 2001; Goethals & Sorenson, 2006; Kezar et al., 2006; Raelin, 2005). Each has a drive to remain connected to educational dimensions whether through teaching, research, or conference presentations, all of which counter prevailing trends among higher
education leadership (Mathie, et al, 2004). Another distinguishing factor is their propensity for making decisions that are spiritually and morally right for the collective whole, particularly in an environment intolerant of risk taking (Hofstede, 1980; Mathie, et al., 2004). Their ability to navigate seemingly disparate communities of people and building relationships has laid a foundation of trust and reciprocity which is key to their leadership (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Bass, 1990; George, 2003; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Meyerson, 2001; Pierce & Newstrom, 2005). Research by Kezar and Lester (2011) demonstrates that mobilization towards organizational changes resides at the grassroots level, something in which this community of practice is versed. Finally, this group of participants speaks with a voice of leadership (Bennis, 2009) in which transparency builds trust (Bass, 1990; Biech, 2010) that is fundamental to leadership effectiveness (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Bennis, 2009; Burns, 1978; Chhokar et al., 2008; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Kezar, et al., 2006). Figure 9 illustrates the theoretical underpinnings unique to first generation Asian Indian leaders in U.S. higher education.
Figure 9. Mapping an integrated model of Asian Indian leadership. Asian Indian leadership underpinnings. retrievable from Woolsey website, www.matthewallenwoolsey.com

Going To the “Other Side”: Connecting Back

Going to the other side is symbolic for this community of practice on a number of levels. First, heralding the journey from India to the U.S. and going it alone elevates their persona as one of explorer and voyager. Each in their own way developed skills of adaptability and flexibility as they learned the ways of a new culture, embraced the differences for U.S. higher education pedagogy, and evolved into leaders among peers.
Second, moving from the academic comfort zone to the administrative side required a labyrinth of skill sets from permeating boundaries through relationship building, leading with an immigrant mentality by assimilating into the tapestry of American and academic life, fusing Eastern and Western communication modes through listening and acting bold, taking risks fueled by values and conviction, and asserting scholarship in search of truth and never leaving that which drove them to academic excellence.

Third, going to the other side has now mutated into a new career phase as some of the participants are now reconnecting with their ethnic roots back in India. Dr. Moorthy is forging academic agreements with India institutions of higher education by which students may transfer to the U.S. and complete a baccalaureate degree within three years. Dr. Arora is increasing professional ties with business leaders in Mumbai and other locations. In all cases, each participant makes it a priority to return to India for various reasons, but is resolute in the proclamation that they are more American than Indian.

Asian Indian Leadership Journey

For each, the journey took different twists and turns, climbing along the administrative ladder when the timing was right by working hard. The cycle of leadership evolution is peculiar to this demographic group and is filled with lessons of success and challenges along the way. In each participant vignette, I experienced a passion they have from whence they came, the journey they trod, and the joy they experience leading others in higher education. Figure 10 illustrates the critical
phases, influences, and actions explicating their sociocultural perspective on the path to higher education leadership in the United States.

Figure 10. Leadership lifecycle for first generation Asian Indian leaders in U.S. higher education. Retrievable from Woolsey website, www.matthewallenwoolsey.com

**Life Applications**

The outcomes from this inquiry are paramount, yet simple in terms of intellectual wrangling. On the outset, the seven-featured paradigms are filled with common sense. Leaders should naturally encourage others, build relationships across competing constituents, and communicate with intention for example. However,
what may be seemingly obvious does not necessarily appear as such. Hence the following are recommendations for Indians at multiple levels of leadership who are desirous of leadership evolution. Some are a synthesis of the seven dimensions distinctive to this community of practice as outlined above, and others are direct recommendations from the participants.

**Encourage Others and Pull Them Along**

Leadership requires an obligation to look outwards, seek others with potential for greatness, and proactively encourage movement upward towards the next level. As we learned from every participant in this study, the power of encouragement triggered action to pursue the next role. With each career move, more responsibility ensued, building off past successes with opportunity to develop new skill sets. In every account of career advancement, role models and mentors proved beneficial.

For Asian Indians considering progression, responsibility also rests on them to actively seek guidance. The search for someone of sage wisdom to guide up-and-coming Asian Indians does not mean that person must solely be of Asian Indian descent. Rather, one should seek guides who will incite dialogue, causing reflection that builds towards a stronger sense of self and an honest assessment of one’s skill sets, taking into account strengths and gaps.

**Work Hard in the Moment With Positivity**

A resounding message throughout this inquiry is the recommendation to simply focus attention on one’s current role and give full energy to doing the best possible job. Dr. Agarwal said:

Just work as hard as you can in the position you are in without thinking about, [...] the next position, just work hard. And the second one is [...] keep a
positive mind and don’t blame on discrimination because you’re Indian, you’re not getting something, there is more to it, you know many people have made it.

Dr. Arora took this a step forward to where excellence drove decision making, building on positivity:

That’s another thing about me, I’ve always, always made decisions based on the very, very highest standards of excellence. And so, when you have that kind of vision, that focus on excellence, and the positive kind of viewpoint, and if you couple that with the leadership principles I talked about—knowing when to listen, when to act—I think you’ve got it. That’s what I would advise people to do. I think people who exhibit those kinds of characteristics in an organization will rise up. Too many around them see all the cynicism, and they don’t want that in a leader.

Working hard in combination with a positive attitude, as demonstrated through the lives of all participants, shows great potential for aspiring Asian Indian leaders following in their footsteps. Combine this with encouragement and a passion for mentoring others, and the potential for greater Asian Indian presence in higher education executive roles becomes reinforced for future generations. However, future roles are dependent on mastering the lessons and skills to be learned in the present and this requires an honest assessment of personal skills and abilities where training and other resources may be required to round out one’s resume.

Seek Leadership Training and Constant Refining

By all accounts, leadership training typically offers a spectrum of topics beneficial to anyone aspiring to hone skills that impact followers. Seek out training through local institutional channels, request opportunities for participation, and offer time and or resources to help in the fruition of training activities. Looking to external options, a number of higher education organizations offer leadership and executive training, including the American Council on Education (ACE), Asian Pacific
Americans in Higher Education (APAHE), Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics (LEAP), National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), American College Personnel Association (ACPA), and many others. Additionally, organizations outside higher education exist to promote Asian leadership development such as the Asian American Institute (AAI), Asian Pacific American Leadership Institute (APALI), and the South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT). However, training in and of itself is not enough; rather, diligent focus on opportunities to strengthen skill gaps while mentoring and leading others in the process is required. Theoretical frameworks introduced in training are excellent ways to contextualize leadership. However, there is nothing more valuable than hands-on, practical engagement with others combined with self-assessment, reflection, and proactive efforts in conjunction with guidance from a sage guide or coach.

**Clarify Values and Align With the Broader Organization**

Leadership inquiry, no matter the theoretical framing, emphasizes one must have clarity about who they are and requires values clarification. Building from this, personal and institutional values must align with the core mission for optimal fit:

Whatever you are as a result of that background, so you have to, you have to have a strong sense of core values, so, the lines you will not cross, right? That no matter how much it might hurt you professionally, that there’s a kind of boundary when it comes to values that you will not violate. (Dr. Gupta)

Leading in today’s higher education landscape can be very taxing as reiterated by many in this community of practice. When a leader soundly knows who they are and the espoused values they subscribe, making tough decisions can be navigated with greater clarity, allowing for one to rest peacefully at night. Of course, making the tough decisions requires other skills in terms of diplomatic communication,
flexibility, collaborative relational connections, and so forth. But at the very core of being, when decisions are made on principle in alignment with institutional virtues, consequences coming from unwarranted compromises are negated.

**Collaborate and Be Relational**

People can tell when a person has their interests in mind no matter the given situation (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Permeating boundaries is critical in navigating higher education, especially in these times with external forces influencing the academy. Increased pressure to operate like a business implies competition between groups in order to make their position known for resources. Leading with a collaborative and collective mind-set as depicted by Kezar and Lester (2011) fundamentally links to the premise that groups working together in the overlapping spaces can achieve results for the greater good. Dr. Moorthy greatly emphasized finding these areas of commonality to achieve results:

> If I were to give some advice, you know, that’s the skill sets that I would ask them to focus on, you know, being collaborative, being pragmatic, being relational, you know. In this setting, in the academic setting, that gets you much farther than, you know, citing chapter and verse saying “this is the way it is.”

Find something of mutual interest, a topic with broad appeal, and proactively engage disparate groups. Leadership from the ground up has potential for positive change. Through these exchanges, relationship capital builds, creating momentum for future collaborative opportunities.

**Develop Communication Approach for Western Resonance**

Americans tend to speak loudly combined with emotionality that counters the natural Asian Indian approach to discourse (Varma, 2004). We have heard the
benefits of listening with intent, connecting to the emotions of others combined with a compulsion to act bold in critical moments. Ultimately, communication effectiveness requires an immense amount of dedication to getting it right, albeit on an interpersonal level such as written and public messaging. Often taken for granted, communication can be the Achilles heel pre-empting the best of intentions. The recommendation here is to practice, secure guidance from others effective in communicating, and build in the time required to dissect those moments of success and failure for future application.

**Learn—Never Stop Seeking Truth**

Warren Bennis (2009) affirms leaders are made, not born. Implicit in this statement is the undercurrent for leadership effectiveness, engaging in lifelong learning. This group of Asian Indian leaders proved education a core component of their being, registering it as a means in the pursuit of truth. Truthful leadership seems the optimal route, where genuineness is fostered and experienced by followers. When truth becomes the driving force, it seeps into communication, permeates interactions, and serves a guiding principle in times of difficult decision making. Truth seems a likely ingredient of transformational, servant, and collaborative leadership that is required to move people toward the greater good of all. Without truth, I surmise leadership becomes an empty, mechanical act, lacking substance for enlisting others.

**Build a Support Network**

When asked about advice for Asian Indians aspiring to leadership opportunities, network building came through unanimously. Networking means extending outside one’s comfort zone and entering the worlds of others. Likewise,
leading sets one apart, compartmentalizing the leader to guard certain emotions and filter words so as to not negatively cast people or the institution into public scrutiny. Dr. Gupta emphasizes this point with great passion:

Network. I think they should build a network of support outside their institution because it’s a lonely spot, […] when you become dean and provost. And when you get to that spot, it’s really lonely […] because when you speak to other people you don’t want to expose your institution, so even when you have friends, you don’t tell them things that you know puts your institution in a bad light; but you do need to have a network of people you can rely on with whom you can be honest and share the things you are going through.

Organizations identified as leadership outlets offer prime resources meeting this leadership need. No matter the forum, the caution is to secure networks based on trust where open dialogue is safe and affords the opportunity for growth and development. Leadership is a lonely place at times, and the more one has avenues for emotional purging, the healthier a person can be, adding perspective resulting in a sense of calm when rendering difficult decisions.

Applications to Live By

As this study shows, leadership is not a finite set of skills with an instruction pamphlet; rather, it is a process requiring firm attention to self in relation to others. One of the greatest things a leader can do is be astute to all those around. Look for individuals who effervesce with a desire to build and make a difference not just for those around them but across the organization, and encourage them to pursue roles with even greater impact. This of course requires diligence for every person to focus on the task at hand, ignore titles, and devote everything one has to do the best possible job with a positive mindset. In this day and age, leadership training and development resources are available to help one understand how one may best
influence followers toward a greater good. A strong sense of personal values and principles aligned with an institution’s mission creates salience for optimal leadership effectiveness. A crucial element to this concoction of recommendations is to be relational whereby collaboration is key in moving an organization along with never ending energy. Effective and transparent communication is key to garnering follower understanding and acceptance, but must be articulated based on truth; never stop seeking truth. Finally, while leadership can be lonely, we as humans need connections to keep us balanced. An external network of peers provides this, particularly when pressures demand a levelheaded approach in moments when stakes are high.

**Continue the Journey**

Asian Indian representation in U.S. higher education executive levels is thin, as illustrated in the rationale guiding this inquiry. The sample size is limited, thus posing challenges to transferability among the entire Asian Indian population in higher education. Additionally, four out of the five participants came from one region of the U.S., which may impact their views on higher education with regional nuances. While the findings unearthed characteristics and peculiarities relevant to their leadership journeys across multiple cultures, one might ask whether or not these are specific to Asian Indians generally within higher education, or whether or not these parallel the experiences of Asian Indians outside the realm of postsecondary education. The depth of research literature on Asian Indians is shallow, posing another limitation; but with the introduction of findings from the study, hopefully future research will build off this and other similar inquiries.
Going forward, future studies with Asian Indians in higher education may include a longitudinal study tracing their journey over time with a scrupulous eye towards leadership evolution and approach. Considering the time this group of participants grew up in India, before the early 1970s, the power of secular forces of the freedom movement and its impact on their approach to leadership in U.S. higher education merits inquiry. A deeper investigation into ethnic identity and motivation for doing what they did, especially among second and third generation Asian Indians, is likely to harvest insightful results for impact on leadership development. Another dimension might consider establishing a comparative group of leaders with similar career progression absent of Indian roots to determine nuances and characteristics of leadership growth and development. In the same vein, a comparative study between Asian Indians and other Asian groups might distill novel insights. Another comparative angle could include a comparison between Asian Indians working in higher education to Asian Indians in the high tech sector given the robust representations Asian Indians have in Silicon Valley. In terms of making Asian Indian leadership style more declarative, future research may want to incorporate insights from individuals working with the identified leaders, such as direct reports, peers, the Board, and community members, since the participants in this study only self-reported their view on how they lead.

“Going to the Other Side”: My Journey

This quest to isolate phenomena specific to Asian Indians is a reflection of culminating forces in motion both in my life, and in a way, the lives of Asian Indians featured in this inquiry. Going to the other side is a metaphorical phrase descriptive
of my life journey where the other side stimulated an unquenchable thirst to explore and learn. From my early years, education became a way for me to distinguish myself from the crowd, opening doors for opportunities unbeknownst to me at the time. Primary education helped me hone leadership skills in student organizations while I dove into my studies and become skilled in communication and music.

My time at Washington State University (WSU), located on the other side of the state of Washington in relation to my hometown, nurtured this ongoing affinity for education and leadership development. I became a manager in campus food service, led the marching band, counseled others in an academic peer advisor role, and served in various officer roles in my fraternity and broadcasting groups. WSU served as a catalyst to my venture in seeing the world and from there I seized the opportunity to learn and help others, culminating in a career in student affairs. As I forged onward to West Virginia University on the other side of the country, I quickly learned that while part of the same country, a cultural shift came into play because life constructs and perceptions were different from my West coast mindset. After six years of student affairs work, including my graduate assistant days, I made the choice to go to the other side and give the corporate world a chance. For the next 12 years my life was steeped in the consulting world where forays into foreign cultures opened my eyes to experiences and life interpretations so new and thrilling they caused a reframing of my understanding of life, people, society, perceptions, understanding, and more.

Clearly, life on the other side of the planet struck a chord with me because my travels to India have exceeded anything required as a work obligation. Education has
always been about finding truth—truth as a result of learning about the world and the interpretations other human beings have about truth—and sorting through to create a holistic frame to guide how I live my life. My passion for working with others, my insatiable appetite for learning, and my affinity for cultural interludes have brought me to this intellectual exercise where India, leadership, and education converged.

All along the way, I have featured quotes from one of the most transformational leaders in modern era, Mohandas Gandhi. Gandhi was heavily influenced by his readings of Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, and Muslim texts as well as his experiences with racism in South Africa and with the British legal system, and then developed it into the nonviolent movement after reading Tolstoy, Thoreau, and others. His life, his calling, his “pull” to serve literally changed the livelihood of an entire nation, inspiring people the world over since his walk on Earth to the present day. I can only try to envision what Indian life must have been like pre-1947—well, of course, movies and documentaries have given me insight—to live in a society where one’s voice seldom had resonance. Gandhi’s voice had resonance, reaching all factions of Indian society, friend or foe, culminating in action for the greater good.

As I continue along this life journey, I hope my voice and actions, big and small, somehow influence the world around me for the better.

Life forward will take a new twist because I plan to engage in education, fusing my higher education and consulting world experiences. This dissertation is not the completion; rather, it is the beginning to a future of new challenges. In the spirit of all those contributing to this study, I will continue to work hard, live my truth, and positively contribute wherever my journey leads me.
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE
APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Introduction
• Doctoral candidate
• Interest in India and Education leadership, shed light for others to learn from

Explanation of study
• Meeting with individuals like yourself trying to understand your journey from India to the U.S.
• Semi-structured, potential for follow-up
• Confidentiality, recording
• Return for member-checking

To begin with, I am interested in hearing about your growing up in India...

Community Culture
• What part of India are you from? How would you describe the climate? (Descriptive)
• Are there customs or celebrations specific to your region? (Descriptive)
• Every region in India is proud of specific dietary delicacies, what was the food like? (Descriptive)

School / Role Models
• Talk about what it was like to going to school in India starting from the beginning. (Descriptive)
• As you reflect on those years, who were some of your school role models that influenced you? Why? (Descriptive)

Family / Values
• How did you learn about right and wrong? (Grand Tour)
• Walk me through the makeup of your family? (Descriptive)
• Did your parents influence your educational path? (Reflective)

Leadership
• During your time in India, what kinds of leadership roles did you fill? (Descriptive)
You made a shift in your life moving from India to the United States...

America

• Tell me about what motivated you to come to the United States? (Descriptive)
• When you got here, what was your overall impression the first day you arrived? (Reflective)
• What were some of the major differences you experienced? (Contrast)
• Which ones did you find easiest to adjust to? (Contrast)
• Which one did you find most challenging? (Contrast)
• What aspects of your Indian roots—like food, celebrations, family, etc.—do you continue to incorporate into your life here in the United States? In what ways? (Descriptive)
• What does a typical social gathering look like—who do you usually meet up with, what kinds of events do you do? (Grand Tour)

Let’s focus on your American academic path...

Education

• When you got to the United States what was your academic journey? (Structural)
• Tell me about how your educational experience in the U.S. differed from India. (Contrast)

In terms of your professional progression and career...

Leadership / Career

• Walk me through your path up to this point? (Structural)
• What does a typical day look like for you today? (Grand Tour)
• Tell me about a campus crisis situation where you were challenged. What past experiences or sources of strength did you draw from to help you manage the situation? (Mini-tour question)
• In your professional career, what successes have you experienced that you attribute to being Indian? (Descriptive)
• In your professional career, have you experienced any obstacles or challenges along the way that you attribute to your being Indian? Can you describe one? (Descriptive)
• If I were to ask the people around you about your leadership style, how do you think they might respond? (Contrast)
• Looking back on your life is there anything you would have done differently? (Reflective)
• Project into the future, where do you see yourself in five, ten, fifteen years? (Reflective)
• What do you want to be remembered for after you leave here and move on to your next assignment? (Reflective)
• To others following in your footsteps, what advice do you have for them to achieve leadership in the United States higher education system? (Reflective)
• Any closing comments?
APPENDIX B: E-MAIL INTRODUCTION
APPENDIX B

E-mail Introduction

Subject: Invitation to participate in Dissertation on Asian Indian Leaders in USHE

Hello, X:

Thank you for your time earlier today regarding my inquiry about inviting Mr. X to participate in my doctoral research.

I am a doctoral student in the Benedictine University Higher Education and Organizational Change program. I am conducting an ethnographic study focused on Asian Indian leaders who grew up in India and are now leading United States Higher Education colleges and universities. Given this is an ethnographic study, I would need to a 90 minute interview in Mr. ___’s office if possible. My goal is to meet with all my participants within the next two months.

I will send Mr. X a more thorough description of the study along with all the requirements requisite of a dissertation consent form.

Here is my contact information:

Best Regards,

Matt
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM
APPENDIX C

Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title: Becoming a Leader in a New Land: Sociocultural Perspectives of Indian Expatriate Leaders in the U.S. System of Higher Education. An Ethnographic Study.

Principal Investigator:
Matthew A. Woolsey, Ed.D. Candidate, Higher Education & Organizational Change, Benedictine University (Lisle, IL)

Description
You are invited to participate in a non-experimental research project focused on Asian Indian leaders in higher education. The purpose of this study is to answer the following research question, “How do Indian expatriates view their highest professional attainments in the U.S. educational system from their sociocultural perspectives?” A major source of data collection for this study will come from semi-structured interviews typical of ethnographic inquiry along with researcher field notes, documents, and artifacts. Identified interviewees of Asian Indian descent will be invited from public, private, community colleges, and universities. All Asian Indian participants need to have minimally completed high school equivalent education in India before moving to the United States.

Study Procedures
Given the nature of this ethnographic study, on-site observation is necessary to paint a complete picture of all research participants’ lived experience. Part of this process will involve an initial interview of 90 minutes in a quiet location free of interruptions.

- All interviews will be video recorded.
- Interviews will be conducted at mutually convenient locations and on days/times that are agreed to ahead of time.
- In some cases follow-up meetings may be necessary for further clarification.
- All participants will be asked to “Member Check” the data once it is compiled and initial analysis is conducted to add to the study’s credibility and trustworthiness.

The potential risks associated with participating in this study:

- There are no known risks associated with participating in the interviews or my presence for observation. No questions of a sensitive nature will be asked. Participants are free to decline to answer any question.

The benefits associated with participating in this study:
- There exists very little research focused in Asian Indians in higher education. The benefit of this study is the opportunity to provide meaning-making for other Asian Indian’s aspiring to achieve executive level leadership roles in U.S. higher education.

Participation is voluntary:

- Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate and quit at any time. You may also quit by contacting Matthew Woolsey at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, or by email: XXX.

Whom to contact if you have questions or problems:

- If you have any questions or problems at any time, you may call Matthew Woolsey at XXX. You may call the chairwoman of the Institutional Review Board XXX for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject.

Confidentiality of records:

- Every attempt will be made to keep your recordings confidential. The records from this study will be stored in a locked cabinet for at least 10 years once the study is completed. Computer files used for this study will be kept on a secure server. Only the principal researcher will have access to them. When the study records are no longer needed, they will be shredded or otherwise destroyed. The results of the study will be used without any reference to any individual or company name in reports or journal articles published or presented. Only the Benedictine IRB and principal investigator on this study have access to the study records.

By signing below, I certify that I have read this entire form and I understand it completely. All of my questions regarding this form or this study have been answered to my complete satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research.

_________________________  __________________________
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT  DATE

_________________________  __________________________
SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR  DATE
APPENDIX D

Leadership Website Field Notes

Part of my dissertation requires field notes on observed activities. While in India dating back to 2006, I witnessed a myriad of activities, events, and celebrations transforming life, perceptions, and beliefs about the Indian Way of life. I am adopting the methodology proposed by Van Maanen (1988), a highly respected ethnographer and author of many articles and books on what is called ethnographic impressionism. Van Maanen posits that time away from the field results in a more holistic and complete picture of experiences. Entering and exiting the "Indian field of study" has afforded me ample opportunity for reflection and interpretation of my experiences regarding work, friendship, culture, religion, social activities, leadership, education, and much more. The following are reflections on my Indian experiences that ignited a deep revelation that I have a kindred spirit with this country—no, a people with whom I understand from a source of which I deem ethereal—which has a story to tell, one of which unites my passion for global agility and educational prowess.

Travelling to India: The Context

Beginning in 2006, I embarked on my journeys to India as a part of my work at a global management consulting firm. In my role as global learning manager, it was my charge to connect people in each location (at that time 13 global locations) through the power of learning via training. At that point in my career, my true expertise revolved around the ability to facilitate sessions in my comfort zone on communication and people management. Unbeknownst to me at the time, my crossing to the other side of the globe as a job obligation would eminently change my life forever.

Off to Pune, India I went current on all kinds of immunizations with an appetite for international travel (I had been to Europe on numerous occasions) and an adventurous yearning to experience something new. My naiveté, so pure at the time, meant travel to a developing country such as India was nothing more than another office visit in a foreign country—I have since learned otherwise.

Before delving into the activities awaiting me when I arrived in India, there are a few things to note about my global travel that led up to a journey to Pacific Asia. At that point in time, March 2006, I had voyaged to the UK, Germany, France, and Italy approximately six or seven times. My confidence level with international expeditions and all that comes with it was quite high, but soon that was to be shaken.
Preparing for India

Trekking to a country such as India is not like a quick jaunt to another U.S. state, a five-hour flight to Mexico, or even a nine-hour trip to Germany. No, going to India means preparatory activities precluding flight such as visiting the doctor, going to the pharmacy, planning enough food supplements for sustenance in case the dietary offerings are not agreeable, and stocking up on every kind of “anti” medication possible (like anti-diarrheal medication, anti-bug bites, anti-itch ointment, etc.) just in case something should go awry.

“You need to contact the travel clinic to receive the right consultation and medication dosing to meet the needs of your travel” my doctor’s medical receptionist told me as I inquired about preparation for travel to India. So, off to Northwestern University hospital I went to find out what it meant to get inoculated for India. Four injections later I was set for my first journey, with subsequent booster shots coming weeks later to build the resistance to disease. I held my own and fared well without blacking out from all the injections; but I must say that the Typhoid serum injection is the most painful and one that leaves an achy feeling for the next three to four days.

Part of the travel clinic protocol included: bug bite protection information, namely for mosquitoes, which requires a liberal supply of deet; preventative methods for treating clothing; and dietary advice with warnings about the dangers of consuming raw foods and any meals prepared outside of Western-like conditions. I took my piles of papers, with meticulous directions for apparel preparation and my new medication records, in my achy arms and left for the pharmacy to collect my new friend of a drug called malarone (an antiprotozoal and antimalarial to prevent malaria as a result of an unwanted mosquito bite).

After being armed with drug protection, the next necessity was for me to collect my Visa from the India consulate, which my employer had processed for me. Now, all I had left to do was to pack my bags and mentally prepare for the world that awaited me on the other side. Clearly, with all this advance preparation, going to India requires plenty of advanced planning and expensive investments.

The Maiden Voyage

The typical flight schedules between O’Hare International Airport and New Delhi, India means a 6:30 p.m. departure that connects through Frankfurt, Germany. Now, the flight from O’Hare to Frankfurt is a pretty standard flight full of Western
courtesies where the clientele appreciate the recognition of personal space and mores of how to board and exit a plane. Basically, when boarding a flight, you wait for the person in front of you to move into their seat so that you can pass by; and while deplaning, it is understood that you wait for the people in rows ahead of you to collect their wares and disembark accordingly. However, when connecting in Frankfurt for the flight to India, plane etiquette as I knew it changed.

I now reverently describe the Frankfurt boarding gate as the beginning of India culture because the entire process is composed of a mass of passengers trying to board at the same time. Lufthansa Airlines tries its best to keep the boarding process orderly, but as soon as the announcement is made that they are ready to board passengers, this signals to pretty much all 300 passengers to “go, run, get to the gate”; and the mad rush of India culture begins with pushing, crowding, and shoving through to get to one’s assigned seat!

On the plane, I just chuckle at the experience of getting to my assigned seat because the scenario is the same every time (note, I have flown between the U.S. and India 18 times). Etiquette? No such thing exists. I will never forget that while I was hoisting my bag full of papers, books, etc. (it was not a light carry on, rather a good 20 pounds of goods), I heard from a passenger behind me: “Excuse me sir; my seat is back there. Excuse me.” I then felt his body squeezing behind me while I was simply lifting my bag into the overhead storage compartment. From there, every other flight travel infraction ensues, including the passenger who unbuckles his seat belt and stands to access a bag in the overhead while taxiing out to the runway, or the other passenger who refuses to put her bag under the seat or in the overhead.

Finally settled into my seat with headphones on, the journey to India from Frankfurt is another nine hours away. Sit back, recline, and get some rest I tell myself, for a whole new world of experiences awaits me!

**Missing Luggage**

I will never forget my first encounter. As the door opened to deplane, chaos ensued with the mad rush to exit. As I gathered my belongings and made my way to the door, the odor hit and consumed me; the air was heavy with scents resembling methane mixed with the spray flight attendants dispelled prior parking the plane. And, the heat was high, even at 2:00 o’clock in the morning.

The jaunt from terminal to the immigration counter was long. The buzz of the bright fluorescent lights and standalone fans circulating the air on high were positioned periodically along the way. Like the experience of boarding and exiting the plane, navigating the maze to the immigration counter was somewhat of a pushing match. Over the years, I have assumed a rather aggressive style by Western standards.
when standing in any Indian line because others will simply crowd in front if any space exists between you and the person ahead.

Leaving the immigration and customs area with just my carry-on luggage in hand, I exited the secured area and witnessed military personnel walking around with loaded rifles and firearms. This scene quickly reminded me of the heightened security measures considering New Delhi has suffered terrorist activities in the past. Nearing the exit, I was quickly enveloped by taxi drivers asking me, “Sir, you need ride to hotel?” Not sure what to do, I approached one of the military personnel and asked where the domestic airport was and told him about my need to get there for my early morning flight. With a side-to-side head nod, he brushed me off and gestured for me to leave the area. Going back out into the night air, once again the taxi drivers pursued and convinced me that the domestic airport was closed and I would need to go to a hotel. From there, I entered a night of chaos as I was taken to hotels owned by locals pricing rooms at $230 USD for four hours of sleep. Finally, I was taken to a place where I paid $130 USD and I stayed there the next four hours. Needless to say, I did not get any sleep that night for fear I would not wake up and miss my flight.

The next morning I was able to secure a taxi for $30 USD (I later found out it should have cost about $5 USD) to get myself back to the Delhi domestic airport. Upon check-in, I confirmed that my luggage transferred over from Lufthansa Airlines to Sahara Airlines (the airline in existence at that time). The check-in attendant started to chuckle and said, “Sorry, no sir, sorry, but your luggage is still at the international airport. So sorry, you need to go back and reclaim your luggage. Would you like me to book you on a later flight to Pune?”

And here is where the official introduction to India begins…

Money, currency, cash, I needed something to get me from the domestic airport over to the international, which required some form of transportation. Where to go? I stood in line at the Thomas Cook bank line to get cash. Like any considerate Westerner, I stood the customary 3–5 feet back from the window while the person ahead of me was making some sort of transaction. That was the wrong thing to do as one must hover behind the person ahead of you in line lest someone else crowds in front. After standing there a few minutes watching other Indians shove past me to the currency window, I started shoving myself and finally got to the window. The attendant was clearly less than impressed with me as he asked me what I wanted. “Cash,” I said, and he pointed me out of the airport. Long story short, I found myself at an IBC cash machine enclosed in a phone-like booth (with an armed guard outside the door) withdrawing 2,000 rupees (approximately $40 USD) because that seemed like more than enough!
Loaded with my rupees, I was hustled into a rickshaw headed for the Delhi international airport. Along the way, I observed the locals out in fields carrying out morning rituals like brushing teeth near a lone spigot, people dressing, and other activities. I observed people piled on one little scooter (sometime 5 or 6 at a time) while weaving around cows and elephants in the streets. Arriving at the airport, of my 2,000 rupees, the driver took 1,500 (approximately $30 USD) rupees for my rickshaw drive that really should have cost about 50 rupees (approximately $1 USD).

Standing outside the international airport, I needed to get in to talk with the Lufthansa airport officials about securing my luggage for transfer to Sahara Airlines. India, I am sure many other countries do the same, requires that for one to pass through security, you must provide an itinerary copy which shows travel for that day. I didn’t have it because I was scheduled to fly out of the domestic airport that day, not international. The guards with machine guns signaled me out of the entrance area and said, “Go away.”

I didn’t know what do; but I needed to get to the Lufthansa check-in counter and explain my situation. I sat on a hard bench outside the international airport entrance and began to think about my options. In the meantime, my rickshaw driver was following me asking me questions. “Sir, what is the matter? Where do you need to go?” I told him the circumstances that I needed to go into the Lufthansa check-in counter to tell them about my luggage. He escorted me over to this grand waiting room across from the main entrance where I had to pay 30 rupees to enter and sit at a
table or bench. From there, my mind started to fire. First, I called Lufthansa at the Delhi check-in counter, but it was closed until noon. Next, I called the travel service that booked my trip; but because it was Sunday, my call was transferred to an agency in Atlanta, Georgia that did not have full access to my account information. All the travel service could confirm was that the Delhi check-in counter was closed.

At that point, I felt the tears starting to swell because never in my life had I felt so helpless, defenseless, and with no control. I sat there in that great waiting room for some time, looking at my BlackBerry, thumbing through names, checking email, wondering what to do. Then, it occurred to me to start calling my India friends in Pune. That is what it took to resolve the situation. I called my friend, a finance professor in Pune, who had a former student who became a judge on the Delhi Supreme Court (relationships are critical in India!). That judge drove to the airport and navigated my way from the domestic airport where I had to meet with the airport general manager (hint: if ever stuck at an Indian airport and you do not know what to do, go straight to the airport general manager) and prove who I was, and then walk down to baggage claim where you must tip every single employee to do their job (i.e. go to the back storage room and pull your bags). Once I had my bags, I had to: walk across the room to have one person re-tag it; give him a tip; take my bags across the room to have another airport person check the bags off his clipboard; provide a tip; crisscross the room to have the bags re-x-rayed; pay a tip; then finally arrive at the exit door for two security personnel to check-off that I retrieved my bags and provide one last tip.

Finally, out the door, on our way to the domestic airport, the least I could do was take him to the airport restaurant and treat him to a Kingfisher beer. Eleven hours after my original intended departure, I was finally on my way from Delhi to Pune.

Tip #1: Never take for granted, when a flight connection is involved, that luggage travelling through India means it will arrive at the scheduled destination. I have learned to personally grab my bags at the connection and re-check them myself (when inside India).

Pune, India

The Central Park Hotel

I arrived at the Central Park Hotel located next to the Pune Movie Theater known for attracting Bollywood’s elite. The check-in process was much like going through security at the airport; all guests go through a metal detector where the machine automatically beeps, even when you have no metal objects on you. Then, a security person takes your bags, unzips them, does a cursory glance, and then hands
them back to you.

At the counter, three people were waiting for me with a greeting, “Good evening sir.” Once all the documents were signed, including me giving them a business card since I was on a business visa, I then headed towards my room. After 10 minutes, the doorbell rang and there stood the bellhop with my luggage and passport; they needed to make copies.

Finally, I was able to lie horizontal, close my eyelids, and catch a few hours of rest before getting up in the morning to go to the office. One more detail about the hotel was the odor coming from mothballs and a strong “air freshener” sprinkled throughout the hotel; after a couple days, my nose became numb to it, but the odor was quite noticeable upon my arrival back home when I first opened the luggage bags.

As I laid there in my hotel room, I could hear rickshaws and mopeds beeping outside my window throughout the night.

**Friendship**

![Image](image.png)

A colleague and me, 2007, at my colleague’s going away party from the company I worked for.

Rather than continue in a chronological order, I will insert lessons learned based on reflections of me entering Indian culture periodically over the past years. These highlights are meant to draw on actual events and tie into some theoretical frameworks or models. In this case, I learned that Geert Hofstede’s messages on face saving take many forms.
There is an ancient and heartfelt phrase in Indian culture—“atithi devo bhava” which means “the guest is God.”

Over the years, I have made life-long Indian friends. Friends of the caliber I know would do anything for me if I asked. I often wonder how this happened. What was it that drew me to India and resulted in such a passion and desire to know the people, their lives, and way of living? This inquisitive nature afforded very personal and memorable discussions over time, from family relations including parental roles to arranged marriages and the fundamentals of Hinduism. And now I can say that each time I return to India for a visit, I am always welcomed with open arms.

It took me quite some time to understand the true meaning of the guest being God. The first time I heard this, my good friend Sameer explained that the guest, especially a foreigner, is treated with the utmost respect. In Indian culture, I have learned that they will sacrifice anything and go to extremes to make sure the guest is comfortable and happy. Thus, my one friend, among many others, would do things like meet me at the airport at 2:00 a.m., even though I had a hired driver to take me to my hotel, to greet me and make sure I was comfortable.

The interesting part about “atithi devo bhava” is that the guest must take the gestures and accept them because if you don’t, the action may be found hurtful. For example, when you are invited into an Indian’s home for dinner and are offered food, you always say yes. If the guest answers with “I’m not hungry” or “I don’t care for dal” (a staple bean-based food often served with rice), the host may be offended. This links to Hofstede’s work about face saving.

Here is a funny story about visiting one of my friends at his home where his wife had made dinner. The timing was in early September; the temperature hovered around 100 degrees Fahrenheit at mid-day and dropped to around 70 degrees by nightfall. One of my American colleagues and I were invited over to dinner at around 7:00 p.m., which is early by Indian standards. We both showed up in cargo shorts and flip-flops. Over the course of dinner, we had a great time eating homemade appetizers and then consuming the main course straight from the local Dominoes (Indian style vegetarian). Several months later, my friend and I reflected on the dinner and how his wife commented on my “clean” legs (I virtually have no hair on my legs). Through interpretation, I later learned that it was dishonorable to show up for dinner, no matter how warm it is, clad in casual attire exposing excessive skin.

The following are pictures of me with my friend and his family in 2009.
Evening dinner with my colleague and his family, June 2009

This particular event was dinner with my friend, his wife, and their daughter. When I first met my friend’s daughter, she was about four years old. Wide-eyed and silent, she just stared at me the entire time and when I would say something to her, she
would turn and bury her face in her father’s chest. My friend later told me I was the first White person she had ever seen.

Goa, India

Located on the West coast of the Arabian Sea, Goa is one of the finer destinations in terms of beauty, luxury, and a unique spin on cuisine influenced by Portuguese settlement (which lasted for some 450 years with eventual disbandment in 1959 when Nehru sent the Indian national army in to defeat the Portuguese garrison).

I am taking a picture of the ocean scene in the early morning before the temperature began to soar. March 2011.

Regarding Goa, depending on whom you speak with in India, results are varied. Some will say that it is the land of fun, partying, and outlandish behavior. Others will reminisce about Goa's beauty and the calmer pace of life. Others will comment on the unique cuisine largely centered on seafood. Whatever the comment, everyone has something to say about Goa.

I have been to Goa three times now (all on the south side), with my latest excursion to Goa being in March 2011. I fondly recall the first time I went back in 2008—solo, with no expectations other than to experience the beach and a weekend of relaxation. The resort I stayed at was a rather small, family owned, but modern facility. I didn't know it at the time of booking, but upon arrival I learned that all cuisine was vegetarian and all activities influenced by Aryudevic health. I remember the food was fantastic, although nothing of a seafood nature, and the Aryudevic healing practice intriguing. I indulged and had my first Aryudevic massage which was less than desirable most likely because I had spent the day in the sun and my skin was feeling rather warm at the time.

My most favorite memory of my maiden trek to Goa was the experience of haggling for some of the finest textiles I had ever seen. To this day, the lace fabric
serves as sheers on our dining room door that leads to the outside deck. The intricate thread patterns sewn through the lacy textures are quite exquisite and display beauty I simply have not found in the United States!

The Portuguese settled in Goa some 450 plus years back (and remained in governance up until 1959 when President Nehru finally used military influence to secure Goa as part of the Indian union) and naturally made an impact converting many from Hindu and Jain to Christian religion. The influence on building structures, food, and celebrated religious holidays make Goa unique from all other Indian locations I have experienced.

My second Goa excursion was part of a company three-day teambuilding event with me, one of a couple of American's, participating in games held out on the hot sand of the Goan beaches. The journey began on a 13-hour bus ride from Pune to Goa with twists and turns, bumps and jostles, and Hindi singing by the cast of young. I learned to play Cricket in 2009 on the Goan beaches where all I really knew to do was run and get the ball (I never had the opportunity to hit the ball) and throw it back as fast as possible. I developed strong bonds with my team and remember our team name to this day—"Paint it Black" which was based on a popular movie at the time.

On my third Goa trip, I stayed at a resort for vacation. The location was gorgeous and the patrons were mostly comprised of Europe’s and India's elite. This was a different experience for me; since I didn’t necessarily spend time with Indian’s, it was an experience surrounded by other foreigners.

**Driving in India**

Travelling in India is an adventure to say the least. The first thing I realized was that the horn is something used to notify other drivers you are near them, not really something to be used to prevent a potential catastrophe as is typically the case in the U.S. In fact, the tail end of every truck and commercial vehicle usually has some sort of painted phrase saying “Horn Please.”

Over the years, I have taken in many sights when commuting from point A to point B in India. I always had a hired driver, which is common practice for most foreigners. A common scenario would involve the car stopping at an intersection and, while sitting there, I would look to see which moped had the most people situated on it. I think my highest count was somewhere around six people while on a trip to Pune; it looked to have mom, dad, and four children hanging off the sides. The other thing that happens at intersections, when the light is red, is how people weave through the traffic. Out of nowhere, people appear and walk in-between cars 10 lanes wide seemingly without a care in the world. Meanwhile, more scooters and mopeds are crowding forward trying to gain an inch ahead of the next car or rickshaw so that
when the light turns green they can accelerate ahead of others.

Everyone is in a hurry only to stop for a herd of sheep, or the two or three cows that decided to lie down in the middle of the road. There were times when my car has stopped for an elephant or camel in the middle of the road.

A typical industrial vehicle painting with “Horn Please” phrase, October 20, 2007.

Traffic on the way to the office in Pune, India, March 12, 2008.
View from the back seat of a hired car on the road to Agra, India, March 2011.

Road signs outside Goa, India. March 2008.
The industrial vehicles are usually adorned in rather elaborate colors and detail, often with flowers hanging off the front grill. Ashok Leyland, Tata, and Maruti Suzuki are just a few of the brand names featured on the vehicles. I remember thinking to myself during my first trip to India back in 2006: “Who is this Ashok Leyland? Such market share!”

The streets are plastered with billboards and small signs displaying the prominence of Reliance (a telecommunication company with investments across the board), Tata (a company that spans the gamut from vehicles to consulting), and Bajaj (a major two wheel vehicle company) no matter the geographical location. I quickly learned that while the country has become economically diverse since the lifting of Licence Raj in 1991, there appears to be some rather staple companies with dominant cultural and economic influence.

A very vivid memory of mine goes back to my first time in a car going from New Delhi to Agra to see the Taj Mahal. A work colleague and I were sitting in the back seat of the car we had rented for the excursion and got stuck in a traffic jam. In my gaze upward from the book I was reading, there sat what looked to be a father and son at the top of a tractor pulling a rather hefty load of produce. The father locked eyes with me, then nudged his son and pointed at me. The child, probably around nine or ten years old, immediately pointed at me and my friend and laughed. Others around them saw the commotion, looked in our direction, and followed suit. For the first time in my life I really felt I was different, not because of my values or point of view, but simply by how I looked. I reflected on that point in time for the rest of the day and the feeling has never left me.
One thing for me that took getting used to was the incessant beeping along with the crowding and pollution pouring out of tail pipes. Once I became more accustomed to these realities of driving in India, I often wondered how Indian people got the nerve to actually purchase a vehicle and drive the streets. I remember going to work in the Pune office and noticed one of the employees was all banged up. I asked him what happened and he replied, “Oh, I was on my scooter sir, and I got hit. I went to hospital and I am fine. That is just part of living in India, at some point you will get in a vehicular accident.”

In the end, I always got to where I needed to go. When I hear “It’s not the destination, but the journey,” I quickly understand the essence of that statement. India travel is much more than moving from point A to point B; it is the activity all around that makes it exciting and in some ways entertaining, and somehow massages the pang that by Western standards a one-mile voyage should take about five minutes in city driving…but in India, that can mean 20 to 30 minutes…if you are lucky!

**The Banyan**

I will never forget the first time I saw one of these wonders of nature (2006). I had just arrived in Pune, India and was riding in the back seat of the car my company had secured. As we lurched toward the intersection, we stopped for a prolonged period of time due to the congestion. I looked from right to left and there I observed a woman wrapped in weathered clothing, sweeping the ground with a bundle of twigs fashioned together like a broom, and hovering above her was this green, stark, solid, mass of majestic beauty.

The Banyan tree is the national tree highly revered by the Hindu community. For me, its sense of history and worn appearance, yet with vibrant colors, communicated to me longevity with a power more than simply a living being—rather something that has witnessed historical events imbued with a powerful, all-knowing existence. I understand why this tree factors prominently in historical accounts, particularly during the time Gandhi walked the Earth uniting a nation towards eventual liberation.
Industrial vehicle under construction in transport to next factory stop for body construction, Pune, India, 2006.

The above truck is in transit to the next factory for body parts (at the time of this photo in 2006). Once the body parts are completely installed, the truck then departs for the final location to receive detaileding. Most likely, the reason for the disparate locations for truck building may very well be an artifact of the License Raj. When License Raj was in place, the government heavily regulated business to limit monopolies. In fact, most every form of business had to receive clearance from the central government before proceeding with any adventure.

Today we can clearly see the effects from the lifting of License Raj in 1991 led by the finance minister, Manmohan Singh (Kishore & Ganpati, 2003), who is now the Prime Minister of India. India business is now home to many world companies where new ways of conducting business is infiltrating the economy. However, given the centuries of immigrant rule from one dynasty to the next with the last being British rule ending in 1947, India is building an economy that is competitive worldwide.

**Working in India: Getting to the Office**

As the global manager of Learning and Development, my work offered lots of opportunities to facilitate training, spanning topics like communication (writing and public speaking), team development, leadership, coaching, managing global teams, and other related topics. My first foray into training in India was the delivery of
business communication, a structured writing course based on the Pyramid Principle methodology.

Up until my arrival, the Pune office had been in existence for about a year, opening in 2005. My first entry was in April 2006. The car picked me up at the Central Park Hotel promptly at 8:30 a.m. I quickly learned there is no need to get to the office by 9:00 a.m. since people really don’t begin trickling in until about 10:00 a.m.

The journey from the hotel to the office involved the weaving around and hustling between vehicles with the horn beeping along the way. Every morning I saw families emerging from their humble dwellings to brush their teeth along the road, bathing near a spigot poking out of the ground, and others carrying their wares for the day of fresh fruit or other items to sell along the roadside. I am always amazed at the thousands of business professionals dressed in their finest Indian clothing sitting atop a moped or scooter bound for work.

When I got to the office location in Magarpatta City, I observed a stark contrast of life outside the gates to this tropical setting just inside the compound. Outside Magarpatta City are the reminders of poverty across the country and just inside the walls of this corporate location there were flashes of millions of foreign dollars invested in manicured ponds equipped with misting sprinklers, beautiful office structures, and streets without a pothole or animal to be seen. John Deere and Accenture are a couple of the prominent U.S. companies with formidable buildings that are observable when entering this location. Upon entry into the building of my company, I was welcomed with marble flooring, both outside and inside the building, and a cursory security checkpoint before entering through the doors.

Facing the elevator banks, I had to push my way into the elevator as soon as the doors opened or lose my chance and have to wait for the next elevator. As the doors closed, the air conditioning was blowing on top of my head, a television monitor displayed ads with Hindi music playing in the background. And there I was, the only Caucasian person in the elevator; as I looked to my left and to my right, eyes were fixed on me.

Exiting the elevator, I was greeted by a security crew at the front desk where I was asked to sign-in on a ledger. I was then escorted to the back IT area of the office space where a desk was set up for me with one yellow post-it, one pencil accompanied by a pencil sharpener, one blue pen, and a pad of paper. The office help stopped by my desk to bring me a chilled bottle of water, a coke, and a plate of cookies; note, only Western visitors were offered chilled beverages.

There was not a consulting, administrative, or HR person to be found given
the time. Then, the clock struck 10:00 a.m. and activity began to pick up. The office leader, Managing Principal, then met me in my office and took me for an office tour, ending in a large room set-up for breakfast for all employees.

And that is the typical routine I followed each morning—arrival in the office, followed by fresh food delivery to my “cabin” (the local term for office), topped off with a slice of toast, fruit, and coffee in the common area.

Working in India: My First Training Experience

In the U.S., a consulting firm usually represents a pyramid with the most expert person on top with subordinates underneath. As the pyramid spans out, typically there are four or five levels with associates or analysts at the entry level forming the base (usually a ratio of one senior partner to 15 subordinates). In India, the pyramid concept was very different, more like a ratio of one senior partner to 40 employees given the cost savings compared to U.S. employees. This is important to note because the bulk of those 40 employees were mostly what Indian’s refer to as “freshers” given they are straight out of university.

The focus of my training was to target the entry-level associates. My company recruited from the IIT system, thus they represented the cream of the crop of all India university graduates. In the academic way of life, Indian institutions are designed with a focus on the degree and technical aptitude, not with the liberal education bent American colleges and universities subscribe to in curriculum design.

There I was, approaching the newly constructed training room where the staff was literally brushing away the fine sand used to fill in the gaps on the floor marble. The new plastic furniture was being assembled as the building staff was connecting the LCD projector and sound system. As the global Learning and Development leader, I was about to conduct the first training in a brand new training room.

As I organized my papers, handouts, and got my materials in order, the workshop participants began to file in one-by-one. When the clock struck 10 minutes after the hour, which I found rather early for a session scheduled to begin at the top of the hour, I introduced myself. Never in my life had I experienced a group so quiet, intent, carefully processing every word I uttered. After about fifteen minutes of introduction and content delivery, the first hand went into the air. “Sir, can you please explain that again as I don’t understand what you mean?” I believe that was the first time I had ever been called “sir” in the training room. As time went on, the heads would bob, but there was no discourse to speak of; their attention was focused, listening to every word I spoke.

This went on for about an hour and finally I realized that this is what Indian
education is about—the students come to hear the professor speak without interruption. My pedagogy is full of interactive activities, but when I spoke, instant silence descended on the room. I knew I had to do something to create a way to make it okay for them to speak up and enjoy a topic that was rather new to them. So I took a chance and I said to them, “Okay, let’s stop right here. Am I making any sense at all?” Their heads bobbed side to side. Then I said, “your heads are moving, but I don’t know if that means yes or no.” After a few moments, we all burst out laughing. I learned that shaking their heads side-to-side meant they were listening, it didn’t really signal yes or no; it simply meant they heard what I was saying. By the end of the four hours together, everyone was engaged in dialogue. I followed up by meeting with them one-on-one for writing coaching, and in those moments, I began to make connections with them. I think for them, they realized that I wasn’t there to scare or intimidate them, but rather to assist them in learning. Over the years I learned that this approach to learning is rather unheard of in India since education is structured in a way that an educator is the know-all, never contradict the teacher in public, and take what he or she says as truth.

My mission from then on was to lighten the moment and make learning fun. I had over-capacity enrollment in almost any class I ever facilitated.

The Taj Mahal
The left image is the ticket stub for entry into the Taj Mahal, October 2007. The right image is one of the streets leading to the Taj Mahal security entrance.

The Taj Mahal is considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Located in Agra, India, there is a lot of commotion with street vendors peddling their wares to all visitors en route to the Taj. What is most striking are the kids who approach, foist their goods in one’s face (e.g. a snow globe with the Taj in it, wooden carvings, and fake marble renditions of the Taj), and proclaim they have the best deal. Meanwhile, the escalating heat feels as though it is climbing a degree with each passing minute.

Agra has a rule that cars cannot come within a mile or two of the Taj compound given the concern for pollution. Upon arrival at the staging area, visitors can either walk the mile to the Taj admissions area, or hire a street peddler with a bicycle unit or an electric powered car tram for transport to the entrance. Entering the facility is like checking in at the airport. Metal detectors are involved and men enter in one line, women in the other. Bags are searched and additional pat-downs are executed if the security personnel feel there might cause. Once in, the initial compound is a quad-like space with all the walls lined with doors to small living quarters where all the engineers and architects lived during the 22 years spent erecting the structure. Arches with the familiar Muslim-inspired design adorn pretty much every entryway.

I have been to the Taj on three different occasions. My first was in 2007 where my colleague and I made the flight from Pune to Delhi, then took a five-hour car ride to Agra. Beginning at 5:30 a.m., our guide met us and took us to the site. The next trip was in 2009 with one of my team members (a blond, Midwesterner who definitely stood out in the crowd). And in 2010, my partner who was with me got to see firsthand the detail and texture with his own eyes rather than just viewing my pictures taken from each adventure.
My partner and me at the Taj Mahal, March 2010.

A Midwest colleague and me at the Taj Mahal, April 2009
At the Taj, its reflecting pools were empty for cleaning, April 2009

With each visit, the tour guides generally share the same historical story about the Taj, but with their own take on it. Basically, during the Mughal Empire's period of prosperity, the emperor, Shah Jahan, erected the Taj in reverence to his wife who died during the birth of their fourteenth child in 1631. Greed and fighting erupted among Shah's oldest sons and the emperor was imprisoned, never to fully experience the completion of the Taj. Whatever the specific facts, at the core is the love, dedication, and admiration the emperor had for his wife.

Every visit to the Taj involves the tour guide stopping at a local marble shop to demonstrate how the Muslims perfected the art of carving and sculpting each stone that adorns the Taj. The art and mastery requires hours of delicate carving by hand. The glue used to hold each stone in place is a kept secret, much like the recipe for Coca-Cola. The marble shops showcase all kinds of marble carvings.
Marble stone covered with red sand for the sculptor to use as a carving guide, Agra, India, March 2007.

Typical marble carvings with in-laid stone at an Agra, India shop near the Taj Mahal, October 2007.

Tools used to carve marble, Agra, India, October 2007.

Indian white marble is found solely in India and is the only marble where light
is able to shine through.

**Religious Celebration: Holi**

The Hindu religion is rife with all kinds of celebrations. There is the celebration of Diwali (festival of lights kind of like Christmas), Ganesha (Lord of Success and one of the five Hindu deities idolatrized by an elephant sitting atop a mouse), and many more. For me, the most exhilarating and exciting time is during the annual festival of Holi which is celebrated each March.

Holi is a time of festivities where caste is somewhat disregarded as people of all ages and roles engage. The origins of Holi are said to trace back to three separate stories. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore Holi because its activities are in the streets throughout much of India, earmarked by coloring each other with powders made from flowers indigenous to India.

My first encounter with Holi happened on my madden trip to India in 2006. I was warned to bring clothes for the occasion since I would likely get covered in lots of colors. Not fully understanding the extent of getting painted, I nervously changed into "Holi attire" after the day of work was over.

The office began the day dressed in traditional Indian garb. As the day drew on, we partook in traditional Holi food. Then, the festivities began. Our company reserved a rooftop location for the coloring-event. With Hindi music blaring, the coloring began. I was covered from head to toe in an array of colors—colors that were told to me to represent life and the spirits. I actively became involved and spent the next couple hours also observing.

That was my first time in a social setting with my Indian office mates. I quickly witnessed that with the Hindi dance music blaring, the men danced with each other and the women danced only with other women. Also, all levels (caste’s) partook, including the building help who represent the lower caste.
Office Holi event in Pune, India, March 2006.

Several months later, my colleague commented on my participation. He said that he told his mother, a very devout Hindu, about my involvement and that I had earned a tremendous amount of respect with his mother and subsequently throughout the local office.

The Local Newspapers

Typical with most stays in three star or higher hotels in India, is room delivery of a complimentary newspaper. My morning ritual before going to the office typically included rising at 6:30 a.m., going to the fitness room, returning to my room to shower and get ready for work, going to the hotel dining room for breakfast around 8:30 a.m., and catching my car around 9:30 a.m. Between these activities, I would slip in a call home since the time there is 11.5 or 12.5 hours ahead, depending on the time of year. Calling home was always challenging given the cell coverage and the simple fact I was making an international phone call.

I would read the paper in the car ride to the office. Along the way there was lots of beeping, potholes, swerving, extremely cold air conditioning, strong incense, Hindi music coming from the car speakers, and sudden stops. I would begin with the local news in the Pune Times and then make my way over to the Times of India.

Here are my observations regarding these newspapers:

• The front page would almost always feature an American story about government. My summation is that Indians are fascinated with how the U.S. governs and in particular, the Asian Indians who have made their way up in the U.S. political system, like the governor of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal.

• One major Indian story, usually around governmental corruption, would be featured. I found these types of stories never really subsided because there is an ongoing tension to shed the shackles of old India, usually represented by the Congress Party, and newer ways of leading in a time post-License Raj. Whatever the causes or reasons, Indian papers tend to uncover and feature another example of fund misappropriation or some other scandalous activity.

• American or British fame tends to garner some piece of real estate on the front page, anything from Madonna or Lady Gaga to Beckham or some other contemporary entertainer. Indian’s are infatuated Western pop culture.

• Bollywood almost always gets a piece of the front-page stories.

• Sex. This is probably the most surprising to me of all. India is a proud and private country, yet articles ranging from diseases to fancy condoms have been on the front page of papers I have read over the years.

• Inside the paper typically included articles with a British-English bent, having British sayings and slang different from American vernacular.

• The obituary section usually has entries of remembrance by family members of
those who died in years past. The obituaries tend to celebrate the life each person who lived and how the deceased continue to live on today through the lives of their descendants.

- Pakistan. I don’t think I ever read a paper without something about Pakistan. Given the tensions between India and their neighbor, a result from centuries of connectedness and separateness following 1947 independence, a watchful eye is always cast on Pakistan.

This list is not exhaustive, but provides a flavor of the stories covered on a daily basis in the local newspaper.

India Wildlife

Snake garden featuring a Cobra pit in Pune, India, July 2006.

I watched a Discovery Channel special on poisonous snakes where one such episode featured Bangalore, India. That particular show said the highest percentage of death-by-snake bite in the world, approximately 2,200 annually, took place in the Bangalore region.

A friend took me to the Pune Snake Garden which houses many hooded snakes, including King Cobras. Apparently, when King Cobras wonder into town, rather than killing them, snake handlers will capture and relocate them to the local snake garden. The snake garden is located in a wooded area. The particular day we went, the monsoon season was underway so a lot of rain was in the air. As we traversed the exhibits, we entered a covered area where a pit was dug into the ground. Around the upper perimeter stood wooden barriers, a fence, to prevent one from falling into the cavity, which was probably about 20 feet down.

Upon closer look, I could make out the shapes of coiled snakes just under the soil. Then as I paid closer attention, I saw hooded snakes here and there in the enclosure. My friend approached the attendants and told them in Hindi that “my friend wants to see the King Cobras.” After this verbal exchange, one of the
attendants lowered into the pit a bamboo ladder laced together with rope. He climbed down into the pit without hesitation, approached a tree branch in the middle and started thumping it. Immediately, the attendant stepped back as slowly snake heads began to rise from the tree limb they had wrapped their bodies around, looked at the person, and instantly inflated their hoods—all this in slow motion.

As I stood above on ground level, I saw easily eight or nine King Cobras flare their necks, irritated by the disruption. Then, the attendant taunted them to make them hiss and strike towards him!
I later learned that the reason the park attendant comfortably entered the snake pit was that during monsoon season, snakes become docile. I also learned that India is full of hooded snakes and most of them are harmless; but growing up, one is taught that if you see a hood you are to run!

**Monsoon**

Monsoon season typically lasts from May to September annually. As the rain pours, the ground becomes muddy. As a result of people commuting throughout the city by cars, rickshaws, carts, bicycles, and any other mode of transportation, the roads made of mud and rock become grooved.

When the rain becomes particularly heavy, it is common to witness vehicles of all sorts pulled over at a roadside tea tent until the downpour eases.

Without monsoon, there will be no food, water to drink, and no money to make for living. India is dependent on rain because it energizes the agricultural
economy, which translates into international trade. For Indians, rain simply means the coming of rice, sustenance—life.

One of my first experiences with monsoon was while I was in the hills at a nearby resort, Pancard Club, outside Pune facilitating new employee orientation. My company had just recruited the largest employee class of 30 “freshers” who all participated in a week-long training and orientation session. During breaks, we would stand outside on the covered terrace and watch the water fall and cascade down the mountain side.

Monsoon, at Pancard Club outside Pune, India, July 2006.

Employee orientation class at Pancard Club, July 2006.

Since Pancard Club, I have been to India many times over when monsoon canvassed the land. I will never forget driving over the mountains from Pune to
Mumbai; the rainwater had gathered and cascaded over the hills creating waterfalls. The mountainside casts a different feel when flush with water (green) compared to other times in the year when everything becomes brittle from dehydration.

**Food**

I recall my maiden voyage to India in 2006 where I first discovered the wide array of Indian bread—Roti, naan (laced with garlic), paratha, papadum, and more. In my reflection on my first Pune office visit, my office tour ended in the eating area where sweet smells of dal, rice, and other Indian staples awaited consumption. A number of Indian companies offer food services for employees and my company was no exception. There is a certain process involved since the seating area could only accommodate half of the staff at a time, so eating was often done in shifts.

Getting into the food line entailed: grabbing a silver, metallic tray along with paper napkins; adding a drop of pickle (spicy accompaniment typically offered with Indian meals); gathering a yogurt based drink or sauce (for digestion); and retrieving crispy papad (flat, crunchy bread, almost like a cracker, with salt and garlic). The food service line typically had rice, bean-based dal (an Indian staple at most meals), two or three vegetarian dishes, and usually one meat-based meal. I later found out that my Indian friends would muse at how I would request the rice be placed on my tray and the dal ladled over it. Apparently, all sauces and food concoctions are to be put in their respective places on the tray, and then the person eating is to take the Roti bread, rip it apart with the right hand, and “grab” the food to eat as desired.

![Paneer dish with rice.](image)

I learned in India that one never grabs food with the left hand because the left hand is the one to use for cleansing in the restroom. Over time, I became verse in eating the “Indian Way.” The fork is rarely used, but the spoon is typically implemented for sauces and ice-cream.
The food is quite spicy compared to American fare and most are prepared on a hotplate rather than in an oven. Pickle is like catsup or mustard in America—something that is almost always served to spice-up the dish. Tomato catsup is another common condiment available at all meals. Ghee is a clarified butter product used for frying and as a condiment for rolls and breads. A dessert often served at office meals, was called gulab jamun, a dish composed of deep fried dough balls drenched in a honey-syrup mix. Dairy-based desserts tend to be extra creamy since they are made from unpasteurized milk.

Gulab jamun

The customary way for companies to treat employees is to offer breakfast, lunch, and dinner when people work past 7:00 p.m. However, in-between each meal, a snack is offered which is typically some form of fried dough with a sauce. Snacking offers another forum for employees to connect and engage and develop bonds amongst peers, the “worker,” and “management.”

Indians eat a rich and vast array of food where spice, salt, flower, and sugar contribute to the regional flavors. Indian cuisine varies from region to region and in my experience northern India, the Punjab area, offers a delicate balance between the sweet, salty, and spicy. Goa proffers dishes with fish and Dutch influences. The Maharashtra region comes with vegetarian-galore varieties.

An Indian Wedding

Prior to my immersion in the Indian culture, I reflect on my first introduction to a traditional Indian wedding back in 2000. At that time, I had been in my new job at the consulting firm for just under a year and received a wedding invitation packaged in PowerPoint with slide after slide featuring the venue, familial activities, and timings for each scheduled event. Each room in the venue was draped in tapestries, adorned with marble, and accented with gold gilding and statues.
While I was at the Pancard Club venue in 2007 for the New Employee Orientation event for all new hires (located just outside Pune city limits), a traditional wedding was taking place. A large white tent big enough to accommodate a couple hundred guests was erected and filled with chairs. At some point, the groom arrived atop a white horse to greet his wife. Since my perspective was from afar, I was not able to audibly take in the exchange of “vows,” but I could hear the cheers and music coming from the crowd.

A year later, I had one of those special moments with one of my Indian friends who explained to me how marriage arrangement is a foretold and a God-inspired event. The first step, according to my friend, is to have the parents “screen” potential women to marry their son. The parents basically go through a catalogue of viable suitors with all their stats including their astrological reading. Based on birth signs, the parents and religious leaders are able to make a match with, from my recollection, 13 out of 24 criteria resulting in a “good” match; anything lower than the 13 threshold is not considered. The goal is to match somewhere around 20 astrological signs. I think my friend and his wife matched on 22. The children who are matched by the parents are then able to meet and, depending on how they engage with each other, the marriage is either a “go” or “no-go” situation. My friend reminded me that the parents have the final word and in most cases, if the children say “no,” the parents will keep looking; if the children are nearing 24 years of age, however, then the parents begin to get a bit more assertive.

While India is now a free society, the caste system continues to impact how people from one caste to the next make life decisions such as marriage. In essence, I am referring to the fact that a person in one caste typically is not permitted to marry up or down; rather, they must stay within their respective social strata. In one such case, a Pune colleague of mine was enduring a tumultuous time because he (from the vaisyas caste) fell in love with a woman from the next higher caste (ksatriyas), which simply was not acceptable. My colleague seemed so distracted that I asked him what was the matter. He told me about his marriage dilemma, that he and his fiancé were madly in love, but her parents simply would not allow him to be a part of the family. In this scenario, the face of old and new India are clashing. India has many more years of this before love marriages truly become the norm, though love marriages are increasingly acceptable.

Once the marriage is confirmed to happen, then all the logistics are arranged, usually by the bride’s family, including venue selection, food choices, and so forth. After the wedding takes place, the public display of marriage takes on different forms. According to my friend, one can tell whether or not a woman is married based on five indicators. A married woman typically wears a distinct necklace (mangalsutra), ankle bangels (gold bracelets), toe and nose rings, and a red “bind”
(red dot) on her forehead (typically in southern India). All of these symbols are distinctive in nature, and to this day, I can look at a woman and know whether or not she is spoken for.

In the discussions with my co-worker, I looked him in the eye and asked him if “arranged” marriages truly experience love. He said to me, “Matt, love is something both people in a relationship want to happen, and if both are genuinely committed, then yes love is the ultimate gift and it will come.” Western and Eastern cultures may approach marriage differently, but the goal is for love.

I observed another traditional Indian marriage, with thousands in attendance, held out on a cricket field near Mumbai. Everyone was dressed in traditional garb; there was all kinds of food; and eventually fireworks were shot into the air. Most recently, I received an invitation from one of my former employees, featuring how the two meant and their story displayed in web pages stating, “souls destined for a life together.” While the display differs from my early introduction of the PowerPoint presentation in 2000, the fundamental elements in this new venue repeat the same theme—two souls joining together where all friends and family are expected to attend and celebrate in this time of new life created in heaven.

**Best Deal: Haggling in the Local Markets**

Most market place streets in many of the India cities I have been, feature shop after shop where the size is rather modest, perhaps 20 feet across, and the entrance is opened and closed by what most Americans would deem a garage door. With larger establishments, the building may be a bit larger with a “regular” door for entry, and shelves and walls packed with row after row of fabrics wrapped around a flat spindle. No matter the size, most merchants stand by the door, waiting for potential customers and ready to display fabrics, eager to make a deal.

Here is how the typical scenario goes when entering a shop selling Sari materials (the traditional garb worn by women, made of colored silk in a variety of patterns, and wrapped around their bodies from shoulder to ankle) and similar sundries. First, I would enter the establishment and begin looking at all the colors. Usually a ceiling fan is cycling at high speed with other mobile fan units scattered around the perimeters. Also, the air conditioning tends to be extreme. One other observation is that when customers are not present, the storeowner tends to shut off the power to conserve energy, but all lights, fans, and air-conditioning come to life upon customer entry.

Second, once one reaches out to touch something or examine a piece of merchandise, the sales attendant would typically begin asking questions like: “You looking for blue colors?”; “You need curtains?”; or “You want to get something very
pretty for your wife or girlfriend?"

Third, almost every formidable store of this caliber has an upstairs. Ascending the stairs, the store attendees would encourage me to remove my shoes and sit on a mattress; this was followed by serving a cold beverage.

Fourth, comfortably positioned on the floor cushion, the first question regarding Sari materials is usually something like: “What color are you looking for?” At this point, I would say something like blues and greens with a floral design. Then, almost out of nowhere, other workers would come and start pulling plastic wrapped Saris stacked along the shelves (from floor to ceiling). Naturally, the first items rendered are of the highest quality silk, thus establishing the bar and appealing to the senses. The salesperson would observe the items I paid most attention to, and would begin unwrapping the Saris and spreading them out on the floor, one after the other. As I examined the craftsmanship, feeling the textures and enjoying the beauty, the salesperson would order others to collect like-accouterments for comparison. I remember on one visit, I must have had 30 some Sari’s spread out before me!
Fifth, then ensues the haggling. Over the years, I have learned to tell them, “I have been to India many times; I want best deal.” The person would usually smile and throw out a number like 4,500 rupees ($90 USD) for a Sari made of 100% silk garnished with embroidery, beads, and other decorations. I would then look at them and say, “Oh, wow, I was expecting something like 2,600 rupees.” The response was usually something like, “Oh, no sir, that is too low…4,350 rupees,” and the haggling continued. My experiences have improved over the years to the point where I could usually get the person down to about 3,250 rupees ($62.50 USD). I do not declare to be an expert, but I have learned over the years to NEVER accept the initial price as the final payment.

All said and done, I have collected many tokens and beautiful pieces of work that adorn my house to this day. My kitchen shears are made from laced, brown fabric and my living room pillows are covered in a beautiful cream colored silk stitched with floral designs. My home is accented with pillow covers, bed covering, carpets, marble, wood carvings, and many other items unique to Indian culture.

**Naming Conventions**

Depending on where one is born in India, the formula for the composition of a person’s name varies significantly. What I have come to learn over the years, and in my readings, is that one common component exists, that being the surname. Every region is influenced by the language and associated customs, family tradition, religious affiliation, and yes, the British government introduced another approach to make names easier for Westerners to pronounce. A name may contain the father’s name, the village, a god, or some other reverent point to show honor. In some cases, upon marriage, the wife may even change her surname to something different from her husband’s. I continue to struggle to understand all the nuances of India people naming conventions, but one thing I am hearing from my confidant’s across the country is that there is a movement to go back to what they once were before the British arrived.
Indian names like “Kingfisher” are prominent across product lines.

There are other well-known names across the country, not so much on a personal level, but rather in industry and commerce. For example, the company called “Kingfisher” is widely recognized as a successful and influential part of Indian culture. Kingfisher originally began as a beer company in southern India that was introduced by the British. Kingfisher beer is served across all of India and is a name prominently known, much like Budweiser is in the U.S.

Like any other successful company, Kingfisher began to divest and explore other industries. Today, when booking a domestic flight online, most likely one will see Kingfisher listing a competitive price. Kingfisher is now one of the largest airline
carriers in India, painted in bright red with the same distinctive bird painted on each vessel.

My Kingfisher luggage tags from a domestic flight from Pune to New Delhi, India, April 2010.

Once capitalism began to take hold in India, and with the lifting of the Licence Raj in 1991, companies have learned how to market products across the country. Everywhere I have been in India, from Goa, Pune, Mumbai, Aambay Valley, New Delhi, Agra, and all locations in-between, Kingfisher is a prominent fixture. Typical of U.S. companies, Kingfisher is a proud sponsor of many sporting events.
A name, no matter of a person or a company, contains many elements. The “name” recipe comprised of vowels, consonants, symbols, or any other rudiment continues to evolve and adjust with time. As Western influence forges on with its permeation throughout the country, names like Kingfisher mean different things to different people (beer, travel, cricket, or all three).

Terrorism

The following pictures capture the magnificence of a Mumbai, India icon—the infamous Taj Mahal Hotel. While I do not understand the reasons behind terrorism, I do know it is very real. Terrorism is a reality that I have avoided having direct contact with in a number of instances.

![Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai, India, March 2006.](image)

The image below depicts the grotesque violence that occurred in November 2008. This event rattled me because I have been there, sat in the restaurant, and even had a brush with celebrity as the key United Kingdom team cricket player entered the restaurant I was sitting in inside the Taj Mahal hotel. My friend said, “Matt, do you know what that was?” “No” I replied. “That was the most famous player on the UK cricket team who is staying here for tomorrow’s big game.” “Oh” I say, “I had no idea.”
Taj Mahal Hotel terrorist attack, November 26, 2008

I was scheduled to fly out to Mumbai on Friday, November 28, with a connection for the Pune office, to facilitate performance review meetings; the airline rerouted my flight to go directly from Frankfurt, Germany into Pune, India.

I have missed terrorist activities on a couple of occasions. The first notable experience regarding terrorist activity happened on July 11, 2006. I was in a car going from Pune to Mumbai the evening of July 10, bound for the airport to catch a flight en route for home. The very next day mayhem emerged as a number of trains loaded with explosives killed many passengers, particularly in the first class section. Pakistani activists were the identified culprits.

The second instance occurred in 2007; I sat in my car en route from the hotel to the office, reading the Pune Times. One of the front-page articles featured a kidnapping of foreign visitors. I asked a colleague if this is common and he said, “Oh yes, kidnappings happen, but it is a result of the people they interact with.”

The final example of terrorist activity occurred on the block where one of the Pune hotels I often frequented, the “O” Hotel, stood next to a German-style pastry shop. Many times I walked past the establishment and observed it packed with Westerners eating Western-styled baked goods. For some reason, I quickly adopted the mantra that for me to truly connect with Indian culture, I should only go to Indian-based shops and restaurant. I never entered that facility or any similar places composed primarily of European, Canadian, Americans or, any other “White” cultures.

India is a land comprised of people (over a billion) living and thriving there, undaunted by external influences evidenced in centuries of invasion and survival. Indian history is rife with disparagement where people live in unity, but outside
forces garner the reserve to conquer and rule. The Mughals, Gupta Empire, Chola Empire, Turko-Afhan dynasties, and the East India Company (which later evolved into British rule), are some examples of outsiders seizing opportunity to subjugate the Indian population into oppression.

**Power Outages**

Living and working in India means succumbing to local infrastructure. Supporting a population of 1.1 billion (and growing) takes a toll on an electrical grid implemented during British rule, and the years that followed under Nehru leadership. I will never forget my first training class in April, 2006 when I was leading a group of young Indian “freshers” through a structured communication course and the lights went out, the LCD projector went black, and the air conditioning surged.

India is challenged by inadequate electrical support, especially as business booms, requiring energy support for Western-styled buildings that are sprouting up around the country. To deal with these untimely breaks in energy flow, many companies have a “battery” closet stocked with power to bridge the gaps in electrical service, much like a disaster recovery bunker. Imagine walking into a confined spaced with walls lined with car batteries all linked to a central socket. The image below is one copied from the Internet insinuating a wide-open space, but is nothing like what I observed in our office locations.

![Back-up battery room to circumvent electrical grid power outages.](image)

What I like about the image above is that it captures the “hierarchy” of building support services: the gentleman to the left is most likely the administrative support leader; the person in the middle is probably the tech representative; and the man to the right (back facing camera) is likely the IT leader guiding activities. During times of power outages, I observed individuals represented in these various uniform colors rushing to the “closet” ensuring the back-up battery supply was functioning so as to not disrupt “business as usual.” Over the years I participated in Indian work, I quickly assimilated and soon ignored such disruptions in productivity.
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VITA

Matthew A. Woolsey attended Washington State University (WSU) and graduated cum laude in 1992 with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication. While at WSU, he was the Drum Major of the WSU Cougar Marching Band and received the Washington State University Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Broadcasting. He earned a Master of Arts in Education Administration from West Virginia University in 1994 and worked as a graduate assistant in the Department of Housing and Residence Life. In 1995, he received the Morgantown Rotary Club Award for uniting the university and local community through the creation of the “Get A Life” wellness program.

From 1994–1998, Matt worked in the field of student affairs at West Virginia University, Elmhurst College, and The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. All positions were within student housing departments where he supervised live-in and security staff, adjudicated student conduct, facilitated educational programs, and advised student organizations. During this time, he was recognized at the institutional and national level for outstanding student organizations and took on leadership roles within the profession, including co-chair of the Chicago Area Small College Housing Association.

In 1998, he became an executive communication coach and then moved into global learning and development roles at ZS Associates and Pricewaterhouse Coopers.
for the next 12 years. During this time, he built company-wide curriculum maps that linked learning to competencies across North America, European, and Asian locations; he also facilitated employee engagement initiatives and created leadership development programs. He is currently engaged in adjunct teaching and doing independent consulting. In 2012, he earned a Doctor of Education in Higher Education and Organizational Change from Benedictine University.