

*Kahani* Literacy Project:  
Culturally Efficacious Story  
Writing

Pixel  
Conference

Presenters

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## **Social Pedagogical Context**

A review of traditional curricula for literacy and the Language Arts indicates a paucity of focus and opportunities for diasporic Asian Indian American children (AIA) (or any minoritized youth) to learn about their heritage culture to an appreciable degree

# *Kahani* Literacy Project (KLP)

## TCRK

- 1) Culturally Efficacious Pedagogies (Flores, et al., 2012)
- 2) Authentic (i.e., culturally congruent) instruction
- 3) Culturally affirming curriculum
  - Respect for community epistemologies
  - Heightening awareness of heritage

## KLP

1. Authentic literacy instruction
2. Culturally efficacious literacy curriculum
3. Culturally affirming Language Arts/English activities
  - Incorporation of Indic-centric media
  - Instruction that foregrounds Indic cultures

# Theoretical Grounding

	Writing Workshop Model (WWM)	Community Cultural Wealth (CCW)	Funds of Knowledge (FoK)
Origin	NCTE	Yosso, 2005	Moll, et al., 1992
Key points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is a social process-conferring</li> <li>• Mechanics is NOT the focus</li> <li>• Need-based intervention</li> <li>• <i>Sustained Silent Writing</i></li> <li>• Modelling and mentorship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Particular Knowledge and skills in Latino communities</li> <li>• Disparaged or neglected in school curriculum)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge and skills that exist in the community</li> <li>• Disparaged or neglected in school curriculum)</li> </ul>

# Key components of KLP

- Indic-centric (centered)
  - Privileges the epistemologies and experiences of India
  - Avoids disparagement (micro-aggressions) encountered in schools
    - Children
    - Curriculum
- Increased student engagement
  - Student interaction through topic choice
  - Focused on culturally connected experiences
  - Opportunities for dialogic conferencing
  - Shared/common habitus (India)
- Validation of “Indigenous” community
  - Knowledge from the elders
  - Knowledge /epistemologies outside of the official school curriculum
- Literacy education is directed to obtain a deeper understanding of culture and self [Diasporic Asian Indian American]
  - Identity construction
  - *Trishanku World – Dual Frame of Reference*

# Methodology

- Distributed multilingual flyer
  - *Barathanatyam* dance schools
  - *Carnatic* music classes
  - *Balavikas* schools.
- Recruitment (2008) (to date: 275 AIA students to date)
  - average of 23 students per year
  - Four major regions of India
    - (i.e., North, South, East, West)
    - fifteen heritage languages
- Demographics
  - Middle class
  - Diasporic AIA children
  - At least one parent holding a college degree

# Thematic Analysis

[*Caveat*: To appreciate their writings, it is important to remember that the diasporic AIA children are writing from memory]

1. Data approached with a priori codes, including:
    - FAMILY, CELEBRATION, RELIGION, TRAVEL TO INDIA
  2. Data subsequently reviewed and revealed posteriori themes, including:
    - AMERICANIZED, INCONVENIENCES/NEGATIVES
- Collapsing codes into categories ; categories into themes



# Results from Thematic Analysis



## Connection to Family, Friends,& Traditions

- Celebrations
  - *Deepavali*
  - *Shankranthi*
- Foods & Gifts
  - *Prasad*
  - *Vetthalaipak*
  - Sugar cane

## Artistic Expression

- Music
  - Carnatic
- Dance
  - *Bharatanatyam*

## Identity Construction

- *Trishanku* World
  - Indic-cultural heritage
  - American culture
- Negatives about India
  - Few in number
  - Offset by positives

## Thematic Analysis: Exemplars

“So [sic] here’s to  
being culturally  
diverse—Indian  
and American, a  
perfect balance...”

### Theme: Identity construction

For many of the diasporic, AIA writers, the KLP offered a *Trishanku World[x]*, that is, a space in which to reflect on and venerate the characteristics of their two cultural worlds.

*I would never ever go back and change my visiting [SIC] the village. India is my home, my history, and the US is just the same [sic] my home, my future. Both are equally important, and neither has made me who I am more than the other. They’ll both be in my heart, and I can’t imagine blossoming into who I am today without these two places that’ve made growing up so worthwhile. I couldn’t be more proud [sic] to be Indian, to have that colorful heritage, and I couldn’t be more proud to be in the US, to have all the opportunities I could want. So [sic] here’s to being culturally diverse—Indian and American, a perfect balance.....(MV 0018).*

## Thematic Analysis: Exemplars

*“I believe that music should be used to help you attach to your family roots.”*

### **Theme: Artistic Expressions of Culture-Music**

Interwoven in the *Kahani's* were references to various forms of entertainment and enjoyment.

Several *Kahani's* signaled enjoyment of music and its effects on emotions.

*Music affects our everyday lives by connecting us to our emotions and our roots. There are many different reasons for why people use music. Most of the reasons are for pleasure but I believe that music should be used to help you attach to your family roots. Your family roots are what keep you attached to reality (AR 0017).*

## CONCLUSION

- Findings from this study suggest that diasporic, AIA writers, when afforded opportunities, will engage in literacy activities (i.e reading, writing) that reveal an appreciation for their heritage.
- The KLP demonstrates that culturally framed literacy instruction is possible and beneficial.
- Instructional approaches like the *KLP* provide for literacy development and cultural scaffolding.

## Implications

- Educators who strive for culturally efficacious pedagogies need not forfeit meaningful, rigorous instruction to address culture.
- As they compose original texts, students leverage their available cultural resources to
  - engage in writing development and
  - deepen their understanding of heritage and familial connections

# Implications

- Bicultural individuals, like diasporic AIA learners, benefit when afforded opportunities to explore both their cultures.
- School curricula can recognize and venerate FoK and CCW while promoting academic development
- A safe and supportive habitus enables a “Third Space” (Anzaldúa, 1993), like *Trishanku World*
- Bicultural individuals may construct a healthy ethnic identity and *Dual Frame of Reference* by the integration of their cultural worlds in their “*Third Space*”.