

**AN ECOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF EGO AND ETHNIC IDENTITY  
FORMATION WITHIN SECOND GENERATION KOREAN-AMERICANS**

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# An Ecological Examination Of Ego And Ethnic Identity Formation Within Second Generation Korean-Americans

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(ABSTRACT)

Investigation of first and second generation Korean-American ego and ethnic identity formation was explored through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Seventeen self-identified Korean-American young adults, aged twenty-one to twenty-nine, were asked to describe their identity development within Bronfenbrenner's five ecological realms. Grounded theory methodology was used to link Erikson's theory of identity formation (1968) with Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecology (1979). Unlike Erikson's prescribed identity crisis for adolescents, Korean-Americans were found to delay their identity exploration until college or young adulthood when they were able to gain geographical and emotional distance from their parents. This was found to be primarily due to Korean culture's emphasis on three main areas--importance of family, respect for elders, and strive for excellence--which served to reinforce collective identity with one's family along with strong parental authority, which inhibited deviation from parental expectations. Subsequently, Korean-American ego identity was found to be significantly influenced by parental adherence to Korean culture. Furthermore, Korean-Americans during adolescence were found to marginalization their Korean culture, due to experiences of discrimination and prejudice from American peers. Depending on the degree of experienced prejudice and discrimination from American peers along with degree of socialization and exposure to other Koreans, Korean-Americans' ethnic identity either proceeded in stages or became fluid, where their ethnic identity changed depending on the environment .

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### ***Identity Formation as an Important Task for All Adolescents***

The importance of identity formation among adolescents has been of interest to researchers, clinicians, and practitioners for many decades. Identity formation has been described as a primary task for all adolescents (Erikson, 1968). As a psychological task, it is vital for the adolescent to obtain a sense of unification and cohesiveness in the self that provides meaning, direction, and purpose while also aiding the individual's apparent competence and adaptive functioning (Allen & Majidi-Ahi, 1989). For Erikson (1968), exploration is the identity crisis, and necessary for identity development. Parents and other socialization surrogates expect adolescents to begin developing their identities (Violata and Holden, 1988; Williamson and Campbell, 1985). Society also grants the adolescent the time and opportunities to develop a congruous set of personal values (Erikson, 1968). Hence, adolescence is a crucial and important vehicle for self development, and identity exploration a vital element in constructing one's reality.

Failure to develop a harmonious, stable identity may lead to confusion and psychological distress (Erikson, 1980). Psychological distress in adolescents may be marked by a personality pattern of self-doubt, confusion, distressed thinking, impassivity, antagonism with parents and other authority figures, reduced ego strength, and increased physical symptoms (Kidwell, Dunham, Bacho, Pastorino, & Portes, 1995).

According to criterion employed by Erikson (1956, 1963) concerning identity formation, Marcia (1966) categorized individuals into one of four identity statuses: (A) *Identity achieved*- individuals have undergone an identity crisis and have identified personal and ideological commitments. (B) *Identity diffused*- individuals who lack direction and commitment, regardless of whether they have experienced an identity crisis. (C) *Moratorium*- individuals who are currently undergoing an identity crisis. (D) *Identity foreclosed*- individuals who have committed to personal and ideological commitments without having undergone a crisis. Theoretically, the emphasis has been placed on stage models of identity formation. However, Yeh and Huang (1996), found that previous cross-situation consistency models of identity are inappropriate for Asian-Americans. Unlike previous studies of identity formation, they conducted a study that explored ethnic identity as a multi-faceted phenomenon that may change to particular social contexts, family interaction, geographic locations, and psychological proximity to Asian-American political movements. Their model of identity formation links the individuals with culture and context, unlike Erikson's and Marcia's stage model of identity.

The importance of cultural identity, for individuals living in a multicultural context, has been suggested by Berry (1980) as providing the individual a framework for self-definition. By understanding the role of culture in human development, researchers can better understand cultural variations in self-concepts and how identity adapts to different social situations. The following section outlines five theories that link culture and identity development. The section will also discuss how culture is viewed in post-modernism.

*Social and Cross-Cultural Construction of Identity*

Five theoretical perspectives that view culture as an important determinant in identity development are outlined in the following table:

**Table I: Five Theoretical Perspectives**

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	DESCRIPTION	LIMITATIONS
Individualism-Collectivism	Shared values of social groups are important contributors to identity development. This theory emphasizes similarities within groups and differences between groups.	Ignores intracultural diversity and individual differences. Broad labels used to characterize cultures promote prejudice and conceptualize independence with individualism and interdependence with collectivism.
Ecological Systems	Interactions between the individual and his/her environment are key factors in shaping one's identity. Social and physical contexts, along with transitions across contexts, are seen as ways that individuals construct their cultural identity.	Does not address how ecological realms change throughout the life span of the individual and how changes affect their identity.
Cultural-Ecological	Identity is influenced not only by ethnicity, but also by cultural and historical contexts.	Not enough emphasis placed on diversity and change within cultural contexts, such as communities.
Social Identity	Social identity is constructed through various social interactions. Different social situations can change the salience of an identity, but individuals view themselves and others as being consistent and create situations that support their views.	More research is needed on the stability of identity across different situations and over time.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	DESCRIPTION	LIMITATIONS
Multiple-Worlds	Links individuals with contexts and perceives individuals as instrumental in negotiating cultural boundaries when developing their identity.	Lacks explanation of variations within groups that share similar worlds.

(Copper, C. & Denner, J., 1998; Killen, M., 1997; Raef, C., 1997)

According to Raef (1997), culture is an important factor for understanding human development. By considering cultural context, variations and similarities among and between ethnic groups can be better understood. Moreover, individual identity can be investigated within different cultural context. This will allow researchers to move from Erikson's post structuralist model of identity to a post modern model of identity, where identity is a social construction.

The current (poststructuralist) model of self stresses that the human subject is decentred, contradictory and fragmented. The emphasis is on the subject process. We are now beginning to understand some of the ways in which identity is criss-crossed by many social dynamics...identity is, in some ways, an effect of socialising institutions- mother, father, the family, schooling, the factory/office, friends, media- but, at the same time, we can choose to stress some elements in certain circumstances and historical conditions. All identities, whether based on class, ethnicity, religion or nation, are social constructions (Sarup, 1996, pp. 48-49).

This postmodern view of identity becomes especially applicable when investigating the cross-cultural construction of identity. Recent immigrants may rely on social interactions to help mediate their transition into another culture and inform them of their relative status within the host culture. For an adolescent of first generation parents, these mediations and transference of information determine how they will reconcile their family and host culture and hence, facilitate in shaping their identity. "During middle and late adolescence, in particular, the influence of parents is likely to be moderated by forces outside the family, including the adolescent's peer group and the broader community in which the family lives" (Steinberg, Darling, Fletcher, Brown & Dornbush, 1995, p.424). These outside forces become a determinant of conflict for the adolescent and his or her family. According to Baptiste (1993), when families emigrate, the parents have already prescribed in their minds what they intend for their children in the United States. However, there may be discrepancies between what the parents want and what their children want for themselves in the United States. The conflicting social and cultural worlds may become especially contentious for the Asian adolescent whose parental "collectivistic" culture clashes with America's "individualistic" culture.

The following section discusses the Asian identity formation within the United States.

### ***Asian Identity Formation***

The establishment of identity, due to its need for a coalition of self, is especially complicated for adolescents belonging to ethnic and racial minority groups in the United States (Spencer, Markstrom-Adams, 1990). For children of immigrants, research has shown that the developmental process of identity formation can be exacerbated by experiences of intense acculturative conflicts. These acculturative conflicts occur as adolescents pursue to adapt in social identity contexts that may be racially and culturally dissonant (Rumbault, 1994). Their identity development has been thought to be fraught with conflict because of professed dissonance associated with belonging to two cultural realms (Grove, 1991). Such conflicts infer a different model of identity development for ethnic minorities than Euro-Americans.

Atkinson, Morton, and Sue (1983), determined that minority identity development proceeds in five stages. The five stages are presented in the following table.

***Table II: Minority Identity Development***

STAGE	DESCRIPTION
conformity	preference of the dominant culture's values over one's own cultural group
dissonance	indecision and conflict about the dominant culture's system and one's own cultural system
resistance and immersion	rejection of the dominant cultural system and acceptance of one's own cultural group system
introspection	questioning of both the dominant group's cultural system and one's own cultural system
synergistic articulation and awareness	resolution in previous conflicts and confusion and the development of a cultural identity that reflects both the dominant group's cultural system and one's own group cultural system

Other researchers have similarly found that identity among ethnic minorities may vary and even act contradictory in different contexts, and that such adolescents have reported varying feelings towards their ethnic identity depending on the situation and the people with which they interact (Goto, 1997; Phinney, 1990; Vermeulen & Pels, 1984; Rosenthal & Hrynevich, 1985).

While research has been done on the effects of multicultural influences on identity formation, the research findings are often limited in scope, and fail to include ecological factors, outside of the individual's microsystem and mesosystem, along with transitional experiences. The role of context such as, family, community, peers, and social structure needs to be more closely examined and has often been ignored in previous research studies (Phinney, 1990). Hence, perceptions of one's own ethnic group could influence how an adolescent melds childhood identifications. These childhood identifications, which primarily develop through family and societal perceptions, were examined in the context of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) five ecological realms.



***Purposes of the Study***

There are two purposes for the present study. First, the purpose of the present study was to inquire how ethnic minority young adults describe their identity development. The second purpose was to explore how cultural context influences identity formation within these individuals. By relating Erikson's theory of identity formation to the Asian-American process of identity development, theories of identity formation among ethnic minorities can be developed or expanded. A qualitative interview approach, based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) five ecological realms, was used to ground the study in existing theory and to provide a framework to investigate Asian-American identity development. In addition, for reasons elaborated in the following section, Korean Americans were the focus of the present study.

## **CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The sample for the present study comprised of Korean-American young adults who were: (1) self identified first or second generation Korean-American young adults, aged twenty-one years to twenty-nine years; (2) single or married to another self-identified Korean-American and having no children; (3) had parent(s) who were both first generation immigrants and of Korean ethnicity; and (4) American born or had immigrated to the United States on or before the age of five years. The rationale for the prescribed population was effective and purposeful for examining ethnic minority identity development within cultural context.

### ***History of Koreans in the United States***

The recent immigration of Koreans to the United States made them an effective group to study cultural context in relationship to identity formation. Immigration of Asians to America started around 1850. During these early years of immigration, few Koreans came to America and those who migrated, settled mainly in Hawaii or California where they worked on the railroads or in agriculture. By 1930, the Korean population had only grown to approximately 1,800 (Kim, 1971:26; Ryu, 1977). It has not been until recent years that the Korean population has begun to increase and disperse to other areas of the United States. Of the Asian-American population, Koreans have been the fastest growing since the passage of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Between 1970 and 1980, the Korean population has increased by 414.2 percent, and 123.5 percent between the years of 1980 to 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995). By 2000, Koreans are estimated to be the third largest Asian and Pacific Islander population in the United States (Bouvier and Agresta, 1987: Table 12.2). This recent dramatic increase in the Korean population made Korean-Americans a good group to study the full effects of cultural context in relationship to identity formation, since they have a generational history less established than many other ethnic groups in the United States. Moreover, Korean-Americans, who have a shorter immigration history in the United States than other ethnic minority groups, have fewer social and cultural ties to the dominant culture than multi-generational immigrants. Korean-Americans, therefore, provide a recent perspective that incorporated both culture and identity formation.

### ***The Need to Study Korean-Americans***

Given the abrupt rise in Korean-American population, the unique stressors that Korean Americans encounter in their quest for identity needed to be more closely examined (Lorenzo, Bilge, Reinherz & Frost, 1995). As the Korean population expands, there is going to be a need for researchers to investigate ways that Korean-American youth can resolve conflicts associated with reconciling two distinct cultural realms. Although there have been numerous studies on Asians as a group, few have been done specifically on Koreans using qualitative methodologies (Park, 1994; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990).

In the past, researchers have grouped Asian-Americans into a single category based purely on external appearance. However, placing Asian-Americans into a single category often disregarded the diversity and uniqueness of each ethnic group (Kim & Chun, 1993). Korean-American youths, who encompass a population of mainly first and second generation immigrants, may have different concerns and issues than other Asian-Americans who have longer and more established histories in the United States, such as the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Filipinos (Kim & Chun,

1993). Park (1994), found that Korean students need more assistance from peers and community to adapt to American culture, along with greater social support in understanding their Korean culture. As mentioned in the section concerning the history of Koreans in the United States, Korean-Americans represent an ethnic population less confounded by multi-generational ancestry in the United States. Therefore, their cultural immersion into the United States differ than that of other ethnic minorities who have a more established history of migration in the United States. It is reasonable to assume that the lack of cultural history of Korean-Americans in the United States, results in a more profound distinction between Western and Korean culture.

In order to distinguish the subtleties between one Asian ethnic group's identity formation experience from other Asian and Euro-American identity formation experiences, a shift was needed from "global rating analysis", which have been the bulk of most studies on identity development (Lavoie, 1994). Moreover, the limited research on Asian-Americans has failed to address the pliant nature of Asian-American identity across different social contexts and the effects of their immigrant status on the development of their identity. In conclusion, as will be described in the following section, the majority of studies done on identity development have been conducted on early adolescents, which may not be applicable to the Korean-American identity formation experience (Phinney, 1990).

### ***Significance of the Sample***

The age range of the focal group studied was twenty-one to twenty-nine. Past research suggests that adolescents of more recent immigrants, whose parents still retain a strong adherence to Asian values, may not experience an identity crisis until young adulthood, at which time they gain some distance from parental influences. Greenberger and Chen (1996) state that "late adolescents' efforts at establishing autonomy are delayed in Asian American families, perhaps because of later expected age of independence..." (p.714). They found that Asian-Americans in their study were more involved with autonomy issues in later adolescence than their Euro-American counterparts and that young adults have less daily contact with family members than early adolescents. In their study, Asian college students reported more conflict with their parents and a less cohesive family environment than their Euro-American peers. This suggests that farther geographic proximity from their nuclear family environment may have triggered increased identity exploration. Hence, if the years which encompass undergraduate college life represent the comparable years of Euro American adolescent identity exploration, then there is a need to examine in depth young adult Asian Americans. Moreover, it was necessary to examine the transition period from adolescence to young adulthood and young adulthood in itself to distinguish the developmental sequence of identity development within Korean-Americans. By examining this transitional period, cultural factors that have inhibited and facilitated identity achievement within Korean-Americans could be better understood. Since, this age cohort was able to reflect back on the transitional period between adolescence and young adulthood, they were able to give a clearer and more complete description of the developmental process of identity formation within Korean-Americans.

Although the participants in this study were young adults, the sample was restricted to those without children. By having no children, the young adults' identity process was able to remain as close to that of adolescent identity, and hence, able to be compared to Erikson's identity

formation process. Having a child would have redefined the individual's identity role and further created added cultural conflict not encountered during Erikson's prescribed adolescent identity crisis.

Participants were either born in the United States or immigrated before the age of five years old, since migratory adjustment experiences were likely to be different with individuals who came to the United States at an older age (Noh & Avison, 1996). Also, those participants who immigrated before the age of five were more likely to have similar memory spans with American-born individuals. Child development theories suggest that most adults can retrieve accurate, vivid memories from the age five and up, but that earlier memories are often fragmented, since preschoolers have not developed a concept of self (Howell, 1993). Howe and Courage (1997) similarly found that only after cognition of self emerges, which is around two years old, are children able to begin storage of autobiographical memories. Moreover, to maintain similar migratory experience across individuals, the parent(s) of the participants were both first generation immigrants and of Korean ethnicity. This also avoided expanding into issues related to being of mixed ethnicity.

Finally, the sample was heterogeneous regarding socio-economic status, which was determined by the participant's report of personal and parental occupation and education. The sample was heterogeneous because findings from previous research have been inconclusive about the role of socio-economic status. Additionally, there has been little conclusive research that correlates socio-economic status with identity formation within Asian-Americans.

Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecological provided a framework to guide research on the negotiations of identity within ecological realms. The following section will examine four of the five ecological realms and their influence over identity formation among Korean-Americans.

## CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecology (1979) conceptualizes development, not only within the family unit, but also within the larger context of culture. Ecological theory stresses the various levels of influence on development. Moreover, ecological theory of human development provides a useful perspective for examining how American culture, subcultures, and Asian culture influence identity formation. It can aid in defining the many layers and contexts that Asian-Americans must incorporate and cope with during identity crisis and formation. These layers are vital in differentiating the Korean-American experience from the Euro-American and other Asian-American identity development experience. The four ecological realms that will be addressed in this study are: 1) Microsystem which is the environment in which an individual resides; 2) Mesosystems which are the relations between microsystems or connections between contexts; 3) Exosystem which is the realm of experiences in a social setting in which an individual does not participate actively, yet influences an individual's experiences in an immediate context; and 4) Macrosystem which involves the culture in which individuals reside.

### ***Microsystem***

The microsystem "is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.22). This realm recognizes the effects the immediate environment in which the individual participates as an important factor in identity development. Therefore, parental and other forms of social support become important factors in identity development for Asian Americans. Research suggests that adaptation outcomes of adolescents are greatly influenced by the way in which their experience of the host culture is mediated by their parents (Aronowitz, 1992). For example, if the adolescent's parents have heavy accents, or have difficulties speaking or comprehending English, the adolescent may become a liaison between American culture and Asian culture for his/her particular parents. Moreover, positive relationships with parents may create feelings of mutual interdependence, which could minimize identity crisis anxiety thereby, encouraging identity exploration within their children. The vital challenges of coping with "...split of self images, a loss of center, and a dispersion...(which are seen as the)..dark and negative side of identity formation" (Erikson, 1975), could be alleviated through parental support and a sense of self unity through cultural consistency. Researchers have found that parental emotional support was associated with enhanced ego identity development, and adolescents who perceived their parents to be supportive and accepting were more open to exploring and experimenting with identity alternatives (Adams, 1985; Adams et al., 1987; Adams & Jones, 1982, Grotevant, 1983; Kampter, 1988; Lavoie, 1976). Moreover, "adolescents who perceive their parents to be supportive and accepting, are supposedly more open to exploring and experimenting with identity options, and are therefore, more likely to discover their unique personal qualities and values" (O'Connor, 1995, p.209). However, perceived parental support for Asian adolescents may be confounded by conflicting parental expectations with Western expectations. Rosenthal and Feldman (1992b) found that parental attitudes toward cultural changes influence the parents' mode of dealing with their children.

For most American youth, peers represent a way to achieve independence from their parents. Subsequently, peers become a facilitating factor in identity formation. Researchers have found

that minority adolescents are relatively more influenced by their peers and less influenced by their parents than their Euro-American counterparts (Steinberg, Darling, Fletcher, Brown & Dornbusch, 1995). However, for Asian-American minorities, forming allegiances with other peers becomes problematic rather than a supportive means to gain autonomy (Goodenow & Espin, 1993). At a time when adolescents should be defining their unique identities, Asian-Americans have been found to negotiate peer interactions by giving others the impression that they are not exceptional in any way. By remaining relatively anonymous, they are able to avoid ridicule from their peers and therefore, move between different peer groups without making enemies (Goto, 1997).

Geographic location in which the individual resides also influences identity formation within Asian Americans. Since Asian ethnic pride is less emphasized in Asian communities than other minority groups, Asians who favor assimilation are at risk of having a negative ethnic group identity, due to their lacking sense of attachment, or belonging (Tajfel, 1978). Moreover, depending on how ethnically diverse the community in which they settle, the degree of discrimination and support received may vary. Communities more ethnically diverse were found to have fewer resources. Moreover, those individuals who favored separation encountered added stress and demonstrated lower self-esteem in situations where they have to interact with the dominant culture (Szapocznik and Kurtines, 1980). However, those who decided to reside in predominately white communities had access to more resources, but were at a greater risk to experience discrimination (Noh & Avison, 1996). Due to more recent immigration and chain migration, in which Asian immigrants have migrated to join other family members, Koreans have been found to reside in either predominately Caucasian regions or primarily Korean ethnic regions (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). Geographic proximity to other Koreans may influence how Asian-American adolescents view their own ethnic group, and in turn, affect their identity formation.

Lastly, generational status and immigration experience of the individual are features of the family microsystem which help to distinguish the Korean identity formation experience from other ethnic groups. According to Noh and Avison (1996) and Ghuman (1997), both first and second generation immigrants are prone to adjustment problems which involve role changes and identity crisis (Noh & Avison, 1996; Ghuman, 1997).

### **Mesosystem**

The mesosystem “comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighborhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work, and social life) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.25).

Identity formation for Asian-Americans is confounded not only by having to negotiate interactions among the individual and family, but also having to negotiate interactions between the individual, the individual’s family, and the individual’s constructed society, which mainly involves school. Ghuman (1997) found that most Asian “young people are seeking some form of synthesis of home and school cultures, so that they can incorporate these elements in their personal identities” (p.33). Moreover, peers become particularly important in mediating the

educational experience, especially for children of immigrants (Fuligni, 1997). Since most foreign born parents work long hours, have discomfort in speaking the English language, and are less knowledgeable about the educational system, they are often less likely to become involved in school lives of their children. Therefore, there is less support for the adolescent concerning peer and extracurricular activities and less recognition of parents as role models. Moreover, lack of parental involvement in school relays a perception from the school that the parents are uncaring and detached (Fuligni, 1997; Lorenzo, Bilge, Reinherz, & Frost, 1995).

### **Exosystem**

The exosystem “refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.25). One event that may greatly affect an adolescent’s formation of identity is parental experience of immigration. A majority of immigrant families migrate to the United States with high expectations of gaining a better life for their family. However, financial struggles, role changes, experience of discrimination, and acculturation difficulties may result in parental idealization of their “home country” and loss of admiration and respect for their host country (Noh & Avison, 1996; Baptiste, 1993). The disappointment in their expectations often leads to increased family conflict, which is attributed to cultural differences, rather than stressors associated with migration. Parents in this case, demand increased family enmeshment and nostalgic adherence to their traditional values, consequently, which inevitably retards their children’s social integration into American culture (Baptiste, 1993). Moreover, due to their nostalgia for their home country, parents may remind their children of the sacrifices they made in order to provide them with a better future (Fuligni, 1997). This in turn, place excess pressure on their children to achieve success academically, and often leads the children to have feelings of guilt when they disappoint their parents (McKay, Wong, & Sau-Ling, 1997). It is reasonable to speculate that the combination of both social isolation and sense of family obligation may decrease the child’s willingness to exert autonomy in the future. Lastly, any future attempts by the child to become “Americanized” may be viewed negatively by their parents, leading to a decrease in parental support during identity exploration (Baptiste, 1993).

### **Macrosystem**

The macrosystem “refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.26). Since Asian-American adolescents residing in the United States participate in two cultures, they must attempt to adapt to a hostile acculturation context where American values, which emphasize individualism, conflict with their Asian heritage, which emphasizes collectivism (Rhee, Uleman, Lee, & Roman, 1995; Kim & Chun, 1994). In the case of Korean-Americans, this consolidation of cultures becomes especially problematic since Korea has been described as one of the most collectivistic cultures, while the United States is described as highly individualistic (Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 1980).

...individualistic societies emphasize “I” consciousness, autonomy, emotional independence, individual initiative, right to privacy, pleasure seeking, financial

security, need for specific friendship, and universalism... Collectivistic societies, on the other hand, stress “we” consciousness, collective identity, emotional dependence, group solidarity, sharing, duties and obligations, need for stable and predetermined friendship, group decision, and particularism ( Hofstede, 1980, p.330).

An ecological framework becomes especially significant in this aspect, since it is important to understand how the individual reconciles the two cultures to develop a coherent, stable identity as prescribed by Erikson (1968).

Phinney, Lochner, and Murphy (1990), found that Asian-American adolescents attempt to reconcile conflicting macrosystems by using the following four strategies:

1. *Alienation/marginalization*- occurs when the adolescent perceives his/her ethnic culture negatively, develops a negative self-image based on societal reflections, becomes estranged from his/her own ethnic culture, and fails to adapt to the majority culture.
2. *Assimilation*- the response when the adolescent seeks to become part of the dominant culture to the exclusion of ties within his/her own ethnic culture.
3. *Separation*- occurs when the adolescent exclusively emphasizes his/her own culture of origin and withdraws from contact with the dominant group.
4. *Integration/biculturalism*- occurs when the adolescent simultaneously retains his/her culture of origin and its values and practices, along with adapting to the dominant culture, by learning the necessary values and skills. In this framework, integration/biculturalism is viewed as the coping pattern most associated with good psychological outcomes.

Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok (1987) found that separation and marginalization were strongly related to Koreans. For Asians, a positive attitude towards maintaining their ethnic culture, appears to be more psychologically healthy and a significant factor in developing their self-concept (Phinney, Chavira, & Williamson, 1992).

Distinctions between two cultures also may take the form of discrimination and prejudice. Since Asian-American children can visually be distinguished as a minority, they are subjected to certain stereotypes, attitudes, and reactions from others that are based purely on physical appearance. Many researchers have speculated that negative attitudes and discrimination, on part of the dominant group, result in psychological problems, such as loss of self-image and self-respect. These things result from an individual’s internalization of negative views of their ethnic group held by the dominant culture (Tajfel, 1981). In such a case, an adolescent may attempt to allude negative views by becoming “Americanized”, when they could never be treated as such due to physical appearance. According to Tajfel (1978), individuals who favored assimilation may leave their ethnic group under the premise of “passing” as members of the dominant society and hence, have a false sense of self and low self-esteem. Therefore, the adolescent may struggle with establishing a stable acceptable identity for both their Asian and American environment.



Although stereotypes are often thought of in negative terms, it may be that positive stereotypes become more of a concern for Asian-Americans when forming their identity. Asian-Americans have long been labeled the "ideal immigrant". They have been described as having high status and positive stereotypes associated with them and are generally perceived to have successfully assimilated into the American culture (Phinney, Chavira, & Williamson, 1992). In the case of positive stereotypes, model minority expectations may be embraced by newer immigrants, due to their lack of history in the United States, and hence, put unrealistic expectations on adolescents and interpersonal relations among Asian-Americans and Euro-Americans (Leong, 1997; McKay & Wong, 1996). Korean-Americans, whose history in the United States is less established than many other ethnic minorities, may enthusiastically conform to their "model minority" image only to be discriminated against for the exact qualities that are admired (McKay, Wong, Sau-Ling, 1996).

It is also instructive to note that, since the majority of Koreans immigrated to the United States after 1965, their "voluntary" immigrant status (i.e. they chose to come to the United States) makes them more vulnerable to exclusion and discrimination from mainstream society than other ethnic groups (Ibrahim, Ohnishi & Sandhu, 1997). Because of this, establishing an identity that reconciles Korean culture with American culture is more conflict ridden for Korean-Americans than for other immigrants. This is due to Korean-Americans having a less established history of discrimination and forced labor within the United States than many other ethnic groups and due to their immigration status as voluntary rather than as refugees.

Ecological theory incorporates the family, peer, community, culture, and immigration history as significant factors in the individual's quest for ego identity making the adolescent an active participant. This framework suggests that adolescents, who reside in an environment in which their culture is the dominant population, will experience less confusion during their identity stages because their subsystems will be less conflictual (Kim, 1994; Triandis, 1989a, Triandis et. al., 1990). This view is also supported by Erikson's (1968) identity theory, which suggests that, Korean American adolescents residing in the United States are less validated than non-ethnic, majority affiliated adolescents to achieve identity successfully since, they are of an "oppressed and exploited minority" ( p.301). Depending on the interaction between the four ecological realms, a Korean-American residing in the United States may encounter unique stressors and concerns than their Euro-American counterparts in their quest for identity achievement.

## CHAPTER 4: METHOD

### **Participants**

The participants in the present study were seventeen self-identified Korean young adults, in the age range of twenty-one to twenty-nine. All the participants identified themselves as second generation Korean Americans, regardless of whether they were born in the United States or immigrated. Ten of the participants were male and seven were female (See Appendix A). The researcher continued to interview participants until reaching completeness and the saturation point. "The first principle involves *completeness*, that is, you keep adding interviews until you are satisfied that you understand the complex cultural arena or multistep process. When each additional interviewee adds little to what you have already learned, you stop adding interviewees. This is called *saturation point* (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.72; Glaser & Strauss, 1967)". Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggest that "Sometimes interviewing one very well informed person is all that is necessary...Through completeness and saturation you gain confidence that what you learn holds for the particular arena being studied" (p.73).

As clarified in the Background and Significance section, the sample comprised of the following characteristics and criteria: (1) Participants were self-identified first and second generation Korean American young adults, aged twenty-one years to twenty-nine years. The age range of twenty-one to twenty-nine was the focal group studied since past research, mentioned previously, suggested that Asian-Americans experience conflicts associated with identity exploration during late adolescence or during college years; (2) Participants were single or married to another self-identified Korean American and had no children, since children or conflicts with melding Western and Asian marital philosophies may change the individual's identity; (3) Participants all had parents who are both first generation immigrants and of Korean ethnicity in order not to be confounded by issues related to mixed ethnicity; (4) Lastly, participants were American born or immigrated to the United States on or before the age of five years, to insure similar ecological influences among subjects.

### **Procedure**

Churches served as a good resource to recruit participants. Asian households in America have been found to be very religiously oriented (Ghuman, 1997). Regardless of length of residence in the United States, a large majority of both young and older Koreans were found to attend Korean church (Kim, Hurh, & Kim, 1993). Consequently, subjects were recruited from local Presbyterian Korean churches in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area and from nominations of already recruited participants. The researcher was approved by the minister of the English speaking congregations to address singles and newlywed small groups. The researcher addressed these groups by giving a brief overview of the study, including criterion to participate. Those who acknowledged that they met the criterion volunteered to participate by raising their hands. They were then asked to fill out an "Interviewee Personal Information Data Card", which asked for name, age of birth, along with parental and personal immigration information. The researcher informed the volunteers that all information on the data cards would be kept confidential. The researcher then collected the data cards and securely stored them in a locked compartment. The data cards were reviewed by the researcher to confirm that the participants met criterion outlined

in the study. Those volunteers who were confirmed by the researcher to meet all four criterion of the study were sent letters briefing participants on the nature of the study along with a notice for scheduling interviews. The researcher scheduled interview and sent out letters of confirmation verifying interview time, date and location for each participant.

Interviews were conducted either in participant's home, at the home of the researcher, or at a Korean church. The interviews were conducted at a time and date specified by the participant. The interview participants' agreed to provide the researcher one period of time, approximately one and a half hour in length. Participants were briefed on the nature of the topic, prior to the interview and informed that they were free to withdraw from the study, or refuse to answer any questions, at any time, without penalty. When possible, interviews were spaced a few days apart, allowing the researcher time to review and study the interview before conducting another interview. "This is desirable...because it forces you to slow down, read your interview carefully, and revise your questions for the next interview" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.109). All the interviews were tape recorded. Following completion of an interview, the researcher tape recorded reactionary, interpretive, and descriptive field notes immediately after the participant's taped recorded interview. Subsequently, the researcher added the information gathered from taped inquiries into an ongoing written journal used to record field notes and methodological procedures and concerns.

A journal provides a solid link to the many simultaneous levels of experience that are involved in the process of qualitative research. It can provide a place where the research focus and the role of the researcher meet methodological and analytical concerns. It can be a place to make explicit questions and concerns for later answering and organizing (Meloy, 1994, p.60)

The researcher maintained the anonymity of all the participants by using pseudonyms, and confidentially stored and secured all the information. A list of the participants' names was kept in a locked compartment and was destroyed upon completion of the study.

A pilot interview using semi-structured format, was employed to generate questions and to gain feedback on thoughts, topics, and factors, that are important in Korean American identity formation (See Appendix B). A semi-structured style of interviewing was used with all proceeding participants. The topic was introduced to each participant before the start of each interview. A conversation and theme guide, based on Bronfenbrenner's five ecological realms, was adopted to guide the interview, allowing for flexibility of subject matter and the "voices" of the participants to be heard in each ecological realm (See Appendix C). All the interviews were tape recorded with the participant's consent. As the tapes were being transcribed into text, the names and any identity indicators of the participants were deleted from the text. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and securely stored in a locked compartment prior to and after being transcribed. Transcription took the form of dual parallel column note taking where the transcribed raw data was on one column. The researcher's questions, hypothesis and subsequent notes comprised the second column. This technique aided the researcher in conducting future interviews and helped to refine methodological and coding procedures.

Lastly, the researcher took notes on the interview based on the tapes. The notes summarized the raw data and highlighted important features or turning points in the individual's development.

### ***Analysis***

Grounded theory methodology involves a continuo play between data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Unlike other methods of qualitative methodology, grounded theory methodology emphasizes generating and developing theory (See Appendix D). Grounded theory methodology is ideal for exploring interaction, discovering processes, and involves obtaining multiple perspectives. Multiple perspectives are then connected with "patterns and processes of action/interaction that in turn are linked with carefully specified conditions and consequences" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p.280). For the purposes of the present study, grounded theory methodology was used to link the existing theory of Erikson's identity formation and Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecology. Collected data was weighed against both theories, subsequently, elaborating, modifying, and generating theory. By evolving new and existing theories of identity formation for Korean-Americans, researchers can develop identity measurements better suited for ethnic minorities. Moreover, understanding the identity process of Korean-Americans can enable parents, practitioners, and clinicians to help facilitate identity achievement by being more knowledgeable of the specialized needs that this rapidly growing population demands.

### *Coding*

All the information gathered from the informants was coded according to themes and patterns. Data coding was done by using domain analysis, wherein related terms, themes, ideas, and processes form groups, which in turn, become primary or dominant coding categories. Coded data was then condensed and grouped into a table as larger themes emerged. Following grounded theory methodology, analysis involved both generating theory and studying a social phenomenon.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) prescribe three steps to coding: Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. These systematic steps, necessitated by grounded theory methodology, were used in the present study for coding emerging themes (See Appendix E). First, all interviews were fully transcribed. Second, the first three interviews were open coded. Third, the ideas and concepts of the three coded interviews were summarized into twenty-two categories. Fourth, the data from all the interviews were then categorized into one of the twenty-two categories, adding and subtracting categories as needed. Fifth, the grouped data was open coded into one of Bronfenbrenner's five ecological realms. Sixth, grouped categories within each of the five realms, were open coded into smaller categories where a small sample was coded concurrently with another researcher. Seventh, axial coding was used to make connections between subcategories and linked relationships within the twenty-two grouped categories, which was also collaborated by a second coder for a small portion of the data. Eighth, the data was selectively coded into core categories. These core categories were then related to one another and used to validate or refine the relationships within the five ecological realms, which were additionally confirmed with a second coder for the first two outer realms (Macrosystem and Exosystem).

*Validity and Reliability*

The first way to ensure validity and reliability was by designing the interview to achieve consistency-coherency of themes. By demonstrating consistency-coherency in theme, the researcher was able to account for contradictions in themes with some explanation (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Consistency-coherency was established through good interviewing techniques. The researcher clarified contradictions related by participants by exploring or by pursuing further conversation with the participant about the contradiction. Contradictions in emerging themes were explored by adding subject areas of concern in the future interviews. Therefore, adding a more in-depth understanding or density, as prescribed by grounded theory methodology, to the study (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The second way that aided in ensuring validity and reliability was by making the research easily communicable to readers. “Other researchers should understand your text and accept your description because they complement what they and others have seen” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The researcher increased communicability by warranting that the participants of the study talk only about their firsthand experiences. Therefore, lending credibility and interest to the study.

Thirdly, using grounded theory methodology along with partial coding with a second researcher helped the researcher gain validity. Accuracy of findings can be validated by referencing literature after the research is completed, hence, gain credibility by impacting existing phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). By having coding validated by another researcher, themes and categories remained close to the data.

Lastly, the researcher fit the criterion for the study, which enabled a better and deeper understanding due to a foreknowledge of the Korean culture along with empathy of having past similar experiences (See Appendix F). The researcher was able to relate through personal experiences of the cultural or macro conceptualizations of the Korean culture such as hierarchy, respect for elders and the importance of family. Moreover, exosystem similarities between the immigration experiences of participants’ parents before, after, and during immigration were also similar to the researcher’s parental influences. However, the micro and meso levels were very different. The researcher’s interrelationships with parents, peers, school and church were less restrictive and more interactive than those recounted by the majority of the participants. This allowed the researcher to gain a deeper and clearer understanding of the participants’ experiences of identity formation since, they were vastly different from the researcher’s identity formation development. Subsequently, the researcher was less inclined to seek personal validation and more inclined to pursue contradictions and differences in each participant’s narratives.

## CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

The results were categorized and examined according to the five ecological realms of macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, microsystem and individual (For summary of results see Appendix G). When participants referred to the term American(s) they clarified that American(s) were those person(s), who were of non-Asian ethnicity and whose ethnic group had an established multi-generational history within the United States. They viewed American(s) as a part of mainstream American society, which was in contrast to their self-perceptions of themselves as minorities. Furthermore, the participants often used the term American(s) and Caucasian(s) interchangeably within their interviews. Hence, the researcher's references to American(s) was used concurrently with the participants' definition of American(s).

### ***Macrosystem***

Participants were asked follow-up questions throughout their interview whether they would attribute attitudes and values they held as being characteristic of Korean culture. Although the participants were not asked specifically to make distinctions between Korean and American culture, often their responses were made in comparison to their perceptions of American culture. Three main areas stood out as features that the participants associated with their experiences of Korean culture. All the participants identified at least one of the three areas in their interview. The three areas were: (1) A need to overachieve or be the best; (2) Feelings and displays of respect for those older than themselves; and (3) Family Unity and Support. The following three participants best described the three areas as being a part of Korean culture.

I attribute to Korean culture, just the strive for excellence, respect for elders, importance of family. (Carl)

...belongs among the Korean circle...especially you know valuing education and respecting elders, respecting parents and sort of the work ethic. You know working hard and diligently and working to succeed. (Frank)

...just respecting elders, the importance of family and how it plays in our roles and just the tightness of it all...the working ethic. (Helen)

### *Strive for Excellence*

The strive for excellence was significantly present in personal experiences of participants or observed by participants as being a feature in the lives of other Koreans they encountered. Many participants felt pressure from parents, teachers, and peers to be the best in every activity they pursued. They felt themselves or perceived Koreans, in general, to be successful, due mostly to the culture's emphasis of working hard. This endeavor to achieve success was labeled by some participants as Korean culture's value for perfection.

If you have to use one phrase it's very perfectionistic. (Abbey)

I thought, oh, man, all the pressure. I got to make it, I gotta be the best, everybody around you, teacher, other students expected or just assumed that you would be better because I was Asian, that perfection stereotype. (Bob)

...really expected the best, you get perfectionistic. (Lewis)

When participants referred to Korean culture's need to excel, the examples they described were mainly within the domain of educational success. The participants viewed education as being very important to Koreans and translated perfection within education as getting an "A" on a report card. All the participants recounted personal experiences of pressures to excel academically.

Korean parents especially, it seems there's more of an emphasis on education. (Abbey)

Education was pretty important...There was always the emphasis. (Frank)  
There's always that pressure to succeed and always pressure to go to a good college. (Carl)

In a Korean household, education is probably one of the most important things...No way was B plus even accepted, it was A. A minus was not even accepted, you has to get an A. And if you got an A, than I was always reminded, why couldn't you get an "A" plus. (Nick)

### *Respect For Elders*

The young adults who participated in this study emphasized the pervasive expectation to respect elders within Korean culture. This expectation was one that the participants associated primarily with Koreans rather than Americans who were older than them. The participants described showing respect as giving the older person a formal verbal greeting accompanied by bowing, which the participants termed in Korean as *Insah*. This form of showing respect was often an automatic response when meeting someone who was older than themselves. Respect towards elders was also described by participants to include compliance when asked to do something from an elder who was a family member or a close associate.

It also has to go back with the culture. Because there's something instinctively within that looks at elders with respect. (Carl)

I think maybe that respect for the elderly. If I see an older Korean person, I still like bow down and *Insah* and stuff. It's just like automatic. (Sally)

...the whole idea of respecting your elders always played a big role. If they disapproved ultimately...then I couldn't do it... In Korean culture there's a way that you talk with your buddy and there's a way you talk with your older brother

or older elder. Complete, complete respect...And so, it's very heavily embedded in my mind. (Nick)

### *Importance of Family*

All the participants during the interview suggested or stated that family was very important in Korean culture. Family unity was not only a means from which they drew support, but also a significant factor that they associated with being Korean. Physical proximity to family, along with strong family loyalty was tied heavily to the emphasis they placed on the family unit. The participants outlined three main ways that Korean culture stressed the importance of family. First, the family's dependence on one another for financial support. Family unity was very important because often children described a system in which children were expected to take care of their parents in old age. Moreover, financial provision was to a large extent the primary way that family members showed love for one another.

...the way Koreans treasure family is not through affection or verbally, but by providing for them financially. (Carl)

I think a lot of Korean parents show love by providing... (Sally)

...it's expected that once their children are older that their parents will stop working and the roles will reverse. (Debra)

The second way that participants felt that family was important in Korean culture was through the display of strong family loyalty. Participants felt that they could depend on their family to always be there for them under any circumstances, and they attributed this value to Korean culture's expectation to insure family togetherness.

...I know that Asians support the perfect family and that we're suppose to be together and watch each other's back and stuff. (Helen)

I see Korean culture, like within the home, everything toward the family. (Frank)

... really emphasized was family. Family unity and just make sure that we did everything together. (Quintin)

...no one's like your family you know, they'll be there with your back the whole time. (Kevin)

The third way participants felt that Korean culture emphasized family was by viewing each member as a reflection of the entire family. This expectation was closely tied to family loyalty which would maintain family oneness. Participants felt, that within the Korean culture, they were seen as extensions of their family. Their actions and behaviors outside the family would be viewed as a direct reflection of their parents by other Koreans. Moreover, any negative



perceptions from other Koreans would in turn, scar the family name. The participants termed having a cautious behavioral attitude in public as “keeping face”.

I think a lot of Koreanness is this face thing. You don't want to shame yourself, there's just a lot of pride. (George)

I think for Koreans it's face. It's very important that people see you in the very best possible light and you don't want to do anything that brings shame to the family. (Sally)

It was implicitly understood that when you go out in public you're representing your family. (Debra)

Although participants felt a varying degree of adherence to the three prescribed characteristics of Korean culture (strive for excellence, the respect towards elder and the importance of family) at least one, if not all three of the areas were heavily embedded in the participants minds as important facets that they associated with Korean culture.

### ***Exosystem***

In the interview, participants were asked to elaborate on their early experiences in the United States. During this line of inquiry participants recounted stories that their parents had told them about the Korean war, along with their perceptions of how their parents viewed being immigrants and how they felt their parents had adjusted to living in the United States. These parental experiences were divided into three periods of time: 1) Experiences before immigration, which included the participants' narratives about their parents experiences of the Korean War; 2) Experiences of being an immigrant; and 3) Experiences after immigration. The reasoning for parental immigration varied with each participant's interview, and very few of the participants continued to elaborate on why they felt their parents had immigrated to the United States. Instead, the participants focused on parental expectations which they felt were consequences of their parents' experiences before and after immigration. These expectations primarily centered around children's financial and educational success.

#### *The Korean War*

The participants attributed hardships that their parents encountered during the Korean War with their parents drive to make sure that their children would have the opportunities to succeed that they themselves did not have. Even though it was not a view that the participants generally held, they felt that in the eyes of their parents, achievement of success equated to acquiring a good education.

You know they were young when the Korean War started...everything in their whole house was lost, everything they owned was lost...my parents had to be the provider of the family, so at a very young age they couldn't go back to school, and they had to go out and work. So, to them it was school, school. I never had an education so I want my children to have it. It was important to them...They knew

what it was like to be hungry, starving for food, where am I going to get my next meal. So, for them, it was if my children can get an education then they don't have to have a hard life, they don't have to struggle. (Abbey)

And so my parents grew up during the war, and so they're always stories about war time and how they really had to struggle to go to school, or struggle to keep the family together. There were struggles to get food. And just living was a hard time. And so, I guess they would expect me to be you know, if they've gone through that and they are what they are, I should at least be that and hopefully more, because I haven't had to go through the hardships that they have. (Frank)

Our parents went through a lot in their generation. And for them to leave Korea and the security and comfort of their homeland and come out here. I would say one of the main reasons, is it would give what is better to their kids, the next generation. And in their minds that would translate into getting a better education. (Mark)

They grew up in a time where they didn't have the opportunities that we had.. They wanted us to take every advantage of it and succeed...And one way of having a better life was to work hard, study hard to make it to the top if you can education wise. (Nick)

In order to give their children more opportunities, participants reported numerous ways that their parents had sacrificed for the sake of their own success. Although the participants did not realize it at the time, upon looking in retrospect of their lives, the participants narrated, often with admiration, of their parents willingness to sacrifice for the sake of their children's success. The participants felt that the act of parental sacrifice was strongly linked to their parents hardships during the Korean War, even though they did not observe parental sacrifices until after parental immigration.

...they work so hard and never seems, at least in my eyes, for themselves, but more for their children. A lot of sacrificing to make sure that their children go to a good school and do better than them. (Bob)

I think with our parents, because they've just given up so much for us, that there's a lot that they expect from us. (Carl)

It was always to better me, or give me the benefit of having something that they didn't have when they grew up. Being able to give me the opportunities, to give me as many opportunities as possible. So, I recognized that they were doing a lot for me. They would be willing to sacrifice. (Frank)

*Parental Impressions of Being an Immigrant*

The participants viewed that their parents' drive for them to succeed stemmed from their parents' attitudes of being immigrants. The participants viewed their parents immigrant status as one where their parents felt disadvantaged and inferior to Americans. Participants felt that their parents worked hard in order to combat the stigma of being an immigrant. They did so, not only to strive for their own success, but also for the success of their children. The majority of participants, observed both parents working long hours to provide for the family. This was closely linked to participants' recollections of parental sacrifices but was distinct in that they associated their parents having to work hard because they were immigrants. They view their parents as being caught in a cycle where they cannot save because they want to insure financial success for themselves and their children, so they must continually work.

I think that just being immigrants they feel that they have to be successful and try their best and hardest to make the next generation to be even more successful than them. (Helen)

...others will look down on us, and so we have to succeed in every way... my dad...he was just saying how there's so many things that he wished that he had done in his life, but wasn't able to do because he had to work...I mean they've just kinda done the day to day work just to get by. But have never really enjoyed life. (Debra)

There's also this thing where, you know, being Korean American, bring immigrants, you know just to have started out, they've had to support everything, and so they don't have savings. They don't have stocks and mutual bonds. You know, they don't have things stored up, like bamm sixty-five I'm going to cash in IRAs and all this stuff. You know, I can live without working... Because you're an immigrant, you gotta stand out, to make a difference (Lewis)

I feel that a lot of these parents immigrated here and work hard, and they want to see their children be successful. (Paula)

*Parental Acclimation to the United States*

The participants viewed their parents' interaction with American culture as being confined within their jobs. The participants perceived their parents having limited contact with American culture because they were always working to provide for the family. When not working, the participants' parents to socialize mainly, if not entirely with other Koreans. Participants felt that their parents did not feel as comfortable in an American setting as in one that was predominantly Korean. This was due to the participants' observance of their parents as not having a good grasp of the English language, and so they perceived their parents as not feeling confident conversing with Americans. Moreover, participants felt that their parents' immigrant status made them feel different from mainstream America.

I mean they have never made an effort to venture outside of the Korean community. And I don't think it's occurred to them as being necessary or desirable. They definitely see themselves as being so different from mainstream American culture that it just seems impossible. I think they felt different. Although their English was good, it wasn't as good. And they felt uncomfortable, I think, communication with non Koreans. (Debra)

(My parents socialized) Mostly Asians. I guess during like work time, work period in the office they'll have friends there, but when it came to recreational time and just hanging out on the weekends, it's all Koreans. (Helen)

I don't think they made any attempt to acclimate themselves in any way. (Lewis)

Due to their parents lack of participation in the American culture, along with limited usage of the English language, participants viewed their parents as dependent on them to become translators of both English and the American culture. Parental dependency on their children was perceived by the participants as a direct result of being recent immigrants. The participants viewed themselves as liaisons between their parents and the American culture, which they often described as being an automatic response.

I was a liaison between the American culture and my mom. I was always a translator for my mother...she was so dependent on me...I would come home and there would be mail that she couldn't, you know, look through, she had to wait for me. (Carl)

...my parents are very, very traditional...After work I'll get a message on the answering machine..."Oh, there's a message on the answering machine can you come over and check it out". And so, I have to call her and sometimes she is picking up the phone, and I say, "mom don't pick up the phone, I'm calling to check the answering machine." Or sometimes, she'll bring over mail and not understand it. Because when I was at home I used to do all that stuff. Even people soliciting, they're not sure, so they'll say, "Oh, call my daughter, she'll talk to you". (Abbey)

I think that I am a bridge for her and the society because she can't speak much English, so I have to translate...Growing up I think I was a bridge but I didn't even think about it. I just do it, it's not even like a thought. (Kevin)

I had to help my parents more and more and more as I grew older. I had to kinda help them out reading things, and be talking to some people for them because of just the language barrier and stuff like that...And my parents aren't good with all the laws and regulations on how to do business and stuff like that, and I'm always like to them, you gotta hand this in, you have to do this and sales tax, you know, you gotta do all this stuff. (Lewis)

The participants in this study talked about their parents' experiences mainly in terms of how they affected them. Participants made direct connections between parental experiences before and after immigration with the particular roles and expectations that they felt they had to fulfill. At least one if not both factors (role of liaison and/or expectations to succeed), became the norm for all the participants.

### **Mesosystem**

When asked about their experiences as an adolescent, the participants made distinct comparisons, rather than relationships between family, friends, home life and school. The participants viewed the personal environment they lived in as being conflictual the majority of the time. The participants identified three major areas of conflict within their personal environment: 1) American friends versus Korean church friends; 2) School versus home; and 3) American peer home life versus Korean peer home life. When talking about the environments that were primarily American, the participants related feelings of marginalization. The participants would refer to being more comfortable, accepted and more themselves within environments where they did not feel that aspects of their Korean background made them stand out or appear to be different. These environments were mainly at home with their family or at a Korean church. In school, which the participants associated as an American environment, they reported feeling excluded from their American peers and hence, would try to minimize differences by down playing any aspect of their ethnicity or culture. Of these three conflictual areas, American friends compared to participants' Korean friends was addressed the most in length and detail by all the participants.

#### *American Friends Versus Korean Friends*

All the participants reported feeling a higher comfort level with Koreans than Americans. They associated their deeper and more intimate friendships with Koreans and a more superficial or shallow relationship with their American friends. Participants felt that they would be able to relate better and have a greater understanding with Korean friends rather than American friends. This comfort level, along with feelings of closeness among Korean friends, was attributed by the participants to three main factors. First, the participants' shared background of being Korean made participants feel that they automatically had a shared bond or understanding with their Korean peers. Whether other Korean friends adhered to, or participated in, similar aspects of Korean culture was inconsequential because the participants felt that their Korean friends would automatically possess knowledge of their traditions and customs. Therefore, the participants expressed that they would not have to explain cultural difference, such as food, language or family traditions and customs to Korean friends, where they would have to with their American friends.

I did have American friends...but...I didn't think of them as not as close as my Korean friends. And I guess part of that has to do with relating to me. Out of the few Koreans, they knew the same things, well traditions...we were able to connect better. (Abbey)

...I would say that I'm more comfortable sharing deeper things with Koreans... I found that we had a lot of things in common, we understood things...Food wise, customs, traditions, everything was very similar and that was very comfortable. Like emphasis on studying hard, emphasis on going to a good college. (Paula)

If there's a whole group of Korean people in a room, there's more in common, like the way we were raised, our tradition, the things we do, or the way our parents grew up, that's easier to associate with...And if it was just a group of American people...there wouldn't be as much in common. Because there's a good chance that they didn't grow up the way that I did, their parents' didn't hold the same beliefs, their parents didn't go through the Korea War and things like that which influenced me. (Frank)

The second factor that participants reported as influencing their increased comfort and friendship level with Koreans was shared experiences. The participants felt closer to their Korean friends after learning that their Korean friends had gone through similar experiences of discrimination and parental enforcements and pressures within the home. Participants felt that they could confide these experiences with their Korean friends without feeling different or misunderstood. Participants viewed their American peers as being able to connect with them only to a limited degree, because their American friends would not be able to empathize with experiences that participants felt were specialized to being a Korean minority.

I had a lot of Caucasian friends but my closest friends were Asian. Because of similarities, similar experiences when it comes to parents. Especially, Korean parents raising teenagers, they're very protective and stuff, so we kinda found out that we were like both suffering under our parents' rule and we can't go out and we have to study all the time...I guess it's the same thing, that's why I was so close with my Korean friends. I think that, that bond is do great, what we've experienced. (Helen)

I guess Koreans can relate to me...I guess like through stereotypes and prejudices and stuff like that. They can relate, "I've felt that before". Like family structure. (Kevin)

I think we just had and still do have a lot of affinity with one another. A lot of the things that have happened in our lives, in the past surprisingly are so similar...a lot of what we had to share dealt with family, dealt with pressures that were on us...a lot of it stemmed from the fact that we were raised in an Asian Korean home...Lack of affirmation, affection at home. And if you got a bunch of Korean guys together, we might be different now and at different places, and even in terms of our conviction about life, we are all probably different. But if you take us back in time, we would say that there's a lot of commonalties that we shared...Those shared experiences, they're not just experiences, but they have a very molding influencing factor in our lives. How we relate to one another. In some way perhaps even molding our personality, perhaps influencing our preferences . So, when I say

about ground experiences, I say so realizing that in some way or another, they do have an influence on how we are today. I feel more comfortable with other Koreans, not just because of the shared experiences, but because the way that they've shaped us. The fruit of those experiences. And we see those certain fruits in each other. And those, for some reason, they just put us at ease with one another. (Mark)

I think it's just a bunch of kids growing up in the States and experiencing similar things...it was just how we were influenced by society and just how we grew up outside of the Korean home or with the Korean home. Just the way we were, we were just very similar. We understood each other and where we were coming from. We could really empathize with one another. (Sally)

The third factor which participants identified as influencing the increased depth of achieved friendships with Korean peers was feelings of acceptance and equality. Participants felt as if their Korean peers were more accepting of them. All the participants had experiences of prejudices and racial slurs from their American peers. These experiences, along with feelings that their American peers would not understand their cultural differences, resulted in the participants not feeling as confident to be themselves around Americans. Moreover, more than half the participants perceived their differences as being out of the norm with their American peers and hence, felt inferior to American peers in a social setting.

I felt closer to, felt more comfort with Korean friends. I think in a way because I didn't feel inferior, like in youth group (which was all Korean) I was more popular, so I had a lot of friends and people who knew me, and I knew them. So, I was just more comfortable there. But when you're with Americans you kinda, in a way, at the back of your mind, you feel inferior, and just that you're different to them...Yeah, so I didn't feel equal at all times. I guess that kinda played a factor in me feeling confident in myself. (Elaine)

...around my Korean friends, since I felt more comfortable, I let a lot more myself come out than I would with like Caucasian friends. I guess around Caucasians I still felt different. They were just more superficial types of relationships. I think it would have been a lot harder to get to know a Caucasian person, and to get to the point of familiarity and that comfort. It takes less time when you come from a similar background. (Roger)

And because of the way I was more inclined to get to know and hang out with the Koreans more than Americans. I think I just felt more accepted, and because I felt that the environment was more accepting, I could be myself... And I didn't have to guard myself, or be and act a certain way. (Sally)

When I was a boy, when I was among just Koreans I was much more confident, much more outgoing, and then when I was at school I wasn't as outgoing...at school, I didn't feel like I was myself, because at any time, if I did something

wrong, I'd just no longer be in the crowd. There's was always this kind of insecurity in school. (Carl)

### *School Versus Home*

When describing their home life and their school life, participants viewed the two as very distinct and contrasting worlds. They associated home life with being mainly Korean and school with being entirely American. School life contradicted the participants' lives at home. Often, the participants felt that they needed to minimize, if not totally obliterate their Koreanness at school in order to fit in. Home, however, was a place where both Korean culture and American culture could coexist. Therefore, participants felt that they could be themselves more fully at home than at school. Since the majority of the participants' adolescence was spent either at home or at school, the participants reported negative feelings of confusion and separation of how they behaved and viewed their Korean heritage and ethnic identity.

School was very different from home. When I came home, I was speaking Korean. Never resented the fact that we spoke Korean or ate Korean food, or went to Korean church. In fact, I enjoyed that. But when I was at school, I never made it an issue...At home I could be myself. At school, I had to put on a different type of face. I had to be a certain way...I had to be very careful not to make a fool out of myself or not to do something which would provoke mocking, or any type of mocking. But when I came home, you know, there was a security there. (Carl)

I hated it. It's like you're in this white culture, right. And then you go home and you have to be Korean, and then like for me, I was sort of confused who I was. When I look back I was really confused. Because you have to be Korean at home. You have to bow and all that kind of stuff. So, when you go out in school, all of a sudden you're trying to act like who you aren't. You're trying to act, you know, white. (George)

So, it's kinda confusing. It was pretty difficult, it was pretty hard. Because, it was almost like changing clothes from going into my house compared to going to school. I had to be very Americanized in front of my American friends in high school, but then, when I came home, I had to come back to the Korean mentality and speaking Korean and things like that. I didn't know if I was Korean or American for a while...My identity was kinda hard because going home, I spoke Korean to my parents, but then when I went to school, everything was done in English. (Nick)

### *American Peer Home Life versus Korean Home Life*

Participants were asked to relate their home life to the home life of their school peers, with whom the majority were Caucasian. The participants' perceptions of their Caucasian peers' home lives were viewed as being normal whereas, their home lives were viewed as being different. The



participants described their American friends' homes as being more affectionate with an open, casual relationship between children and parents. When describing instances where they observed family interactions within their American friends' house, all the participants did so with either stating or inferring that they wished their home life was more like their American peers. Although in some instances the participants perceived their American friends' home life as better in terms of parental and child relationships, the majority of the time, participants' desires to have a more American home life was motivated by not wanting to differentiate themselves from their American peers.

...after school I'd always go to her house. And I would like their family, like the way they read a book, and my parents would like, be in front of the TV, watching TV you know, until they fell asleep. And you know, how mom comes home with the groceries and all the kids kinda help, and it just seemed like a pretty white picture. You know, this nice family who has two girls and a little boy, and the way they function. And for us, my mom was working and I was a latch key kid for a long time too, and I wish my parents had stayed at home. (Elaine)

Once I heard a friend joking around with his mom. That shocked me that they were laughing together. In some ways considering each other as equals. Yeah, when they gave each other hugs and kisses, that was pretty shocking too. I was thinking what a different family. I was wondering, is this something I wished I would have at home? Kinda, but not really. Because I know it would not just be awkward for my parents but it would be awkward for me too. (Mark)

When I saw my American friends' families there was much more freedom...They got to do things that I never got to do, like go out...They had a lot more toys. Parents always said yes to them. My parents never said yes...Their place smelled different, they had different things, furniture, all that stuff. I think at times I was wondering why can't we be like that. At times, when I was younger, I think I was ashamed to bring home my friends, because it was so different from everyone else's. Some people would laugh, some people would say, ha, it's different, but other people would say, wow, it's neat. But in my perception, I felt that we were different, and I didn't like it. (Quintin)

The participants' perceived conflictual nature of American and Korean settings was reflected in their statements about being torn between or confused about being a Korean in America. To some extent, all the participants marginalized either their Korean or American qualities depending on whether the setting was majority Korean or American. To all the participants, clear separations existed between Korean and American environments and their relations with the people in those settings.

### **Microsystem**

Participants were asked to describe and elaborate on their experiences as adolescents. The main area that the participants stressed greatly during the interviews was on their relationship with their parents and how their parents had influenced them. Other areas of significance were school

and church. All the participants had direct relationships that they felt were significant in their development within the three environments of home, school, and church. However, all the participants acknowledged their relationship between themselves and their parents as being the primary factor in shaping their attitudes, perceptions and values. Participants who reported having parents that were more strict in their Korean mentality, said that they had less open and more authoritarian relationships with their parents. These participants tended to seek their parents approval through obedience and felt extreme pressure to excel academically. They viewed their role as children as primarily to obey their parents. Thus, these participants were often apprehensive about their parents' reactions when they did not excel. Out of the seventeen participants, only three described their relationship with their parents as being more American. These participants perceived their relationship with their parents as being unusual to that of their other Korean friends. They viewed their parents as more open and their interactions less formal. These three participants felt fewer pressure to excel, and did not seek approval from their parents to the same degree as other participants who perceived their relationship with their parents to be more Korean.

The other two areas--school and church--influenced the participants to a lesser extent but were still significant relationships that the participants associated as influencing factors of their self image. School peers influenced participants by reinforcing or instigating participants' views of themselves as being different to mainstream America. Church served to maintain or reintroduce participants to their Korean heritage.

### *Parents*

Participants viewed their parents roles as traditional in Korean culture in regards to the father being the provider and the mother being the nurturer. The participants held these views even if both their parents were employed, which was the case with the majority of the participants. These perceptions were reinforced by a more distant relationship with their fathers and a perceived closer relationship with their mothers.

With my father, I mean we never talked, we still don't talk. I mean we say hi and bye, but there's no like meaningful interaction, never has been... I think my relationship with my mom is very good. (Lewis)

From my mom, lots of affection and my dad, I rarely saw him. (Paula)

My father was definitely a provider, not so much caregiver or friend. It was definitely at a distance...My relationship with my mother, much, much more closer. I guess she would just be the nurturer that women are. I felt closer to my mom. (Quintin)

Because the majority of the participants' parents both worked, they felt that parental involvement within their personal lives was very limited. Participants viewed their parents as always working and not having much time to spend with them and inquire about the happenings in their lives. All the participants viewed their parents as less involved with their school environment than their

American friends' parents. Moreover, since the participants associated Koreans with not being open and as enforcing a hierarchy within the family, the majority of the participants felt that they could not confide in their parents of their personal problems or concerns.

My parents, they've always both worked... I wanted them to be more involved than they are. (Elaine)

My parents were too busy at work. My mother worked a lot, my father worked a lot, so I don't think they knew my personally life. (George)

I wouldn't tell them my problems or anything like that. You know, I wouldn't tell them anything. (Lewis)

Parental involvement was very little...They never came to any kind of PTA meeting or anything...I don't ever remember going to either of them and asking them questions about my school. Never was that. My father was always busy working. (Carl)

The area which influenced the participants most profoundly involved parental authority and expectations. These aspects defined the roles of participants and their parents within the home. The participants identified three facets of their parent/child relationships within the area of parental authority and expectations. First, all the participants, with the exception of two, described themselves as being good or non-rebellious children. These participants accepted that their parents knew better than them, and therefore, respected their parents through obedience. This was also done in accordance with upholding their parents' Korean expectation of respecting elders.

I was a very submissive child and so I don't think I did a lot of things that they disapproved of...like I didn't do anything rebellious or out of the ordinary...I think I felt very young, my parents know best, so I'll just do what they want me to do... And so I really didn't fight against it. (Debra)

With my parents, I have a lot of respect for my parents as well and I know that they are a lot better than me... (Helen)

The whole idea of respecting your elders always played a big role. So, if my parents really strongly told me not to do this, I needed to first of all, just obey.

(Nick)

The second facet of the participants' parent/child relationship dealt with parental expectations to excel. This included participants seeking parental approval by doing well in all areas, especially those related to academics. In order to be a dutiful child, the participants believed they had to fulfill their parents' expectations to excel. Participants related feelings of guilt when they disappointed their parents. Participants also reported feelings of impossibility to attain parental

approval because they felt that they could not satisfy their parents continuous expectations for them to succeed in all their pursuits.

I remember whenever I got my report card, I felt guilty because I didn't make straight "A's". And I disappointed them. I just wanted them to say, listen you tried your best and that's all we ask. I would say that was one of the hardest things growing up, was showing them my report card. (Abbey)

They wanted me to succeed. There was a point where I was very angry at them, because it didn't seem like anything pleased the except like the best, like an "A"...But it was very important to them, and yet, I wish they could have helped me more...That was tough for me growing up...You know you get a "B" plus and it's not enough, and you're like, hey, I tried my best. (Lewis)

I think for me, I was still waiting to hear what to do, because I was used to hearing my dad telling me what to do. I wouldn't do things that would upset them...I was a dutiful child. Because the only affirmation that I received was in the context of doing something well. And so, to me that translates in to dutiful, to receive more affirmation, do things well in more areas of my life. (Mark)

Participants who felt overwhelmingly that they could not meet their parents expectations and therefore, gain parental approval, lost their motivation to excel and became underachievers. Further, a sense that parental approval was unattainable also ignited rebellion against parental authority in the majority of these participants and extended to include delinquent behavior.

If I didn't make an "A" it was tough because I knew that really an "A" was the only thing they wanted to see. And I did struggle with motivation as well. Because when you're put in that situation, you kinda have two ways to go. You kinda have one way where okay, I'm gonna knock it out. And you just try your hardest, and you're just like the over achiever. And then the other response, you just loose motivation. It's like "A" is all that they care about so you just say, forget it. I'll just do what I'm going to do...I definitely under achieved. (Lewis)

Back then, I was like I'm not going to school. Forget school, why do I need that...I guess I didn't want to put the time into study. I definitely knew it was important for my parents...The only thing what they would say was go to school, you gotta do good in school. That's basically the whole conversation we had...I guess in my teenage years, I wasn't really a model person, you know. I got into a lot of trouble with things like that, with the law. (Kevin)

...he would be like you have to do this, you have to go to school, you have to do this to be the top person. It bugged me a lot...I ditched a lot of classes. When I say I was a trouble maker, that's an understatement. I went to jail a couple of times. (George)

The third facet of the parent/child relationship that concerned parental authority and expectations was fear. Participants were afraid to disobey or confront their parents. Often, physical punishment was employed to discourage participants from rebelling against their parents' regulations. Fear of parents solidified the parents' role of absolute authoritarian and the child's role of subordinate in the participants' understanding of the parent/child relationships.

I wasn't the type to confront or refuse or deny, or contradict him. I would just accept what he wanted me to do, whether willingly or not, eventually I would it... When I didn't do well in high school and junior high, I had a lot of fear, a lot of anxiety. When report cards came, it was like walking on nails at all times or broken glass or something. Just a very tense time and for me, I never got really, really good grades... so I was always yelled at and punished. I felt like I never really pleased my parents in that way... there was always the pressure, always the fear of what are my parents going to do. How are they going to react...I think my parents were pretty traditional, conservative Koreans. Although it wasn't verbalized to me the rules and regulations or things that I needed to do, it was definitely implied to me not to go out. I didn't have a curfew because I wasn't allowed to go out. So, I didn't have to worry about getting home at a certain time, because I was always home. As far as dating, I wasn't allowed to date. Although it was never verbally said, it was just a fear... My parents pretty ruled the household, that is my father. My father ruled the house hold with a fear, a strong right hand, punishment if we did anything wrong. Not a grounding, but a physical punishment. A lot of verbal yelling... We were just so fearful that we didn't even want to challenge our parents or ask them... Fear. Fear. Wanting to please him. I think I was happy when my father was happy. Always wanted to please him. I never really saw what I wanted to do as enjoyment, I always wanted to just kinda, in a way, just pacify my father. (Quintin)

I was hit in the face once because I disobeyed my dad like blatantly. I mean he asked me to clean up this mess and I didn't feel like I made the mess and so I refused. And I went to my room, and he followed me and he hit me. (Joyce)

We didn't have a father/son relationship. It was almost employer/employee relationship, kind of thing. You do when I say, what I say. My duty was to carry out what he said. (George)

Often the presence of these roles (parent-authoritarian, child-subordinate) was conflictual when the participants acted as liaisons or translators for their parents. The majority of the participants acted at some point in their lives as liaisons for their parents when dealing with the American culture. Even though participants viewed their parents as the consummate authority figure within the household, they saw them as inferior in American contexts. Feelings of resentment and frustration arose within participants when roles reversed, and they assumed the leading role over their parents.

I kinda resented it after a while...And I remember getting into fights with my mother, you know “What if I die, who’s going to take of all this”? (Carl)

A lot of times I got frustrated, mom, dad you came to this country, when you go to a country and choose to live there, you needed to do something. You try to learn the language, because you can’t stay Korean in America, you know what I’m saying. For me it didn’t seem like my parents made that effort and it was frustrating for me. And they tried to keep me that way, and that was frustrating too. Because it’s like, hello? We’re in America here... And the tension is, if I just stay Korean with them, then we’re all stuck. And yet, they want me be American so that I can be useful, but then they want me to stay Korean. (Lewis)

I always looked down upon my parents a little bit. I said, why are we in a country where you can’t speak English. You expect me to speak English, but yet you can’t speak English and we’re in America, so why can’t you do that. And so, I kinda looked down upon them a little bit. (Nick)

The only aberration from the previous outlined sections of the parent/child relationships among the young adults were from those who perceived their parents taking on a more American attitude rather than a Korean one within the home. These three participants viewed their parents as involved, encouraging and casual in their relationships with them. The participants attributed a less authoritarian parental role within the home to their parents’ proficiency with the English language, which resulted in increased communication between their parents and themselves. Equally important, the participants perceived that their parents could better understand different facets of the American culture, such as going participating in American social functions.

I think they actually were involved quite a bit rather than being ones to work, work, work. They’d still take time to see how you’re doing, asking question about how you’re doing what did you do. I don’t know if it was because they were more Americanized so they tended to follow up more, versus what I’ve seen with some other families where there’s sort of distance. (Bob)

I don’t think I feel the formality between my parents. We have a casual kind of relationship. I respect my parents but not in that formal kind of sense... And so probably when I mean more Americanized, it’s just that perception of your parents being a little more casual. Speak to them a little more freely, when you get into arguments and things, you don’t have a problem raising your voice or yelling at them.... But, for me, I could always communicate with my parents, they always understood everything I was saying. Both of my parents speak English very well.

(Frank)

I think my parents are unique also in that they gave us a lot of freedom even at a very young age. So, in a sense I think it was sort of American. But, my parents are very lax, and we never had to do the honorific, you know speaking to them. It was just, not very formal. (Sally)

Among the ten males and seven female participants, there were perceived gender differences in which female participants would report that they had more restrictions by their parents. Females with siblings observed their brothers as having greater freedom to pursue things than they themselves did. Males perceived themselves as having the greater responsibility or obligation to obtain financial success, since it was their duty to take care of their parents in old age. However, there were numerous examples and variations within the participants' experiences that did not validate consistent occurrences of gender differences among male and female participants concerning interactions with their parents.

### *School*

Experiences of prejudice and discrimination from school peers reinforced participants' feelings of being different, and enhanced teen insecurities about physical appearance. Participants reacted to racial slurs by minimizing cultural differences. Participants often felt ashamed of their ethnicity, and would attempt to counteract feelings of rejection from their peers by conforming themselves to be more like their American peers, even if it meant denying their ethnicity. In cases where participants experienced extreme prejudice and discrimination from their school peers, the participants expressed self-hatred along with suicidal thoughts.

I guess it was during high school that most of my insecurities started coming to full bloom. And when the guys would date girls, and it there were guys I had a crush on or whatever, I would think to myself a few time, well, maybe it's because I'm not white. (Debra)

...in a lot of ways I resented the fact that I was an immigrant. And so, I wanted to be like them. And so, I always tried to change myself to be more like them. (Joyce)

Oh, yeah, all the time. Chinky want a twinkie ("twinky" is a derogatory term which implies wanting to be Caucasian--yellow on the outside, white on the inside) was pretty common...you know, Chinese, all that stuff. But the thing that really bothered me the most was when they looked down on me...Not, just the words, because some of them were kidding...But when they actually looked down and treated me as if I were less qualified than they were in a lot of things...And so, I had to prove myself extra hard that I could keep up with these guys. (Nick)

I think there was an incident where I was being picked on the school bus, just verbally being abused by older kids in school. Just the typical Chinese, Japanese, terms that they kind sling out at you. But for the most part, that wasn't a daily thing, it was occasional. It made me feel very inadequate like I was very different. I felt like I was a second class citizen in a way. I was withdrawn to myself, quiet. I was very sad, not finding much comfort in other friends. Because your friends would be the ones laughing with them as well. (Quintin)

In junior high and elementary school, that's when I faced a lot of racism and things like that. I lived in a community that was mostly black but when to a school that was mostly white. Not really from adults, but just like racial slurs you hear from kids...Like hey, China man, and the stuff with the eyes and stuff like that. Then say Ching Chong whatever and blah, blah, blah. And then there were actually stupid little questions like, what kind of dog did you eat this morning or whatever and things like that. You hear it daily, constantly...I always told people I hated being Asians and I hated being Korean. I hated the food that we eat, stuff like that. You just name it I would deny everything...I tried to deny my ethnicity so I didn't want to be associated with Koreans at all...I was lonely, I hated life. Obviously I had a lot of suicide thoughts. In high school, even though I was with my friends and whatever, I just hated life. (George)

Experiences of racial slurs often made participants want to cling to a positive stereotype when possible. Participants reported feeling proud when the Asian stereotype of being smart was being applied to them. It was one area in which participants felt they had an advantage over their American peers. The following quote best captures this perception.

Education wise they were intimidated by me. Because the stereotype of the smart Asian. I mean, when I was growing up I did the best I could. And the best I could was far greater than most students. And even though my mediocre would be their best, for the majority of them. And so, being in gifted and talented programs and different programs, I can tell that if I put my mind to it I can get it done. And a lot of students kinda looked at me as one of those typical Asian kids who excelled in school. I was aware of that stereotype and I was proud of that too. Because it was one area that I knew that I could exceed them. (Nick)

### *Church*

Church served not only for spiritual guidance but as a place that aided participants to maintain, reinforce, or learn more about the Korean culture. Church also often became the primary environment in which participants felt they could safely explore their Korean identity.

We did go to a Korean American church. So that kinda helped me you know, keep my identity...There were people my age who had maybe similar experiences, just being people who looked like me you know and it was normal. Just more confirming. (Helen)

...through church, and that's where I was exposed more to Korean culture. (Mark)

I thought I was the only person in this world, being a Korean yet not even understanding Korean, or not really appreciating the Korean culture. I found a likeness here and it was very attractive to me. It slowly grew on me and I felt like wow, I do have an identity in my English speaking Koreanness and there are other



people that way...It was maybe a reintroduction to my exposure to my ethnicity here...Just a reintroduction to Koreanness. (Quintin)

In conclusion, within the microsystem the relationship between the participants and their parents was the predominate subject discussed and detailed among all the participants. All the participants stressed the significance of their parents' influence on their lives during their adolescence, and even currently in young adulthood.

### ***Individual***

Ego and ethnic identity were closely interrelated when participants addressed or described themselves. The participants' experiences of Korean culture, within the home, often were associated in molding both their ethnic and ego identity. When participants were asked whether they viewed themselves as Korean-first or American-first, all the participants responded as Korean-first. Identification as a Korean was closely tied to their belief system. Participants felt that their upbringing ingrained in them values, convictions, and lifestyle choices which they also equated with being Korean-first. Exploration of ego and ethnic identity were also linked in that parental authoritarian and child submissive roles, which participants associated as a part of being Korean, often restricted the participants' ego identity exploration in adolescence. However, the participants perceived freedom or inclination to explore either their ego and ethnic identity was very distinct. The extent to which the participants were encouraged or willing to explore aspects of their identity affected the extent of their achieved status, if at all, within their ego and ethnic identities. For the majority of the participants, ego and ethnic identity issues were not explored until they entered college. Participants felt that geographic and emotional distance from their parents, along with increased social interaction with other Koreans sparked and facilitated participant introspection. Participants felt more freedom to make their own decisions and pursue their interests in college than in high school.

#### *Ego Identity*

Each participant's identity status was assigned according to Marcia's (1968) identity statuses of achieved, diffused, moratorium, and foreclosed. Since, the participants did not take an identity scale, three factors were used to assess their identity: 1) Whether an identity crisis was experienced; 2) Self descriptions concerning their ego identity; and 3) Comparison of their self descriptions of their ego identity with Marcia's (1968) outlined criterion for identity statuses (See Appendix H). Out of the seventeen participants, eight were found to be achieved, seven were foreclosed, and two were in moratorium. None of the participants were assessed as being diffused.

#### ***Achieved Individuals***

Participants who were identified as being achieved in their identity, experienced an identity crisis either during high school years or college years. Five out of the eight achieved participants experienced a crisis during adolescence. These participants described their relationship with their parents to be more Americanized, which was marked a perception of their parents to be open, casual, supportive and encouraging, and not restrictive. Moreover, their crisis was

characterized by increased conflict between themselves and their parents and self-professed initiation of identity exploration.

Before I went to college, I was exploring new things already. My parents were lenient...my parents were very open minded in terms of, they trust me a lot and what I decide...they value my opinion and what I want to do and so...they always let me make the final decision. They encouraged me to try new things when growing up, anything with my initiative...from my family, I'm more independent and kinda on my own. What has shaped who I am is my independence—being able to find out things on my own and experience things and be able to make decisions. (Elaine)

I grew up a lot more in an Americanized style. My parents were pretty supportive. I don't think I ever felt there was a time when they were restricting what I did...I don't think I've ever experienced when I felt that I've been hindered...I do feel there's something about me. My personality, the way I do things, the way I act, it's not dependent on somebody else...it doesn't depend on my parents...I've got my own personality and traits and characteristics. (Frank)

But I mean, I caused so much pain for theme when I was in my high school years you know. Getting into trouble, I guess I was just was trying to find out who I was, you know. I don't know I just thought I knew everything...It was just like they were trying to make me do something that I didn't want to do then. You know like the kid versus the parent basically...Like in high school there was just so many different things. Like what was cool then and you wanted to try to do that. I think after high school, I started things like, I'm me, I'm not you're average person. (Kevin)

I remember in high school dealing with some of that (identity issues). I started trying to understand myself and I guess analyzing like myself more. I think in junior high I started becoming aware of myself, but not the extent that I was in high school...(Parents) they gave us a lot of freedom, they weren't very restrictive...I guess with my dad...He was pretty lenient on social type things. Wherever I wanted to do something or go some place I could pretty much go. I didn't really have curfew or anything like that. With my mom, I went through period through junior high where I did kinda rebel against her. Like talking back, you know, just kinda not really respecting her authority. Questioning her if she asked me to do something. (Roger)

I think I was very rebellious during me teen age years. I remember fighting with my parents a lot and I noticed like, why am I fighting with my parents so much...Like constantly fighting with them just about didn't want to hear them telling me what to do. And so, there was that short time period that was kinda hard. I can't even remember what we fought about. I think issues of control...(My parents) They were supportive. They weren't very strict like, oh,

gosh you got a B, we're disappointed for it. They were never like that. They just encourages you to do better...They really encouraged us to learn and grow... (I describe myself as having) Independence... I don't like people telling what to do. The sense that I can do whatever I want and don't tell me what to do and how to do it. (Sally)

The remaining three participants were foreclosed during adolescence and did not experience an identity crisis until college years. These participants explored their identity in college and became achieved in their identity during young adulthood. These participants perceived a greater freedom to explore identity issues in college, which was attributed mostly to distance from parental influences and expectations along with greater acceptance of their ethnic differences. While in high school these participants were foreclosed, due to their parents enforcement of authority over their lives along with a need to blend in or remain anonymous among their school peers.

In college, I kinda found myself... I felt I definitely had the freedom to try new things...I tried to experiment with a lot of different things to kinda find myself... In high school I never really thought about who I was. You never really ask yourself that in high school, it's more how am I going to fit, it doesn't matter as long as I fit in--as long as I am accepted...In college, things became my own after a while. I think Koreans, to their detriment to some degree, don't give their children much freedom. And because there isn't that much freedom, I think they're stifled in a lot of ways. I mean my mother didn't want to stifle me, but I think in many ways I felt somewhat stifled. And so, when I went to college I got to think about things. I rejected almost anything, then kinda put it back together. And I realized that when I put it back together, it looked a lot like the person I was. This is actually what I do believe. (Carl)

When I started college I realized I can do anything that I wanted. Where as before it was like, yeah, I'll go to school, I may do this, I may do that...So, going to college, it seems like it opened a lot of opportunities for me to grow as a person...'Cause (at home) it was just like, okay, this is what we do. And I just had to accept it...And when I went to college...slowly I learned to be myself. (Joyce)

There was a lot more decision making on my part. A lot more reason for me to now ask why, because now my dad wasn't going to be there. So, whatever decision I made, I now, had to be able to explain myself... Just like practical decisions, like the major I chose, what am I going to do with it...I don't think I experienced that same kind of freedom in high school...Proximity of the parents, just the fact that they weren't there...And I realized just how much of that was enmeshed with who I was as a dutiful son...And it was just a really good time for me to re-evaluate why I do the things that I do, why I hold these convictions that I hold. And it was somewhat a time of crisis. But the crisis was really good, and I grew a lot from there. (Mark)

### ***Moratorium Individuals***

The two participants who were assessed as being in moratorium were foreclosed during adolescence and did not experience an identity crisis until college. These two participants differed from the achieved participants, in that they both perceived their parents to be more authoritarian and controlling. In addition, the participants' expectations to obey their parents accentuated an inclination to seek approval from others.

I'm only 23 and I feel so very confused sometime about myself and my identity... I guess I worry a lot about what people think about me I want to be liked, I want to be thought of as someone who matters, things like that...In terms of religion, I'm still muddling through a lot of what my stance are on religion. What I believe theologically, like where does God fit. On top of that of, welfare, you know, affirmative action. A lot of those issues I'm still thumbing through...I'm still trying to find myself identity wise... Just four years of college is not going to help find myself...I'm still trying to work and find out who I am. (George)

And so , I think that it wasn't until after college I started to assert some of my independence and make some decisions... And started to figure out what I liked and what I didn't like and what kind of person I wanted to be. What kind of life I wanted to live, and what was important and what wasn't important...Choosing between those lifestyles, and choosing between ambitions. And those have come from conflicts between myself and my parents...it's been more just wanting to be independent. And that's how I would try to define my identity--independent from my family, and identity outside my parents... One thing I've always struggled with was wanting to be myself, but always feeling like there's these external pressure to not to be myself. Not being afraid to make my own decision and assert my own opinions and things like that, which I can't do freely all the time at home...It comes from Korean culture though, just that pressure to conform or to be obedient and submissive. It's an inherent part of being Korean, and I guess that's the tension. (Debra)

### ***Foreclosed Individuals***

Seven participants did not experience an identity crisis and have maintained foreclosed in young adulthood. The seven participants, who were not willing to explore identity issues, expressed being resolved to abide by their parents' expectations and prescribed lifestyle, due partly to their strong sense of parental control and partly to familiarity. These participants described their parents as being very Koreanized or adhering strongly to Korean culture, which included perceptions of their parents as being very strict and authoritarian. Moreover, experiences of discrimination and prejudice from their American peers profoundly affected these participants, by resulting in their continuing need to blend into their environment.

Growing up... and living underneath your parents and hearing all the time, in one way or another, you hear about the Korean tradition whether you like it or not., so it's been a part of me all of my life...I didn't know the American tradition. I never experienced it I've always been the kind of person, where I didn't want my parent

to worry...I would minimize the problem...they would let us know, you know, we're you're parents and you have to do this and that. And I think that just to do with honoring your parents, I've always been a pretty good daughter ...approval is important to me. (Abbey)

I thought things would change a lot more, that I would be a little more free, not being at your parent's house you kinda do what ever you want. But, the sense of responsibility on me kinda grew...So, I saw more of a sacrifice and I then felt that obligation to kinda, live up to their expectation ..Even though I was away, I still felt that I needed to a do. (Bob)

So, I never really had that like, you know, conflict, like you know, you can't do that, or you cant do that, 'cause I never really experience that, I never went out of my way...Just very, wanted to be the good girl...So I tried to play within my limits...With my parents, I have a lot of respect for my parents as well and I know that they a lot better than me...Before I took the initiate...before I made that decision I factored in what my parents would probably think. (Helen)

I do sometimes when I look at myself, I'll go, you try to please people...Where I feel like sometimes, I may believe something and I may really think a certain way, but just because I'm around the same kind of people, I don't really express as much as you want to...Because, you know, you need to kinda fit in. And to stand out is a very risky thing...Especially if you've grown up trying to fit in, in different places, it's a risky thing. And I don't know if it's that just a Korean American experience, it may have a lot to do with my home situation much more so...I think I'm pretty much the same...my trait is cautious. I think that I've stayed more the same than I've changed. (Lewis)

Oh man, I remember one of the first nights, I went out with a bunch of guys in my dorm and it was around 11:30 on a weekday, and I felt actually guilty for being out. Not being in my room and studying. And that's when I realized, boy, I'm not used to this. So, I didn't change much...I think I was very comfortable with my lifestyle in high school. Even though my parents were very strict, I didn't really care. And so, when I was in college, the freedom that I did have, I think I did what I had to do, and that was more important to me than anything else. What I had to do was study, work hard. I was there for a reason. (Nick)

...I kinda got back into, what I felt I needed to do, which was study. Focus on that. Kinda knowing that I just wanted to please my parents, and knowing what I wanted to do was succeed. And I guess being so used to trying to get good grades, and focusing on getting good grades, It just kinda carried over to college. I guess that was the only arena that I knew. I don't think I could say that I was comfortable in it. I don't enjoy studying, it's not a passion for me, like other people...But, that was the only thing I knew. I couldn't picture being lazy or not doing the work, or going out too much. It was going out or studying, and I didn't

enjoy going out... I guess I wasn't used to it, so I studied. It was like the less of two evils for me. (Quintin)

The remaining foreclosed participant perceived her parents to be open, supportive and encouraging. However, this participant remained foreclosed due to severe impressions of discrimination and prejudice from her peers. Lack of acceptance by their peers foreclosed this participant to a perceived security within her home life.

I didn't explore much in high school. I never had an opportunity to do those things... junior high was extremely difficult. I got traumatized very much... Not being accepted, being teased and made fun of for being different... I got left out of a lot of activities... Because that's a time when you're trying to find your own identity and you're trying to fit and you don't want to be the center of attention by being the one that's sticking out and being picked on. So, you'll try to find the easiest person to pick which was me. My parents were very supportive of me, they were very open. ..They really wanted me to join other activities and be more extroverted... I got a lot of loving support from my parents. They really trust me, which really encouraged me... In a way, I guess I grew comfortable and sheltered by that... I think it has to do with a defense mechanism of mine that I feel afraid of getting close because of the memories of the past... I grew up never really confused about my identity. (Paula)

Whether participants became achieved, moratorium, or foreclosed depended on the degree of adherence to three main factors associated with their parental relationship. First, parent/child relationship was found to be an important factor in the participants' ego identity exploration. The participants needed to perceive that they were able to initiate deviance from their parents, during their adolescent years to experience an identity crisis, either during adolescence or in young adulthood. The participants' views of Korean culture as being restrictive and conservative, along with their parents adherence to Korean ideologies, made participants less apt to experience an identity crisis during their adolescence. Since the child's role within the Korean culture is to respect and obey their parents, participants were less inclined to question their parents. Therefore, the participants accepted and tried to fulfill the expectations that their parents prescribed for them. The need for parental approval along with feelings of guilt and fear when they disappointed their parents, also inhibited participants in rebelling against their parents' authority. Second, the cultural value and parental pressures to excel, made participants cautious to try new things or explore unfamiliar avenues. This was compounded by experiences of discrimination and prejudice from American peers which prevented participants from exploring their ego identity, because the need to fit in and find acceptance was more immediate. Lastly, the importance of family encouraged participants to view their identity as a part of their family unit rather than in individual terms (See Appendix I).

### *Ethnic Identity*

Ten out of the seventeen participants were identified as being within one of Atkinson, Morton, and Sue's stages of minority identity development (See Appendix J). Out of these ten

participants, seven were found to be within synergistic articulation and awareness, one was in dissonance, and the remaining two were in introspection. Six participants in the study did not move from stages in which they would eventually obtain synergistic articulation and awareness in their ethnic identity. Although there were variations in the exploration of ethnic identity among all the participants, along with similar feelings of marginalization or conformity during adolescence, the six participants, who were not found to be within a developmental stage perceived their ethnic identity as changing depending on the environment and people with whom they were around. The remaining one participant was found to be diffused (See Appendix K). These individual had extreme circumstances in which she derived her ethnic identity from her family and hence did not initiated introspection of her ethnic identity.

All the participants identified themselves as Korean Americans, but felt that they were Korean foremost, due to cultural experiences which differentiated them from the experiences of their American peers. The obvious physical appearance of being Asian was also a key factor in their self-identification. This split identification of Korean and American reflected how the participants melded their culture, either in stages or by maintaining a fluid ethnic identity.

The five issues are addressed in the following order: 1) Ethnic identity exploration ; 2) Korean first; 3) Ethnic identity within stages; 4) Fluidity of ethnic identity; and 5) Diffused identity.

### ***Ethnic Identity Exploration***

Participants varied in the degree and time of exploration of their ethnic identity. The variations were greatly affected by reinforcement of Korean culture experienced while growing up, which was found to be associated to their parental adherence and enforcement of Korean culture, along with amount of exposure to and association with other Koreans. All the participants had the desire to fit in with their American peers during high school. In order to do so, participants who had limited associations with other Koreans felt to a greater degree the need to down play any cultural differences in order avoid encounters of prejudice and discrimination among their school peers. Moreover, lack of opportunities to relate with other Koreans, because of the homogenous population of their community or schools, prevented participants from having positive peer models with whom they could identify, or avenues where they felt they could safely explore their ethnic identity, unless they attended a Korean church. Participants were found to have either: 1) Low exploration of ethnic identity in high school; or 2) High exploration of their ethnic identity in college.

#### ***Ethnic Identity Exploration in High School***

Participants who were heavily reinforced by their Korean culture, through home and increased exposure to other Koreans, were found to have low exploration of their ethnic identity. This was due mainly to an established comfort level and familiarity among Koreans, which encouraged isolation from Americans.

I guess it's who I am now...I hold on very strongly to Korean culture...I adapted a lot of the Korean mentality...So, I guess the way I grew up is kinda, who I am now. (Nick)

In more high school I hung out with more people at church and the Korean thing, so I guess I was more exposed to Korean culture...in college, it was pretty much all Koreans. And it was just more comfortable and I can relate to them a lot. Because I always feel like I'm more Korean than I realize, and I know I'm more Korean than I realize, and I know that I am very Korean. Just like family wise and the way we grew up. I grew up in a Korean home and I didn't grow up as an American in an American family. (Elaine)

I had many friends at church, and all of the ones who were close to me, I realized we were very similar in what we were going through...When I was with the Koreans, if a American guy or a Caucasian guy tried to come into our group we tried to kick him out. We didn't want him to fit in. This was our special bonding time, because we can relate. And we didn't want anyone to interfere. (Carl)

### *Ethnic Identity Exploration in College*

Participants who had limited or no exposure and association with other Koreans during adolescence had a greater degree in exploration of their ethnic identity during college than the participants who associated primarily with Koreans in high school. These participants felt that college not only gave them greater opportunities to associate with other Koreans, but also the advantage of being within an environment where they felt free to explore ethnic issues without standing out. Unlike from their American school peers during adolescence, participants related feelings of acceptance of their culture from their Korean peers, who they felt were similar to themselves and viewed exploration as a reintroduction to their Koreanness.

And it was only when I got to college, it was semi culture shock, because there were all of these Koreans who flocked together. And I think because I didn't have that Korean church experience, I just never was exposed to that type of social life... I think there's always been this underlying sense, when I was growing up, of not quite belonging. And then when I got to college...I didn't feel as much like I was an outsider looking in... I think I felt very free...And I think that was when I really came into my own, when I was surrounded by other Koreans. (Debra)

I didn't have an identity until I went to college...But when I went to college, I see people who look like me, you know, who act like me and that was nice...It was a part of my life that was missing in my childhood...My environment, the people around me sparked my identity search in college. People that I chose to become close with. They were all Korean...My outlook in college changed, because I think that's what I was always looking for, and I could never find it. Korean is who I am, and I can't deny the fact that I am Korean. (Joyce)

When I was in college, I started to appreciate the differences (between myself and others), and not necessarily see it as something bad. Now, I guess I kinda can appreciate the differences and background, where as before I kinda saw that more as being negative, or something that made me stand out. I think in college I started becoming comfortable and gaining a respect for where my parents came



from. I feel like I was very narrow-minded in high school. I guess going through college, you see that there are different things are good in different societies, and one is not worse than the other...I guess in college I rediscover my Korean identity. I think that was a time when I wasn't trying to ignore where I came from.

(Roger)

### ***Korean-First***

All the participants identified themselves as have a primary ethnic identity of being Korean. They associated being Korean-first not only because of their outward appearance, although that was a significant factor, but also because they felt more Korean than American. They attributed feelings of being more Korean with family upbringing, and specific Korean values they maintained, such as, respect for elders, importance of family and education, and family background.

For myself, I would still label myself first as Korean. Because there's things that I feel are Korean that make me different, or things that I've grown up with or believe and feel that's Korean, at least in my perception...I feel that it's the same kind of thing, values of education, respecting your parents, the strong family values. (Frank)

Korean first. To me that's how I was raised, that's how the family was. If you ask what our family was like, it was a Korean family. Inherently, just physically, I would consider myself Korean. (Mark)

I definitely see myself as Korean first. Because of my name, birth place, family upbringing. I think for those reasons, I see myself as Korean. Also, emphasis that you are Korean...Also, seeing where I came from. Seeing what my parents went through and where they've been. (Quintin)

### ***Ethnic Identity Within Stages***

Among the ten participants found to be within a developmental ethnic identity stage, seven were found to be within *synergistic articulation and awareness*, one was within *dissonance*, and two were within *introspection*. None of the ten participants were found to be within the stage of resistance and immersion. Although, all ten participants perceived themselves to be Korean-first, the participants felt they could not deny the influences of the American culture and society in molding their ethnic identity.

#### *Synergistic and Articulation and Awareness*

These seven participants were found to have a large exposure or association with Koreans during high school or in college. They perceived themselves to have a consolidation of both American and Korean culture by maintaining the best of both cultures. There was no perceived conflict or changes of their ethnic identity when interacting within a more a Korean or American environment.

It's not divided in my mind the Korean culture, the American culture, it's kinda it's just me and who I am, and my personality or my goals or desires it's not

clearly defined...I can't tell what I'm losing and what I'm not because it's just me and who I am...Melding and kinda picking and choosing and making it into what I want. I wanna take the best of both worlds and make myself a better person. (Elaine)

I think I'm the same person everywhere, but it's how much of that I let out... And so I don't necessarily culture, it's not, ho, wow, these are Asians, O.K. fine, I can be more me. Or these are Americans so I'm less me...I think in general I feel pretty comfortable whoever I'm around. (Frank)

I don't make any changes in my personality whether I am with Americans or Korean I just try to be as real as I can be. I think I'm always growing and learning new things about myself. (Joyce)

I don't think that I do change... I see myself creating my own world, taking bits and pieces of the Koreans world, bits and pieces of the American world. (Mark)

I'm Korean but I'm so Americanized that it just comes out. But all I can do is be myself...Well when I was younger there were thoughts in my mind where I was like, I wish I was white...But now, I'm liked the totally opposite. I'm happy I'm Korean. I'm happy with who I am. (Kevin)

Now, I guess I feel pretty grounded in both cultures. A lot more so in American culture than Korean culture. I feel pretty comfortable with that identity. I kinda don't feel there's a struggle that goes on between the two, because I feel more comfortable with who I am. (Roger)

I'm not totally American I know that. And I'm not completely Korean I know that for sure. I am just Korean American and that identity is not one way or the other. (Sally)

### Dissonance

This participant perceived himself as being caught between two cultures. However, he did not feel that he changed his ethnic identity depending on the environment. This participant expressed feelings of confusion and conflict when confronted by either the Korean or American culture.

I see myself fitting in no where. I read this one quote where this author said, "I find myself caught between the hinges of the door, not knowing whether to step in or to step out". And that's where I am. Caught between two cultures...I don't have a consolidation of the American culture and Korean culture...Because there are certain things in the cultures that are opposed, and I don't know which way to go toward, which side to take. (Carl)

### Introspection

These two participants expressed active exploration of their ethnic identity. They were found to be assertive in learning and participating more in the American culture and began questioning their perceptions and role within both the Korean and American culture.

I'm still trying to figure out where I stand as a person, as a Korean male in this society. I not really confident about that yet. I think I have a lot of insecurities in myself of feelings of how Koreans view me and how also American views me. So, those are things I'm still working through...There's so much more to life I realize than this small Korean community that I've been exposed to the last three or four years in my life. I'm taking more sorts to hang out with more sets of people. Kinda distance myself, kinda leave the Korean crowd and hang out with different people and seeing what other people are like and seeing how different I am. See how different they are, things like that. (George)

I think I'm still working it out...It depends. I think there's a difference in terms on how I view family and the outside world. I don't know what I know. I feel strangely proud to be a Korean, but there's so many things about Koreanness that I don't like. I guess it's also because I feel so connected to my family, despite the fact that there are difference. It's almost like a love hate relationship at times...For me, it's just been kinda struggling along, kind of just being myself when I'm around non Korean people, and not feeling like I have to conform in the little ways, or just in terms of speech patterns or body language, just those little things, they come out when I'm in a non Korean context. I don't know if it comes from just inward rebellion these days. (Debra)

### ***Fluidity of Ethnic Identity***

These six participants felt that they were able to function efficiently within the American culture, but did not feel that they fully belonged or were accepted by American society. Much like the participants who were found to be within the stage of *synergistic articulation and awareness*, the following six participants experienced aspects of both Korean and American culture. The participants felt they had a reasonable understanding of the expectations and etiquette of behavior required within both a predominately Korean or predominately American environment. However, participants perceived themselves as being chameleon like, where they could change their ethnic identity depending on the environment. These participants perceived themselves as being able to easily accommodate the degree of their Americanness or Koreanness to their environment, describing experiences of being Korean in a Korean environment, and American in an American environment. Although the participants did have feelings of marginalization and conformity during adolescence, their ethnic identity did not proceed within a stage oriented development. Instead, a continual fluidity or flexibility of their ethnic identity was present throughout their ethnic identity exploration, in which a transference, rather than a melding occurred between Korean and American culture.

It's difficult being a Korean in America. You get a lot of mixed messages. For instance, you get a lot of role expectations. When we're at church we play the

role of myself being that very quiet, Korean wife. Versus at work, I play the role of, you know, a more aggressive helper. I change my identity pending on where I go and who I'm with. (Abbey)

You almost switch back and forth from Korean to American depending on the environment. I would almost think about that you would try to be the same, but in actuality, no, it depends on where I am. It's interesting, I flip flop between where I am in terms of how I act, the things that I do. (Bob)

I have a vision or a view of how they see me and how I'm suppose to be and how I would like them to see me, I'm like a chameleon...So, I play the part just to be more accepted into the community. (Helen)

What I realize is you do kinda become a chameleon, a little bit. You kinda do what's best in the environment...just growing up the way I have, as a Korean American, as an immigrant, that's the only way you can really survive. That's a way to survive...So, I look at my life right now, that's the way it is, you kinda act in away that kinda fits the situation. (Lewis)

I don't know if it was really melding. It was more a salad bowl. They could never kinda intertwine, but they were kinda chunks in a room, you could say. I don't believe in a melting pot. I believe in the salad bowl method. I believe Asian are tomatoes. You know with all this lettuce, you only have one or two slices of tomatoes in there...So, I don't know if I really melded or brought the two together, it was more of a transfer... I change to the situation...I think my background from just going from one to the other; I think I can fit both. I don't think I can combine the two cultures together completely, 100%. It has to be one or the other. (Nick)

I would say I'm somewhat Korean at home, maybe 50/50. Fairly Korean with my Korean friends or around Koreans, very American with Caucasian friends. Very American at work...I feel like I can easily switch on and off my Korean with my American side. I don't know if that's rejecting something that I am, but I feel that I've had a full exposure to both cultures and I feel like I understand and know what it means to be like, American, and what it means to be like, Korean. So, I feel like I can sympathize with both cultures. (Quintin)

### ***Diffusion of Ethnic Identity***

As mentioned in the ego identity section, this participant had no exploration of her ethnic identity, due to an extreme perception of rejection from American peers. In addition, lack of exposure to Korean peers or Korean adult role models, apart from her parents, resulted in a seclusion within her home environment. The participant expressed profound feelings of separation from her American peers and the American society. This resulted in her feeling unable to explore her ethnic identity since she also feared similar rejection from Korean peers.

I don't still don't really care very much about what am I. Korean or American... I think it had to do with what I've been through... And I will never forget the people who hurt me. I think it has to do with a defense mechanism of mine that I feel afraid of getting close because of the memories of the past...I grew up never really confused about my identity. One question that I got during one of my college interviews was, how different is it for you to be Korean American and how is that culture integrated.. And I never really thought about it, and I never really cared.

(Paula)

All seventeen participants identified themselves as Korean-first, the participants also all described themselves as being a part of a unique subculture of Korean Americans. They viewed themselves as being caught between two distinct and sometimes conflictual worlds of Korean and American culture. This view created difficulties for participants when trying to meld their ethnic identity. Participants who perceived their parents as less rigid in their enforcement of Korean culture, and less restrictive in their freedom to participate within the American culture, were found to have synergistic articulation and awareness of their ethnic identity. These participants also perceived their parents to be open to the American culture, and having greater degree of socialization or interaction with Americans than traditional Korean parents. Accordingly, these participants viewed their home life as reflecting greater synthesis of American and Korean culture. However, participants who reported higher degrees of reinforcement of Korean culture, and perceived their parents to have limited or no socialization with Americans, were found to have fluidity of their ethnic identity (See Appendix L).

As mentioned previously, participants' ego and ethnic identity were closely intertwined. For instance, as outlined in the ego identity section, the participants' ego identity exploration often revolved around gaining independence from their family, especially their parents, which they associated with being more American than Korean. The findings of ethnic identity were consistent to the participants' ego identity statuses. All the ego identity achieved participants were similarly found to be within synergistic articulation and awareness of their ethnic identity. All participants in moratorium of their ego identity were also found to be within introspection of their ethnic identity. Lastly, all ego identity foreclosed individuals were found to be fluid within their ethnic identity.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide evidence that second generation Korean American adolescents experience a tumultuous identity crisis that is less inclined to be identity achieved than adolescent counterparts who have a multi-generational history within the United States. This is due mainly to having increased conflict within their ecological subsystems. Ego and ethnic identity formation did not differ by gender or by social class. The differences in ego identity or ethnic identity depended on the degree to which the participants' subsystems were conflictual, and whether their subsystems were perceived to be more influenced by the American or Korean culture. In the macrosystem, conflictual expectations from the Korean and American cultures were found to decrease identity exploration when participants were enforced to maintain their Korean culture since, in the Korean culture, identity was found to be derived mainly from one's family group identity. Collectivistic cultures, such as Korea, view individuals in terms of specific relationships to significant others, moreover, personal attributes are viewed as situation specific (Kim, 1994; Triandis, 1989a; Triandis et al., 1990). The Korean culture's emphasis on excellence, importance of family, and respect for elders permeated throughout the subsystems as important factors in ego and ethnic identity development and will be discussed in the following sections.

### ***Exosystem***

In the exosystem, parental experiences before and after immigration affected how the Korean culture was mediated to their children. The experiences of hardship during the Korean War enhanced the Korean culture's emphasis on education and hard work. The importance of their children's success often resulted in parental sacrifices, where all financial resources were allotted for the assurance of their children's success. Parental sacrifice mainly encompassed working long hours in order to give their children advantages that they themselves did not have, and resulted in less parental involvement within their children's lives. Moreover, as similarly found in the present study, the employment of Korean women rises dramatically with immigration into the United States, which in turn, disrupts the Korean traditional patriarchal family (Kim, Hurh, & Kim, 1993). This disruption of previously maintained family roles upon immigration may also decrease parental support and increase conflicts within the family unit, which was found to influence the initiation of identity exploration among Korean-American adolescents. Due to decreased parental supervision, along with the Korean culture's emphasis to respect elders, Korean parents were found to strictly enforce their authority through punishment, which resulted in authoritarian parenting techniques. Finally, the magnitude of investment, in which parents entrusted toward their children, increased the amount of pressure and necessity for their children's financial success, since parents would need to depend on their children to provide for them in the future. Korean parents were found to generally live their lives through their children, since their personal opportunities were limited, due to the Korean War and their immigration to the United States. These issues, along with perceptions that their ethnicity hindered their status within the American society, projected a need for parents to attain a higher social status by having their children overachieve. Further, parental experiences of hardship during the Korean War and during immigration intensified the Korean culture's emphasis of excellence, family unity, and respect for elders, which also served as the premises by which parents enforced their authority. Hence, the findings reflected that the more parents adhered to the Korean culture, the

more likely those practices and ideologies were passed down and reinforced in their children. Therefore, the degree of adherence to Korean culture became an important conflictual matter when Korean- American adolescents were forming their ego and ethnic identity, since they had to participate within both the Korean and American cultures.

### ***Mesosystem***

In the mesosystem, the separation of Korean and American culture was prevalent within the conflicting relationships between the Korean American participants and their American peers. Differences between the Korean-American participants and their American peers resulted in negative perceptions and marginalization of the Korean culture. The amount of socialization, or avoidance of socialization with other Koreans, was found to reflect the degree to which ethnic identity was explored. Participants in the present study emphasized Korean church not only as a means to reinforce or reintroduce Korean culture, but also serving as a socialization network for recently immigrated and already established Korean families. It was found that feelings of marginalization, or need to find acceptance among their American adolescent school peers, inhibited Korean-American adolescents from exploring their ethnic identity. However, exposure along with associations with other Korean-Americans increased exploration of ethnic identity issues because similarities and feelings of empathy among Korean peers produced an environment where participants could explore their Korean culture without ridicule or appearing different, since they felt visually and culturally accepted. A harmony between Korean home life and social life could be established within church or among Korean friends, which was not plausible within American settings, such as school, or among American peers. Lastly, since in Korean culture devotion and oneness with family was found to be greatly emphasized, the sense of obligation towards one's family members may affect personal choices of whether to explore and participate in activities associated with the American culture. Lack of participation within the American culture or seclusion to the Korean culture was also found to decrease ethnic identity exploration and needs to be more closely examined.

### ***Microsystem***

As previously mentioned in the exosystem section, the degree of adherence of Korean culture became an important conflictual matter when Korean-American adolescents were forming their ego and ethnic identity. In the microsystem, a strong adherence to Korean culture by parents was found to increase or result in conflict between the parents and their children, especially surrounding issues of American versus Korean ideas and practices. This conflict resulted either in a lack of support towards identity exploration, or in the complete rejection of American culture, due to pressures from the participants' parents to maintain their Korean culture. Participants who perceived their parents to adhere strongly to Korean culture were found to be foreclosed in their ego identity, since they were strongly reinforced to respect their elders and therefore, not to deviate from the cultural boundaries their parents set. Deviations from their parents' expectations were not confronted, primarily due to fear, or feelings of guilt when they disappointed their parents. For these individuals, seeking identity apart from the family was not supported, whereas obedience and loyalty towards parents heavily supported during adolescence. Also, as similarly found in the present study, within Asian cultures, any achievement or setback/disgrace of the adolescent become a reflection of the family and not only of the self (Huang, 1994; Liu, Yu, Chang, & Fernandez, 1990). The result appears to be that these

individuals felt great obligation and pressure to excel, which also inhibited exploration of new avenues where there was uncertainty of success. Lastly, although Korean immigrants have been found to retain their cultural ties, regardless of length of residence in the United States, adult children become Americanized at a faster rate than their parents (Kim, Hurh, & Kim, 1993). As in the case of the participants in the present study, children may need to become mediators of the American culture for their parents. By having their children become liaison for themselves and American culture, Korean parents may feel threatened concerning their parental control over their child, and therefore, send conflictual messages about acculturation to the adolescent. Huang (1994) found that:

Although parents may depend on the youth to develop the skills and the language for becoming successful in America, they are reluctant for them to “become American.” This results in confusing messages to the youth and leads to transgenerational conflict. For example, the parent may encourage the child to learn English to succeed in American society, but they may refuse to let them speak English in the home (p.22).

Accordingly, as Asian youth became more Americanized, the less they perceived themselves to be a part of their parental value system, which becomes a major cause of stress within the family unit (Lorenzo, Pakiz, Reinherz, & Frost, 1995). In the present study, it was found that Korean-American children hold feelings of resentment and confusion about parental expectations, since traditional Korean parent/child roles where parents were found to be authoritarian, was in stark contrast to the relationship of liaison, where the child assumed the adult role. This added stress was found to be an inhibiting factor in the Korean-American quest towards identity achievement, especially within cases where parental adherence to Korean culture was strong. Dependency by parents on their children to act as liaisons between the American culture and themselves, served to emphasize the importance of family and resulted in a lack of support towards identity exploration, since many roles and expectations were already established. These roles and expectations, such as being a liaison, taking care of parents in the future, and self as a reflection of the family unit, also contributed to a tumultuous identity crisis. This was due to the established roles and expectations, which revolved around the Korean culture, being conflictual to the American culture’s emphasis on individualism. Baptiste (1993) found that the variations in rate of acculturation among parents and their children, often will create intense conflict and stress between the two subsystems, and result in the polarization of the family. The present study suggest that communication problems, due to parental difficulty using the English language, resulted in an lack of involvement in lives of their children, since they could neither fully communicate with their children nor feel comfortable within an American setting, such as school functions. This problem led to further increased stress and polarization of the family.

### ***Individual***

In the individual realm, difficulty in integrating the contrasting philosophies of Western individualism and Korean collectivism was found to inhibit ego identity achievement and resulted in the development of a fluid rather than a stable ethnic identity. In the present study, individuals who were heavily reinforced by their Korean culture were found to develop a fluid rather than stable identity. This suggests that less harmonious subsystems resulted in the



individual to perpetually renegotiate his or her ethnic identity, thus, struggled with establishing a stable acceptable ethnic identity for both their Korean and American environment. Kim, Hurh and Kim (1993) similarly found that Korean-American adult children will develop a new way of adapting to the United States, in which a combination of both American and Korean cultures will be established in a coherent, yet, not necessarily stable identity. In contrast, participants who perceived their parents to be more Americanized, had less conflict concerning Korean and American culture, or less conflictual subsystems, and did not feel inhibited to initiate identity exploration. According to Phinney, Chavira, and Williamson (1992), by becoming more “American”, Asians may lose a sense of group identity which has been associated with higher self esteem, and in turn, encourages identity exploration. Regarding Asian-Americans, Yeh and Huang (1996) concluded that in many cases, Asian-Americans’ ethnic identity is forced upon them by others, since Asian tradition places more emphasis on relationships and familial commitments than do Western cultures. The researchers also found that avoidance of shame was an important factor in shaping Asian-American ethnic identity and was used as a reason to conform further to “white society”.

These findings, as mentioned previously, concur with findings in the present study that recent immigration, parental experiences of the Korean War, and lack of Korean history within the United States of Koreans, serve to intensify familial commitments and result in limited resources for Korean-American youth. These factors in turn, were found to result in marginalization of Korean culture or conformity to American peers among second generation Korean-Americans. Lorenzo, Pakiz, Reinherz, and Frost (1995) found that Asian-Americans in general, felt less social support than their Euro-American counterparts. These findings suggest that lack of social support, combined with conflictual cultural expectations, may result in an absence of reinforcements for identity exploration among Korean-Americans, along with increased confusion surrounding identity issues. In contrast, Korean adolescents residing in Korea, whose ethnic unity was combined with integrated strong, cohesive in-groups, and emphasized collective identity, were found to experience less turmoil during their identity stages (Kim, 1994; Triandis, 1989a, Triandis et al., 1990). This suggests that more harmonious subsystems encourage identity exploration and achievement. Lastly, findings in the present study conclude that rigid rules and reinforced sense of obligation towards family, which was associated with Korean families, inhibit identity exploration during adolescence. Huang (1994) found that, due to the group-centeredness nature of traditional Asian cultural values, most Asian cultures do not have a developmental stage that is comparable to that of Western cultures. Accordingly, participants in the present study, who viewed their parents as reflecting Korean culture, did not experience an identity crisis, necessitated by Erikson, until college or young adulthood, when they were able to gain some distance from parental influences. This may be due partly to Asian parents associations of individuality as being viewed as selfishness (Ghuman, 1997).

### ***Future Implications***

America has been seen in the past as a “melting pot” where minority groups assimilate into the mainstream culture. However, recent trends have described America as a “salad bowl”, where minority groups retain their own distinct cultures (Phinney, Chavira, Williamson, 1992). Perceptions of how individuals think America, as a society, view one’s ethnic group, can reveal to some extent, an individual’s personal perceptions of acceptance or rejection from the dominant

group. Since Korean-Americans visually can be identified as of Asian ethnicity, it would suggest that a negative perception of one's ethnicity would also decrease one's self esteem, increase acceptance of American culture, and rejection of Korean culture. This was found to be true among all the participants in the present study during adolescence. All the participants reported denial of their ethnicity among their American school peers, due to fear of negative perceptions about being different. Phinney, Chavira, and Tate (1993) found that ethnic minorities can separate themselves from negative perceptions, even though they might feel that their ethnic group has problems. They can do this by internalizing positive aspects of the ethnic group, and considering role models who represent the positive characteristics of the group. However, this becomes problematic for Korean-American adolescents, since their recent immigration trend limits their exposure to positive role models. Although participants were found to internalize positive aspects of the Korean culture, such as being hard working and academically successful, these stereotypes served to reinforce the Korean culture's need to be perfectionistic, and hence, may inhibit identity exploration outside of educational realms. Moreover, Asians have been described as having high status and positive stereotypes associated with them and are generally perceived to have successfully assimilated into the American culture (Phinney, Chavira, & Williamson, 1992). However, these perceptions may be deceptive. Korean ideologies of hard work, promotion of education, and in the case of the participants in the present study, Christian values, coincide with American ideologies and seemingly embody what Americans wish to promote and reinforce as a nation (Mckay, & Wong, 1996). Therefore, it may not be that Koreans assimilate, it may be more that Korean ideologies do not offend Americans. This has implications because the extent to which recent immigrants assimilate to their host country may affect their identity formation. According to Erikson (1956, 1963), identity crisis involves an individual melding childhood identifications in ways that will establish reciprocal relationships with the society they live, while maintaining a sense of continuity within himself/herself. Hence, perceptions of one's own ethnic group would greatly influence how an adolescent melds childhood identifications. These childhood identifications, which primarily develop through family and societal perceptions, may be both negative and positive. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that a sense of continuity of self could be more difficult if one's own perceptions of their ethnic group conflicts significantly with the societal perceptions the adolescent chooses to internalize. In the future, the role of ethnic identity in ego identity formation within Korean-Americans needs to be more closely examined.

### ***Limitations***

Participants were limited to Presbyterian Christians who grew up mainly in Northern Virginia. Identity issues that revolved around being Christian affected participants' participation in social activities. However, Christian influences over their values, beliefs and lifestyle choices were not pursued in the interview. Moreover, similarities between the Korean culture and Christian culture were found to be present, but were not deeply explored on how the relationship between the two cultures affected their identity development. Finally, the Korean community in Northern Virginia was very centralized and diversity among the Korean population was limited.

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## APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Age range	21-23	24-26	27-29	<b>Total</b>
Male	2	3	5	<b>10</b>
Female	1	4	2	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>

## APPENDIX B: PILOT INTERVIEW

### Brief Background Overview

*\* A pseudonym was given*

Donna\* was born in Korea and came to United States when she was eight months old and has since, been raised in the United States. She is twenty-eight years old and comes from a middle to upper middle class economic family. Her parents are both Korean and immigrated to the United States in the early 1970s. She is the oldest of three children. Her sister is five years younger and her brother is seven years younger than her. She currently is working as an independent consultant and travels Monday through Friday. Her parents run a Korean bookstore, and live in Donna's house with her. Donna still attends Korean church with her parents, and helps financially support not only her parents, but also her siblings.

### Partial Transcript: Key Interview Questions and Responses

### Interview Categories

*Donna:* "I probably was raised pretty Korean, meaning I was pretty sheltered when I came to the United States. I was surrounded by Korean speaking relatives only and didn't speak English until I was probably around eight years old... and then I was raised, I guess as what you would call as a typically American child, but with the influences of Korean culture at home.

Personal Family Background

*Janice:* "O.K. well did you find that a lot of your childhood friends were mainly Korean or did you have American friends when you were growing up?"

*Donna:* "Umm... let's see, since the 1970s there was very little immigration. I was raised in the Washington D.C. area, and although the immigration laws were less stringent then they are currently, umm...there was not too many immigration when we came here, and actually the reason why my parents came here was because they thought that there was more opportunity umm...because my mother was a nurse. Umm...but I probably would say that I had more Caucasian friends till even in college, that was the predominant crowd that I hung out with. The only Korean exposure I had was going to church, because I went to a Korean church, and that's why I would have quote unquote Korean friends, but I wouldn't say I had any Korean friends outside of church, because it was very difficult to meet Koreans that were hanging around Caucasians is probably a better way to say it."

Personal Socialization with Koreans

*Janice:* “So umm... mainly your Korean socialization or social life revolved around the church?”

*Donna:* “Right.”

*Janice:* “ I know that when I go to church, it is really a kind of social network for Koreans, did you find the same in your church?”

*Donna:* “Umm... I would definitely say so, umm... you know I was exposed to Korean church because my parents went there. My parents felt obviously much more comfortable in that environment at that point when they first started going to church umm...you know they didn’t speak that well of an English, so I just got exposed to that environment as well. So it was a Saturday/ Sunday type thing as where my Korean environment came into play. Monday through Friday was school and the school social circle.”

*Janice:* “Was that easy for you to make the transition going to school and having mainly American friends/Caucasian friends, then switching on the weekends?”

*Donna:* “I really didn’t think much of it, I just thought that’s the way it was. I didn’t really feel as if it was a transition, because at school, I didn’t have any Korean friends, so it wasn’t like I had to adjust to my Korean network at church to a Korean slash primary Caucasian environment at school. I didn’t really have any Korean friends at school until I really reached college, because I was still a significant minority, not just in my nationality, but as a true population. I was truly a minority, there wasn’t much Korean, African Americans, Hispanics really around where I lived and where I was brought up, as suburban as...I mean, it is pretty close to Washington D.C. but still you know, primarily Caucasian, probably ninety-five percent.”

*Janice:* “So did you ever feel a sense of being left out or a sense of really discovering that you were different while in school?”

*Donna:* “You know, I’ve been asked that question before, and I would say I personally never truly understood the meaning of discrimination because, first of all, you don’t see those kinds of violent acts towards your quote unquote nationality type people or whatever. But more importantly, when you’re raised in that environment, you just think that’s the way it is, you just don’t think that you’re out of place. You know you look different, you know you have a different background but you’re not really segregated out as--oh, you’re Korean, you’re not American. Umm...there has been some instances,

Personal Participation in  
Cultural Activities

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I would say primarily in elementary school, at very like odd cases, where I'd be like set out and I would just say that it was really just certain people that were very just insensitive, what we would now call politically incorrect. Those kids were just very insensitive to people that looked different than them."

*Janice:* "Can you give me an example of when that happened?"

*Donna:* "I remember one time when I was in sixth grade, so now you're thinking I felt like I was fine all the way until sixth grade, you know, so that's like what ten years or twelve years or whatever, and just like one day, I remember when somebody was like picking a fight with me and I think it was because I had a different backpack. It probably wasn't fashionable or something like that and umm... but I kinda felt like they weren't picking on me because of my backpack, they were just kinda picking on me because I was different. The backpacking just made it worse because you're like different and you have a different backpack. You don't shop where we shop, you know, that kind of thing. So that whole idea of fitting in, clicking. But I felt like it was even more than a fashion plate at that point, and I remember the teacher kinda umm... blame me, saying that I kinda started the whole fight because there was a lot of yelling, kinda pushing a little bit, not true violence, and I said "hey, you're blaming me because I look different". I said they're treating me because I look different, so I said, "don't tell me I started something when someone gives me the first push". I remember I was like very bold, I mean this was like, you know, some little tiny sixth grader yelling at a teacher saying, "don't you dare try to tell me what to do", you know that kind of thing, and those incidents were so far and so rare in between, but I remember that incident just because I was like, hmm...I think they were picking on me not because of my fashion sense, they were picking on me 'cause they thought they could pick on me."

*Janice:* "How did that make you feel?"

*Donna:* "I'm not really sure, because I can still realize how naive I was. Because when I first started my first job out of college, umm... you know, it's primarily Caucasian, you know, it's primarily male. And I just decided, hey, that's just the way it is, so it's not a big deal. And we had this African American lady come in and she was working, and she always had a pretty big chip on her shoulder and not in a bad way, but it was bad for her to be assimilated into that corporate environment, because she felt like the day she walked in, she was a quota person. She felt like the day she walked in

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everybody treated her different because she was say, black. So, unfortunately she came in with the wrong attitude, always kinda feeling on the defensive. So, what happened was, I think, people treated her to be on the defensive, but I became more sensitive to the situation 'cause I said, is it really her fault that she feels defensive, look at the environment around here you know, it is primarily Caucasian , it is primarily male. And she's the one who really made me a little bit more sensitive to say, you know, you're right, you know? I am Asian, I am a woman you know, the woman part is really more where I could relate with, but that you really need to work harder, you need to fill out. But I still was like, it's not an excuse, it doesn't matter, you still have to try harder, but she really got me to be more cognizance of my environment and where I work, you know, because still from that sixth grade incident to college I'm like, that's just the way life is, move on, whatever, you know, you learn to deal with your environment, you learn to survive, but I never felt like I was fighting to survive. I was just like, you know, you assimilate yourself, you adapt yourself to the environment and you work. But you can see how really naive I was, I never really saw being a women or Asian really an issue for me. But at least while I've gone through work, and work with people from different cultures, I've become more sensitive to the issue, even though I, myself am a minority. I really wasn't sensitive to the issue before."

*Janice:* "Do feel that by trying to assimilate you are losing part of your Korean heritage or do you think that, that's a good thing."

*Donna:* "You know that's a tough question to answer, because umm...I'm not really sure how I could not assimilate. Like I kinda draw everything from a personality type thing. I think that I beat the typical stereotype, because most people think Asians are hard workers and quiet. That's the stereotype. I'm not saying that's right, but that's the stereotype even more for women. They're not out spoken, and I'm very aggressive at work , meaning that, aggressive to get things done, things done to a certain quality, and quite frankly, you don't see many Koreans, at least in these fortune five hundred or big companies, because they know that they can take over their parent's business and make hundred and a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year after they get their college degree. So I'm like the fool as far they concern. Great, I'm in a corporate environment. So it's like, I don't feel like I've changed, and definitely, I feel like I've been able to use my Korean upbringing to my advantage at work. That whole thing of understanding, respecting seniority, working very hard, if anything I feel that I have a higher level of patience and I don't do the political maneuvering,

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butt kissing, that kind of stuff, because you know, I was never really raised that way, that kind of thing. But I don't feel like I've forced myself to adapt to the point where I've changed to assimilate to an environment. You know, I feel like I've always found a way to work with the environment, versus changing myself to fit in it, because I don't do very well with that unfortunately. "

*Janice:* "So would you take the perspective of kinda doing what's better for the group than breaking out on your own?"

*Donna:* "Hmm....the reason why I say hmm... is because I've been called by many a nonconformist...it's really tough to say, because even now, I'm working to Atlanta, Georgia and it's so clearly primarily Caucasian it's unbelievable. And the thing is, I don't feel any sense of discrimination towards me, but sometimes when I walk the halls I just say, "I'm clearly the only Asian out of two hundred people that work here, I wonder what they think". But it's not like they even think about it, and I'm kinda not used to that, because I've been working in New York City and all these Metropolitan areas where they force you to think about it. But here, they don't even think about it. You know, they're just like, Donna is Donna. Donna does her work, no other big deal. You don't see big social, cultural groups forming like American Americans hanging out together, with Asian hanging out together, that kind of thing. I don't see that I work. So, I'm not really sure, I mean that's really tough to say. I mean people always say, "do you have an identity crisis"? I'm like, I'm not really sure, so it's umm...you just kinda go by the situation. And I think the more you're asked, then you think about it, besides that, I really don't think about it, and I'm not sure if that's a good thing or bad thing."

*Janice:* "So, would you say that being in a setting where there weren't a lot of Asians helped build who you are?"

*Donna:* "It did definitely. Because you stand out, you know, and one thing that you're aware of is like--one time I worked in a Charlotte office, there was about one hundred and fifty people in that office, at a company of about one hundred and fifty thousand, I was one of six women men, four of which were working professionals, salary professions, the remaining being secretaries. On top of that, I was the only single Asian, period. Charlotte North Carolina, not that metropolitan at that time. And everybody will remember, Donna, why, because they click that with she's Asian, or she's Korean, so

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it's kinda almost an advantage. But you have to make sure you keep a certain standard, because if you fall, they'll remember your mistakes. They won't remember you for anything that's good and that's one thing that definitely I've kept inside my mind. You stand out because of who you are in the minority, but if you make a mistake, boy, will they remember, because you just don't blend into the realm of mistakes, you're the only single person there. And they'll remember you because they noticed you first, you know that kind of thing, and it's because of race, not because you're a hard worker."

*Janice:* "So you talked about how there is this stereotype of Koreans being hard working and quiet, when growing up, did feel like people had certain expectations of you? Did you feel any special pressure, or know about those kinds of stereotypes?"

*Donna:* "I would say in school, there were about two other Korean girls, and when I say Koreans, I just knew that they were Koreans. I don't know about Chinese, Japanese, whatever. And they kinda stood out in school too, I remember one was an excellent cheerleader, one was a brainiac, and then there was me. I just did my own little thing or whatever. We were all in a upper social circle, you know, going with the popular crowd or whatever, because of whatever activities we were doing, you know, that kind of thing. And, I felt like, if anything, we were treated more like we were exotic versus people that stood out because we look different, you know that kind of thing. And we weren't popular because we were exotic. But I don't think people ever put us at, oh, you are Korean, therefore you're different, therefore you have to stand out. And we didn't have the stereotypes like, oh, you are Korean, so you must be great at Math and not speak good at English, you know, that kind of thing. We didn't really have to deal with that too much."

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*Janice:* "Did people ever expect, when they saw the three of you, you would naturally know each other, and naturally be friends because of your ethnicity?"

*Donna:* "I'm not sure about that, but I definitely think to a certain extent we all kinda kept our distance, because we kinda wanted to keep our own little individuality without making it look like, oh, look at all those Koreans hanging out together. 'Cause it wasn't common back then. I mean, when you go to college, you have the,

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you know, Philippino group, you have your Turkish group, you have your black Americans hanging out together, or whatever. In high school, you didn't have that. So you didn't make a point of kinda getting your own little niche and hanging out with that group together. It really wasn't thought of. Now my younger brother and sister, now eight years further down the road, they do that commonly at school and it's not thought of. So I think it's just an increase mixture of nationalities in the school system versus the way it was before for us. So we could stay as our own little islands and never really bump in, and it wasn't really a big deal."

*Janice:* "So do you feel that your parents really encouraged you to have Korean friends or how did they feel about that, because you said that they were very active with Koreans socially in this area."

*Donna:* "Well, I think they understood the situation, the level of exposure. The level of exposure was weekends. And I lived in Virginia, and my church was in Maryland, so you're obviously not going to assimilate with that group during the week. So, I just considered it two different social circles. I think that their expectation was, once I went to college, I assimilated a little bit more. Not really an expectation, I thought it would be a natural progression. But what I found in college that disturbed me extremely was, if you hung out with Koreans, they would only hang out with each other, they didn't know anybody outside their social circle and I found that to be very, very disturbing because I'm thinking, you know that's not the way the real world operates. So, if anything, I think I went to an extreme and said, I'm definitely not going to hang out with you all because, number one, you expect me one hundred percent of my time to be involved in the social circle and two, you know, you don't assimilate outside the group. The fact that if I say, "do you know a buddy in your sociology 100 class", and they're like, "no, I know this person", and that person happens to be Korean. And I think that that's just very limiting. And for whatever reason, I just said four years down the road, I'm going to graduate from college and I'm not going to have this comfort zone around me, you know, what I'm going to do is intermingle with everybody, you know. I'm not just going to intermingle with Koreans, you know, I think that's just a bad thing to do. I mean I remember I had a lot of Philippino friends and they would say, "why don't you join our Philippino group?" And I'm thinking, that's the exact same thing, no I'm not interested, I'm going to do my thing, which is hang around everybody."

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*Janice:* “In my personal experience, I’ve noticed that Koreans are very ethnocentric.. and I can’t help but feel partially ethnocentric too. How do you feel?”

*Donna:* “I feel the exact same way. More so, I understand where it’s coming from . You know that whole social circle and of the network of knowing people is very powerful, and you see that in Korea, even though it’s just Koreans, and if I know you, I’m going to treat you a little better. So if you go into a Korean store I know you so I’m going to treat you a little better. But I think people see that as ethnocentric but I don’t know how different it is if I’m Joe Smith, I go to, you know, Mary Joe’s cafe. I know them, and they say , “oh, I’m going to give you a discount ‘cause I know you”. I definitely would say it’s a little more common in the Korean community. In the non Korean community, you know, business is business, but once you past that business line and you are personally close to that person, then it’s always more like family versus a customer, versus a vendor type situation. You know, it’s a little more closer.”

*Janice:* “So you say that on the weekends it’s a little more different social environment than on the weekdays, do you feel like you have a different, sort of self , or portrayal when you’re around Koreans then around Caucasians?”

*Donna:* “Not really. I think it’s gotten better because I’ve had certain experiences, working more with Koreans, and the reason why I use Koreans as an example because that’s a group that I can deal with. Recently, I went and worked in Korea for six months and it was interesting because the Caucasians liked me because I could bridge the gap between Koreans and Americans, and the Koreans liked me because although I was westerned up, you know, I had an upbringing of a western culture, they saw my face and they said, oh, she can relate with me even though my Korean may not be as good as, you know, English. So, I don’t really feel a tension of portrayal. If anything, it’s served me well, you know, I’ve taken the best things of, you know, the freedom to live in the United States, the perks that come with it, you know, good schooling , more opportunities, umm...openness. But then you bring, I feel my cultural upbringing, which is they are like, you know, you may be a Korean living in America, but you do have that Korean upbringing and you know, even if people ask me if I am an American, I still say I’m Korean. And I struggle with that because certain people don’t understand that, and I guess it’s because I identify with my first culture. I look at my face, I say I’m Korean. And I look at my parents and I say they’re Korean. I have an American past but, to me the word

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American, seems more stereotypical of Caucasian, versus an American melting pot. It felt like the word American meant more melting pot, then I would say that I'm American. But I don't feel that when they talk about America and American to be referred to a melting pot. I feel like it's more towards a Caucasian type thing, and that's why I say I'm Korean versus American."

*Janice:* "Would you categorize your parents as having a strong adherence to Korean heritage?"

*Donna:* "I would say definitely they have a strong adherence to Korean heritage. But they've learned to adapt themselves to American culture and an example of that is, they've assimilated and tried to understand a little bit more socially how things work here. They've learned the language, they've lived here for many years. There's a lot of non Caucasians families that live in the United States that can't speak English. I think that's horrible. And that's the same thing that you say if you go visit Italy, you should learn Italian, right? Same thing, if you're going to come live in the United States you should learn English. You should be able to assimilate into the United States of America, you know and that kind of thing. You should understand the social cultures like, one thing that's different in Korea is that you don't go sleeping in other people's houses, slumber parties. That whole concept of slumber parties, is very difficult. Umm... I never went to a slumber party that much, because they never understood that. But as my younger brother and sister grew up, you know my parent's finally realized that's more common here, you know, so that's like a cultural adjustment for them. So, they've learned to assimilate a little bit more to the culture and understand without letting go of some of the cultural sense of the way they were you know, brought up. They're willing to go to a certain extent, but they're not willing to let go completely. You know, they don't want us to stand out like aliens, they want us to assimilate, but there are certain family standards they believe in and they're not going to past the line of family values...I remember when my parents, my father, definitely my father, is a little bit more conservative, definitely is

Parent's Adherence to  
Korean Culture

Assimilation and Acculturation

Perceived Parental Attitudes  
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much more of what I think Korean, than my mother- has not become too Americanized. And if he found out that a good friend of mine came from a divorced family, he would say, “you can not be friends with that person anymore, their parents are divorced, what kind of family is that?” I mean just instantly, never even meeting the person, you know, God help my poor friend, he was already judged just because his parents were divorced. Because that whole linkage to family is so critical, and if anything I still feel that, you know, it’s like if you were the child and did something wrong, it’s bad on the family name. It’s not bad on you. And I think to a certain extent, that tie is very critical because you should think of that, you shouldn’t be so you are an individual but you do have a family attachment to you. You know, they’ll say it’s a marriage of families not just the marriage of two people, and I think that’s very important. It’s a pain in the butt, it’s a lot of baggage to carry around with you, but I see the importance of it, you know, and there’s different ways to adapt that to the way you live now. But, I think that’s very important, because umm... you know, yeah, people may be miserable with their families, but they kinda try to keep it together, for that sake of keeping the family together. Like a lot of people would say that’s wrong, they may be right, you know but umm...I think there’s something to be said with you know, the way that the children are brought up, you know. You try to work at the marriage longer because there’s a stigma attached to divorce. A lot of people would disagree with me, but, I think people shouldn’t be so quick to divorce, you know. I’m very conservative that way, and I think that conservativeness comes from being raised in Korean. When I went to Korea recently, its becoming a lot more like the United States, where divorce rates are a little bit higher. There’s a lot of things that are going on that to me, when I went to Korea, I expected it to be conservative and it wasn’t anymore, and I was like, I don’t like it because I want Korea to be like Korea. I don’t want Korea to be like the United States. And I may be guilty of that, people might say, hey, they need to modernized, you know, the culture shouldn’t always be in the 1960s and then I say, what was wrong with it, you know, does everything need to change?”

*Janice:* “Do you feel that way because of your parent’s strong adherence to the “Korean true” heritage?”

*Donna:* “Definitely, and that’s why I say, I definitely am a lot more conservative. And I’m not more conservative because of the social values or the measurements of being considered more liberal, but its more that, the Korean culture is much more conservative in regards to that of family bondage umm...adherence to what you do affects my

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name, umm... that kind of thing. And again, it is a lot of baggage. I'm not saying, I liked it all the time, it was really a struggle, you know? I'm like hey, this is me, this is my decision. But there's something to be said about a family knowing you, because if they raised you for X amount of years I think your family does know you better than some other person. And I think that's good to know that you have a support network always."

*Janice:* "Well, how did that affect you as a teen. I know that there is a lot of conflict in adolescence as it is, especially since your parents saw you as a sort of representation of themselves- that when you go out in front of the entire world, you are representing your family?"

*Donna:* "It was clearly, clearly emphasized, and I'm not telling you that it was perfect. I mean there were times that we would definitely argue, you know, and be like, what do you mean I can't do this, you know, that kind of thing. As a teenager, you want to have more social freedom umm... but that's what forms you as a person too. You know, things can't be perfect, otherwise you never learn how to deal with each other. A family is like work, it's political, you gotta learn to you know, kinda assimilate with the whole situation."

Perceived Parental Support

*Janice:* "So what kind of characteristic or personality do you think formed from dealing with that? "

*Donna:* "Umm... you just think twice about being an individual, you don't always think of me, me, me. You say, O.K., me and then, how can I help the family out, how can I not think of the family. You know, if I went off and eloped, let's take an extreme example. Stigma on the family number one, but number two, I say more than the stigma, that's pretty selfish. You know a significant part of your life, why don't you want to share it with your family? I think a little bit more that way. Instead of saying, I'm going to elope, it's more convenient, I don't have to do any wedding plans, I want to do my own little thing, you know. So, you just kinda think twice before you make those kind of things that do affect the family, not just you as an individual."

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*Janice:* "So you said that it's a lot of baggage to carry, what do you mean by that? Does it ever limit you?"

*Donna:* "It's not that it limits you, but it's sometimes more of a pain in the butt, because you can't just say, O.K., I'm going to do my own little thing, you know. Umm... I'm going to go color my hair blond and do my own little thing, it's not a big deal, because you

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know there's going to be repercussions with it, you know, because your families like whoa, are you crazy? I mean you have dark brown hair or you, you know, whatever. It's just more of, oh, I have to deal with this obstacle, more than it's limiting. I mean people say, yeah, they're holding you back, but, it's not like you can't talk about the issue and say, "I want blond hair" because, whatever. I mean, that's kind of an extreme example. But it forces me at least to communicate more with my parents, and if anything, I think our relationship is stronger because I think I told more than they wanted hear. So now they absolutely trust me, versus always trying to do my own little thing, never telling them what's going on and you know, say, you're not part of my life. And then it back fires on you because then they don't trust you, because then they're like, we don't know who you are, we don't know what you're doing, we don't know who you're hanging out with. Versus me, I just said, here's the world you know, whatever, you do with it what you want and then they're like, oh, we trust you because they understand how I make decisions, you know."

Collectivism

*Janice:* "Did you feel like you needed to tell them more because, they were less aware of the American culture, so you kinda had to act like a liaison."

*Donna:* "No, I just felt like I had to tell them more so that they'd leave me alone. Because I saw this theory back fire with my sister and my brother, which were like, I'm more cool I don't need to talk to my parents, you know, I'm going to do my own thing. Well, I saw the way that whole concept of trust, you know, what are you doing out past midnight."

Perceived Parental Support

*Janice:* "Did you feel like they attributed that to becoming Americanized and losing Korean tradition, like respecting your parents?"

*Donna:* "Oh, definitely, that's why we always say, they're more Americanized than me, because, they didn't have as strong of an influence. They didn't have my grandparents raise them a little bit, I was raised with my grandparents until I was about six years old. They didn't understand why my parents felt the way they did and I was like, this is critical to growing up as a teenager. You gotta kinda understand your parents, so can manipulate the situation a little bit better, right? And I felt like it was umm.. it was their lack of Korean cultural understanding that brought them to think of more me, me, me, me. Because, I know that once they visited Korea, they kinda

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understood kinda of where some of the stuff was coming to, they were a little more sensitized to the situation.”

*Janice:* “Do you feel like, because you outwardly look Korean and even though your brother and sister were born in the United States that you should adhere more to Korean tradition?”

*Donna:* “Definitely, because I think that’s the whole concept of your family. The family kinda sets the tone for how you work. You go to a certain company because you they have a certain type of culture, you know saying, the environment is black, the environment is strict. Well, your family also has that same kind of thing, they have certain ways that they do things, certain ways that they interact with each other, and if you don’t fit in there, and I mean, it’s conflict. You know, if you don’t agree and you can’t come to an understanding, a melding of understanding, it’s conflict. I don’t think that’s the way you want be a family if there’s conflict all the time...I would say that my brother and sister are more Americanized because they weren’t raise with the same set of struggles. I came here as an immigrant, I was raised as an immigrant, and my parents, weren’t settled. Once we were settled in the United States, my brother and sister were born. So they didn’t have to go through that whole phase of being a quote unquote immigrant. And people might say, oh, you were so young, how do you know? Well, you know because you weren’t settled, you weren’t established, you have to find like, what cereal there was, you know. You can tell your parents are struggling because they don’t know what to buy at the store; you can tell they’re struggling, because they don’t know what kind of clothes to wear without standing out, you know? They knew all that by the time my brother and sister were born, so they didn’t have to go through that hardship, so you didn’t have to force that closeness with the family. They kinda went like, you know, like day one, they knew English, day one you knew what clothes to buy, day one you knew how to go to PTA meetings, you know, just that kind of stuff, that where a learning curve had already been conquered before my brother and sister were born. So it’s not like they had to learn how to understand my parents in order to grow up.”

*Janice:* “I can understand. You know when I was growing up I wanted to fit in with my friends but at the same time I didn’t want to disappoint my parents, due to struggles related to immigration and I had a hard time. For instance, the pull of American individualization and to kinda break out. Did you feel any similar struggles?”

*Donna:* “Yeah, I definitely had some of that. But I think that I had a

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more sheltered life than other people. You know it wasn't like I was always going to parties, and smoking and drinking and all that kind of stuff once you get into a cool crowd. Probably around twelve you start doing that stuff, but I probably was a lot more sheltered because I was playing piano and learning violin, so my afternoons were spent in orchestra or piano lessons. So you know, I kinda wasn't aware of some of those kinda social freedoms, I guess. Because my focus was learning music you know, and some people may take that as a form of shelter, but then again on the other side, I liked doing that, you know, and that kind of thing."

*Janice:* "So what kind of influence do you think being kept "sheltered" has had on the philosophy do you have on life. Do you think that it is more Korean in ideology?"

*Donna:* "I'm not really sure. I can't tell you what Korean philosophy is. I worked in Korea and there's things I understand why people act the way they do, but, I understand the in depth game or whatever?"

No, not really. I just know like basics-- like family is very important, you don't tarnish the family name, umm...family stays close together, you rely on each other, you support each other, you know, you don't have this thing of, you borrowed sixty dollars from me and now you have to pay me back. I felt that my parents have been supporting me for twenty-five years, I don't think they have to pay me back anything. Umm... it's more umm... you certain cultural perspectives that you keep with you, and you just understand. And even when I hang around certain Koreans at church, you can even say that they take it a little different than I do. 'Cause I definitely have a western click to it, because when I work, I don't have any Korean business philosophy affecting me. I work like I was raised in, you know, learned in a fortune five hundred company. I work to do good work, I do work to get promoted, I do work to succeed. But you know, I wouldn't know how Koreans do work and that's something I wasn't exposed to. So there's always a constant learning process and you just have to make sure that you make the best of it. Take both things and you make them fit that formula fit for you. Not every formula fits for every person, you know. I don't have an accent for example. There's a lot of Korean-Americans that have an accent, and it automatically makes them stick out, and I know that. And people are like, you don't have that much of an accent, and I'm thinking, you know, not everybody in the world has an accent, you know, that kind of thing. So, sometimes when I see colleagues that have more of an accent, I feel for them a little bit. Not sympathy, but I know that they are going to struggle a little bit more because they will be picked on a little bit more than I would.

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They wouldn't dare make fun of my English, because they know that my English is as good if not better than theirs. And I don't mean that in a snotty way, I'm just saying, they're not going to pick on me.. If I make a grammatical error, they're not going to pick on me. If that other person who has an accent makes a grammatical error, they're automatically going to think that their English is not that good. You know what I mean? I don't get that, and that's a winner for me, I guess. But that also keeps you sensitized and grateful for what you have. Because I can take the best of both worlds, because I have Korean culture, but I have, you know, western upbringing. That's a good thing."

*Janice* : "Growing up did you ever feel any conflict concerning things that your parents chose to support you in, and the things that they didn't?"

*Donna*: "My father didn't support me in anything where I would get bruised. Like I remember I wanted to play field hockey but a lady doesn't do that. A lady doesn't do that because you'll get bruised. Um, no you're not going to take Tae Kwon Do because that's not a lady type thing to do. But less that, it really was not a big deal, you know.. Definitely, it was because my parents pushed music so much for me. At the time, I didn't realize that they were pushing music, but that's just became a significant portion of my life. And whether I accepted it or not, I really don't know. I guess the key thing here is, umm...if you look into the whole conversation, I really don't think much of it, you know. I can attribute certain things directly, but a lot of things its just like if you were, you know, the Jones' family. You get raise in a certain way and you just kinda live by those norms and you pass them on to your children, and they pass them on to their children. You know, it's like we all make fun of Happy Days. They were raised that way, so, you know, umm...you definitely have some more cultural things interjected, but I think a family's a family regardless of where geographically or what nationality you were raised in."

*Janice*: "Did you ever feel left out at all because of your ethnicity?"

*Donna*: "I'm not really sure. I definitely know in high school I made a choice not to stay with the popular crowd because I thought that they were too high maintenance. You feel left out, but you don't know if it's because of your ethnicity or because you made a choice not to, you know, go to the Limited and go shopping, or go wear make up and stuff like that. And the only reason I say that I'm not sure is because that's still the way I am now. I want to be low

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maintenance, and I don't feel like I have to be a fashion plate all the time. I don't feel the need to be popular or whatever."

*Janice:* "Do you ever feel like you have ever had to defend yourself because of your ethnicity? If so, do you feel like you are defending yourself, or more your ethnicity?"

*Donna:* "I know that I haven't had to do that on an ethnic perspective, but I definitely had to do that on gender. I think I have more issue with gender."

*Janice:* "How do you feel about dating people from other races and how do you think your parents feel about it?"

*Donna:* "Well, I think with parents, with the way Koreans are, is that they always want you to date Koreans. Its a whole pedigree thing. They want to keep their culture in tact. And multicultural couples are not accepted. They are not accepted in Korea at all, they are not going to be accepted here. So, if you date a non Korean, that person better stand out. That person, what they ultimately need to do, is that your parents need to feel that there's security. Your parents need to feel a sense that this person is going to take care of you no matter what. There better be something outstanding about this person, instead of just being a lawyer and making money and coming from a good family. Umm...my parents, I've never dated a Korean and that's just because I don't have the opportunity to meet them. Working at work, ninety percent of the people are Caucasian, where do you meet them? You're going to date people you meet. You may say, what about church, you say, there's still eligible people. So I did get set up with Koreans and stuff like that, and it didn't seem to work out. And I think that its just more that the personalities didn't work out, that kind of thing. But I think my parents understand that. They can't fault me for what I have exposure to. I mean that's just the way it is, so they just accept that. Would they still like for me to marry a Korean? Yes, but you know, what do they do, they need to more focus on someone who will take care of me. So do I think every Korean parents think like that? No , definitely not, there are a lot of Korean families that would never, ever accept that. And even when I see certain couples together, I think about that. If I see a Korean and a Caucasian person together I just sit there and am like, I wonder if uh, their parents accepted that? You know, because something's really odd, like the girl's like drop dead gorgeous and the guy's like O.K. Or their personalities don't match, like the girl's super quiet and the guy's super outgoing, and maybe I'm just sensitized to that because I'm Korean. I do think about it. You know like, I

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remember I was working in Colorado Springs, there's a lot of interracial couples there. There's a lot of Koreans slash Caucasian combinations and you know, the first thing that comes to my mind is that oh, it's because they served in the military, you know. So, I'm like, hmm... now did this couple come here because she wanted to come to America, so that's why she quote unquote fell in love with him, or is it true love, you know? I mean you just don't know. Or was he really lonely and it just turned out to be, you know, just that kind of thing. But then, when you really think about it, in a level above that is, that person was working in Korea, who did he have exposure to? People on the base and Koreans, ergo. But, definitely before, that's not what I thought. I thought hmm...you know? What's the purpose, like I have any right to judge, what's the purpose, right. But you do think of those things sometimes."

*Janice:* "It was interesting to me that you said that "as long my parents think that he can take care of me. Can you tell me a little bit more?"

*Donna:* "I mean, they don't want me to struggle, they want someone to financially support me, emotionally support me, support my culture, like if I want to eat rice everyday they're going to support that, and the personal has to be a really good person. I would say, that on a first glance, if it was a Korean guy I was being set up with, the first thing they look at is, money, job, family background. The personality doesn't even come to play. Seriously, the personality doesn't even come to play initially when you get set up. You get set up on based on those criteria only. Umm...for a non Korean, that personality better be just so overwhelmingly, gushingly, generous, kind and loving otherwise, just no chance. Because they are always going to say well, what if this person was Korean, you know, that kind of thing. You just need to, umm...ultimately, whether this person is Korean or no Korean is going to get judged by the whole generosity, loving factor that kind of thing, but the non Korean better stand out even more. There better be just something great about this person."

*Janice:* "And do you feel the same about that as your parents do?"

*Donna:* "You know, I don't care whether they're Korean or non Korean, I mean even for me, I mean, I'll have to be honest. And it may sound hypocritical, but even if I was married to a non Korean I definitely want my child to learn Korean even though they would be more American than Korean since they would be second generation or whatever. And to a certain extent my bias would probably be, it

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would be great if they married a Korean. It's still the same thing, because it passes on and that's that way you were raised umm... but, for me, it's just a person. I would say sure, I think it would be great to marry a Korean, I think that it would be super, but its not just that alone, it has to be someone that matches with you. Unfortunately its the amount of opportunity to meet Koreans. It's difficult. If all your friends are Korean, than it's not that difficult, but it's who you work with. My work takes me Monday through Friday. Church is primarily more adults, not as much singles. You know, you do with what you have.”

*Janice:* “How would you like people to see you?”

*Donna:* “I don't think that they'd even put that whole Korean thing into factor, and that's the whole point, if you don't try to make yourself stand out, you don't stand out. They do see that you have darker hair, they do see that you have darker eyes, I mean it's clear that you're non Caucasian right? But if you just accept who you are they just see you as that person. They don't see you as a Korean person , and that goes back to my friend I used to work with, she was like, I am black, I am being discriminated against, you know, you guys are treating me different. Well you know what, everybody saw you as black 'cause they didn't focus on you as a person. And that's true whether you're black , Koran, Hispanic, American Indian or whatever. I mean think about it, when they talk about minorities, who do they talk about. They talk about African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians, when they click on minorities for a college. Minority scholarships, who are they talking about. They never have Asians in there, well, guess what, we are a minority, but they never see us that way. Why is that? Whatever reason, I don't know.

*Janice:* “So how does that make you feel? You feel like Asian Americans are....?”

*Donna:* “I don't know, my question is, why do they even use that whole minority status for, you know, I mean I don't really care, but it's like, how is it that we are minorities, but we are not minorities on a certain type of form? You know that kind of thing. To me, I don't really care...”

*Janice:* “Have you ever felt any conflict between the two cultures?”

*Donna:* “I think the only time that I've ever dealt with conflict is

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when I've actually tried to socialize with Korean eccentric groups, that are only Korean. I feel like I don't fit in, because they're so focused on being Korean and hanging around Koreans, only I think they lose sight of who they are, because what I've realized is, and I'll just take one group for example, I'm like, I may speak Korean better than them, so what makes them think they're more Korean just because they hang around Koreans, you know like that. Or, what makes them think they're more Korean, when I still feel like I have a stronger bond with my parents umm.... what makes them think they're more Korean when they're purely second generation. They were brought up and they were raised like American kids, but they think they're Koreans 'cause they hang around Koreans. But they don't think I'm Korean because I don't hang around Koreans, you know that kind of thing. And to be honest, that's why I don't socialize in that set, it's a sense of person, you know, they don't see things, think the way that you do. You know, I still have a lot of friends that hang around Korean groups, but I personally don't socialize in that whole Korean circle because I was raised more Korean, I was not second generation. I consider myself first generation, we think a little differently. I'm a lot more conservative than they are...You think about it more just because they think that they are more Korean just because they hang around Koreans. Forget the fact that they may not speak Korean. Forget the fact that they may not have, you know, whatever, whatever you say a typically Korean person is, you know that kind of thing. They think just because they are the latest in Korean fashion and watch Korean TV, you know, but they don't understand anything, they think they're more Korean, you know. "

*Janice:* "So do you feel like you've encountered more discrimination from Koreans?"

*Donna:* "Oh, definitely, yeah, I would say that's more true, because they emphasize the fact that they're Korean. And that's fine, and I mean I talk Korean at work when I'm on the phone talking to my family members, you know, it's not like I hide the fact either, you know. It's not like, I'm definitely Korean because I hang out with Koreans, you're Korean regardless of who you're with. That doesn't go away, you can't shed yourself of not being Korean. But it's the same thing with people who are clearly of a certain race, but they say, oh, I'm not because I was raised in the United States, you know. I mean I can't say I'm not Korean I'm Caucasian, people would laugh at me, they'd think I was from outer space. Typically you don't even look like that, so what makes you think they're going to be able

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to assimilate to a group denying your true heritage...You just kinda need to accept who you are and use the best points out of that.”

*Janice:* “So do you feel that you have a good sense of who you are?”

*Donna:* “I don’t know, I think, you know, with every experience you change. So, I think you’re constantly learning new things about yourself, whether it’s changing jobs, or moving to different cities, or interacting with different people. I think that I’m comfortable with who I am, but do I have a great sense of who I am? It’s hard to answer, because I think that it’s constantly developing as you grow older and you experience different things.”

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*Janice:* You say that you’re still constantly changing, when you’re doing that, do you feel like you’re at a point where have assimilated your Korean heritage and your American heritage together-- that you can do that very smoothly? Or do you think that as you’re changing, you have to renegotiate the two cultures?”

*Donna:* “Well, I think that I have assimilated them well together. I think that there’s still some things that, you know, that still seem a little different for me. For example, working with a Korean colleague at work, I feel the need to speak Korean instead of English, I mean I’m not sure. That’s where you see two roles now have, what you call come together, and you’re like hmm...And this person happens to be my parents age. So, I feel like I should treat them elderly with respect. And this is what I’ve learned. This is a new thing that I’ve recently dealt with in past years. I’m like it’s work, you deal with it like work, but even that other person you can tell you’re like , I want to treat them more like Korean versus a colleague, and you know that kind of thing. And that’s just because of that whole social bond, but you know, if you’re at work, you’re at work and you speak English, and, you know, that kind of thing. But, you just can see yourself flirting towards that whole Korean thing, and say, hey, it’s not so bad if I spoke to that person in Korean, it’s not a big deal, you know, that kind of thing.”

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*Janice:* “So do you have any final thoughts or things you feel are important that we haven’t covered?”

*Donna:* “I wouldn’t say that I’ve melded both together great, I wouldn’t say I’ve melded both together bad, it’s just, you just take who you are and you go with it. And some people find fault with that, they say, well you are Korean you know, and some people say, oh, you’re not Korean. You see yourself as an individual, and you

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take the best of both, and it's not easy. I think different people have different struggles with it, that depends who you are, where you are, what kind of opportunities you have, what kind of experiences you have. So, I think it runs the gamete whether you are Korean, or Caucasian, or Icelander, or whatever. I think it all just depends on the person, because that's just what makes you a person, all those different things.

## **APPENDIX C: CONVERSATION AND THEME GUIDE**

### Individual

- 1) Tell me a little bit about yourself?
- 2) What was it like for you growing up in (geographic area) ? Describe some of your experiences.
- 3) How would you describe yourself? How have you changed or stayed the same?
- 4) What factors or persons do you feel help shape the person you are today?

### Microsystem

- 1) How would you describe your relationship with your parents when growing up? How has your relationship changed as you've gotten older?
- 2) Tell me about your experiences in school?
- 3) How do you feel about being an ethnic minority?

### Mesosystem

- 1) How would you compare your home life while growing up with other areas of your life: a) school life? b) friends? c) church life?
- 2) How would you compare/contrast your relationship between your family and peers? Church and peers?

### Exosystem

- 1) Tell me about your families immigration experience?
- 2) What type of expectations do you think your parents had for you while growing up? Now?

### Macrosystem

- 1) Describe what it is like for you being a Korean in America?
- 2) How would you compare and contrast Korean culture and American culture?
- 3) How have the Korean and American cultures affected your identity development?



- 4) Now reflect back on what we have discussed --how would you describe yourself as a Korean American? What do you see yourself first as--a Korean or an American or neither has a priority; explain.
- 5) What type of life philosophy do you follow?

## APPENDIX D: REVIEW OF QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGIES

Qualitative methods enable a researcher to investigate selected topics in depth. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), “Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researchers and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p.4). All approaches of qualitative methodology emphasize the importance of interpreting qualitative data in a way that will give a better and deeper understanding of social phenomenon or complexities. By doing so, the researcher also becomes an instrument of analysis. Hence, data collection and the process of analysis is influenced and shaped by the researcher.

There are a variety of ways to analyze qualitative data. Since qualitative data occurs and may be collected in many different forms, there is no single right way to analyze qualitative research. In order to gain a better a deeper understanding, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that researchers employ an array of strategies and methods to collect and analyze data. Some of these strategies may include taking field notes, keeping a journal of both methodology and personal inquiry on data, transcribing interviews, pictures and other visual aids, and personal and recorded observations of social interactions. There are different approaches to analyzing qualitative data. Three different methodologies widely used are Huberman and Miles’, Wolcott’s, and Strauss and Corbin’s construction of analysis.

### *Three Approaches to Analyzing Qualitative Data*

Huberman and Miles (1994) have developed a three step process for analyzing qualitative data. Huberman and Miles (1994) view coding as a means to identify meaningful data which can then be interpreted and used to draw conclusions. In their perspective, data analyzing involves the reduction or compression of data. The first step in this process is data reduction. Here, data is summed and categorized accordingly to larger themes and patterns. The second step is data display, which is a descriptive process. Here, data is presented in a visual form so that the reader and researcher will be able to draw implication of the study on larger society. The last step in this process is conclusion drawing and verification. Here, the displayed data is interpreted and explained. Huberman’s and Miles’ subscription for data analysis is very systematic where data is linked together and then identified. They acknowledge that:

“social phenomenon exist not only in the mind, but in the objective world as well, and that there are some lawful, reasonably stable relationships to be found among them. The lawfulness comes from the sequences and the regularities that link phenomenon together...it is...(their) aim to “transcend” these processes by carefully constructing explanations that can account for them in plausible ways” (p.429).

Miles and Huberman’s move for more descriptive data analysis is particularly, yet not exclusive, for inductive methods of study. Wolcott (1994) gives a different perspective of what analyzing should encompass.

Wolcott (1994) views data as being “transformed” and that transformation of data can differ pending on who is analyzing the data. Wolcott (1994) views coding as a way to validate the interpretation of the researcher. Coding is the “fact” or “the part of work that is right” in which the data is grouped into patterns that are undeniable significant (p.176). Coding then becomes a distinct process from interpretation and hence, can be drawn upon to reveal systematic relationships. Wolcott also has three categories of transforming data into meaningful data: description, analysis, and interpretation. Description involves keeping data as close to its original form as possible. “The strategy of this approach is to treat the data as fact. The underlying assumption, or hope, is that the data “speak for themselves” (p.10). Analysis involves organizing and reporting data by building or expanding on the former descriptive account. Analysis is described as being “*cautious, controlled, structured, formal, bounded, scientific, systematic, logico-deductive, grounded, methodical, objective, particularistic, carefully documented, reductionist, impassive*” (p.23). Wolcott (1994) in his book *Transforming Qualitative Data*, outlines ten strategies for data management, which overlap throughout the analysis process. They are: (1) Highlight your findings; (2) Display your findings; (3) Follow and report “systematic” fieldwork procedures; (4) Flesh out whatever analytical framework guided the data collection; (5) Identify patterned regularities in the data; (6) Compare with another case; (7) Evaluate (i.e., compare with a standard); (8) Contextualize in a broader analytical framework; (9) Critique the research processes and; (10) Propose a redesign for the study. Through careful and systematic analysis, themes and patterns will emerge from the data. Lastly, interpretation involves simply making sense out of the data. Contrary to analysis, Wolcott describes interpretation as being “*freewheeling, casual, unbounded, aesthetically satisfying, inductive, subjective, holistic, generative, systemic, impassioned*” (p.23). Interpretation is seen as a delicate process between personal opinion and insightful, meaningful inquiry. It involves not only interpreting the data, but analyzing and interpreting both the researchers’ analytical process and interpretive process. The transformation of qualitative data is not a step procedure, since each level can be done at one or in some combination and in varying degrees of one another. Unlike Miles and Huberman’s approach to data management, they are not mutually exclusive of one another. Lastly, Strauss and Corbin present data in terms that extend past description and into generating further inquiry.

Strauss and Corbin (1994) have developed analysis through what they called, “grounded theory methodology” or “constant comparative method”. They view coding as a means to break up the data in ways that will originate questions about the data and generate theories and frameworks. Here, theory may be generated from the data or the data may compare, elaborate, or modify an already established or “grounded” theory. Analysis involves both generating theory and studying a social phenomenon. This procedure is distinct from Miles and Huberman and Wolcott’s conceptualization of data management since it involves making consistent comparisons between the collected data and means of analysis.

In the current study, the researcher used grounded theory methodology. Since there has been limited research on Korean American identity development along with ethnic minority identity development within contexts, there is a need to investigate if stage model theories of identity development are appropriate for Korean Americans. Grounded theory methodology allowed the researcher to compare data collected with present theories of identity formation. Therefore,

gaining a better understanding of Korean American identity development. Moreover, grounded theory methodology facilitated generating new or modifying present theories of identity development to more appropriate measures of identity formation for Korean Americans. For further analysis description and rationale, see the *Analysis* section of the methodology chapter.

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## APPENDIX E: CODING--OPEN, AXIAL, SELECTIVE

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
<p>Open coding is defined as “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss &amp; Corbin, 1990, p.61). Three types of open coding are line-by-line, sentence and paragraph, and summarization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Line-by-line coding data is scrutinized phrase by phrase and sometimes by single words. This process is useful in generating categories and also topics to pursue in future interviews or observations.</li> <li>• Open coding done by sentence or paragraph is useful when several categories have already been identified and the researcher wants to summarize ideas or concepts around those smaller categories.</li> <li>• Open coding through summarization will involve summarizing the entire document. Here, the entire data is first conceptualized into a larger theme then analyzed for similarities or differences with other data (Strauss &amp; Corbin, 1990).</li> </ul>	<p>Axial coding is defined as “a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. This is done by utilizing a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences” (Strauss &amp; Corbin, 1990, p.96).</p> <p>Through this process categories will give way to subcategorizes, forming linked relationships.</p>	<p>Selective coding is defined as “the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development” (Strauss &amp; Corbin, 1990, p.116).</p>

## APPENDIX F: ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

I am a second generation Korean American. My parents immigrated to the United States twenty-nine years ago. After the Immigration Reform Act, the United States was more open to professionals, who have specialized skills to gain permanent visas, so my father was able to obtain visas for the entire family. My father and mother, along with my two older siblings came to the United States. My father was an engineer and had completed his studies in Korea. However, the United States presented to him a place for better opportunities, not only for himself, but also for his children. My parents left their extended families, along with a comfortable lifestyle in Korea when they decided to immigrate to the United States. Upon immigrating, my father decided to pursue a second Masters degree at a University, in order to find a professional job, even though he had already graduated from the most prestigious college in Korea. During this time, my mother had to work. In Korea, she not only had her extended family and in-laws for support, but also a nanny which helped her with household chores and child care. My mother said that in Korea, she didn't have to work. But since my father was pursuing his studies, my mother had to work as a cook in a donut shop. After my father finished his studies, he worked two jobs so that my mother could stay home with the three children. My father who had worked as a professional in Korea, was forced to work as a bus boy and janitor in order to support us. My parents told me that my father managed to find beds for us from the garbage dumps, and clothes along with toys were purchased from the Salvation Army. My parents said that churches, which provided day care services, along with social welfare programs, provided them with valuable resources necessary for survival. Just hearing about the hardships that my parents faced after immigration, humbles me. When looking back at my childhood, my parents overcame so much and gave their children all the reaps of their hard work. My father and mother scrimped and saved because they said they wanted to give me and my sisters every opportunity to succeed. My family life was very traditional. My father was the provider and my mother stayed home. Any major decisions were made by my father. Household maintenance, along with the responsibility of raising children (morally and physically) were left up to my mother. My mother I would describe as the lenient one, and my father was the last word in authority. I did not question his authority, mostly out of fear, and also because it was implicitly implied that he was the head of our family and hence, required respect. I would describe my relationship with my family was very close. My parents always stressed the importance and unity of family. They would frequently remind me that no matter what happens in my life, my family would always be there for me; People may come and go, but my family will forever be constant. I can remember, that the only time I would see the wrath of my father while growing up, was when I would fight with my siblings. It is something that I am thankful for today, since I realize that my family is exceptionally close, and I feel secure in knowing that emotional or financial support will always be available to me. Emotional closeness was not only stressed, but also physical closeness. My parents emphasized the importance of physical family closeness. My father would tell me about how he had to take care of his siblings during the Korean War. My grandfather was captured and tortured, and while he was away, my father, being the oldest son, recalls crawling across the ground looking for turnips, while planes flew by and the sounds of bombs penetrating his ears. It is a subject that he rarely discussed, but would occasionally refer to, when imprinting on me the importance of family unity. My parents were both physically and verbally very affectionate. I have always had the sense that my parents literally have poured out

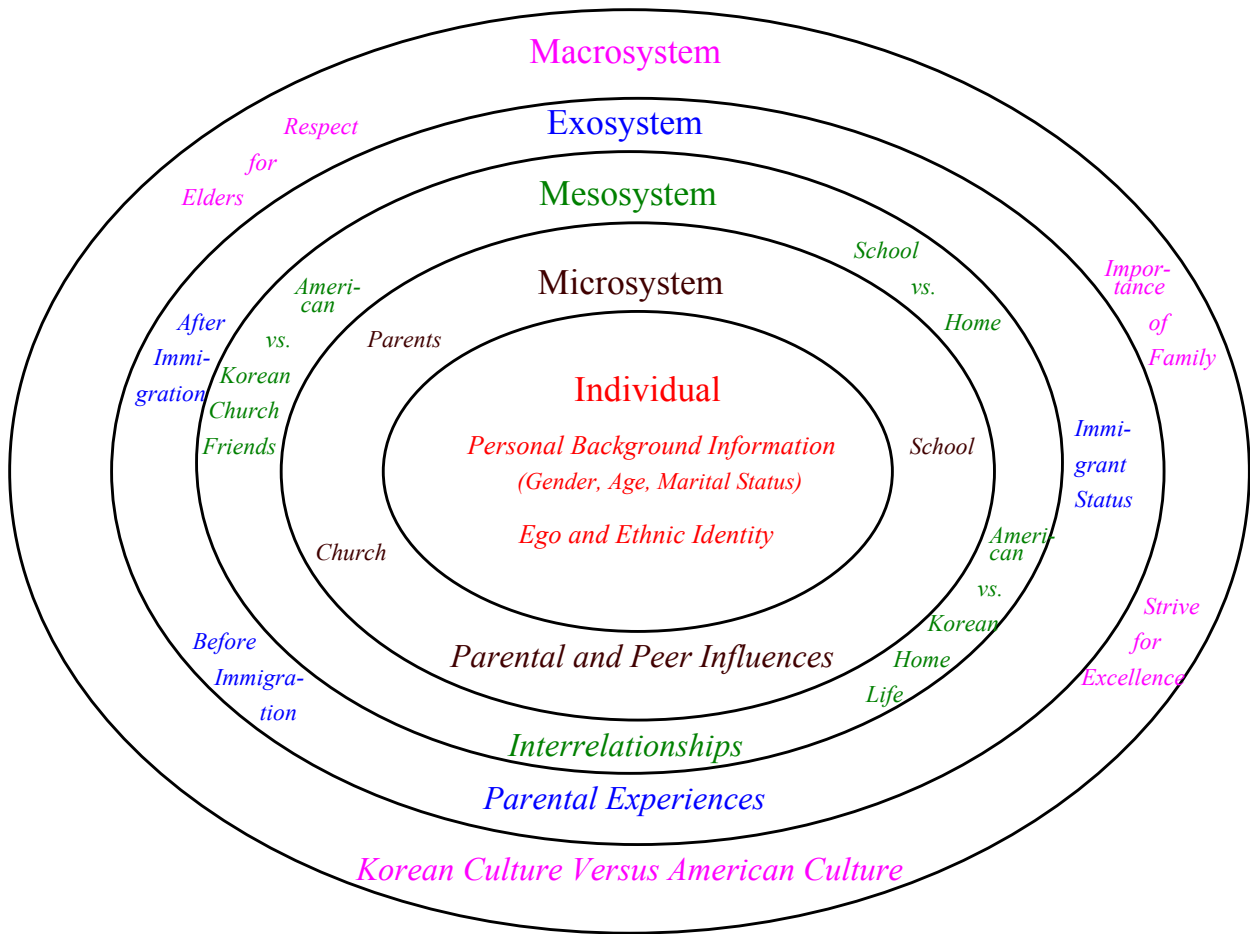
their lives for me. They did not know about stocks and mutual bonds, so my parents saved and sacrificed in order to have the financial resources to send all three of their children to college. I am in awe, when I think of how my parents were able to send three children to college, on one income, without receiving any financial aid. I feel that Korean parents live their lives through their children, and even though, I attribute many positive results from that, such as family support, often it made me feel very guilty when I would disappoint my parents. The only thing they ever pushed was educational success. My parents to this day believe that the more education you get the better off you will be in the future. However, when growing up, my parents did not make me study or restrict my social life. The area we lived in during my elementary through high school years was a very small affluent town, where I was the only Asian in school. My parents, especially my mother, wanted me to fit into my school environment, and she encouraged me to become socially popular with my peers. They were involved in my school life, and also encouraged me to pursue any activity that I wanted, along with allowing me to attend social activities, such as parties, dances, and dates. I did not feel restricted socially in any way. Even though I did not question my father's authority, he so rarely was absolute, that it never was a conflictual issue within my relationship with him. The only thing that was absolute was my attendance at a college after high school. Even though my father would verbally stress the importance to excel in any activity that I pursued, it was more from knowing how much he had excelled under struggles and hardships, that was a more significant factor in my pursuit for excellence. While growing up, I always felt that I had to work hard and always turn in the best project in school, because I had seen how my parents always gave their best. There was a time period when I did not do well in school, and I remember feeling so inadequate, not about myself, but more because I wasn't living up to my parents' expectations for me. The knowledge of their sacrifices, along with knowing that in their eyes, they live their lives for their children, made me feel dejected. Moreover, it made me feel as if I had a great responsibility to insure their happiness, since what I accomplished in my life, reflected their accomplishments. I see my parents as very different from other Koreans, in that they have always been very accepting and open to my participation, along with their personally participation in American culture. However, an ingrained strong sense of family unity and obligation has affected me greatly, in that I want to continually give back to my parents. So, gaining independence from my parents has been the biggest struggle in my life. Since the value of family is something that I admire within the Korean culture, and is something that I inherently associate with my identity, I am uncertain that it is something that I could ever achieve. I definitely see myself as Korean first, even though I know that am very Americanized. Outside of my family, I feel that I act and think more American than I do Korean. For instance, I am more individualistic than collectivistic and I believe in the equality of women outside and within the home. I also feel more comfortable around Americans than I do around Koreans, because I feel that I have experienced more similarities of the way I was raised with my American peers than with my Korean peers. However, the ties of Korean culture, along with my physical appearance make me feel that I am Korean first. The cultural background of my parents, along with an personal understanding of cultural expectations and norms makes me undeniably different from mainstream America (which I associated with being Anglo Saxon and having a multi-generational history within the United States).

Because of my personal understanding of what it means to be a Korean, I was able to relate to all the participants' narratives even though my experiences may have differed from theirs, since I fit the criterion for the study. Moreover, I could also understand what participants' meant when they used specialized terminology or made specific inferences to Korean culture, such as *Insa*, or the immense sense of responsibility to take care of your parents. In all the interviews, I was able to share my personal experiences that the participants could directly relate to, which in turn, invited them to become more open with their responses. In addition, my experiences as a Korean American, facilitated in developing interview questions and probes by enabling me to uncover or distinguish specialized concerns related to the Korean American identity formation. Lastly, since all the participants reported being able to become more intimate and connect better with other Koreans, they felt more willing to share their experiences and perceptions with me, since feelings of understanding and empathy between myself and the participants could be more readily established.

Even though I felt that many of my experiences and perceptions were dramatically different from those of the participants, the differences encouraged me to gain a deeper and more wholistic understanding of their experiences.



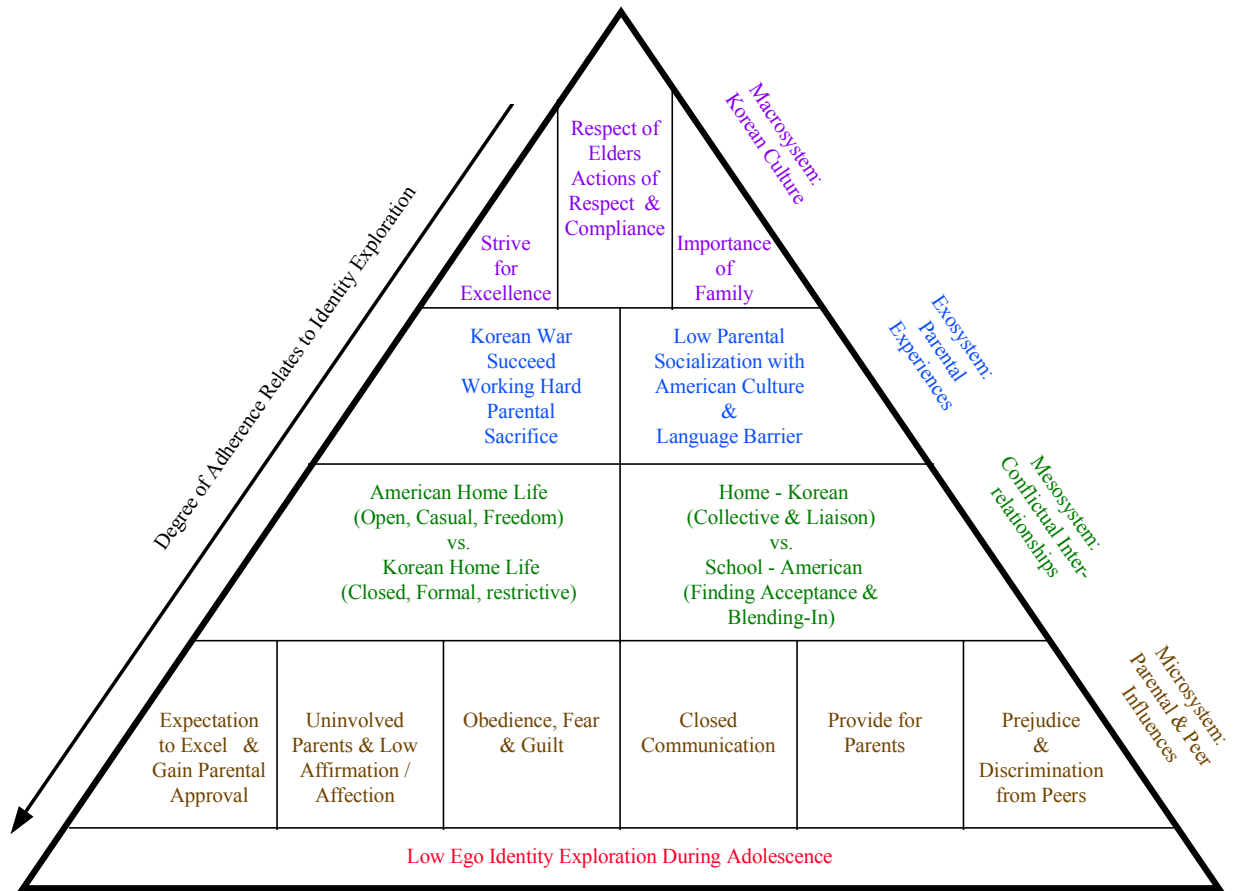
# APPENDIX G: THEMES BASED ON ECOLOGICAL MODEL



## APPENDIX H: MARCIA'S IDENTITY STATUSES

<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Diffused</b>	<b>Moratorium</b>	<b>Foreclosed</b>
<p>Identity achieved individuals have undergone an identity crisis and have identified personal and ideological commitments.</p> <p>“With respect to ideology, he seems to have reevaluated past beliefs and achieved a resolution that leaves him free to act. In general, he does not appear as if he would be overwhelmed by sudden shifts in his environment or by unexpected responsibilities.” (Marcia, 1968, p.552)</p>	<p>Identity diffused individuals are those who lack direction and commitment, regardless of whether they have experienced an identity crisis.</p> <p>“He is either uninterested in ideological matters or takes a smorgasbord approach in which one outlook seems as good to him as another and he is not averse to sampling from all” (Marcia, 1968, p.552).</p>	<p>Moratorium individuals are currently undergoing an identity crisis.</p> <p>“Issues often described as adolescent preoccupy him. Although his parents’ wishes are still important to him, he is attempting a compromise among them, society’s demands, and his own capabilities. His sometimes bewildered appearance stems from his vital concern and internal preoccupation with what occasionally appear to him to be irresolvable questions.” (Marcia, 1968, p. 552).</p>	<p>Identity foreclosed individuals, are those who have committed to personal and ideological commitments without having undergone a crisis.</p> <p>“It is difficult to tell where his parents’ goals for him leave off and where his begin. He is becoming what others have prepared or intended him to become as a child. His beliefs (or lack of them) are virtually “the faith of his fathers living still.” College experiences serve only as a confirmation of childhood beliefs. A certain rigidity characterizes his personality; one feels that if he were faced with a situation in which parental values were nonfunctional, he would feel extremely threatened” (Marcia, 1968, p.552).</p>

# APPENDIX I: EGO IDENTITY PYRAMID



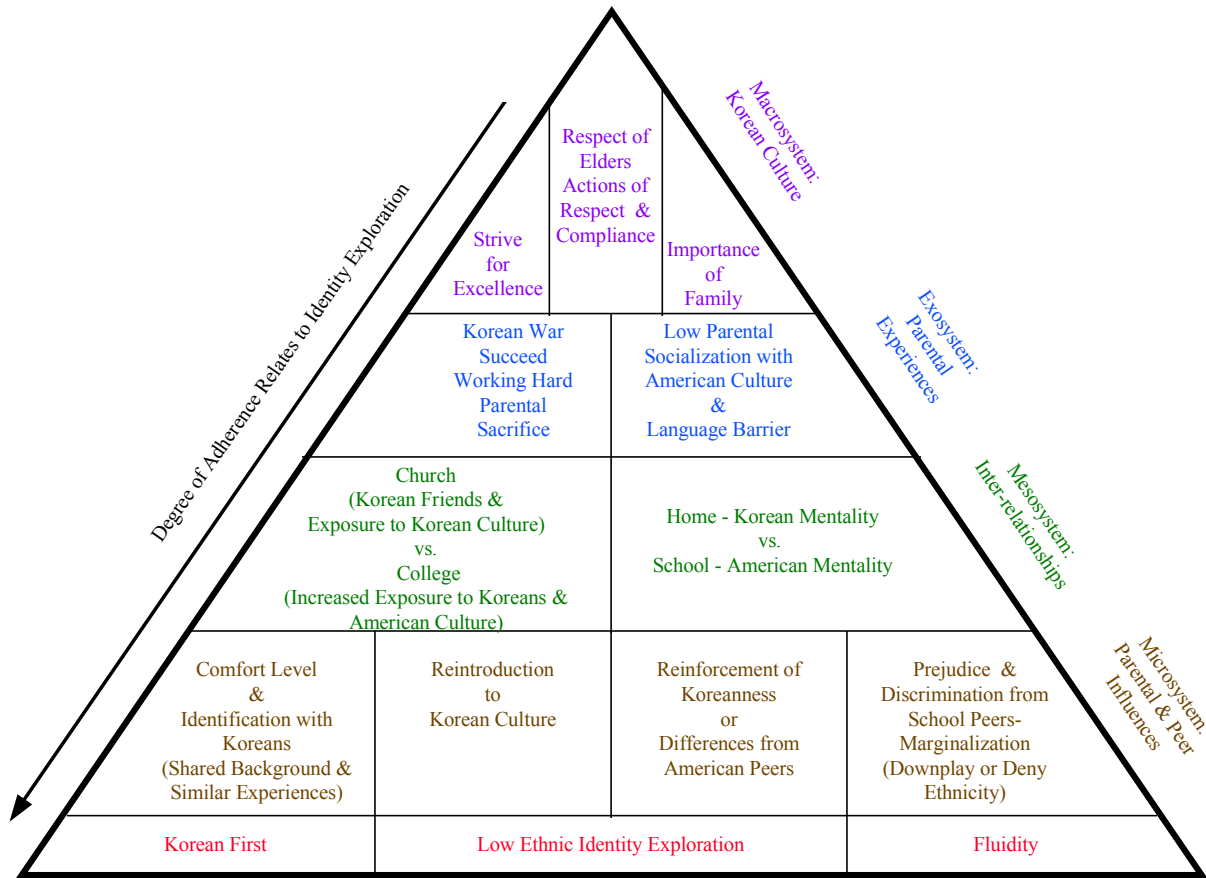
## APPENDIX J: ATKINSON, MORTON AND SUE IDENTITY STAGES

<b>Ethnic Identity Stage</b>	<b>Ethnic Identity Stage Description</b>
Conformity	Preference of the dominant culture's values over one's own cultural group.
Dissonance	Indecision and conflict about the dominant culture's system and one's own cultural system.
Resistance & Immersion	Rejection of the dominant cultural system and acceptance of one's own cultural group system.
Introspection	Questioning of both the dominant group's cultural system and one's own cultural system.
Synergistic Articulation & Awareness	Resolution in previous conflicts and confusion and the development of a cultural identity that reflects both the dominant group's cultural system and one's own group cultural system.

## APPENDIX K: PHINNEY'S ETHNIC IDENTITY STAGES

<b>Ethnic Identity Stage</b>	<b>Ethnic Identity Stage Description</b>
Diffused	Individuals who have not yet explored their ethnic identity
Foreclosed	Individuals who have made a commitment to an ethnic identity based on their parents values
Moratorium	Individuals who are still exploring their ethnic identity and have not yet committed to one
Achieved	Individuals who have explored their ethnic identity and are firmly committed

# APPENDIX L: ETHNIC IDENTITY PYRAMID



## VITA

Janice H. Im

Janice H. Im is a Korean-American born in the United States. Her family, in which she had two older siblings, are first generation immigrants. Her background served as an advantage to this study, since it was similar to those with whom she was conducting interviews. She obtained her Bachelor of Science degree, with a concentration in Family and Child Development, from Virginia Polytechnic and State University. Before returning to graduate school, Janice worked with Head Start as a teacher for four and five year olds. She obtained her Master of Science degree at Virginia Polytechnic and State University, concentrating again in Family and Child Development. She has taken graduate studies in Theoretical Foundations of Child Development, Cognitive Development: Infancy through Adolescence, Social and Emotional Development in Children, Parent-Child Interaction, Research Methods, and a Ph.D. graduate course on Qualitative Methods in Educational Research. As a part of her course work in Qualitative Methods in Educational Research, Janice conducted a mock study that entailed in-depth interviewing techniques along with analysis, and has moderated two focus groups, which also required performing analysis. Moreover, while pursuing her Master degree, Janice continued to substitute teach for both Fairfax County Public schools and a private child development center. Her past educational and work experience have helped to hone her skills as a researcher and have given her the theoretical foundations for conducting the present research, which examined Korean-American identity formation across cultural contexts.