

A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXAMINING  
INFLUENCES ON IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT FOR  
BIRACIAL ADOLESCENTS AND EMERGING ADULTS

By

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## ABSTRACT

### A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXAMINING INFLUENCES ON IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT FOR BIRACIAL ADOLESCENTS AND EMERGING ADULTS

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The number of people who identified themselves as multiracial has increased from 6.8 million in 2000 to 9 million people (or 2.9% of the total US population) in 2010, indicating a change of approximately 32% in the past decade (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2011). As multiracial individuals have rapidly increased in number, understanding their unique experiences and the influence of interracial parenting on the identity development of biracial children have become more salient. However, multicultural individuals and their families remain seriously understudied.

In order to provide some insights on this understudied population, this qualitative study focuses on Korean-White late adolescent and emerging adult children and their Korean immigrant mothers, specifically to understand: (1) how biracial individuals perceive the role of various ecological systems in helping them develop an identity and cope with the challenges they face; and (2) how mothers' unique cultural/racial background and personal characteristics impact their parenting approach including racial socialization of their biracial children.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of human development and Root's multiracial identity development model guided this study. In-depth interviews with 18 participants (9 Korean-White biracial children and 9 Korean immigrant mothers from Korean-White interracial families) yielded the findings for this study.

The data were analyzed using grounded theory methodology, and six main factors emerged as being significant in helping identity development and psychological adjustment of

biracial individuals, including (1) modifying parenting styles to better accommodate the needs of each biracial child is the most useful strategy in interracial parenting; (2) parents should be the primary facilitators in the racial socialization process of their biracial children to help them develop a healthy identity and effectively deal with race-related matters; (3) supportive peers and extended family are positively related to biracial individuals' psychological adjustment and identity development; (4) inclusive and safe school and community where diversity is valued and recognized help promote positive development of biracial individuals; (5) inherited personal traits such as phenotype, birth order, and biracial status could either positively or negatively influence the identity development of biracial individuals, however, having a positive mentality can help promote a healthy development for biracial individuals; and (6) emphasizing strengths of dual heritage through acknowledging strengths as a biracial individual, exerting efforts to convert negatives into positives, and being more open and tolerant of other races/cultures will help promote overall development of biracial individuals. Directions for future research and the limitations of this study are discussed.

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Tae-Jung,  
and my two sons, Andy and Eric.  
All of you are the joys of my life.  
I love you dearly.

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## **Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION**

As interracial marriages have sharply increased, multiracial individuals and families have become a rapidly growing segment of the U.S. population, representing one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States (Shih & Sanchez, 2009). The number of people who identified themselves as multiracial has increased from approximately 6.8 million (or 2.4% of the total US population) in 2000 to 9 million people (or 2.9% of the total US population) in 2010, indicating a change of about 32% for the past decade (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2011). Of those self-identified multiracial individuals, 0.9% of the country, or about 2.65 million Americans identified as having partial or mixed Asian heritage. In 2010, the largest four multiple-race combinations in the United States included: White and Black (1.8 million), White and Some Other Race (1.7 million), White and Asian (1.6 million), and White and American Indian and Alaska Native (1.4 million) (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2010).

As with the growth of multiracial population in the US, the number of multiracial children is growing rapidly as well. According to the 2010 U. S. Census, among all American children, the multiracial population has increased almost 50 %, to 4.2 million, making it the fastest growing youth group in the country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The National Science Academy postulated that the multiracial population could rise to 21% by the year 2050 (Leong, 2006). As posited by researchers, the United States should restructure its current concepts of race, racial identification, and racial classification because of the growing number of multiracial people who would join groups of the majority in the U.S. (Anderson, 2002; Winters & DeBose, 2003). However, notwithstanding the rapid growth in the number of multiracial individuals, little has been done to understand those multiracial individuals and families (Steward, Giordano, Goldsworthy, Stallworth, & Stevens, 1998). Furthermore, there is a particular lack of research

examining the role of family and parenting in the development of multiracial children. Thus, as scholars pointed out, further research is needed to identify the unique experiences of multiracial individuals (Miville, Constantine, Baysden, & So-Lloyd, 2005; Shih & Sanchez, 2005) as well as to recognize their entities in the society because the presence of multiracial individuals has been largely ignored.

Recent research by the Pew Hispanic Center also indicated that the out-marriage rate (i.e., percent of those marrying someone from different race or ethnicity than their own) has doubled since 1980 (Passel, Wang, & Taylor, 2010). Among all newlyweds in 2008, 31% of Asians, 26% of Hispanics, 16% of blacks, and 9% of Whites married someone whose race or ethnicity was different from their own (Passel, Wang, & Taylor, 2010). The comparatively higher rates of intermarriages among native-born Asians and Latinos showed that as these groups incorporated into the United States, they not only become receptive to intermarriages but also are perceived by Whites as suitable marriage partners (Moran, 2001). Bean and Stevens (2003) noted that by the late 1990s, the percentage of Asian or Latino wives or husbands having spouses of another race or ethnicity exceeded 30%, with the majority of them married to a White partner. Studies found that interracial marriages occur most frequently between Whites and Asians, whereas marriages between Whites and Blacks make up the lowest percentage of interracial marriages (Root, 2001; Wehrly, Kenney, & Kenney, 1999). However, the 2010 Census data showed that the largest multiple-race combination was White and Black (1.8 million or 20.4% of people who reported multiple races) followed by White and Some Other Race (1.7 million or 19.3% of people who reported multiple races), and White and Asian (1.6 million or 18% of people who reported multiple races). As indicated by the 2010 US census data, intermarriage and the interracial childrearing that accompanies these interracial unions have become significant social aspects in

the United States. Despite this rapid increase, interracial families, especially Asian-White families, have been largely neglected by researchers. Therefore, this dramatic growth calls for more practical information that can help interracial parents and also human service professional working with this population.

In addition to exploring Korean-White biracial late adolescents and emerging adults' experiences regarding racial identity development, challenges they have faced, coping strategies, relationships with various systems including parents, siblings, extended families, peers, school personnel, and community, this study also looks at parenting experiences of Korean immigrant women who are married to White men. Therefore, the goals of this study were twofold. The first goal was to look at how biracial children have perceived their parents, families, and other ecological systems as either helping or hindering them to develop a positive racial and ethnic identity. The second goal was to examine the various ways the mothers have addressed their children's biracial status and challenges they have faced while raising biracial children.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Researchers postulated that the family environment where a biracial child is raised can promote and facilitate the development of a stable and meaningful biracial identity by which there is a smooth integration of multiple identities (Rockquemore, 1998; Root, 1990, 1999). Societal, racial, and cultural factors influence interracial families and their children by impacting both the family relationship itself and the context in which they live. These varied contexts and experiences influence and form the creation of meaning for each individual family member and inform the family relationship within their family as well as larger social context. In order to address the issues derived from the relationship and various contexts, I have integrated aspects of two theories for this study: Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986) ecological systems theory of human

development and Root's (2003) multiracial identity development model. I have utilized ecological systems theory to explore various environmental contexts that may have a significant impact on interracial mothering practice and on multiracial adolescent and emerging adult development. This theory aims to understand an individual's life and daily process, but I have also used this theory to conceptually organize how multiple relationships within various systems influence interracial mothering practice and biracial adolescents and emerging adults' development. In addressing how these mothers and their multiracial children navigate various systems, one will be able to understand systemically interracial family process at relational levels as well. Employing ecological systems theory may enable us to understand interracial families, particularly mothers and their multiracial children, from multiple stances to gain a holistic perspective on their lives from various relationships (e.g., within family, community, school, and society).

Root's (2003) multiracial identity development model based on an ecological approach has been used to assess the overall well-being and adjustment of multiracial family and individuals within various systems. This framework includes identity models and identity development over the lifespan. Therefore, it will specifically address (interracial) family dynamics and social contexts related to multiracial adolescents and emerging adults' identity development.

### **Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development**

Research has indicated that there are numerous variables in the ecosystem that need to be taken into account to fully understand biracial individuals' life experience and their quality of life (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Multiracial identity studies employing ecological lens have found that identities can change across contexts, vary within a family system, and change



throughout the life course (e.g., Renn, 2003; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Root, 1998). Environmental contexts including families, extended families, friends, schools, and neighborhoods, may have a great impact on biracial individuals' development, specifically on their mental health, self-esteem, academic performance, and risk behaviors. For example, extended families are likely to have an important influence on the biracial children's parents' personal characteristics and, consequently, how they raise their children.

Peers and friends are known as significant factors that either enhance or hinder the growth of a secured mixed-race identity (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004). Furthermore, Garcia Coll and colleagues (1996) found that experiences of racism and discrimination and the adaptive culture context synergistically impact family and individual characteristics and ultimately minority children's experiences and development. The type of friendship that biracial children have is determined primarily by the contexts of their social environments, such as neighborhood and school locations. One theoretical framework that will help understand these contextual effects is Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory of human development, which postulates that human development is driven by proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) within interconnected systems. Bronfenbrenner (1994) discussed his ecological models of human development as follows,

In order to understand human development, one must consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. This system is composed of five socially organized subsystems that help support and guide human growth. They range from the microsystem, which refers to the relationship between a developing person and the immediate environment, such as school and family, to the macrosystem, which refers to institutional patterns of culture, such as the economy, customs, and bodies of knowledge (p. 37).

**Microsystem.** Among all settings in the ecological model, the microsystem is thought to be the most important because the majority of the proximal processes that shape development occur at this level (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The microsystem is the immediate environment where the developing person (e.g., a child) resides, including settings such as immediate family, school, and peer group. Bronfenbrenner (1994) noted that as long as increased numbers in a child's micro-system mean more enduring reciprocal relationships, increasing the size of the system will enhance child development in a positive way. As Swick (2004) postulated, the caring relationships between a child and parents (and other close caregivers) could help promote a healthy personality.

**Mesosystem.** According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), the mesosystem, a system of microsystems, consists of the linkages and processes occurring between two or more settings including the developing individual, such as the relations between home and school, school and workplace. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) posited, the most crucial influence of mesosystems is that they help connect two or more systems where child, parent, and family live. The interactions between a number of overlapping ecosystems impact a developing individual significantly (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), and these interpersonal interactions are the element of the mesosystem in which the developing individual actively participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The different environments and structure within those environments do not influence human development independently, and there is a consistent interaction between those environments and structures that influences the child's development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

**Exosystem.** As Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1994) claimed, the exosystem is similar to the mesosystem in that the system consists of the linkages and processes taking place between two

or more settings. The quality of interrelationships among various settings is influenced by forces in which the child does not participate, but which have a direct impact on parents and other adults who interact with the child. For example, although the child does not participate in the activities held in his/her parents' workplace, interpersonal interactions in a parent's workplace might influence parent-child interactions in the family microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

**Macrosystem.** As described by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1994), macrosystem is the larger cultural context, including issues of cultural values and expectations. Macrosystems do not refer to specific contexts of influence, but to the ideological components of the society that underlie the form and content of interactions within more proximal settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). It provides the broad ideological and organizational patterns within which the meso- and exo-systems reflect the ecology of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

**Chronosystem.** The final system, chronosystem includes change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the developing individual but also of the environment in which that person lives, e.g., changes over the life course in family structure, place of residence, socioeconomic status, employment, cross-generation relationships, or the degree of individual's ability in everyday life (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1995) ecological systems theory of human development has been utilized to describe the development of children by looking at the environmental factors and external influences that aid in the positive outcome of children. Thus, using the Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework, this study sought to examine the links among interracial parenting practice, family relationship, psychological adjustment and identity development of

biracial individuals in various systems surrounding them, such as families, peer groups, schools, religious institution, and neighborhood. Through this examination, I specifically aimed to highlight the mechanisms by which parents, family structural characteristics, and other support systems exert their influence on biracial adolescents and emerging adults' positive sense of identity and psychological well-being. Relationships within families are not linear and may be better understood from an ecological perspective. For example, social support from family and exposure to diversity has been found to greatly influence an individuals' choice to identify themselves as part of the minority or majority group (Poston, 1990).

### **Root's Ecological Model of Multiracial Identity Development**

In addition to Bronfenbrenner's model, this study also employed Maria Root's (2003) multiracial identity development model based on an ecological approach because it appears to provide the most useful framework through which to assess the overall well-being and adjustment of multiracial family and individuals within various systems introduced in the above Bronfenbrenner's theory.

Root's framework includes identity models and identity development over the lifespan. Root's (2003) ecological approach appears to recognize the ecological factors that impact identity development and psychological adjustment of multiracial individuals by closely looking at the complex interaction of the immediate environments including family, peers, the school environment, the local community as well as broader context including socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, sociopolitical contexts, geographical and generational history. Furthermore, Root's approach also encompasses multiracial individuals' identity development process across the lifespan and their flexible/situational identity choices.

Root (2003) proposed five strategies for possible healthy identity resolutions: (1) acceptance of the identity society assigns; (2) identification with a mixed identity (i.e., both ethnic/racial groups; (3) identification with a single ethnic/racial group; (4) identification as a new racial group (e.g., multiethnic/ multiracial group); and (5) identification as White. As Root (1992) posited, the resolution of multiple heritages cannot be understood without considering family and community influences, sociohistorical factors, and political context. Unlike previous multiracial identity concepts that did not include all of the ecological factors, Root (1999, 2003) attempted to widen the concept of multiracial identity through incorporating factors such as inherited influences (e.g., phenotype, language, name), traits (e.g., social and coping skills, temperament), social interactions inside the community (e.g., school/work, peers, community), various identity choices, thus designing a more comprehensive ecological model that consists of various elements of micro and macro system as they impact the development of multiracial individuals throughout their lifespan.

Root (1990) suggested that supportive family, exposure to mixed race peers, and a diverse community can mediate the effects of marginalization. Rockquemore and Brusma (2004) also indicated that the multi-interdependent contexts biracial individuals are placed in could include the parental system, neighborhood, peers, extended family, school, friends and the larger socio-cultural system. Each of these systems may, directly and indirectly, be influenced by the broader systems, which may, in turn, impact the experience of being a biracial individual. Having adequate understanding of each of these different systems is not only vital to better grip of the experience of biracial individuals, but also to eventually learn what factors contribute to building a healthy sense of identity and promoting psychological adjustment.

The above two approaches, (i.e., Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Root's multiracial development theory) served as useful frameworks for examining a number of environmental factors that can impact psychological adjustment as well as health and behavior problems in this specific population.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There were several reasons for conducting this research. First, there is a lack of research in understanding how Asian-White individuals successfully negotiate the process of developing their identity and how various systems facilitate or hinder this process. Thus, this study sought to provide insight into the lives of Korean-White biracial adolescent and emerging adult children and also the lives of their monoracial Korean immigrant mothers in terms of biracial identity development and psychological adjustment.

Second, there is a lack of research on interracial parenting, interracial family dynamics, and how these factors influence the development of multiracial children. Although considerable research has been devoted to examining the formation of multiracial individuals' racial identity and various issues surrounding them as they interact with people from different racial groups in their sociocultural environment, much less attention has been paid to assessing the impacts of family relationships and parenting practices in interracial families have on the psychological adjustment and well-being of biracial/multiracial children.

Third, there is a paucity of literature on Asian-White interracial families. Most studies on the multiracial population have focused on Black-White biracial individuals and little is known about biracial Asian-White identity development in general and even less is known about how biracial Asian-White adolescents and emerging adults experience the process of identity development in the family, and how it is related to their overall development outcome. Thus,

there exist gaps in what is known about the lived experiences of biracial Asian-White individuals, what strategies they employ to facilitate their own identity development, how family interactions (specifically monoracial immigrant mother-biracial child relationships) influences their overall development.

Fourth, there is a lack of research focusing on monoracial Asian mothers' racial socialization for their multiracial children. Racial socialization has been defined by Rotherman and Phinney (1987b) as the developmental processes by which children gain the values and attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of an ethnic group, and come to regard themselves and others as members of the group. Research has suggested that it is through interactions with others, especially with parents that biracial youth could gain insight associated with their racial heritage and their respective position within society (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). However, the relationship between racial socialization and the components of racial identity in multiracial youth has not been thoroughly explored; specifically there is a dearth of research exploring the relationship between Asian mothers' racial socialization for their multiracial children and the racial and ethnic identity development in multiracial children. As these multiracial youth struggle to fit into their families, communities, and society, parents are also faced with the unique tasks of promoting their children's ability to establish a mixed race identity based on positive self-concept and appreciation of their multiracial heritage (Crawford & Alaggia, 2008). Therefore, an in-depth study on Korean mothers' interracial parenting practice including racial socialization of their children will provide much needed information.

Fifth, existing literature on multiracial individuals has emphasized the negative aspects of being multiracial. This study focused on finding the positive aspects of interracial families and multiracial individuals, i.e., this study examined what supports have been available for

multiracial individuals and what social supports should be provided for facilitating the development of an overall positive identity in multiracial adolescent and emerging adults in Asian-White interracial families.

Overall, by investigating parent-child interactions and interracial parenting that promote racial identity of biracial adolescents and emerging adults, I attempted to gain further insight into other systems that help promote racial identity at a developmental period when multiracial individuals experience with racial discrimination generally increase. The information derived from this study will add to the limited literature that can be accessed by researchers, mental health practitioners, educators, and policymakers as well as interracial families and multiracial individuals.

### **Definition of the Key Terms**

The following is the list of definitions of terms that are utilized in this study.

- The terms biracial, multiracial, and mixed race are used to refer to a person whose parents are from socially distinct racial groups or two or more socially distinct racial heritages (Herring, 1995; Laszloffy, 2005; Root, 1992).
- Biracial is defined as an individual who has parents who are from two different racial or ethnic groups (Root, 1992). In this study, I focused specifically on biracial individuals born of one Korean parent and one White parent. However, the term multiracial and biracial will be interchangeably used throughout this study.
- “Hapa” or Asian-White individuals are defined as those of mixed racial heritage with partial roots in Asian and/or Pacific Islander ancestry (Fulbeck, 2006).
- Monoracial would indicate only one known or accepted racial heritage for both parents and within a family (i.e., Black *or* White); biracial refers to individuals



whose parents are from two distinct federally designated racial categories; and multiracial indicates individuals from two or more racial categories (Renn, 2003).

- Race of an individual is determined by phenotypic characteristics such as skin color, hair type and other physical features. However, this category is controversial since it depends on biological differences and society's generalized ideas on what is believed to be the characteristics of each race (American Psychological Association, 2002).
- Culture is an individual's belief system and values, including various identities such as nationality, religion and family country of origin. Socioeconomic, historical, and political factors also influence culture (American Psychological Association, 2002).
- Racial identity refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group (Helms, 1990).
- Racial identity development refers to the process of racial identity development that occurs as a child accepts and rejects various aspects of the racial identity group to which he or she has chosen to belong (Wardle, 1991). Racial identity development is also defined as the development of pride in one's racial and cultural identity (Gibbs & Moskowitz-Sweet, 1991).
- Ethnic identity refers to one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership (Phinney, 1990).
- Ethnic socialization refers to the developmental processes by which children acquire the behaviors, perceptions, values, and attitudes of an ethnic group, and come to see themselves and others as members of such groups (Rotheram & Phinney, 1987a).

- The term “interracial marriage” falls under the larger category of “intermarriage,” which encompasses interracial, intercultural, interethnic and interfaith unions, all of which refer to the marriage between individuals of a different subgroup (Hwang, Saenz, & Aguirre, 1997).
- Miscegenation refers to race mixing in intimate dating and sexual relationships. Anti-miscegenation is a term used to mean opposition to intermarriage or race mixing.
- 1.5-generation (or 1.5G) has been used to describe Asian Americans who immigrated to the United States as a child or an adolescent (Hurh, 1990; Lee & Cynn, 1991; Rumbaut & Ima, 1988), whereas second-generation Asian Americans refer to individuals who were born in the United States.

Although many of these terms are familiar, it is crucial to ensure consistency and a clear understanding of these terms as they appear throughout this study.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The intent of this proposed study was to: (1) examine strategies that biracial participants have employed to facilitate and negotiate the difficulties they encountered due to their biracial status in the society as well as factors that promote their identity development by looking closely at the interactions between the biracial individuals and various ecological systems surrounding them; and (2) explore the lived experiences of Korean mothers’ interracial parenting, specifically focusing on family dynamic between parents and the child, racial socialization of their child, and how the family interactions have impacted on the formation of their biracial children’s identity as well as on the children’s psychological well-being. Through in-depth interviews with mother-child dyad from Korean-White interracial families, this study examined the strategies parents employ to help promote a healthy sense of identity in their biracial children and the ways biracial

adolescent and emerging adult children respond to or negotiate race-related stress and the clinical implications of these responses and coping strategies for their overall health outcomes.

### **Research Questions**

The two overarching research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. How do biracial adolescents and emerging adults perceive to be the role of various ecological systems (e.g., mother, father, extended family, peers, school, neighborhood, and community) in helping them develop an identity and cope with the challenges they face?
2. How do the mothers' unique cultural/racial background and personal characteristics impact their interracial parenting approach including racial socialization of their children?

### **Significance of the Study**

Despite the significant growth, Asian-White interracial families are least studied and most poorly understood racial group in the United States. As introduced earlier, there has been a significant increase in the number of Asian-White interracial families, and the likelihood is that the number will continue to increase. Even in the existing literature on Asian-White biracial population, the main focus has been on the biracial individuals and their racial identity development. There is a dearth of research that looks closely at the other domains related to biracial people's experiences with their family (e.g., family interactions and interracial parenting practice) and other systems (e.g., extended family, friends, school, neighborhood, religious institution, and community). This study was designed to explore those unique factors and dynamics within this relational context and to understand it from the ecological points of view. It was the intention of this study to benefit multiracial individuals and families, the field of family

studies, and human services professionals working with this specific population. Exploring the strategies interracial parents and their biracial children have employed to deal with a variety of challenges will help us better understand interracial families and biracial children. The findings from this study will also add to the existing knowledge of issues associated with multiracial population.

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

This chapter is a review of relevant literature in the areas of racial identity, multiracial individuals' psychological well-being, and racial attitudes towards this population. This literature review also provides insight into the complex social positioning and experiences of interracial couples and their multiracial children.

### **Interracial Marriages and Multiracial Individuals**

According to Wehrly, Kenney, and Kenney (1999), the key factor that hinders the process of acceptance of multiculturalism or mixed relations in the United States originated from the historical relationship between Blacks and Whites. Multiracial individuals have been influenced by the insidious use of the “one-drop-rule”, and laws outlawing interracial marriages, among other things (Baysden, So-Lloyd, Miville, & Constantine, 2005; Root, 1992). The one-drop rule mandated that any drop of Black blood in the mixed marital union between Black and White would downgrade a mixed-race child to the racial group of the lower-status parent (Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). The years between 1660 and 1849 were regarded as a critical period that the anti-miscegenation laws and the concept of hypodescendancy (“one-drop-rule”) were conceived setting the stage for the relations between the Whites and Blacks (Wehrly, Kenney, & Kenney, 1999). There appears to be an unrelenting belief implying that it is “unnatural to mix the races” and “that intermarriage ‘lowers’ the biological superiority of the White race” (Nakashima, 1992, p. 165). Root’s (1996) statement below shows people’s perception regarding interracial relationships in general:

Everyone who enters into an interracial relationship or is born of racially different heritages is conscripted into a quiet revolution. People who voluntarily cross the border are often viewed in such strong terms as “race traitors,” a sure sign that they have

unwittingly created an emotional/psychic earthquake with emotional reverberations. They have refused to confirm the reality predicted on a belief in racial immutability and segregation at the most intimate level. Their resistance suggests that another reality exists (pp.10-11).

The anti-miscegenation law -- the legal prohibition of interracial marriage -- was only a tool used by the government to ensure the hierarchical and superior status of Whites and to maintain their political and economical privileges over African Americans and Native Americans (Frankenberg, 1995). Most states in the United States enforced anti-miscegenation laws to prohibit interracial marriage until a significant shift occurred in 1967 when the United States Supreme Court unanimously ruled in *Loving v. Virginia* that anti-miscegenation laws are unconstitutional (Loving, 1967). Ever since these anti-miscegenation laws were abolished, the number of children born to parents of different races has grown steadily (Suzuki-Crumly & Hyers, 2004), as well as interaction among the races at school and in the workplace and acceptance of interracial marriage by Americans has increased (Gallagher, 2006; Kouri, 2003; Loving, 1967). As a result, interracial marriages have increased from 300,000 to 1.4 million in the past three decades (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2004). The number of babies born of mixed-race has grown 26 times faster than any other group (Jones & Smith, 2001). Advocates for multiracial people in the mid-1990s proposed an alternative racial designation by seeking to have the category “multiracial” added as a legitimate racial designation (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2008).

As discussed, racial mixing is not a new phenomenon in the U.S. (Morning, 2003; Rockquemore, Brunnsma, & Delgado, 2009), however, the significant increase in the number of multiracial individuals and the increased visibility of multiracial people in the media have encouraged many people to claim membership in more than one racial group (Rockquemore,

Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). One thing that is notable is that interracial marriages are uneven across racial groups, and differences can be partly explained by racial differences in educational attainment, which is positively related to interracial marriage (Qian, 1997). As studies indicated, educational attainment, a measure of socioeconomic status, is a strong predictor of minority intermarriage with Whites (Batson, Qian, & Lichter, 2006; Rosenfeld, 2005). According to Farley (1996), Asian Americans with greater socioeconomic status than other racial minorities may have greater levels of interracial marriage with Whites than do other racial minorities. In a similar vein, researchers found that native-born Hispanics and Asian Americans with high levels of educational attainment may have continued to experience high rates of intermarriages and marital assimilation, just as White ethnic immigrants did in the past (Alba & Nee, 2003; Sassler, 2005). Xie and Goyette (2004) also found that among Asian Americans, high intermarriage rates with Whites could be partly explained by disproportionately more Asian Americans having college degrees. These factors that may partly influence the formation of Asian-White families were taken into consideration in this study.

### **Biracial/Multiracial Identity Development**

Poston (2001) regarded racial identity as “pride” (p.152) in one’s race. In a discussion of the development of racial identity, Tatum (1997) defined racial identity development as the “process of defining for oneself the personal significance and social meaning of belonging to a particular racial group” (p.16). According to Root (1992), the identity development process of biracial individual is complex, evolves over time, and changes contextually. In addition, as Root (1990, 1992) pointed out, the resolution of multiracial heritages cannot be understood without taking account of sociohistorical factors, political context, and family and community influences. Studies noted that factors that have been associated with multiracial identity development in

college students include gender, social class, family status, age, spirituality, social awareness and orientation, and geographical region (Renn, 2003; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002; Root, 1998, 2003; Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007, Wallace, 2003; Wijeyesinghe, 2001). According to Renn (2008), the first researchers who publish models for the development of healthy biracial identity were Poston (1990) and Root (1990), meaning that until the 1990s, biracial and multiracial identity models did not appear in the United States. The following section discusses the studies of several biracial/multiracial identity theorists.

**Studies of biracial/multiracial identity development.** Self-identification of one's racial heritage is varied among biracial individuals. The process of developing a racial identity usually begins during adolescence and continues until the early to mid-twenties (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Root, 1992). As Rollins (2002) indicated, biracial people identify as monoracial minorities, as monoracial Whites, or as biracial (which includes numerous labels such as mixed and multiracial), whereas some individuals totally reject racial classifications and refer to themselves as human. Studies also found that mixed-race individuals chose a variety of racial identities: biracial, multiracial, monoracial, or variable depending on the social context (Brunnsma, 2006; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2002).

In addition to the social context, physical appearances are found to be influential in deciding each individual's identity. For example, researchers have found that how a multiracial individual looks--skin tone, hair texture and color, eye and nose shape, and so forth -- strongly influences one's identity (Renn, 2003; Root, 2003; Wallace, 2003; Wijeyesinghe, 2001). Regardless of the social context and physical appearance, several researchers contended that the end product of the identity of mixed-race individuals is a matter of personal choice (Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2004; Williams, 1999). There is evidence that multiracial identity



development can be a complicated and painful process (Brandshaw, 1992; Gibbs, 1998; Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). In a study examining multiracial individuals' experiences, Vivero and Jenkins (1999) noted that multiracial individuals struggle with incorporating their multiracial identity because they are encountered with "cultural homelessness," meaning that the experiences of multiracial individuals do not belong to any specific ethnic or cultural reference group. As noted by researchers, building a positive ethnic identity is regarded as a major challenge for ethnic minority youths (Deters, 1997; Gibbs & Moskowitz-Sweet, 1991). Due to their multiple heritages, it is posited that multiracial youths may have greater difficulty negotiating the challenges of race and ethnic identity than monoracial ethnic minority youths (Gibbs, 1989; Gibbs & Moskowitz-Sweet, 1991).

The development of a healthy identity is the principal developmental milestone during adolescence (Erikson, 1968). Erickson's model is crucial for postulating identity development throughout the individuals' life cycle, and not as reaching to a certain static endpoint. He introduced eight physical, emotional and psychological stages of development and related specific issues, or developmental work or tasks, to each stage (Erikson, 1968). During the first stage (i.e., infancy), the essential conflict is trust versus mistrust in which an infant needs maximum comfort with minimal uncertainty to trust oneself, others, and the environment. The second stage involves toddlers, and their essential conflict is autonomy versus shame and doubt. The third stage involving preschoolers focuses on their essential conflicts (initiative vs. guilt). The fourth stage surrounding school-age children includes industry versus inferiority. The fifth stage involves adolescents with the conflicts of identity and role confusion. The sixth stage which emerging adults are at includes the conflicts of intimacy and isolation. The seventh stage surrounding middle-age adults includes the conflicts of generativity and stagnation. The last

stage for the older adults includes integrity versus despair. Among the above eight stages, the fifth stage involving adolescents is one of the most complicated and conflicted stages of an individual's life that is also central to the identity development process. As Erickson (1968) claimed, the important accomplishment of this stage is the establishment of one's sense of identity, and this theory will provide a firm basis for emphasizing on adolescence in the process of identity development. Some biracial/multiracial identity development theories have been also based on Erickson's developmental stage model, such as Jackson's Black identity development (BID) which is a racial identity development (RID) model (Jackson, 2001). The BID consists of five developmental stages: (1) naïve; (2) acceptance, passive and active; (3) resistance, passive and active; (4) redefinition; and (5) internalization (Jackson, 2001, pp. 15-16).

Identity theories of monoracial Asian American began to appear from the early 1970s (Sue & Sue, 1971), whereas biracial and mixed-race identity theories involving Asian American individuals did not come out until the 1990s (Kich, 1992; Poston, 1990). Although there have been no Asian-White multicultural identity development models developed, there are multiracial models drawing on Asian-White individuals that could be applied to the broader multiracial community. In the biracial identity model developed on Japanese-White individuals, Kich (1992) discussed "For a person who is biracial, a positive expression of that reality is the integration and assertion of a biracial identity" (p. 304). Kich's model is an ethnic identity model based on the philosophy that identity occurs in states throughout the lifetime with a desired endpoint. There are three stages in this model. The first stage, Awareness of Differentness and Dissonance, describes the experience of realizing that one is a member of more than one group, but is not quite a member of either monoracial category. This stage usually starts around ages 3 and ends around 10. Most biracial individuals in this period experience some form of racism due to their

differentness, making the experience of being different painful at times. The second stage, Struggle for Acceptance, usually starts around age of 8 years old and goes through late adolescence and emerging adulthood. Biracial individuals in this stage try to build friendships and belong to various social groups, and they start to distance themselves from their parents and realize that membership to an interracial relationship is different from being multiracial. They may start researching both parts of their identity, such as family history, the history of multiracial people, and the limits of rigid racial categories. The final stage, Self-Acceptance and Assertion of an Interracial Identity, usually begins towards the end of high school and marks by multiracial individuals choosing their own labels to define themselves. The multiracial individuals in this stage are more secure and confident with their multiraciality because they “generally have come to value their identity as something constructed out of the relationship between personal experiences and social meanings of ethnicity, race, and group membership” (p. 316). This model takes account of the fact that this stage is an “ongoing and unfinished process” (p. 316). Another study conducted on Asian-White individuals demonstrated that multiracial identity development is different from monoracial identity development process. In an ethnographic study, Standen (1996) found that Korean-White individuals have two different levels of ethnic identities: micro level and macro level ethnic identities. The micro level identities or private and personal identities tend to be more fluid, in that they are not “static or confined to a particular definition. Rather, it changes with each situation, depending upon specific elements” (p. 254). On the other hand, macro level identities that are expressed to others and dominant society tend to be less fluid. Korean-White individuals are limited in labels, as they are confined in a society where individuals are categorized in rigid and outdated racial categories (Standen, 1996).

## **Challenges Biracial/Multiracial Adolescents Face**

Researchers found that biracial individuals tend to experience greater challenges to integrating their cultural identifications and memberships resulting from their dual racial heritage when compared to monoracial individuals (Jacobs, 1992; Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson, & Harris, 1993; Root, 1996). As indicated by a number of researchers, achieving a racial identity is the most common challenge faced by biracial youth (Gibbs & Hines, 1992; Kerwin et al., 1993; Root, 1996, 2003, 2004; Wehrly, 1996). As noted by a number of scholars, the development of a healthy identity is particularly complex and difficult process (Brown, 1990; Bryant & Morrison, 1991; Gibbs, 1987; Nishimura, 1995). The racial identity of biracial youth is often presumed to be ambiguous (Root, 1996). According to Stonequist (1937), the racial ambiguity inherent in being biracial posed problems for normal identity development and adjustment. Multiracial individuals are complex and somewhat ambiguous, and within the description of the three-tiered system, the privileged category of Whites includes some multiracials, while the intermediate category of honorary Whites includes most multiracials (Bonilla-Silva, 2002).

As biracial youth enter adolescence, they should synthesize their earlier identification into a continuous personal identity and positive racial identity (Herring, 1995). Bradshaw (1992) identified the “uniqueness” multiracial individuals may experience as contributing to feelings of being an outsider and not belonging to any group.

Gibbs (1987) maintained that multiracial individuals may have trouble identifying with their parents and peers due to the inherent ambiguity and uncertainty of their identity. Individuals may learn from their families to identify themselves as biracial, but they may not be perceived as such in school. In a later study, Gibbs (1998) pointed out that multiracial persons struggle or fail to successfully integrate their multiracial identity (Gibbs, 1998). Shih and Sanchez (2005) found

that mismatch in the messages received from each parent, or from family versus community members, can cause some conflict for mixed-race individuals. Nakashima (1992) also claimed that the mismatch between individuals' private self-identification and the ones assigned by the society can cause some tension for mixed-race individuals.

Mixed-heritage people are often expected to experience confusion about their racial or ethnic identity that may lead to the development of emotional problems, such as low-self-esteem, and a variety of other psychological or behavioral problems (Gibbs, 1987; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004). Research has also found that multiracial youth are at greater risk than their monoracial peers to use substances, engage in violent behaviors, and struggle with self-esteem due to stressors related to navigating a multifaceted identity in a monoracial focused society (Choi, Harachi, Gillmore, & Catalano, 2006; Samuels, 2009). In a quantitative study on adolescents using data from a national survey, Cooney and Radina (2000) found that both male and female multiracial adolescents reported higher levels of depression than White male and female adolescents. Challenges that multiracial individuals must face may have caused these higher levels of depression (Cooney & Radina, 2000). Studies concluded that many mixed-heritage children feel torn and forced to make a single declaration of their racial or ethnic identity (Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995; Lee, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Tizard & Phoenix, 1995).

Researchers have noted that recurring questions and concerns over one's racial heritage and identity can induce feelings of embarrassment, shame, and confusion, especially for multiracial people who may have conflicting views about parts of their racial heritage or who are challenged to identify more with one of their racial heritage than another (Bowles, 1993; Okun, 1996; Wijeyesinghe, 2001). A study involving 120 school counselors in an urban school district,

in the mid-southern area of the United States, found that biracial students faced greater difficulty with peer acceptance than their monoracial counterparts (Nishimura & Bol, 1997). Stonequist (1937) further claimed that biracial individuals developed a “marginalized” identity characterized as a negative state of being. Gibbs (1987) also noted that multiracial adolescents encounter a variety of clinical issues and problems including identity confusion, self-hatred, substance abuse, suicide, delinquency, alienation, denial of self, gender identity confusion, and feelings of guilt and disloyalty. In line with Choi and colleagues’ (2006) claim, these findings seem to support the notion that multiracial individuals may be vulnerable to more problems than parents, teachers, or professionals working with these individuals realize.

In addition to the problems associated with identity confusion, like other minorities in the US, multiracial individuals face racism, discrimination, and prejudice. Brown (2008) claimed that children whose parents give information about discrimination without overemphasizing it “have higher grades, greater self-efficacy, and less depression than children whose parents do not discuss discrimination” (p. 147). Therefore, in order to lessen the negative impact of discrimination on multiracial children, it is indispensable for parents to provide their children information on discrimination and also about their racial and ethnic groups (Brown, 2008). Experiences with discrimination are difficult to deal with at any age, but specifically for adolescents, they are often ill-equipped to negotiate the complexity of such issues and may be overwhelmed by the emotions elicited by such harsh experiences. The societal racism often causes a greater disempowerment in biracial individuals by triggering the feelings of fear and shame, causing them to feel that they are not as entitled as a “full-blooded” individual (Fukuyama, 1999, p. 14). Therefore, discriminatory experiences multiracial adolescents encounter may cause more behavioral problems and mental health issues in these adolescents.

For example, in a recent national study, Udry, Li, and Hederickson-Smith (2003) have found more problematic psychological adjustment, behavior, and health characteristics for multiracial adolescents when compared with their monoracial counterparts. The multiracial adolescents in the study, in comparison to their monoracial counterparts, reported higher levels of depression and more health-related problems, including sleep problems, skin problems, headaches, aches/pains, and greater levels of smoking and drinking. Other studies have also found numerous issues facing mixed race youth and their families, including stigmatization, alienation from their racial roots, racism and divided loyalties (Kich, 1992; Root, 1990). Similarly, Milan and Keiley (2000) compared biracial and White adolescents and found that biracial reported having issues related to delinquency, school problems, and self-esteem problems. A number of studies also found that multiracial youth are at greater risk than their monoracial peers to use substances, engage in violent behaviors, and struggles with self-esteem (Bolland, Bryant, Lian, McCallum, Vazsonyi, & Barth, 2007; Choi, Harachi, Gillmore, & Catalano, 2006; Jackson & LeCroy, 2009).

It is pertinent to note that, however, the results of various studies have been diverse and inconsistent regarding the correlation between being biracial and self-esteem. Some of these findings suggested that biracial adolescents tended to have higher self-esteem than their monoracial counterparts, whereas others reported lower self-esteem or no significant differences at all. For example, in a study utilizing a large representative sample, Bracey, Bámaca, and Umaña-Taylor (2004) discovered significant differences between biracial and monoracial adolescents regarding their self-esteem. From their findings, it was concluded that biracial adolescents had significantly lower self-esteem than Black adolescents and, yet, when compared to the Asian adolescents, they had a significantly higher self-esteem.

In addition to the difficulties caused by their dual heritages, multiracial individuals and their racial identities are rarely recognized as a crucial topic of diversity within the educational field. As scholars indicated, mixed-race people have often been ignored, neglected, and regarded as nonexistent, particularly in the media, educational materials, and psychological literature (Root, 1992, 1996; Wardle, 1992). Multiracial people tended to be considered as “confused, distraught, and unable to fit in anywhere in the American racial landscape” (Wijeyesinghe, 2001, p.131). As Wijeyesinghe (2001) postulated, multiracial individuals may have no choice of racial identity:

The history of slavery, immigration, and racial oppression in the United States has resulted in millions of people who are multiracial by ancestry, but who by majority do not claim multiracial identities due to personal choice or socially imposed restrictions (p.136).

Unlike Wijeyesinghe’s claim that multiracial individuals’ having no choice of their racial identity, in terms of multiracial individuals’ identification choices, Root (1996) posited that multiracial people may experience “situational ethnicity and situational race” (p.11). Hitlin, Elder, and Brown (2006) posited that multiracial youths were four times as likely to switch self-identification across time as their monoracial counterparts. However, if multiracial youth came from a higher socio-economic background and lived in a predominantly White neighborhood, they were not likely to switch their race when compared to the multiracial youth who came from lower socio-economic background and did not live in a predominantly White neighborhood (Hitlin, Elder, & Brown, 2006).

Contrary to the views indicating that multiracial individuals experience negative psychological effects due to their marginal status and somewhat ambiguous racial group membership, there have been some research indicating that multiracial people do not feel



overwhelmingly marginalized or rejected by others, are effectively deal with their multiracial status without much trouble, and rather take advantage of their mixed heritage by having increased contact and experiences with varied cultures (Root, 1990; Stephan, 1992). In reviewing the psychological studies on implications of having multiple racial backgrounds, Shih and Sanchez (2005) found that mixed-race individuals resemble their monoracial counterparts on most indices of psychological adjustment, and they furthermore found the evidence of positive psychological functioning in mixed-race individuals. Shih and Sanchez also highlighted that mixed-race individuals had even higher ratio of positive feelings toward multiracial identity than negative feelings.

Cooney and Radian (2000) have highlighted that multiracial individuals mirror any other minority groups in regard to peer relations, depression, substance use, delinquency, and school achievement. Furthermore, scholars found that in some cases, multiracial individuals fare better, displaying less ethnocentrism, higher academic achievement, and more positive levels of self-concept when compared with their monoracial counterparts (Chang, 1974; Stephan & Stephan, 1991). In line with the above study findings, in a study comparing multiracial adolescents with monoracial adolescents using identity development measures, Herman (2004) observed that most multiracial groups reported positive feelings towards their racial identity that was comparable to their monoracial White counterparts although Asian-White multiracial adolescents did not share this result. Considering these varied and ambivalent study findings, it is crucial for researchers to approach studies with multiracial individuals in a more balanced way, i.e., focusing on both the challenges and difficulties faced as well as the strengths, coping skills, and resilience multiracial individuals possess.

## **Asian-White Interracial Families and their Roles**

Fulbeck (2006) defined Asian-White or “Hapa” as individuals of mixed racial heritage with partial roots in Asian and/or Pacific Islander ancestry. According to Root (1996), Hapas represent a category of individuals impacted by unique forces, both from society and family, which influence the development of a sense of self. Hapas also encounter the challenges of establishing identity in the absence of clear role models (Roots, 1996) and often face rejection from both dominant White American culture as well as from the specific Asian group represented by their parents from minority backgrounds (Gaskins, 1999).

According to the 2010 Census, of various Asian groups, the largest multiple-race combination was Asian and White; of the 2.6 million who indicated themselves as multiracial (Asian in combination), 61% of them (1.6 million) reported being Asian and White. The number of people identified as Asian in combination of other races was increased from approximately 1.66 million in 2000 to 2.65 million in 2010, indicating 59.8% growth. When compared with the percent growth of total U.S. population (9.7%), the growth of the Asian in combination was significant (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2011).

As with the increase in Asian-White interracial families, the number of biracial children and adolescents from these families has been also growing rapidly and steadily in the United States. According to the 2000 Census, among over 2.1 million who identified as partial Asian American or Pacific Islander (AAPI) descent, half of this population was under the age of 18 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2000). Le (2006) reported that among the six major Asian ethnicities in the United States, interracial marriage amongst Black people was about 1.5% of total marriages of foreign born Asians, while Whites represented approximately 27%. Among Asian Americans, this number increases even further with Black people representing approximately 2.3% of

interracial marriages with Asian Americans, while Whites are approximately 52% (Le, 2006). The reported number of children from interracial households in the 1990 U.S. Census was 1,037,420, and of these, nearly half of those children (i.e., 466, 590) were in families that marked one parent as Asian and the other parent as White (Williams-Leon & Nakashima 2001).

Asian Americans are considered by the dominant society to be the most similar to White individuals, so there is less research on the combination of these two racial groups (Root, 1992). Thus, this study specifically focused on this Asian-White multiracial population because they represent the most rapidly growing multiracial group, and yet clearly the most understudied racial group in the United States. Therefore, it is vital to examine the experiences of this subgroup. Furthermore, the limited research that has been conducted on people of Asian-White and Asian-Black heritage mostly focused on their individual ethnic identification (Hall, 2001; Williams 1992), and in addition, research conducted on this population focused largely on Japanese-White or Japanese-Black populations (Root, 2002; Standen, 1996). For example, as to the impact of parents on multiracial children's identity development, in a study conducted on 15 Japanese-White individuals, Kich (1992) found evidence to support the crucial role parents have in identity development. Therefore, there is the need to conduct research on other multiracial groups such as Korean-White population that was the main focus of this study.

### **Parental Socialization**

Research related to individuals' identity development suggested several different factors that contributed to an individual's development of identity, such as the parent-child relationship, peer relationships, school experiences, work experiences, and external influences, and of these factors, one of the most significant contributing factors to shape an individual's identity is the parental relationship (Jacobs, 1992; Kich, 1992; Mass, 1992). Particularly parental socialization

has been found to be closely associated with children's psychological adjustment. Socialization refers to the process by which children acquire the standards, values, and knowledge of their society (Cole & Cole, 1996). Ethnic socialization was defined as the developmental process by which children acquired the behavior, perceptions, values, and attitudes of an ethnic group and come to consider themselves as part of that group (Rotherman & Phinney, 1987a).

Racial socialization is the transmission of messages from adults to children that promote an understanding and awareness of race, racism, and cross-race relationships (Hughes, Smith, Stevenson, Rodriguez, Johnson, & Spicer, 2006). In a study exploring how biracial children are identified by their parents, Xie and Goyette (1997) found that the results supported the notion that racial identification involved two processes: assimilation and awareness. The findings include: (1) third-generation children are more likely to be identified as Asian than second-generation children; (2) third-generation children with more educated parents are more likely to be identified as Asian than are those with less educated parents; and (3) children are more likely identified as Asian when father is Asian. As observed in the studies conducted on the Asian-White biracial and multiracial individuals, these individuals should define themselves in terms of Asian, White, and mixed-race culture since there is no clearly defined model for them to employ.

Researchers indicated that when parents of multiracial children are supportive of their children, acknowledge their children's complicated social experiences due to race, and openly encourage pride in their children's multiple racial backgrounds, their adult biracial and multiracial children report feeling confident, comfortable, and content with their racial heritages (Gibbs, 2003; Pinderhughes, 1989). Researchers have emphasized the importance of empowering their children with knowledge of their racial heritage so as to prepare them for the inevitable racism they will encounter (Kerwin et al., 1993; Morrison, 1995). Parents draw on

their own experiences and group values to prepare children for experiences with racism and discrimination (Hughes & Chen, 1997; Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Racial differences have been found in racial socialization messages. Katz and Kofkin (1997) found that White parents were more likely to racially socialize their children by answering questions and teaching equality, while African American parents were more likely to focus on awareness of racial differences and preparation for bias. Studies have discussed relations between minority socialization and child outcomes, including more effective coping strategies (Phinney & Chavira, 1995), higher grades (Bowman & Howard, 1985) and higher resiliency (Miller, 1999), advanced stages of racial identity development (Stevenson, 1995), and greater knowledge about one's group and greater understanding of prejudice and racism (Quintana & Vera, 1999). In contrast, some studies found minority socialization, including fostering racial mistrust of Whites (Biafora, Warheit, Zimmerman, & Gil, 1993) and giving lessons about racial awareness, to be related to problem behavior and poor academic achievement.

According to Hughes and Chen (1999), in order to avoid detrimental outcomes, parents have to carefully balance those messages with messages of pride and culturally enriching experiences. Hughes and colleagues (2006), therefore, suggested a fine line between preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust, which were often subsumed under minority socialization. Parents' socialization also included historical lessons that foster group pride and empowerment (Stevenson, 1995). Boykin and Toms (1985) defined cultural socialization as the cultural conditioning that occurs within the family system, including transference within the family context of "modes, sequences and styles of behavior" (p.42) that reflected traditions and values directly associated with cultural ethos.

Studies examining both multiracial and non-White children posited that gender might impact children's racial and ethnic identity. For example, women may be more likely to identify with their non-White parents and/or retain more cultural behaviors (Portes & Schauffler, 1994; Salgado de Snyder & Padilla, 1982). Regarding parental efforts related to ethnic socialization of their multiracial children, studies postulated that Asian parent's gender may be an influencing factor, i.e., whether the respondent has an Asian mother or an Asian father. Researchers maintained that mothers play a more significant role in their children's ethnic socialization (Wilson 1981), i.e., having an Asian mother will exert a stronger effect on Asian identity than having an Asian father. Contrary to the above findings, some studies found father as the primary cultural transmitter of the family where children tend to identify with their father's ancestry and surname (Waters, 1989; Xie & Goyette, 1997).

Language can play a pivotal role in the racial identification of biracial children with an Asian parent. Saenz and colleagues (1995) found a positive influence of Asian-White children's use of non-English language on the likelihood of Asian identification and interpreted it as representing the impact of exposure to Asian culture. In a study exploring parents' experiences with their biracial children, Wilson (1981) suggested that mothers assumed the primary role of transmitting ethnic culture to their children and postulated that biracial or bi-ethnic children will be more likely to identify with their mother's race or ethnicity. In contrast, Waters (1989) claimed that father's ethnicity was more salient in determining the ethnic identification of a child because the child generally carries the father's family name, one of the main cues for ethnicity. In line with these parental influences on the formation of biracial identity of children, there has been an increasing tendency for parents to support their children in developing a strong biracial identity (Suzuki-Crumly & Hyers, 2004). For example, some parents of biracial children suggest

or encourage their children to identify as mixed or biracial (Rockquemore et al., 2006; Root, 2001; Rosenblatt, Karis, & Powell, 1995). Research has demonstrated that mothers have a vital role in developing ethnic identity. In a study exploring the relationship between mothers and daughters, Turnage (2004) found that mothers influenced ethnic identity, which in turn positively impacted self-esteem. Thomas and King's (2007) research also showed that mothers influenced their daughters' self-esteem and ethnic identity.

### **Parenting Multiracial Children**

Researchers claimed that parenting multiracial children differs from parenting monoracial children because in addition to the usual parenting obligations common across all parents regardless of race, parents with multiracial children should provide their children with protective and supportive environments, and must educate their multiracial children about racism (Gibbs, 2003; O'Donoghue, 2004; Pinderhughes, 1995; Twine, 2006). In a study examining racial and ethnic identity development in children, Cross and Cross (2008) pointed out the significance of parents' role. They claimed that parent deemphasize, have a moderate emphasis, or attach "singular importance" (p.167). Researchers have found the importance of parents' feelings, racial attitudes and overall self-concept because of their influence on the development of their child's identity development (Bryant & Morrison, 1991; Sebring, 1985).

It is often postulated that the challenges parents of multiracial children face regarding childrearing practice is mostly due to their racial and/or cultural differences (Kenney, 2002). According to Root (1996), parents are "not aware of the identity tasks their multiracial children face unless they, too, are multiracial" (p.10). Parents often choose a race for their child that they think will be socially beneficial, but the child may change the race chosen by their parents later in their lives (Root, 1996). In a descriptive study of Black-White interracial family identity, Byrd

and Garwick (2004) noted that the majority of parents of mixed-race children felt that they “lacked guidance or resources” to explain to their children about issues concerning race” (p. 32). In their studies of parenting multicultural children, Cote and Bornstein (2003) noted that parenting cognitions vary among cultural groups. They also contended that, because parenting cognitions are often closely associated with one’s core aspect of identity, it acculturates extremely slowly, if at all. Therefore, interracial parents are likely to encounter challenges regarding what being parents is all about and how they should assume their parenting roles, in light of their differing beliefs about and styles of parenting. Furthermore, monoracial parents can complicate the issue of biracial identity development for their biracial children either by encouraging the racial and ethnic identity of the most obvious physical qualities or by simply denying any race at all (Hughes & Chen, 1999).

There is a lack of research on interracial parents, specifically examining parenting strategies used by these parents. Most studies have been focused on the multiracial individuals (i.e., children, adolescents, or adults), investigating the vital influence of parents and families on an individual’s identity development and racial identity development (Collins, 2000; Gillem, Cohn, & Throne, 2001; Kerwin et al., 1993; Laszloffy, 2005), little research has specifically asked parents and biracial children about their interactive experience of biracial identity development. Limited research conducted on parents in order to learn their parenting strategies of raising biracial children mostly included parents, without matching parents’ responses to the findings about their biracial children (e.g., Tizard & Phoenix, 1993). Some studies in which researchers attempted to match parents’ and children’s responses did not include rigorous comparisons between parenting strategies and children’s identity development (Cauce, Hiraha, Mason, Aguilar, Ordonez, & Gonzales, 1992; Gibbs & Hines, 1992; Wilson, 1987).



**Korean American parenting.** In the familial context of Korea, parenting styles and roles have largely remained based on Confucian ideals of traditional roles and filial piety (Hurh, 1998), which is also similar to the parenting practices of Korean Americans. Korean Americans are generally voluntary migrants who moved to the United States searching for more political and social security, as well as better educational opportunities for their children (Shin & Shin, 1999). Since Korean American parents tend to ask their adolescents to obey them without talking back or questioning their authority, they are regarded as authoritarian, characterized by a lack of affection, a lack of communication, and by their emphasis on absolute obedience (Kim, 2005). However, in a study on relationships between Korean American parents and their children, Kim and Hong (2007) found that Korean American parents are warm and sensitive, particularly Korean mothers have been shown to interact sensitively with their children by reading and responding to their children's subtle cues. The traditional Korean family structure requires their children to be obedient to their parents and to conform to their family rules; however, as children adjust to new societal and cultural expectations in the United States, the traditional structure and the relationships within the family tend to be modified (Kim, 2004; Um & Dancy, 1999).

**Effects of environmental factors on multiracial identity development.** In addition to the strong impact of parents on biracial children's identity development, studies have found that other systems, such as a multiracial school environment and neighborhood, have an influence on the racially mixed adolescents (Folaron & McCartt-Hess, 1993; Tizard & Phonix, 1993). For example, children who are fortunate enough to live in Asian communities have a sense not only of what it means to be Asian, but also what it means to be in the majority (Kim, 2001). On the other hand, for biracial Asian-White children growing up in White neighborhoods, there may be confusing thoughts about what it means to be Asian when compared to Asian Americans who

have grown up in predominantly White neighborhoods. They were often found to employ active White identification, tended to identify more fully with Whites --believe they are not different from Whites, and that being Asian presented no problems in every aspect. On the other hand, Asian Americans who have grown up in predominantly Asian or in mixed environments mostly employ passive White identification. They may enter into White identification later, in junior high, rather than in elementary school, and they do not regard themselves to be White, but they are more likely to wish to be White instead of believing themselves to be no different from Whites (Kim, 2001). There are also similar findings associated with the relationship between racial identification of multiracial individuals and place in which they live. Biracial and multiracial people who live in White-dominated communities are more likely adopt their White parents' White identity or a multiracial identity, whereas people who live in diverse communities are more likely to adopt their non-White parents' identities (Herman, 2004; Phinney & Alipuria, 1996; Rockquemore, 1998; Rockquemore & Arend, 2002; Root, 1998).

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented historical background and statistical information on interracial families and bi/multiracial individuals. More specifically, it focused on the complex social positioning and experiences of interracial families and their multiracial children. In addition, this chapter discussed some significant issues and challenges biracial/multiracial individuals and interracial families face. These included issues regarding racial identity development, racial attitudes towards this population, and negative psychological effects due to their marginal status and somewhat ambiguous racial group membership. Most current research has largely focused on the racial identity development of multiracial individuals and interracial relationships between Whites and Blacks. Therefore, as previously discussed, there is a lack of research on the family

relationship in Asian-White interracial families and also parenting practices focusing on their children. Thus, there is a need for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of Asian-White interracial families and their biracial children in with the goal of identifying suggestions for practice. Although currently there exists literature on a variety of issues that interracial relationships and multiracial individuals deal with – such as racism and discrimination, lack of interracial parents’ knowledge on parenting, the relationship stressors—few studies have explored how they deal with various stressors and the impact these stressors have on multiracial children’s psychological well-being. In order to unravel the interactional dynamics between parents, multiracial children and various systems around them, I pursued a qualitative investigation of their lived experiences and also the meaning they derive from their relationships (e.g., parent-child, family and social networks, child-peers), and how each of these relationships influence the psychological adjustment of interracial family and their multiracial children.

## **Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

Development through adolescence and into emerging adulthood constitutes a period of conflict and challenge for most adolescents. However, the challenges during adolescent development are especially complex, difficult, and conflictive for bicultural, multiracial, and other racial/ethnic minority adolescents, who often encounter conflicting normative expectations imposed by each of two differing cultural sources (Root, 1998). In order to identify factors that can promote healthy development and adjustment in biracial individuals, this study examines strengths and protective factors in the lives of biracial individuals through in-depth interviews with nine Korean-White biracial adolescent and emerging adults and their monoracial Korean mothers. Through this study, I aim to understand: (1) how biracial individuals perceive the role of various ecological systems in helping them develop an identity and cope with the challenges they face; and (2) how mothers' unique cultural/racial background and personal characteristics impact their parenting approach including racial socialization of their biracial children. In order to address the research questions, I utilized a qualitative research approach guided by the principles of grounded theory. Data was analyzed using the three phases of coding --open, axial, and selective—as advanced by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998). Throughout the whole data analysis process, various measures were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study findings.

### **Qualitative Inquiry**

Qualitative inquiry is a research approach including methodologies such as phenomenology, case studies, ethnography, life histories, narrative inquires, and grounded theory research methods (Schwandt, 1997). Qualitative researchers aim to understand and make sense of phenomena as experienced by research participants. They do not initiate research with a hypothesis; rather they use inductive strategies, collecting data through the use of interviews,

conversations, field notes, photographs, recordings, and their own research journals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam, 2002). In family-related research, Ambert and colleagues (1995) explained that qualitative methodology allows one to paint a vivid picture of the family, by presenting rich quotes and deep illustrations of the feelings, conflicts, emotions, and motivations of its members. Individuals who had experienced the phenomenon were in the best position to share information and to aid in understanding – they represented those “from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2002, p. 12). Thus, I found the qualitative approach to be the most appropriate for my study exploring support systems in the lives of biracial individuals and monoracial mothers’ interracial parenting experiences.

### **Justification for Methodological Decision**

The topics of interracial mothering and the effects of various systems including family dynamics on the development of multiracial adolescents have received little attention, and as such demands more in-depth exploration. While there are a number of qualitative methods to choose from, research based on grounded theory is most appropriate for my study. Grounded theory study is the process of developing a theory, rather than testing a theory. I chose a grounded theory approach for this study because I aimed to identify common experiences within a community that are typically not articulated or well understood (McCann & Clark, 2003). Grounded theory also aims to develop substantive theories that explain various processes, and thus is appropriate for this study that aims to develop a greater understanding of interracial mothering and multiracial identity development in adolescents from Korean-White interracial families.

Research based on grounded theory “is done to produce abstract concepts and propositions about the relationship between them” (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Glaser and

Strauss (1967) proposed grounded theory as a practical method for conducting research that focuses on the interpretive process by analyzing the “the actual production of meanings and concepts used by social actors in real settings” (as cited in Gephart, 2004, p. 457). They postulated that new theory could be formulated by paying special attention to the contrast between “the daily realities (what is actually going on) of substantive areas” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.239) and also the interpretation of those daily realities made by those who participated in them (the “actors”). The method depicted by Glaser and Strauss (1967) has been built upon two key concepts: “constant comparison,” in which data are collected and analyzed simultaneously, and “theoretical sampling,” in which decisions about which data should be collected next are determined by the theory that is being constructed. The development of categories, properties, and tentative hypotheses through the constant comparative method, is a process whereby the data gradually evolves into a core of emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Throughout the whole data analysis process, I followed the strategies (e.g., constant comparison, theoretical sampling) suggested.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Sears (1991) postulated, “The test of qualitative inquiry is not its unearthing of a seemingly endless multitude of unique individuals but illuminating the lives of a few well-chosen individuals. The idiographic often provides greater insight than nomothetic” (p.433). In line with the concept posited by Sears (1991), emphasizing the “lives of a few well-chosen individuals” (p.433), for this study, along with the pilot study with one mother-child dyad, I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine mother-child dyads consisting of nine Korean mothers and nine biracial late adolescent and emerging adult children in Korean-White interracial families. For the child participants, I focused on the individuals in their late

adolescence and emerging adulthood because it is at this critical stage that individuals, especially adolescents grapple with the question of who they are (Erikson, 1968), when compared with monoracial adolescents, it is more significant for biracial adolescents due to their dual racial backgrounds. In addition, several qualitative studies examining identity development of biracial individuals used the age of 18 as the minimum age requirement for respondents to participate in the study because the researchers regarded that by age 18, individuals will have the cognitive abilities to take a retrospective view on their life, thus enabling them to communicate to the interviewer the significant events of their lives (Hall, 1980; Kich, 1982). Therefore, the above guideline was taken into consideration in this study.

This study has been determined as exempt in accordance with federal regulations by the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) in June 2011. After receiving an exemption letter from the IRB, the semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted either in the participants' homes or, in the local coffee shop of the participants' choice. Only one emerging adult participant had to be interviewed over Skype because she was attending a college in California. On average, the interviews lasted 1 to 2 hours. Prior to the interview, each participant signed an informed consent form (see Appendix A) that explained the purpose and procedures of the study, as well as their rights and assurance of anonymity. Participants also filled out a demographic information sheet (see Appendices D & E). All but one mother preferred to be interviewed in English: Nineteen interviews were conducted in English, and one interview was conducted in Korean. The interview questions (see Appendices B & C) for the study were developed based on the review of the literature on biracial/multiracial identity development and interracial parenting.

As researchers claimed, the key to a grounded theory is to produce enough in-depth data that can illuminate patterns, concepts, categories, properties, and dimensions of the given

phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore, it was crucial for me to acquire an appropriate sample size that could generate enough data. In order to satisfy this condition (i.e., determining the most appropriate sample size), I have collected the data based on recommendations by Strauss and Corbin's (1998) theoretical saturation. According to them, theoretical saturation occurs when: (a) no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category; (b) the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation; and (c) the relationships among categories are well established and validated. (p. 212).

### **Research Participants**

The sample for this study was nine Korean immigrant mothers and their Korean-White biracial children. There were several reasons for choosing Korean-White interracial families. First, it is conceptually useful to limit the sample to one Asian American subgroup. Although some cultural ties exist among the different Asian American communities, they consist of highly diverse groups in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, education, income level, level of English proficiency, and their historical experiences in the United States. It should be noted that Korean American mothers' subjective experiences may not be similar to those of Filipino American mothers due to the differences discussed above. Qualitative research draws from subjective experiences of individuals to identify problems or experiences that are common to a population that is not well understood (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; McCann & Clark, 2003). Thus, including several different Asian subgroups to this study may not generate the intended outcome, i.e., aiming to "ground" theories and hypotheses within the data that arise through questioning of subjects, (McCann & Clark, 2003), particularly with the relatively small sample size of this study. Second, the researcher's own Korean ethnic background can be a possible asset in establishing



an open rapport with the Korean-White interracial families. Last, the researcher's background as a Korean American mother will place her in a potentially more sensitive position to interpret the cultural dynamics in this group of families.

The criteria for the study participants – biracial individuals and their monoracial mothers are as follows:

**Biracial children.** Arnett (2005) identified the transitional stage of life (referred to as emerging adulthood) as the period from the end of secondary school through the attainment of adult status. Emerging adulthood covering approximately ages 18 to mid-20's is marked by a variety of developmental tasks, including identity formation and the establishment of more mature interpersonal and intimate relationships (Arnett, 2000). Therefore, late adolescents and emerging adults who are between the ages of 18 and 26 were selected for this study.

**Sample criteria.** Qualitative methodologies lend themselves to small samples, as are usually obtained in working with specific multiracial groups (Root, 1992; Standen, 1996). Child participants were required to meet the following criteria: (1) be of mixed racial heritage (have biological parents of two different racial backgrounds – particularly a Korean mother and a White father); (2) be adolescents or emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 26 years old; and (3) be comfortable answering questions exploring the personal experiences, thoughts and feelings about the experience of being biracial. Mother participants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) be a monoracial Korean American woman married to a White man; (2) either first generation or 1.5 generation immigrant; (3) have at least one biological and biracial adolescent or emerging adult child who is between the ages of 18 and 26 years old; and (4) be comfortable answering questions exploring the personal experiences, thoughts and feelings about the experience of parenting biracial children. The study sample was nine Korean women who

were interracially married to White men and their one biological and biracial late adolescent or emerging adult child between the ages of 18 and 26.

I used a subset of purposive sampling -- snowball sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) that allowed me to build a participant pool. In this study, the first stage of sampling involved the use of a key informant interview (Marshall, 1996), an anthropological technique utilizing rich information sources, which has defined sample selection criteria (Burgess, 1989). I have known several interracial (Korean-White) families in the local community and contacted one of them to ask about the Korean-White families in the community because I heard that there were regular meetings held for the Korean wives. According to the informant, the meetings were recently stopped since some participants moved out of the state. Most interracial families she knew did not quite fit the participant criteria because children are either too young (younger than 18 years old) or too old (over 30 years old).

The informant provided a list of potential individuals who I could talk to. With the information, I made initial contact with potential participants, providing a brief overview of the study. When the potential participants agreed to take part in the study, contact information was exchanged, and interview times, dates, and places were set for the interviews according to what is most comfortable for the participants and to the necessity that the physical setting be not only quiet and comfortable but also conducive to audio-taping (Creswell, 1998).

Prior to conducting an interview, I met with the participants at their choice of interview location. The researcher went over the purpose of the research project with the participant. All participants were given an informed consent form. The researcher explained the contents of informed consent form. Risks and benefits were clearly outlined before obtaining written consent from participants. Individuals who agreed to participate in this study received a cash incentive of

\$25 for their time and sharing their experiences with me. Upon receipt of a signed informed consent (see Appendix A), in order to begin the process of engagement while gathering useful data to understand the context of the interviewee, the researcher asked the participants to fill out the demographic information form (see Appendices D & E). These questions served to warm up both interviewer and interviewee to the conversation and have the potential to increase the interviewee's sense of confidence to successfully participate in the conversation (Dilley, 2000). After getting permission from the participant, the digital recorder was turned on, and the researcher invited the interviewee to talk about their experiences. Each interview session lasted between 1 and 2 hours excluding the time to complete an ecomap. Each interview was continued until the point where no new knowledge and information emerged (Kvale, 1994).

In order to determine if the interview questions were reliable and could be clearly understood by participants, one mother-child dyad was selected for a pilot study, which provided useful information, including factors that could be considered relevant in facilitating positive development of biracial individuals. Through the preliminary analysis of the data drawn from the pilot study, themes and categories emerged (see Figure 1). The interview questions were then modified based on the feedback provided by the mother-child dyad. Two sets of interview questionnaires (see Appendices B & C) were developed for this study. The first one is the child version, and the second one is the parent (mother) version. The semi-structured interviews were guided by the interview questions. Once each interview was ended, the participant was debriefed to ensure that the participant was feeling positive when he or she left the interview. Although the researcher prepared a list of resources in case the participant has experienced undue stress as a result of participating in the study, there was no one who needed these resources.

As soon as each interview was conducted, I wrote down general thoughts about the interview, interviewer feelings, and observations on the interview in a field notebook. After each interview, the recorded interview was transcribed verbatim. In order to verify some ambiguous wordings in the transcripts, the transcripts were emailed to seven participants to check the accuracy of the transcripts.

The researcher kept a folder for each interviewee that included the participant's signed consent form, demographic form, transcripts of interview, the researcher's observations and comments about the interview. Pseudonyms were given to all participants to maintain the confidentiality of the research participants.

### **Researcher Positionality**

I chose to use a qualitative method because I was interested in exploring the experience and phenomenon of being parents of multiracial children and being biracial individuals in depth and at a personal level. Although there have been a number of studies on the topic of "biracial" children and their racial identity development, there is a lack of research specifically focusing on the parents' experiences. Qualitative research is an interactive process between researcher and participant, researcher and research, researcher and self, therefore, it is vital that the qualitative researcher first articulate his or her values beforehand, and continue self-examination and reflection throughout the research process (Merriam, 2002). According to Morse and Richards (2002), qualitative research is a process of informed choice, reflection, flexible planning, and decision-making. In line with this statement, my role as a researcher was to be fully involved in, and open to each of these processes as the research progressed. I assumed that my shared status as a mom of bicultural children would give me an "insider" access to my research population (specifically Korean American mothers). However, as research cautions that insider/outsider

status cannot be clearly delineated (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, & Muhamad, 2001), so I did not assume that my position as a mother of monoracial Korean American children fully guaranteed me an insider status because there existed differences between me and the Korean mothers of biracial children. For example, I raised my two US-born children in a bicultural home environment, but since my husband was from the same cultural and racial background as I came from, in terms of parenting conflicts due to cultural differences between spouses, I seemed to have faced less difficulties compared to the Korean mothers who were married to White husband. Merriam et al. (2001) also stressed that positionality is a complex, dynamic factor in researcher-participant relationships and should never be taken for granted. Therefore, to monitor how I have been affected by and have experienced the research process, I wrote field notes following interviews, and memos when reflecting on and analyzing the data collected.

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

Trustworthiness of this study has been accomplished through the use of several methods to verify the accuracy and credibility of study findings. In order to establish the trustworthiness of study findings as well as increase the accuracy of the study findings, several strategies identified by scholars were utilized in this study: triangulation of data sources defined by Glesne (1999) as the use of multiple data methods and sources; an examination of researcher subjectivity (Peshkin, 1998); “thick description” (Geertz, 1973); and member check and peer debriefing (Creswell, 2003).

According to Creswell (1998), one technique that is common in qualitative research is a triangulation, in which researcher relies on multiple sources of data. This was done by constantly comparing new information to another interview, literature, and/or observation (Lincoln & Guba,

1985; Patton, 2001) throughout the research process. Triangulation, in relation with data, includes multiple sources (or methods or investigators) being checked against other sources (or methods or investigators). Denzin (1979) identified four types of triangulation techniques that could strengthen the rigor of qualitative research. The first is data triangulation, in which the researcher uses various sources to collect data. The second is investigator triangulation, in which more than one researcher is examining the phenomenon under study. Third is theory triangulation, in which the researcher applies multiple theories and/or perspectives in interpreting the data. The last one is methodological triangulation, in which the researcher uses multiple methods to study the problem under triangulation. Triangulation helps to ensure credibility of results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), enhances the trustworthiness of analysis by offering a more inclusive and complete narrative (Kidder & Fine, 1987), and reduces the biases and limitations of any individual method by compensating with the strengths of another method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Recognizing how critical this process is to establish credible data, I have employed various types of triangulation including: (1) data triangulation by using a variety of data sources via multiple interviews, research, and theory; (2) methodological triangulation through using multiple methods, i.e., interviews and ecomaps (Patton, 1980). In this study, in-depth interviews and ecomaps served as multiple sources of data that could be triangulated. In order to ensure the credibility of the study, the subjectivity of the researcher should be also acknowledged (Peshkin, 1988). During the study, I have kept employing the subjective lens and viewpoints that researchers often bring to the study. This approach helped prevent me from imposing my personal perspective onto the research. As mentioned, memos were used to log and document my feelings and biases throughout the research process. Furthermore, in order to reduce study bias

and enhance trustworthiness, “thick description” approach was used in the analysis phase of the study (Denzin, 1988; Geertz, 1973) by adding detailed information of the research subjects’ feelings and experiences. In addition, peer debriefing with a fellow graduate student was used to reduce study bias. In order to ensure that no findings have been misinterpreted, overlooked, or misunderstood, I asked a graduate student who has had experience in conducting qualitative research to crosscheck the interpretation of the data from the study. Member checking was also utilized as an approach to strengthen the credibility of the study. I asked the participants to read their interview transcripts to confirm whether I have correctly documented participants’ experience and perspectives.

As Lincoln and Guba (2000) posited, strengthening the trustworthiness and the credibility of this study will ensure that information acquired through will be authentic and conscious of potential biases as the study aims to reliably capture the viewpoints of research participants. Trustworthiness of the data has been strengthened by utilizing the abovementioned strategies including triangulation, documenting researcher subjectivity, thick descriptions, peer debriefing, and member checking,. The following section describes the research instruments used in this study.

## **Research Instruments**

**Semi-structured interviews.** Interviews are useful because they allow the participant to provide a more detailed perspective and for the researcher to guide the focus of the study (Creswell, 2005). Data collection: the first round of interviews was conducted with mother participants only and the second round of interviews was with adolescent and emerging adult participants only. A total of 20 separated interviews (including 2 pilot interviews) were

conducted. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher collected ecomap data (Hodge, 2000).

**Ecomap.** I constructed an ecomap (Hodge, 2000) for each participant. The ecological map or eco-map developed in 1975 by Hartman is an assessment tool to assist workers in public child welfare practice to evaluate the needs of families (Hartman, 1995). Ecomaps can be a useful tool in helping the researcher identify external support and nurturing systems in the participants' lives, and the systems identified will be either formal or informal (Hodge, 2000). Through the use of ecomap, I was able to explore the relationships (either positive or negative) among multiracial individuals, family members, and social support networks. Using the ecomap, both interracial parents and multiracial children were able to identify the external relationships that are healthy as well as those that are unhealthy. Ecomaps can empower multiracial individuals and families to know where changes may be needed with the environmental systems to provide improved interactions for individuals and families. For this study, the ecomap was found to be a helpful tool that provides useful information regarding positive or negative experiences the multiracial child and family have had with these networks, as well as useful data about where and to whom the individual can go for empowerment and support (Logan, Freeman, & McRoy, 1987).

**Demographic questionnaire.** The demographic questionnaire (see Appendices D & E) was used to collect demographic information such as age, racial identification of each participant, highest education level achieved, and socioeconomic status. Furthermore, all participants were asked to describe the racial make-up of their social environments growing up, including specific questions related to the racial make-up of the neighborhood.



**Field notes.** In addition to the abovementioned data collection methods, the researcher has kept field notes. Field notes are a valuable source of data in qualitative research. Field notes are the observational records, detailed, non-judgmental, concrete descriptions of what has been witnessed (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Along with interviewees' words, I have documented and described interactions and marked their body language and affect. Keeping notes detailing the research process has also provided analytic insights. These notes provided clues to focus and be more strategic in collecting data and assist in identifying relevant questions for subsequent interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). I wrote down my own feelings and behaviors that surfaced throughout and after each interview as well as any emerging themes (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). These field notes including personal thoughts, ideas, phrases, key words, and quotes also assisted me in providing a frame for the data analysis (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Linville, 2003; Schwandt, 2001). Taking the time to reflect in the journal allowed me to evaluate how my own life experiences interact with and impacts the entire research project.

**Debriefing.** All participants were offered a debriefing throughout the interview. Prior to the interviews, I reiterated that their participation is entirely voluntary. I also stressed that if the participant stops at any point during the interview and appears to be in distress, debriefing would be provided at that point. During the interview processes, out of 18 participants, only one mother showed emotional distress when talking about her childhood. Thus, debriefing was provided, and she was able to continue the interview. There was a follow-up call asking whether she felt well after the interview.

All participants were provided names and contact information of the primary researcher, the researcher's mentor as well as the director of Michigan State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Protection of Human Subjects in case other questions regarding the

research or the researcher arise. The information is located on the research consent form. At the conclusion of the interview, the participant was debriefed with the interviewer and the researcher also answered any lingering questions, as well as issues of confidentiality.

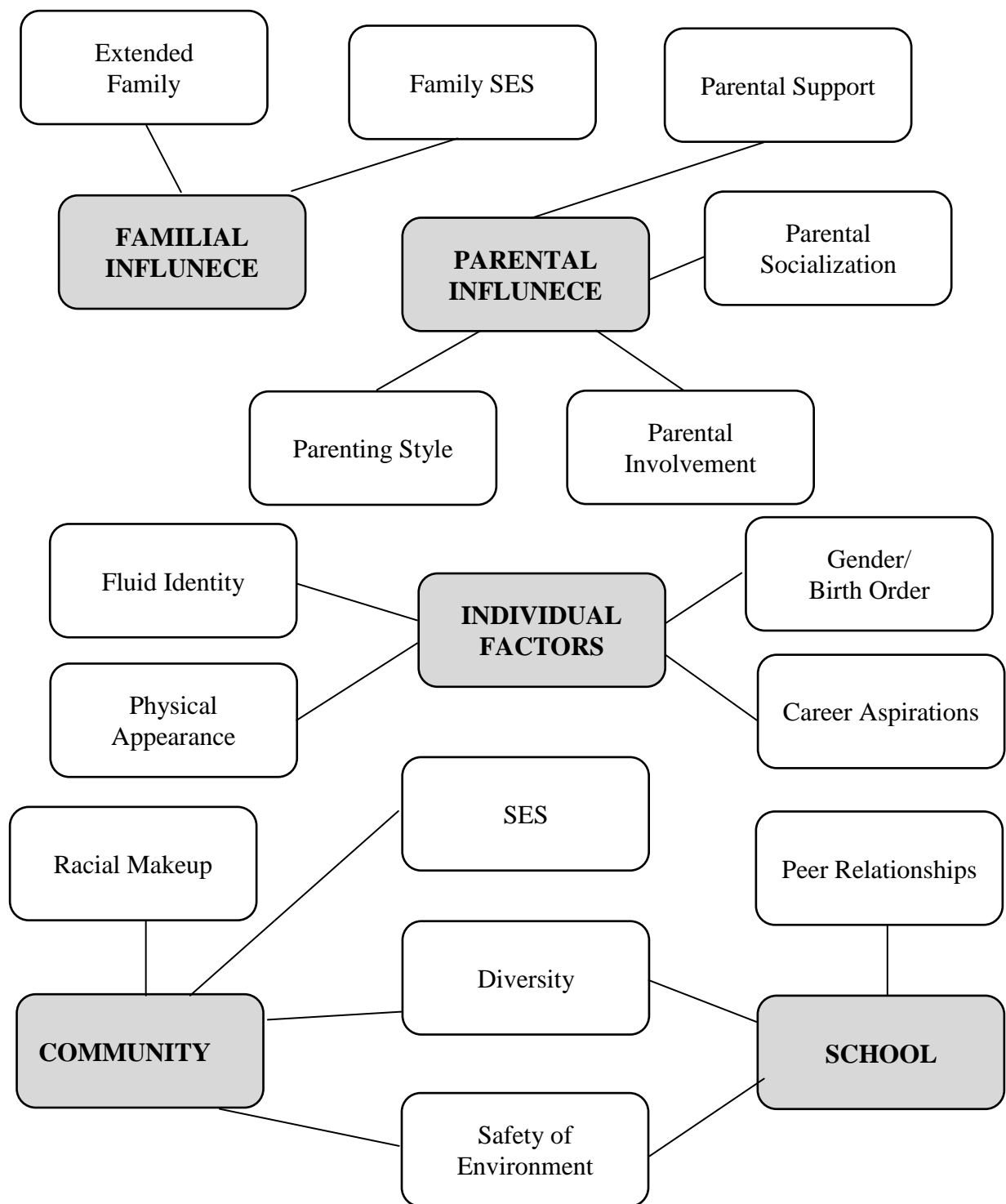
### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Data collection, analysis, and interpretation are not separate activities that occur in a linear sequence; instead each is related to the other and sometimes these processes occur simultaneously (Kvale, 1994; Sandelowski, 1995; van Manen, 1990). Theories are either deducted from logical assumptions or generated from observation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and grounded theory is a qualitative approach that generates theory from observation. In grounded theory, the researcher does not pretend to have formulated the hypotheses in advance since preformed hypotheses are not commonly used in qualitative research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Strauss and Corbin (1998) posited, “Analysis is the interplay between the researcher and the data” (p. 13) and also suggested that grounded theory analysts work to “uncover relationships among categories ... by answering the questions of who, when, why, how, and with what consequences ... to relate structure with process” (p. 127). When grounded theory analysts code reflectively, they are acting similar to the investigative reporters, asking the questions, what, when, where, why, how, and with what result or consequence (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative analysis will be applied to analyze the themes that emerge from various data provided by the participants.

In grounded theory, data analysis is an ongoing process that takes place simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 2002), which allows the researcher to make adjustments as needed and to test emerging concepts, themes and categories against subsequent data (Merriam, 2002). Consistent with grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) and

Merriam's (2002) guideline, data collection and analysis for this study were performed simultaneously.

In order to formulate a theory, I utilized a systematic coding approach based on a constant comparative method of data analysis, by constantly comparing one piece of data (e.g., an interview transcript, a memo, and an ecomap) to the next, while looking for common themes across data. Prior to analyzing, verbatim transcripts of the interviews were prepared. I transcribed the first 10 interviews including two from the pilot study; the remaining 10 interviews were transcribed by two undergraduate students who were previously trained to transcribe interview data. A total of 19 interviews in English were transcribed in English, while one interview in Korean was transcribed in Korean and then translated into English by the researcher. The quality of the translation was assured by another bilingual and bicultural translator. Accuracy of all transcriptions was assured by the researcher and two transcribers independently comparing the transcripts to the original audiotapes. There was no disagreement among the three transcribers including the researcher. These transcripts were read and reread by the researcher multiple times. Based on the pilot study and literature review, I had anticipated that codes associated with parental support, familial support (e.g., extended family), individual factors, school and community factors, and identity development would emerge (see Figure 3.1).



*Figure 3.1.*Anticipated themes and categories based on the pilot study

As I conducted constant comparative analysis with the rest of the data, relevant sections of the transcripts were highlighted, and main themes and subthemes were identified. Themes identified were associated with questions regarding interracial parenting, biracial identity development, strategies used to facilitate biracial identity development and promote biracial individuals' positive sense of self. Data analysis in grounded theory is essentially a sorting into coded categories. As the data are being categorized, relationships among categories are identified and compared to theoretical codes that integrated those categories into cohesive theory (Glaser, 1978).

In order to formulate a theory, analysis of this study was based upon three different coding approaches: open coding, axial coding and selective coding grounded theory strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 55-143). Open coding is the initial phase of grounded theory analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Immediately following transcription, I performed open coding which is a process of identifying and developing concepts in the interview data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I utilized a combination of line-by-line and sentence or paragraph coding. During this open coding phase, I identified, named, categorized, and described examples found within the interview transcripts, memos, and ecomaps. The second coding is axial coding defined as "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). Axial coding is the process of relating codes (categories and properties) to each other, via a combination of inductive and deductive thinking. As new categories emerged, they were compared to old categories in an attempt to saturate data in a constant comparison method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These processes all are a part of creating an explanation of the perspectives within the data that is reflective of multiple realities and is constructed by both the

researcher and the participant (Charmaz, 2006). Axial coding brings out relational statements and formulates mini frameworks, while explaining context (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The third coding is selective coding which is a process of selecting one category to be the core category and relating all other categories to that category. In this phase, the core idea is to develop a single storyline around which everything else is draped (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Selective coding is encouraged while using grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1998) since grounded theory is not concerned with data accuracy as in descriptive research but is about generating concepts that are abstractions of time, place and people.

For example, when a biracial participant said “My friends and I are very accepting of other races because all of us came from diverse racial backgrounds... On top of coming from diverse backgrounds, I also think that the whole idea of being biracial has sort of made me more accepting of others I think.” This initially was coded as “acceptance of other races” and “being biracial made more accepting of others” (open codes). When one mother said, “Acceptance and tolerance are very important factors to keep, especially in this diverse society....people should treat all people decently and embrace others’ differences... I’ve taught my sons to be more open-minded and accepting of others and other cultures.” These statements were initially coded as “acceptance and tolerance,” “treat all people fairly,” “embracing differences,” and “being open-minded towards other cultures” (open codes). After open coding, the initial codes of “acceptance of other races” and “being open-minded towards other cultures” were put back together by making connections between categories, i.e., placing them under the subtheme of “Being more open and tolerant of other races/cultures” And through the similar steps that generated the axial code of “Being more open and tolerant of other races/cultures” two other higher-order categories (i.e., axial codes) – “ Acknowledging strengths as a biracial individual”

and “Influences of the model minority myth” – were identified, and these three axial codes generated the main theme –“Emphasizing the strengths of dual heritage,” which was one of the most important six concepts identified from the data for this study.

I used a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program, Atlas.ti v.6 to code, organize, and manage my data (ATLAS.ti, 2010). Using the Atlas.ti, I was able to create code families and also to rename codes, redefining codes in other words more easily. In the final analysis of the data, six themes were identified as the most meaningful facilitators of positive development of biracial adolescents and emerging adult individuals. The findings of the study are presented in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 4: FINDINGS**

This chapter is divided up into two sections. The first section of this chapter includes demographic data of 18 participants and their self-identified support systems facilitating positive development (for biracial individuals) and influencing parenting practices (for mothers). The second section of this chapter will present important findings related to certain influential factors (systems) that facilitate biracial individuals' positive development and psychological adjustment.

### **Demographic Data**

**Biracial participants.** Nine late adolescents and emerging adults, 6 males and 3 females, participated in this study. The participants ranged in age from 18-26 years, with a mean age of 19.89 ( $SD = 2.62$ ). At the time of collecting data (June – August 2011), five participants were undergraduates, two participants just graduated from high school and were planning to attend college in the fall, and two participants would become high school seniors in the fall. All biracial participants were born and raised by their biological parents in Michigan. The majority of the participants ( $n = 8$ ) described their ethnic make-up as composed of two races although their use of a racial label varied, including biracial (Korean-White), multiracial (Asian American), half Korean and half German, both Korean and White, and White and Asian. One male participant identified himself as Asian American, while the other male participant self-identified as Korean-American (see Table 4.1). All biracial participants spent their childhood, adolescence, and emerging adulthood in predominantly White neighborhoods and were raised in intact families. Either one or both parents had a minimum of a college degree, and more than a half of the parents ( $n = 10$ ) had advanced degrees (e.g., masters or doctorate degree).

**Demographic information on mother participants.** Nine Korean immigrant mothers participated in this study. As seen from Table 4.2, the ages of the mother participants ranged



from 44 to 64 with a mean age of 52 ( $SD = 5.4$ ). As to the immigrant generational status, three mothers were 1.5 generation, while six mothers were first generation immigrants. The average length of US residency is 33 years ranging from 26 years to 45 years ( $SD = 6.97$ ).

The samples of the mothers used for this study were mostly upper middle or middle class monoracial Korean mothers of biracial children. With respect to the annual family income, six families belonged to the upper quintile (i.e., the top 20 percent or 80<sup>th</sup> percentile; over \$100,000 of an annual family income) among the total US families, while the other three families belong to the upper-middle quintiles (US Census Bureau, 2011). Education attainment levels for the mothers were also high when compared to the general population: two with a PhD, one with a MD, two with a Master's degree, one with a Bachelor's degree, one with an associate degree, one with some college experiences, and one with high school diploma (see Table 4.2). Except for two mothers who were retired, seven mothers were currently working either full- or part-time at the time conducting interviews. The interracial families typically lived far away from their maternal extended families and only occasionally saw them, whereas their paternal extended families tended to live relatively close and saw them at the holidays and special occasions.

Table 4.1

*Demographic Description of the Biracial Participants*

Pseudonym*	Age	Gender	School	Self-Identified Racial Identity	Racial Make-up of Neighborhood
Aaron	21	Male	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year College	Biracial (Korean-White)	Mostly White
Amy	21	Female	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year College	Multiracial (Asian American)	Mostly White
Candice	19	Female	1 <sup>st</sup> Year College	Biracial (Korean-White)	Mostly White
Michelle	20	Female	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year College	Half Korean Half German	Mostly White
Eric	18	Male	Will attend college**	White and Asian	Mostly White
Paul	26	Male	4 <sup>th</sup> Year College	Both Korean and White	Mostly White
Larry	18	Male	Will attend college**	Korean-White	Mostly White
Kenny	18	Male	High school senior	Asian American	Mostly White
Tom	18	Male	High school senior	Korean-American	Mostly White

*Note.* \* Pseudonyms were selected by the researcher. \*\* indicates individuals who recently graduated from high school and planned to attend a university coming fall.

Table 4.2

*Demographic Description of Mothers*

	Mary*	Jean*	Kim*	Dana*	Celine*
Age	64	52	52	54	44
Length of US Residency	30	26	26	30	38
Immigrant GEN Status**	1 <sup>st</sup> -Gen	1 <sup>st</sup> -Gen	1 <sup>st</sup> -Gen	1 <sup>st</sup> -Gen	1.5-Gen
Education (Self)	PhD	Some college	MBA	High school	BA
Education (Spouse)	PhD	BA	BA	BA	MBA
Occupation (Self)	Retired (Researcher)	Realtor	Bank Clerk	Self-employed	Self-employed
Occupation (Spouse)	Researcher	Engineer	Court Clerk	Salesperson	Co. Employee
Yearly Household Income	Over \$100,000	Over \$100,000	\$80,000-89,000	\$60,000-69,000	Over \$100,000
# of Children	1	3	1	3	2
Age(s) of Children	21	23,21,20	19	24, 22, 20	18,16,14
Child Interviewed***	Aaron	Amy	Candice	Michelle	Eric

*Note.* \* All names are pseudonyms selected by the researcher. \*\* refers to Immigrant Generational Status. \*\*\* Pseudonyms chosen by the researcher were used.

Table 4.2 (cont'd)

*Demographic Description of Mothers*

	Liz*	Yoon*	Jenny*	Angie*
Age	50	49	52	49
Length of US Residency	29	28	45	41
Immigrant GEN Status"	1 <sup>st</sup> –Gen	1 <sup>st</sup> -Gen	1.5-Gen	1.5-Gen
Education (Self)	Associate Degree	MS	PhD	MD
Education (Spouse)	MA	PhD	BS	MD
Occupation (Self)	Self-employed	Researcher	Researcher	Retired (MD)
Occupation (Spouse)	Self-employed	Professor	Co. Employee	Medical Doctor
Yearly Household Income	\$50,000-59,000	Over \$100,000	Over \$100,000	Over \$100,000
# of Children	2	2	3	2
Age(s) of Children	21	18,12	23,20,18	18,16
Child Interviewed***	Paul	Larry	Kenny	Tom

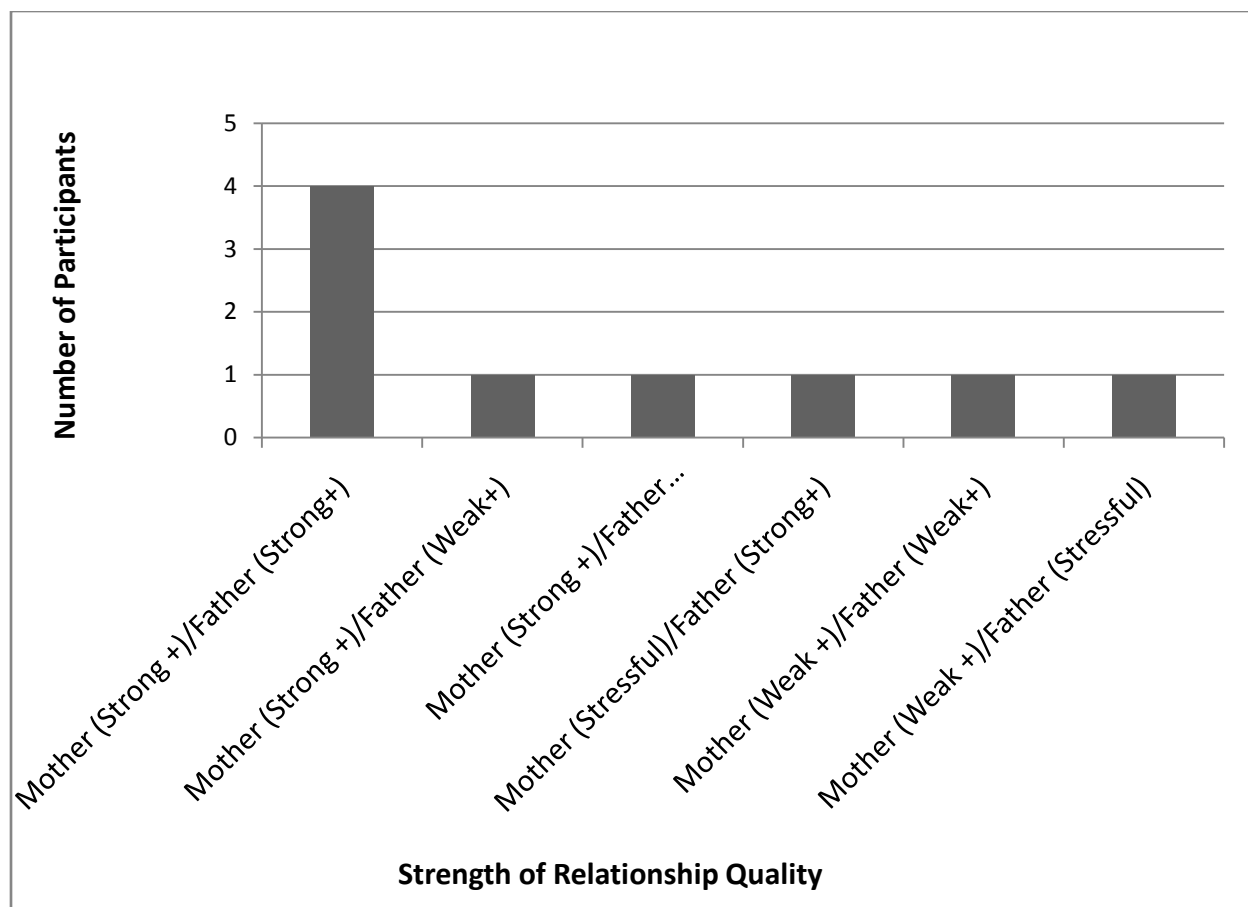
*Note.* \* All names are pseudonyms selected by the researcher. \*\* refers to Immigrant Generational Status. \*\*\* pseudonyms chosen by the researcher were used.

## **Parent-Child Relationship Quality Based on Ecomap**

Using the ecomap, the participants were able to identify external supports and nurturing systems in their lives. Through the use of ecomap, the participants explored the quality of relationships (either positive or negative) and the strengths of the relationships among their family members and level and nature of support provided by their extended family, friends, school, church, neighbors, and other external sources. In addition, the ecomap activity was used as a tool to elicit both biracial participants and their Korean mothers' beliefs about the role of family, and their respective roles (i.e., the role as a child or a parent).

### **Ecomap Analysis**

The ecomap activity also served as an effective icebreaker that helped establish a positive atmosphere between the participants and the researcher. As we can see from Figure 4.1, four biracial participants indicated that they had strong positive relationships with both their mother and father. Among the five biracial participants who did have strong positive relationships with both parents, three had a strong positive relationship with one of their parents (two with their mother and one with his father). Two participants reported that they had a stressful relationship with one of their parents, but they also had a positive relationship with the other parent. The findings from the ecomap activities indicated that all of the biracial children confirmed that they all have positive relationships (regardless of its strength) with both or one of the parents.

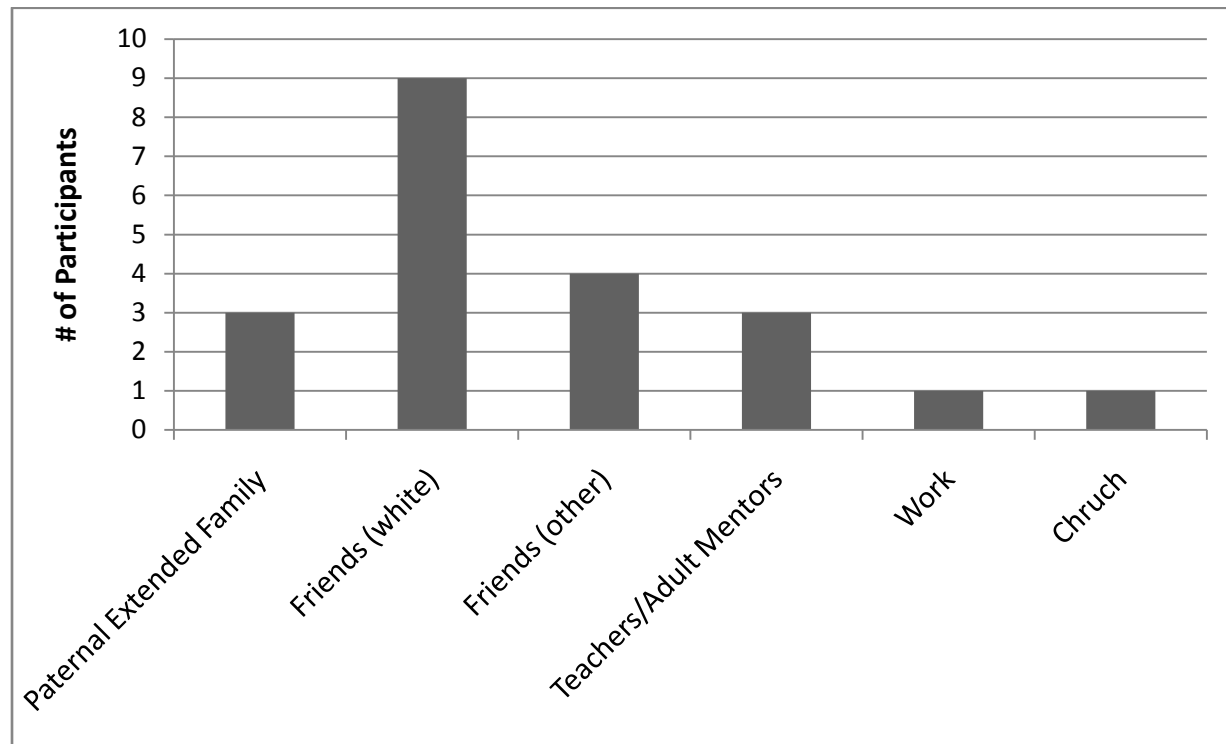


*Figure 4.1.* Strengths of relationship quality between parents and biracial participants

Note. Strong + denotes strong positive relationship between a parent and a biracial child, while Weak + refers to somewhat weak, but positive relationship.

In addition to indicating the relationship quality with their parents, biracial participants also identified support provided by influential people in their lives, showing their connections to the external worlds and highlighting the quality of these connections (see Figure 4.2). All nine biracial participants indicated that the strongest support was provided by their White friends who understood them well and accepted them regardless of their biracial status. Of those nine participants, four also had friends from other racial backgrounds, including those from Chinese-White biracial, Cuban, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Chinese families. One thing that should be noted was that three participants indicated they had positive relationships with their extended families, and all of

those extended families were paternal sides. Three biracial participants indicated that they had strong positive relationships with professors/teachers. Only one participant reported that he had a positive connection with the church and work.

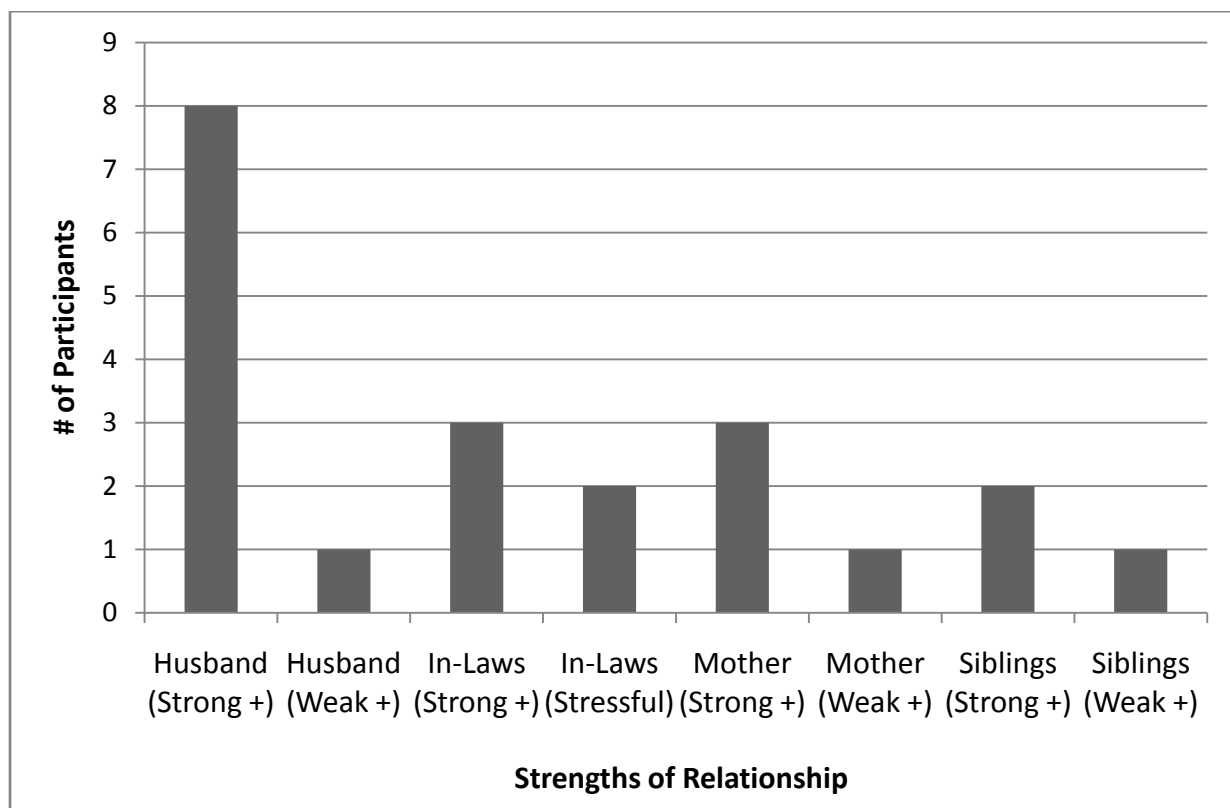


*Figure 4.2.*Support networks identified by biracial participants

When asked about the familial supports they received when raising their children, as seen from Figure 4.3, eight mother participants reported that they had a strong positive relationship with their husband, whereas one reported that she had a weak, but still positive relationship with her husband. Three mothers indicated that they had strong positive relationships with their in-laws, while two participants reported that they had stressful relationships with their in-laws. Three mother participants said that when they faced parenting difficulties, they called their mothers with whom they had strong positive relationships. Two mothers reported that they maintained strong positive relationships with their siblings, while one mother also had weak, but positive relationships with her siblings. Of the six first generation Korean immigrant mothers,

five mothers had their families living in Korea, so they reported that it was very difficult for them to maintain close connections. However, regardless of geographic distance, four of them reported that they still had strong positive relationships with their families by regularly talking on the phone with their families in Korea. However, as they voiced, if their extended families lived nearby, it would have been much easier for them to receive supports when needs arose.

Regardless of geographic distance, all except one mother indicated that they considered their parents and siblings as their supporters whom they could talk to when they faced with difficulties.



*Figure 4.3.* Strengths of relationship quality between Korean mothers and their families

Note. Strong + denotes strong positive relationship between a parent and a biracial child, while Weak + refers to somewhat weak, but positive relationship.

All mothers reported that they had positive relationships with their husbands and children even though two mothers indicated that they had weak positive relationships with one of their



children, and one mother reported that she had a weak positive relationship with her husband. Five mothers reported that they had strong positive relationships with Korean friends, whereas all three 1.5 generation immigrant mothers had strong positive relationships with their White friends, and one first generation mother reported that she had strong positive relationships with her White friends. Two mothers also indicated that they had friends from other racial backgrounds. Five mothers attended a Korean church, while one mother attended an American church. Of them, four reported that they had positive relationships with church. In case of the mothers attending Korean ethnic church, the church was actively utilized as a place to culturally socialize their biracial children.

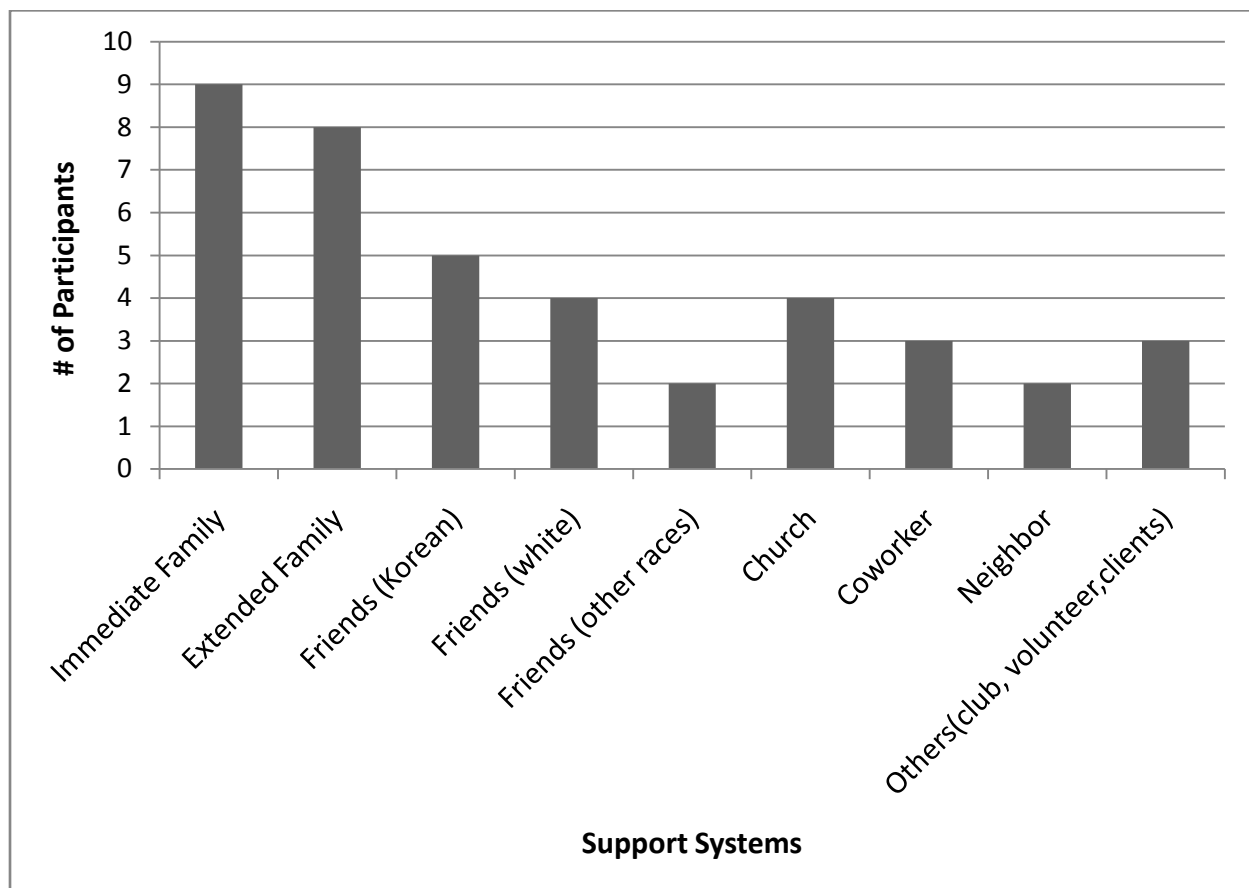


Figure 4.4. Support networks identified by Korean mothers

## **Study Findings**

In the following section, I organized my study findings based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, which allowed me to examine factors that help facilitate biracial late adolescents and emerging adults' identity development and positive psychological adjustment. Exploring ecological systems around biracial individuals showed how each system in their lives influenced the ways they developed their identity and effectively coped with their biracial status.

The findings are presented through themes generated from the interviews and other supplement data (ecomaps, field-notes, and memos), and quotes from participants are utilized to support the themes presented. Essential themes emerged as being supportive facilitating biracial individuals' identity development and positive psychological adjustment including: (1) Perceived Support (influence of peer relationship on identity development; peer relationships in school; influences of having friends from diverse backgrounds on identity development; influence of community on identity development; and influence of extended families on identity development); (2) Importance of Parental Supports (maternal support; modifying parenting styles; acknowledging the difference between biracial and monoracial individuals; mothering vs. fathering ; middle-ground parenting; parental racial socialization practices ; and preparation for bias); and (3) Biracial Individuals' Outcomes related to Racial Identity (influence of inherited personal traits; emphasizing strengths of dual heritage; and being more open and tolerant of other races/cultures). Each main theme has sub-themes that help describe and summarize the similarities and differences found among the participants. Following is a detailed description of these findings.

## **Theme 1: Perceived Support**

Most biracial participants reported that they did not have problems forming friendships during childhood. Their biracial status did not give them much trouble when making friends even though some people joked about Asian stereotypes around them. They appreciated the opportunity to develop friendships with like-minded individuals although most of their friends were limited to White peers, which was not common for them to have biracial friends while growing up unless they lived in one of the few communities with high numbers of interracial families. All participants had been involved in or were currently involved in positive relationships with their friends. Biracial status is experienced by the participants as both helping and hindering social relationships, but mostly helping them.

**Influence of peer relationship on identity development.** Experiences with peers, whether in the school or neighborhood context, significantly contributed to identity development of biracial participants. For them, particularly finding acceptance among a group of their friends seemed to be closely related to their psychological adjustment and social development.

***Race doesn't matter when forming friendship.*** As participants in Renn's (2000) study on biracial college students pointed out, even though sometimes the borders were more clearly defined, and more subtly delineated at others, being accepted into a group was often a matter of demonstrating a shared set of cultural experiences (e.g., knowledge of language, food, religion, or values of the group's culture) and how one looks (e.g., physical appearance). However, unlike the Renn's (2000) findings, although the biracial participants in this study acknowledged the importance of peer relationships on their identity development, they also said that their cultural experiences associated with their biracial heritage and their physical appearance were not closely related to their being accepted into a group of friends. For example, a high school senior, 18-

year-old Tom, who were aiming to become a medical doctor as his parents shared his peer relationships:

Yeah, we are a very diverse group. And it has always been that way. It's not like I hang out with Korean kids, or I hang out with the White kids. It is just the kind of person you are. My friends and I were having a discussion about this last night when we were hanging out. We were just hanging out, and I don't know what brought this about, but we were like, "How is race even an issue today, like how does everyone not just get along?" And in my family we have never been prejudice against one race or the other. I think we are very kind to others, and we treat people based on the kind of person they are.

Tom emphasized that when making friends, race did not matter. When forming a friendship, the most important thing to consider is "what kind of person one is." Tom continued to elaborate his thoughts on the peer relationship:

It would ultimately depend on the type of person they are. I don't see race as much of an issue. I think it is more of how compatible you are with someone. You can be White and just not a very pleasant person. And that does not mean anything to me if you are White; it's just that you are not very pleasant. And, you know, in terms of how we will be seen, I don't think we are seen as very different from a lot of people. It is always, "Tom, you're Asian." And stuff like that. It is like if I don't score well on my tests, my friends will tease me saying like, "Oh you should have gotten 100% your Asian," stuff like that. And it's like, "C'mon, I am only half Korean." It is like not an excuse, but just a joke, and we don't even take it seriously at all. When I hang out with my friends, I have no sense of being very different from them. We are a very diverse group as I showed you. None of us are like, "Oh friend 'so and so' is different because he is like 'this'." We are all just like funny and like kids who hang out and have a good time and there is no distinction.

Similarly, Eric, an 18-year-old adolescent who recently graduated from high school and was planning to attend a top-tier university coming fall, also commented that his racial background did not have any influence on his interactions with his friends at school, "I don't think it [being biracial] has any influence on me at all, like interacting with my friends at school. Like maybe if I was completely Asian, like 100% Korean, I'd hang out with more Asian people." Unlike Tom and Eric who discussed that race did not matter for them to make friends, Aaron, a 21-year-old college senior whose parents were both PhD holders, talked about the influence of his biracial peers on his identity development:

When I was younger, it's definitely my parents who influenced me most and as I grew up, my half Asian friends had more influence on my becoming who I am, my friends who were as much Asian as me because they were half Chinese and half White and my other friend is full Chinese...we have many things in common, and we talked a lot and that has strengthened me becoming myself. We can talk that kind of things because I am not close to my parents on a daily basis since I left home for college.

Emerging adulthood often is characterized by changes in residence, employment or education and it is a time of identity exploration and self-focus, development of new social networks; separation from families and old friends, and decreased parental support, guidance, and monitoring (Arnett, 2005). Therefore, as Aaron pointed out, his friends have become more influential in his life than his parents who had less daily contacts with him.

***Having mostly White friends.*** Biracial participants identified the racial demographics of their school and neighborhood as predominantly White from elementary school through high school. While asked the racial compositions of their close friends, except for three biracial participants including Aaron, most biracial participants reported that a majority of their close friends are White, and the reasons of their having mostly White friends were: 1) having lived in a predominantly White neighborhood in all their lives; 2) having attended schools in which a majority of students were White; and 3) feeling more comfortable to interact with White people.

Kenny, a high school senior, whose mother was a 1.5 generation Korean immigrant woman with PhD degree in education, considered his White friends as being supportive when he faced some difficulties:

All my friends are like 99% White and 1% other. I don't really know many Asian kids, I easily interact with more White people, and most of my friends are White, so I can say that I'm closer to White friends than Asian friends. I don't really go to my parents to ask for their support when I'm in need of some advice. It's like talking to my friends when I face some kinds of problems. They listen to me and when it's needed, they provide some advice.

Michelle, a 20-year-old college junior, talked about her friend network that was similar to

Kenny's:

My friends are pretty much White. I have a friend half Mexican half White, and I know one Asian girl, but I am not close to her. I actually have a friend who is half Korean and half German, but I don't have many friends who are from different races. I don't know why, it just happened that way.

A 21-year-old Amy who attended a prestigious university preparing for the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) said that mostly she feels closer to her White friends:

I would say most of the times I feel closer to my White friends. I think it could be hang out with them more often so you know, like the other ones, they don't really know me as much as my White friends, especially as I was growing up.

Amy's mother, Jean who was a first-generation Korean immigrant woman working as a realtor talked about the reason why most of her children's friends were White, "My kids all attended schools in which the majority of students were White. There were a very few students from racial minority backgrounds." Most participants reported that they lived in a community that had hardly any mixed race youth and family. As noted by biracial participants in this study, the racial demographics of their social environment impacted their peer relationships. However, most of them did not experience alienation and rejection caused by their biracial status. Rather all seemed to have been able to form friendships with White that they became very close to.

As 18-year-old Larry who recently graduated from high school and was planning to attend a prestigious university coming fall commented that his identity might have been shaped around his White friends:

I don't know for sure, probably a lot of it is [identity] shaped around my friends. I don't really think about it, but probably a lot of it is because those are the people I spend times with and stuff, so I guess if anything, they influence me to be more American because most of them are [White].

Paul, a 26-year-old college senior majoring in accounting also said, "I'll have some of my

friends, if I am stressed out, I'll talk to them, but it is not racial specific." Michelle's case was similar to Paul, "When I have some problems that I can't talk with my dad, I go to my friends and they help me." For those participants that felt comfortable in their environment, regardless of racial make-up, lack of exposure to other mixed race youth and families is described as not having mattered. Surprisingly, just over half of the participants claimed that it did not matter whether there was a high visibility of mixed race youth and families in their schools and neighborhoods or whether they had mixed friends.

**Peer relationships in school: The importance of valuing diversity.** When compared to parental influences, school environments influenced the participants to a lesser extent, but there were still significant relationships that the participants associated as influencing factors of their development, especially viewing their differences in a positive way. Schools have been regarded as an extension of the community, in which important messages about race and race-related issues are conveyed through day-to-day experiences. A majority of biracial participants viewed their interactions with influential people such as peers and teachers in this setting, school, in a positive light. For biracial participants in high school or college settings in this study, finding acceptance among a group of peers might have set the tone for social development and provide feelings of comfort and safety. Several biracial participants talked about the positive influence of their school environment on their development.

Tom's positive experience with peers at school influenced the way he embraced his two heritages:

It [being biracial] is always has been something that has set me apart from some of my other friends in school, but no one has ever made fun of me for being bi-racial. And I just think it is very nice to have this sort of diversity in my life and to have two sides of a culture that I can experience.

In case of Eric, school peers influenced him by reinforcing his views of himself as being different from some of his friends. However, his peers' acceptance of his dual heritages enabled him to embrace his cultures and appreciate diversity in his life. Eric also recalled a similar positive experience with his peers:

In my high school, there are like, Asians and African American and like Indians, we can call it a bit more diverse than other schools with predominantly White. Regardless of different racial backgrounds of students, we got along well. I've never faced racial discrimination there. Some students sometimes just casually say, like Asian jokes and things like that, but those were not aimed at me specifically, and I wasn't like, super sensitive even though I'm also part Asian. It's kinda, it's just coming from like a friend, so it's like, "okay, yeah, that's pretty funny." I've never had anybody like, try to get at me like talking about my Asian ethnicity.

Kenny also talked about his positive experience with his school environment:

Mostly I've had positive experiences with peers in school I went. If I went to different schools, like those in Detroit, it might have been different, but the school I went was small in a farm town, about 600 students attending in high school, so no discrimination or anything like that in school.

As Kenny pointed out, he has had positive experiences with his peers because he attended a high school in which there was no discrimination, when compared to other school districts where students might feel unsafe. Schools play an important role in channeling peer influence in a positive direction. Thus, as Kenny talked about, attending inclusive schools would help biracial children to form positive peer relationships.

### **Influences of having friends from diverse backgrounds on identity development.**

Tom commented the diversity of his friends how they helped him to view the world:

My friendships influenced me to be more inclusive. I have mentioned this numerous times now, but the diversity of my friend group has really opened my eyes to a lot of things. I have neglected to mention that my Irish White friend is a vegetarian. That is a cool experience. My Persian friend is Muslim so they don't eat certain types of meat. He has enlightened me about the Islamic religion. And my Cuban friend has opened my eyes to Hispanic-American culture and stuff like that. My Japanese-Chinese friend and I are the Asians in the group and we can compare our relationships and our experiences off of each other. Having such a diverse group has really helped me build my own identity.



Aaron's mother, Mary who recently retired from her work as a university researcher also commented that his son's friends and their families came from diverse cultures:

It has to be diverse. Aaron's friends are from racially diverse backgrounds. Nowadays our society has becoming more and more diverse. For example, all my sons' friends' families are pretty much inclusive, so they embrace diverse cultures.

Tom and Aaron were the ones whose friends were from diverse racial backgrounds the most. As Tom commented, his interaction with friends from was what helped him to develop his identity as well as to enrich his life.

Not all biracial participants talked about positive relationships with their peers. Unlike several participants who shared positive experiences, due to his racial background, Paul had some unpleasant experiences with peers in elementary school:

I can barely remember. Elementary school I remember more often now. I would like try to hang out with the Koreans and they are kind of being weird because I am half White, and the White kids not wanting to hang out with me because I am half Asian.

While interviewing, experiences in all levels of schooling including all K-12 schools and college were mentioned in various contexts by all participants. In addition to the peer relationships, one of the most frequently recalled experiences associated with their schooling was parental involvement in their education. The school district that six biracial participants belonged to was well known for educational excellence with strong parent and community support. According to the biracial participants, especially parental expectations and active participation in their education were served as a tool to promote the biracial participants' academic achievement, motivation, and also career aspiration. Economic advantage, residential stability, and family stability were also factors that help facilitate the positive development in biracial individuals in the study.

**Influence of community on identity development.** Seven participants discussed the influence of the community on their development. All biracial participants reported that they grew up in predominantly White, affluent neighborhoods located in suburbs. When depicting their neighborhood, they described their suburban neighborhood as either “mostly White,” “majority White,” or “predominantly White.” When asked whether they were discriminated by others based on their racial background, most participants said, “no”. Among the biracial participants, five attended a large racially diverse public school at some point in their lives, while four attended school in which there were a majority of White students except for a few racially diverse students. Currently, six biracial participants were residing in a college town and their descriptions of the community were all very positive. Tom commented on his supportive environment:

I would have to say, again I am very fortunate to have grown up where I am, and I don’t have other experiences to compare them against, but from what I see, the half White, half Korean community is fairly nice. I don’t see them being particularly jaded or prejudice toward one side of their culture or the other. They are not saying, “No, I am Korean. I need to embrace the Korean values and reject my White heritage, or the other way around.”

Larry who also lived in the same neighborhood also informed, “In terms of racial composition of the community I live in is, although I think it is open minded too.” Larry’s mother, Yoon who was a first generation Korean immigrant woman working as a researcher at a state university described her neighborhood, and how her family was received by others in the community:

It is a pretty diverse community, and a lot of people are university affiliated, so I guess, they’re very open-minded, but if you go to country-side or big cities, I heard that it’s different because there may be more discrimination based on race. I don’t know what their psychology is, but it depends on each individual’s attitudes or perceptions toward diversity, but in the community we live in, I think our family is very well accepted because my sons are very nice kids, and they are polite and well-mannered...you know my neighbors, they always actually praise my kids.

When asked about the surroundings he lived, Eric shared that overall, he has not encountered much obstacle:

I've never faced racial discrimination. People sometimes just casually say, like Asian jokes and things like that. But it's just coming from like a friend, so it's like, "okay, yeah, that's pretty funny." I've never had anybody like, try to get at me like talking about my Asian ethnicity.

Aaron also had similar experiences with others in terms of the atmosphere of the communities he grew up and he is currently living because of his schooling:

I haven't encountered any incident of discrimination while growing up, I think a lot of that is, because I look more like a White person, because a lot of that caused by my physical appearance because I look more like a White person than biracial and also then growing up in Maple [pseudonym], it's pretty much welcoming community, there's a lot of it's very, like multiracial, and then Macomb [pseudonym] is even more so. So I think that there's lots of environmental stuff to that too. If I was in a different city, maybe in which racial discrimination is more prevalent, then I would probably have a different experience...however, for me, it's been a very very smooth sailing I would say.

As Aaron pointed out, his physical appearance, i.e., looking more White, seemed to serve as a protective factor, but the inclusiveness of the communities he grew up in and attended college also influenced the way he was received by others. Aaron's mother, Mary talked about the time when she had to live separately without her husband because she decided not to move to another city with him for the sake of her son:

There were times when my husband and I were living separately because my husband moved to Illinois to work there and I decided not to go with him since my son is biracial I did not want to move him to a White-dominated community. Maple [pseudonym] and Super State University [pseudonym] are a diverse community. I wanted to raise my son in this diverse atmosphere and I did not want him to face any kind of discrimination and prejudice.

Mary pointed out that although she intentionally prepared her son for any possible encounter of discrimination, by having him live in the inclusive community, somehow she protected her son from facing any race-based incidents:

I've never taught any kind of coping strategies in relation with discrimination. So far, I don't think that I've tried to intentionally socialize my son in that respect. One thing I've tried for my son is that having him grow in a diverse community in which there are less discrimination toward minorities.

Jenny, a 52-year-old, 1.5 generation Korean immigrant woman with a PhD in education, working as a university researcher commented that she has faced no race-related issues in her neighborhood:

The community now we live in is all White neighborhood. When my kids were younger, that was a bit more mixed...in terms of neighborhood, there's no problem related to race. All the kids in our current neighborhood are White and younger than my sons. We did not have any issues related to our neighborhoods.

All biracial participants including the mothers emphasized the importance of education and high academic performance, which was also closely associated with the environment of the community they resided. Yoon, a 49-year-old first generation Korean immigrant mother, introduced an anecdote showing how her neighbors were like:

In terms of the racial makeup of neighborhood while raising my children, it's basically Caucasians.... and my neighbors know what kind of things go through our family's, like our son's lives, for example, when Larry received an admission from a very prestigious university and my neighbor was like "Have you made the decision?" and I said "Yes, I did" and then I told him that I made the decisions based on certain factors, and stuff like that. I can feel that they care about us and our kids' education as neighbors....yeah, I can feel they care.

Yoon's family lived in an upper-middle White neighborhood near a state university in which her husband worked as a professor. As she pointed out, her neighbors showed interest in her son's education such as college decisions. Living in a diverse and inclusive community may better foster a sense of belonging for ethnic/racial minority individuals and families, but as Jenny and Yoon commented, living in a predominantly White neighborhood in which diversity could be recognized as well as people could also live in an atmosphere of understanding and mutual respect for each individual would promote biracial individuals' positive development.

**Influence of extended families.** Most biracial participants reported that one of the most influential factors in their lives that helped them to develop their identity was their extended families even though their influence was not as strong as their immediate family and their peers. However, it seemed that close relationships with extended families are generally associated with: 1) each parent's relationship with their own families; 2) the geographic proximity or ability to travel that made for consistent contact; 3) each extended family's view on cultural diversity (i.e., the level closeness to each extended family was determined by whether the extended family members accept people whose racial background was different from their own); and 4) biracial individuals' ability to understand Korean language. Therefore, in terms of each biracial participant's feeling of affinity toward their maternal side of and their paternal side of extended family, there were variations among the nine interracial families in this study. A majority of the biracial participants reported that they felt closer to their paternal side of extended family because of the geographic proximity, and Kenny of one of them, "Compared to my mom's family, I've seen my father's family often, like for holidays, like Thanksgiving and Christmas, and birthdays, because they live closer to us. And I feel closer to them than my mom's side of family." Kenny's mother, Jenny also acknowledged the fact that the geographic proximity was a significant factor, "My mom and dad are far away, so our family did not see each other often, when compared to my in-laws who live nearby." Jean shared her difficulties:

There's nobody who actually helped me to raise my kids, but I talked to every individual about my problems. I talked to my mom, my older sister and they listened to me and when needed, they gave me advice. Since I live far from my extended family, they're not around us, so it's hard to ask for any help. Of course, I talk to my mother and older sister, but that's about it. There's nobody near us who can help me if any of them were near me, I would have got a lot more help when raising my kids for sure.

Jean's children including Amy did not have many opportunities to meet with both sides of families, so for them, the influence of extended families on identity development seemed to be

very weak when compared with other interracial families in this study. Michelle shared her experiences, saying that living nearby matters a lot in terms of relationships with her extended family:

I feel closer to my dad's family 'cause all they live nearby, they all live maybe in 20-minute drive. We do a lot of family things, like get together, stuff like that. Growing up, being with them also influenced the way I think about myself, like my racial identity. My grandma's family was from Germany, so she cooked German foods, so I got to experiences part of German culture through her food. I am pretty close to her. I have four aunts and two uncles and lots of cousins. My brother and my dad are really close because my brother works with my dad. My dad owns a company and his business partner is my aunt, so it's like a family business, and then I don't really know how close are them to my mom. However, when there're family gatherings, my mom doesn't go there, but I go there, so I do feel naturally closer to them.

Michelle continued to explain the downside of being biracial:

I would say the downside of being biracial is one side of your families are not nearby, like living in a different country. You know if one can share both sides of cultures and one can meet both sides of family often, that would be good, but most times that's not the case. Like my case, I am close to my dad's side of family because they live near and we get to see each other often.

As can be seen from Michelle's relationship with her paternal side of extended family, the geographic proximity was the most salient factor that enabled her to see her extended family often. However, it could be inferred that the relationship between her paternal extended family and her mother was not very smooth because her mother did not visit her in-laws. Thus, we can see that Michelle's mother might feel disconnected with her White extended family. Michelle's mother, Dana commented on her in-laws' influence on her daughter:

Let me share my experience with my daughter when she was young. One day, she was yelling at me saying why she has slanted eyes and she looked so oriental. I think she heard something from, maybe her grandparents, my husband's parents, or her cousins. My husband's parents never liked me. They sometimes told me that I had to go back to where I came from. They insulted me many, many times due to my racial background. I think that they also influenced my children in negative ways. Every time my children visited their grandparents, I could feel some distance from them. I am sure my in-laws said something about me to my children. I feel so very sad.

In Dana's case, we can see that there was an enormous challenge—racial tensions--between herself and her in-laws, which seemed to have influenced the relationships between herself and her 20-year-old daughter, Michelle. During the interview with Michelle, I was able to see that Michelle was much closer to her father and her paternal side of extended family than her mother and her maternal side of extended family. Although it was not explicitly said, the negative views and attitudes toward Dana from Michelle's paternal side of extended family might have partly influenced Michelle's perception or attitudes toward Korean culture.

Jean, a 52-year-old first generation Korean immigrant mother of three biracial children shared her unpleasant experience with her brother-in-law:

My husband's older brother participated in Vietnamese War, and he seems to think that all Asian countries are dirt poor, so naturally he figured out I was also from a very poor country, like he's stereotyping me. That's very insulting in some way, and he never really considered me as a person who's educated. He did not really want to know me well in fact. Recently he called me saying that he wants to mend the bridge between us, but since I was hurt so much by his rudeness for a long time, it was really hard for me to accept his gesture. I would not treat a person as he did to me. He totally ignored me. If he were my family, I would have said something to him...I would not be treated like that, but since he's my in-law, I couldn't.

As Jean experienced, sometimes White extended family members tended to characterize their Asian in-laws by a stereotype, which could be very insulting to an Asian American who was married to a White American spouse. After having experienced with such negative encounters with their in-laws, Korean mothers such as Dana and Jean tried to avoid meeting their in-laws, which, in turn, might also cause some obstacles when their children are trying to form positive relationships with their paternal side of extended family.

Another 1.5 generation Korean immigrant mother, a 44-year old Celine with three biracial children, described how her first meeting with her in-laws went, which could also explain why there might have some tensions between Korean women and their White in-laws:

I never really like told them [children] that I went through a lot of discrimination when I came here. And you know, I remember the time when I was dating my husband and we dated for over seven years before we got married. And my in-laws have never, ever seen an Asian person, so there were some racial tensions there. My husband has never had an Asian friend, or let alone a girlfriend, so it's kind of very like, whoa, all of a sudden you have an Asian girlfriend? They did not know what to do. So the first time I met my in-laws, the whole, entire dinner was the most uncomfortable experience I've ever had. They'd stared at me all day long and I felt really uncomfortable. I'm so glad my kids don't have to go through that because I've already went through it with my in-laws. Even before we were getting married, my mother-in-law cautioned her son and said, "You guys are so different. You guys are from totally different planets." We are not even talking now she's Asian and you're Polish or you're American. But she's not even... I mean, 'cause you're fifth generation and I'm only the second generation or something like that.

Celine continued to share her experiences on how she tried to modify her lifestyle to fit more into her husband's family background:

You know, our upbringing was so different. I'm from New York City, the ghetto, and he's from, you know, what would you say, a small town in Gaylord [pseudonym] or whatever, so very middle class, White family... I have had to change a lot of my lifestyle. You know, I try to make it very American as I can. So, yeah, I've adjusted a lot.

In order to better meet the expectations of her husband and his family, Celine tried to emulate a typical American middle class, but at the same time, it seemed that she intentionally or unintentionally gave up her heritage culture. It should be noted that Celine's case was contradictory to Chan's (1997) findings on over 200 interracial couples' relationships, showing that assimilation process was bi-directional in that over time each individual began to adopt the values and attitudes of their partner. Celine also acknowledged that she put a lot of effort to be more like White American, and the result seemed to be her son, Eric's feeling closer to his White side of family. Eric commented:

I think maybe like my grandparents have influenced me, because they're White and I feel like I'm close to them. I also meet them often. In fact, I rarely see my mom's side of family, so I don't actually know them well. My mom's mother passes away when I was very young, so I don't remember her and my mom's dad's still alive, but I don't get to see him, I only know that he's in a nursing home in New York. And so naturally, I just feel like I'm part of a classic White family. So that might have had an influence on me, I don't know, being more White, I guess.



As in the cases of Celine and Dana, when they had rejecting experiences from their in-laws, the relationships between them would not be smooth. In fact, family dynamics were further strained when they had to accommodate experiences that included the parents being disrespected by in-laws. A 19-year-old Candice talked about being isolated at family gatherings and feeling sorry for her mother, Kim, a first generation Korean immigrant:

It's not really an issue, but normally when we do holidays, we always go to my dad's side of family, so me and my mom were the only Asian people there, then my cousin married a Filipino lady and she always talk to us, so it's kind of me and my mom, we're only being like an outsider there. It's like isolated because sometimes I noticed people won't talk to my mom because they can't understand my mom because of her accent and then when I go to my mom to stay with her, I also noticed nobody came to us, so it's been like a really long time. It's still the same. Since I am older now, I can talk to the adults there, but for my mom, it's the same, so after talking with my aunts, uncles and cousins I usually go back to my mom to keep her company.

As in the case of Candice, sometimes, biracial participants found that their Korean mothers' experiencing feelings of marginalization, or need to find acceptance among their paternal extended family members, which, in turn, made them feel sorry for their mothers and might have influenced (either negatively or positively) their perceptions or views on their dual heritages.

***Relationships between heritage language fluency and closeness to their extended family.*** Biracial participants who could not speak Korean appeared to be closer to their paternal side of extended family than their maternal side of extended family because there was no language barrier between them and their White extended family. Larry shared his experience in that respect:

I see my grandmother on my dad's side quite often, and my grandma on my mom's side maybe once a year or maybe once every other year. I am probably closer to my grandma on my dad's side because she knows English... Yeah. But I mean my grandma on my mom's side used to be around here a lot when I was a kid and watched me through the day and stuff. So even though we can't talk to each other, I can see that she does care for me. However, it's really hard to communicate with them [maternal side of extended family] because I can't speak Korean and they can't speak English.

In terms of developing relationships, communication can be a key. As Larry commented, when there was a language barrier between a biracial child and his/her extended family, and they had to struggle with their second language, it might not be easy for them to feel rapport and to have the desire to maintain the relationships until the barrier was removed. In line with Larry's claim, Tom's comments seemed to be a great example showing that individual effort to overcome the language barrier is important:

It was a very funny experience for me when we would go to my grandparent's house on my mother's side. They would speak Korean to her, and she would respond in English. Yeah and she would say—well I can't speak for her but from what I gather, she can very much understand it and speak it. It just depends on how much she is willing to put in and commit to the language.

Tom talked about his positive experiences with his extended families:

I feel very comfortable with my family's racial identity. I would have to say that I have no issue with it at all. I have no moments where I am like, "Oh I wish I was this." Or "I wish I was a different race." I could not have asked for a better childhood or a more supportive family, just a fantastic life. I sort of grew up with my mother's side of the family more than my father's. Because my father only has one sibling and he is 8 years younger. His brother did not have children until about 6 years ago, so when it was Thanksgiving and family time, we would go to Illinois or Wisconsin to hang out with the kids and the Korean side of the family, and we identified ourselves with them. We are typically fairly nice people. I have to say I have not met, as of yet, a half White, half Korean person who has been cruel or particularly unkind.... I would have to say they are more open. There is a trend that they are very nice people and they are very considerate. We are just fun people who judge people on their personal qualities not on their race.

As can be seen from Tom's account on his Korean extended family, Tom seemed to have enjoyed being with his warm, welcoming, and tight-knit extended family, and he was very appreciative of that aspect of his life. Tom spoke of the joy in being with people who wholeheartedly accepted and claimed him as their own, all of which, in turn, made him to grow into a healthy and positive individual.

***Relationships with extended families: Distance and frequency of contact matters.*** All

but one, biracial participants reported that they felt closer to their father's side because there was no language barrier, met their paternal extended family more frequently than their maternal extended family, and were exposed to American culture much more than Korean culture. For example, Eric commented, "I don't look like Korean much, yeah, looking more like White. And, um, hanging out with my grandparents and cousins maybe influence me more." Larry's account explained why he felt closer to his father's culture:

I don't think that I identify myself as one or the other, but I think I look more like my mom but I think mentally I still see myself more as my dad's culture because I live in America and I regularly visit my paternal grandparents and see them a lot more than my mom's family.

Jean talked about her children who seemed to feel that they were more American than Korean:

My children think that they're Korean, but they also think they're more American than Korean. I did not tell them you need to be Korean or you need to speak Korean, but they exactly know that they're in the middle. They did not have that difficulty adjusting here.

Aaron did identify himself racially, rather he considered himself as someone who belongs to the mainstream American society:

I think that because Korean culture is what's different versus American culture, that's definitely been more like, whenever we go visit my Korean side of family elsewhere, like everyone is your aunt or uncle type of thing, versus I don't really know it's actually my great aunt or whatever. And I guess, always it seems to stick out just because it's different, but it's never been talked about specifically in the family, like identifying this way or that way, and I would say that I would identify myself in the middle, but definitely not as I would say that I would identify myself as Korean and as White, but definitely like, someone in the mainstream American society versus Korean society.

Tom discussed that in order for him to get connected to his Korean culture, he should try harder:

Yeah I have thought about it. I definitely have a little more to do in terms of connecting with my Korean side than I do with my American-White side because my American side is all around me. I don't have to make much effort into experiencing the White culture. And Korea is far away and stuff like that. But it would be something nice to do. Like I said, I was very excited to learn that my friend on the water polo team was born in Korea. I ask him like, "What was it like there? Tell me about it. What was your experience? Was

it a wonderful place? Was it very fun?” He’s like, “The culture is different. The males in Korea are becoming more feminine because the fathers are not there.” And, “We used to catch these large beetles and tie strings around them and let them fly,” which I found both very interesting.

As Tom commented, since he has been living in the US, not in Korea, in order to get to know Korean culture and stay connected with it and his maternal side of extended family, he needed to exert a lot of effort, which could be challenging for him and for those who were not living near Korean American enclaves.

The role of extended family seemed to be influenced by both dynamic systems that influenced individuals (e.g., biracial children, each parent) in the extended family network as well as by how these systems associated with each other. Staying in touch with both sides of extended family members can be an effective strategy of racial socialization in biracial families even though it will not be easy due to the geographic proximity, language barriers, and exclusive culture in some families.

**Summary.** The biracial participants in this study perceived their peers, safe and inclusive school and community, and their extended family to be great supports in the development of their overall identity. Experiences with peers, whether in the school or neighborhood context, significantly contributed to identity development of biracial participants. Being easily accepted by a group of friends seemed to be closely related to the biracial participants’ psychological adjustment and social development. Extended family could either help or hinder the development of biracial participants. If their views toward diversity were positive, and they were accepting of their Korean in-law, biracial children could easily form positive relationships with their extended family. However, as stated by several Korean mothers and their biracial children, there seemed to exist racial tensions between White extended family members and Korean mothers, which, in turn, made their biracial children to feel uncomfortable when they were with their paternal side

of extended family. Thus, both parents should exert efforts to minimize the racial tensions for their biracial children's sake.

## **Theme 2: Importance of Parental Support**

All biracial participants reported that their families, especially their parents were the most significant influence in the overall development of their identity. As identified by the eco-mapping activity, all nine biracial participants reported that they had positive relationships with both ( $n = 5$ ) or one of the parents ( $n = 4$ ). As they acknowledged, the relationships between themselves and their parent(s) were served as a major factor in shaping their own values, thoughts, and attitudes as well as impacting their development.

**Maternal support.** Although all biracial participants underscored the influences both parents have on their identity development, according to them, mothers served as the main support system in their lives providing supports and guidance. The mothers who came from Korean families had somewhat different cultural values and parenting styles from the fathers who came from White American families. One thing that should be notable was that biracial participants tended to refer their mothers as Asian mothers instead of Korean mothers throughout the interview.

***Typical Asian Parenting: “My Asian mom pushes me, but I know it’s for my own good.”*** Several biracial participants seemed to consider their Korean mothers’ overemphasis on academic performance and somewhat strict attitudes as an annoyance. However, they also appreciated the devotion of their mother and the continuous support for their success. Their mothers have helped them to shape and constructed their biracial identities, while promoting their academic achievement at K-12 schools and guiding them to pursue a professional career.

Most biracial participants described their relationships with their Korean mothers as supportive and close. Tom's changing attitudes towards his mother's parenting clearly is a great example:

My relationship with my mom has improved over the past couple of years as I have gone to appreciate everything she has done for me. But before when I was younger and did not really take time to look at all of the things she did, it was like, "Ugh she is always in my life, and she is constantly doing things." But now I see it as committed to my future.

As Tom explained, when he was young, he did not quite regard his mother's efforts and support as positive factors because he found his mother's overemphasis on academic performance to be annoying, rather than beneficial for his own good. Tom described typical Asian parents:

Whether you're Chinese, Japanese, or Korean, there is this idea about Asian parents, like what they are like, "We all do very well in school because of our Asian parents." Or, "They make us play an instrument." But we are all better from it, I think. As long as you make decisions for your child until they are ready to make decision for themselves is the right way of parenting. And I think we all identify, and we all have conversations where we "grieve" about it. Like, "Don't you hate it when you get an A- and your parents are mad?" Stuff like that. My mom watched an episode of *Glee* recently where the Asian character got an A-, and his father was like, "Oh no, that is like an Asian F." So ever since then, she's jokingly referred to my grades as Asian F's because they are not 100%.

Although Tom's depiction of Asian parents can be an example of stereotyping, more than half of the mothers in this study also practiced so-called "Asian parenting." Getting good grades are also very important in Asian American families, and Kenny's mother sounded like a typical Korean mother in that respect:

Because my oldest brother struggled in school, like grades slipping and everything, and my next brother was a 4.0 student, so my mom wanted me to be like him, so she always pushes me to get good grades, so I did because to her, grades like 3.5 or 3.0 wasn't good enough, so I've got all 4.0 in high school. I can see my mom emphasized the importance of education. They always tell us "don't be procrastinate", "don't wait until the last minute," "do it right away". She wants me to become a doctor, things have to be good to be, like a surgeon 'cause I have fine motor skills, so I don't know. At least I know that my mom wants me to do well academically because she's worried about my future.

As Kenny recognized, biracial participants appreciated the devotion of their mothers even though they felt their mothers' controlling way a bit stifling at times. Some Korean mothers in this study reported that they indeed possessed a strong personality. Angie, for example, said:

My husband could say I always win, you know. I guess I've never accepted his way, but I know my way is right, so why I would have to follow his way? It all depends on your child. If I had a child who can't do it, they can't do it. If my child could not do it and I knew it, I wouldn't expect as much, but I have two kids with brains better than mine and they could better than me. Look at me how far I've got. I did not think my brain was that good.

Angie further described one significant incident related to her Asian parenting:

When Tom was in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade, grades did not matter to him, so I said that grades do matter because unless you could figure out another way or another system that could be accepted by all. You have to remember what I have seen was, I know that Tom has a capacity for A's, so I am not gonna accept "C's". When he got a "B", I did not say that "Tom, you got a "B", it's wonderful, you did well." Instead I said, you need to work harder to get an "A" because I know you could do it. I think, my husband's parents, I had some issues with how my husband was raised. Not him, because he's different from most Americans. He had his own drive, again that, I believe, has made him succeed, but I think the mentality for a lot of Americans is that "Make sure, he's happy and as long as he's happy, he'll be fine. It's like a bottle of wine. It will come to its age when it's time." You know, I see a time line, I mean you could look, the best time to learn is when your brain is young when it could make all these different connections. I'm not gonna let Tom's brain to be idle until he figures it out at 21. College starts at 18, so I have to make sure he develops his brain to study on his own by 18. I've had a lot of pressure from my husband and his parents not to push him though...

A 49-year old Angie who retired from her profession as a medical doctor to raise her sons seemed to be strong-willed and determined when it came to her sons' education and their future careers. While interviewing, she talked about providing autonomy to her sons, but at the same time, she talked about parents' acting as a guidance and facilitator for their children. According to Angie, her parents-in-law and her husband were too laid back to effectively discipline children, so she wanted to support her children in her own way even though she has faced some conflicts between herself and her husband/ in-laws. Angie's son, Tom, reported that now he has become actually appreciated his mother's parenting efforts:

I think a lot of it is leading by example. It is just like that with parenting. Rather than say, “You need to be Korean.” Or, “These are the things you need to do.” Just lead by example and let your kids be whom they want to be. I don’t think you can force them to do anything. When I was too young to make decision for myself, my mom was like, “You’re playing piano. You’re playing violin.” There were certain things I had no choice in. But I think I am very much better off from them. My mom did take control of me when I was much younger. There was a lot of, “You’re going to violin. You’re going to go to piano practice. You are going to do Kumon.” Stuff like that. While it was like I did not want to do those things because it meant spending time away from video games and friends, I think I am very much better from it. I can’t say playing violin has made me a horrible person, or the things that my mom has done for me have made me bad. I can’t look at my life and say I am unfortunate in any way. I am only fortunate to have what I have.

Aaron shared experiences with his Korean mother’s parenting, especially the emphasis on achievement and performance:

Sometimes, some of my friends joked about there’s like this half Asian crowd, just half like that way, but it is like we talk about, my friends and I both have an Asian mom so sometimes we talked about “Oh Asian moms like to do this and it’s silly and my Asian mom told me to practice it again.” That was more like we were in high school like “my mom makes me practice all the time” and then she also said “I know my mom does the same thing and I wish she leaves me alone,” and in high school, it’s more like Asian things like moms making us study, like my Asian mom making me practice all the time now it’s more like my Asian mom said something cute or my mom cooked this and we would have that together. My Asian friends and I also were thankful for the things our Asian moms have done for us because we’ve turned out well.

Tom also expressed his gratitude toward his mother who gave up her professional career to raise her sons as a full-time mother:

Well I think she made the decision [to quit working] after the birth. But I am very appreciative of what she has done.... she got a lot of criticism from my grandparents and their friends. They would say, “Oh you sent her to medical school, and she is no longer a doctor, she is a mother.” And I think my grandparents were accepting of it, and that was her decision. I can’t speak for her, of course, but I feel that I couldn’t be who I am if my mother wouldn’t have chosen to raise me like she did...And you know, I thought about this a lot, and it is very difficult for me to think about children without a mother who is there all the time. And not that there is anything wrong with having a job as well, but from my experience, I have only seen beneficial things from having a mother who is there all the time and is committed to you. I feel I am very secure with who I am and where I am right now, because of a lot of stuff she has done. I have to say that my parents are very kind people, and that has definitely come off on me.



Both Tom and Aaron admitted that they did not much care for their mothers pushing them to study hard and practice musical instruments when they were young, however, as they got older, they rather appreciated their mothers' persistence and efforts because they could clearly see a number of positive outcomes.

*Atypical Asian parenting: "My mom's not like other Asian mothers."* Five biracial participants commented on their mothers' parenting style which was different from a typical Asian parenting style. They seemed to think their mothers' not being like other Asian mothers as a compliment because there were a number of negative stereotypes attached to typical Asian mothers. When asked about the most important influence to his racial identity development, Tom was quick to comment:

My mother's influence largely. It's not what she did it is what she did not do. She never said to me, "You are Korean; you need to do these things." It has never been—because you are this, you must do this. It has always been, "Do what you want to do. I am living my life for you. So please just don't be anything I want you to be; be what you want to be."

Tom thought highly of his mother because she did not push anything to him, rather she gently let her son make his own decision. It seemed that Tom did not find her mom's statement (i.e., living her life for him) as a burden. Parental sacrifice has been suggested as a major construct of parenting in Korean culture, especially Korean immigrant families, many of whom claimed that they came to the US to provide educational opportunities and upward mobility for their children. Thus, as a 1.5 generation Korean immigrant, Angie's 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrant parents seemed to have instilled that construct (i.e., parental sacrifice) in their daughter, Angie whom also utilized (maybe unintentionally) that practice to her children to promote (or push at times) their motivation to do well. Unlike some Asian children who may feel burdened by their parents' emphasis on parental sacrifice, Tom appeared to take her mother's statement in a positive way.

Amy also regarded her mother as the most significant figure in her life, “My mom was a huge influence, but she also did not act like a typical Korean mom... she let me do whatever I wanted to do. She’s very respectful towards whatever I want to do.” In terms of parenting practices, as Amy’s statement implied, her Korean mothers’ acting differently from other typical Korean/Asian mothers was meant to be a praise. Candice also talked about her mom’s being different from other Asian mothers, “My mom’s been pretty much supportive, she’s not like other Asian moms who want their kids to be doctors, lawyers, or something like that.” Candice’s mother, Kim, shared her parental expectations:

I consider myself a very good mom, I’ve done my best to raise her although I did not make her to be a straight “A” student as other Korean parents, but I don’t think that getting good grades should be the number one value in one’s life, so I can’t deny the fact that as a parent, I am focused on my child’s academic performance, but I also put a great emphasis on my daughter’s personality, umm, character development because I noticed, as a biracial kid, my daughter’s got a lot of ups and downs emotionally while growing up. Now my daughter’s away from home and can see her with more objective eyes and I found that I’ve raised my daughter well because she’s responsible, considerate and well-mannered. I just felt that.

Similarly, Aaron talked about his mom’s not practicing typical Asian parenting approaches:

My parents are usually on the same page. Here is the thing. My mom’s not like traditional Asian mom. And so she would more like, probably American way of parenting. She’s always urged me to do well, but she’s never pushed me beyond what I’ve actually wanted to do. One of my mom’s other friends, she pushed a lot harder. I kind of grateful my mom did not do that.

Like Aaron, many biracial participants in the study kept comparing their mothers with other typical Asian mothers, and when they found that their mothers were not as strict as other Asian mothers, they seemed to feel appreciated for their mothers’ flexibility. Mary, Aaron’s mother, explained why her parenting could be more flexible than other Korean mothers because of several reasons:

I asked my son, “Do you think I am a tiger mom? He said, “No way, mom.” I think because I have Wes very late, in my late age. The approach is very different from young

mothers, like more flexible, because at my age, the things I learned from Korea was not that important any more. If I were young I might have pushed my son a bit stronger. You have to be doing this and that. You have to get all “As” and things like that. However, I had my son when I was 43, so it was not that important anymore. We have always certain criteria, if he can meet that criteria and keep the boundary we as parents set, he can do whatever he wants.

In case of Mary, various factors such as age, length of US residency, and level of assimilation to American culture all influenced her parenting approach. Another mother, Jean talked about her effort to avoid exercising authoritarian parenting style:

My daughter is dating a Chinese American guy, and my daughter compared me with them saying, “Mom, They are so pushing and controlling. I’m glad you’re not like that.” I’ve tried not to be traditional Korean moms. I’m not exactly like Asian moms who are strict and controlling.

As inferred by the above statements, interpretations of Asian parenting seemed to be closely associated with negative connotations, including being too pushy, strict, controlling, excessive emphasis on parental authority and academic performance. Most of all, in traditional Korean family, absolute obedience of the children to the parents is expected with respect for all elders being the main authority of traditional Korean family values (Jo, 1999). These Korean American parents are naturally presumed to expect absolute obedience from their children along with excellence in academic work and the pursuit of professional careers (Jo, 1999).

Eric also pointed out the differences between his mother and other Asian mothers:

My mom’s not like completely like your traditional Korean mother. She always tries to support us without asking anything in return. Other Asian mothers are different from my mom, they just seem kinda strict. I like her the way she is. I don’t even want to imagine how we would turn out if we had like two people who are like my dad. Like if she was like my dad, I’d just go crazy, you know. We’ll have to deal with two extremes.

According to Eric, between his parents, his dad was more authoritarian, expecting absolute obedience from him and his siblings, “My mom will listen to input from us. And my dad, it’s kinda just like, “All right, this is what we’re gonna do. Here’s a plan. Oh, that’s what you think?”

Well, that's nice to know. We're still just gonna go with this here." As can be seen from Eric's account of both his parents, it is not always Asian mothers who are stricter and have no flexibility than White American fathers. Many people tend to stereotype "Asian" parents, but they appear to overlook the impact of the ways each individual was raised by their parents. Eric's mother, Celine, talked about her parenting approaches:

I am not very Korean...in the way I approach stuff or how I look at stuff, at how I surround myself with people. So that's why when they are closer to me – and I have to say my, all three of them are closer to me because I have an open communication with my children.

In terms of different parenting approaches between his mother and father, Eric explained that the differences might have come from the different ways both parents were raised:

I've had friends make jokes about how like, "Oh, you've got an Asian parent in your house, that's probably why you do well in school because she, like, goes crazy on you." However, that's not the case in my family. That's kinda my dad. That's like the White part of my family, he's all over me for my grades and then she's kind of just a, no offense, mush (laughs). My mom's really lenient...she's not a pushover. My mom gets whatever we want for us regardless whatever is going on. Well, it's not like I ask for a whole lot. Anyway, my they [parents] are completely opposites. Like their backgrounds too are also completely different. Like my dad grew up in a very stable household and a very, I would say, it was a pretty strict household.... like having rules and regulations. It was like, everything was like structured, and then my mom grew up in like the ghetto, and so there was no structure. It was pretty much just like do whatever comes at you. Both of them grew up in totally different environments.

**Modifying parenting styles.** During the interviews, two mothers also talked about modifying their parenting approaches to better meet the needs of their biracial children growing up in the US. In line with Eric's speculation about parenting differences, Kim shared her parenting practices similar to those of her parents:

I believe I raised my daughter in the similar way how I was raised by my parents, but there are also some differences, like modifying my parenting style since we're living in America, not in Korea. For example, my Korean parents instilled many good values in me, but as with other Korean parents, they were very strict, so even though I respect them, I don't think that that's the way I should raise my daughter because she's not a 100% Korean and I don't think that she can abide by many rules set by her parents as I did

while growing up in Korea. In terms of raising my biracial child, I think, I raised her in the way I think the best for my child, however, still at times my daughter has kept reminding me saying, “Mom, we’re not in Korea, this is not 1970s,” and whenever I heard that, I reflected my parenting style and tried to modify it accordingly without changing the basics of my parenting – raising an honest and responsible individual.

As described above, Kim modified her parenting styles to better accommodate the needs of her biracial daughter, Candice, who was from two different heritages and also living in the U.S., not in Korea. Like Kim, Jean also modified her parenting style, but as she admitted, it was because she did not want to be in conflict with her children:

I am not like other Korean moms who keep asking every step of their children. I am more accommodating than that, but I have my own boundary. I think they value that their mom respect their wishes and I trust them. Sometimes I let them have their own ways, but it’s because they want to, it’s not because I want, if I could have had my own way, my daughter would have gone to Harvard. I think my children are stronger than me. She did not get accepted to the top schools she applied, but you know what, if she followed what I wanted her to do, she would have gotten the admissions from top tier schools. Korean moms really forced their because their children do whatever their moms tell them to do, but my kids will say why would I have to do that more than what school teaches me they did not accept that and I couldn’t force them, if I would find a way, I would have had my way, but they’re stronger, so I just let them do it.

**Acknowledging the difference between biracial and monoracial individuals.** One of the most important factors that parents of biracial children should consider pointed out by the biracial participants in the study was for the parents to acknowledge the differences between biracial and monoracial children. A 21-year old Amy emphasized that parents of biracial children should exert a great deal of effort to understand their children:

You should be willing to understand where your kids come from. You should put effort to better understand your kids and their situation even though I said it [being biracial individual] really wasn’t an issue for me much, I heard stories about biracial kids’ being bullied a lot in Korea and also here, so I know that if they can understand that their kids probably go through a little bit of stereotyping and racial slurs by other kids, they have to try extra hard to overcome the difficulties, like faking their way out of it., .like I am better than you, so shut up, or something like that... you just need to understand your biracial kids, have to figure out who they are, no matter what, you’ve never fully understand where they’re coming from because your children are literally different race than you are,

like completely different, like biracial is not American and biracial is not Korean you know, it's completely in-between.

Similarly, as a monoracial mother raising a biracial daughter, Kim suggested a way to overcome some limitation, which was in line with Amy's suggestion:

You should be open-minded and try to understand your biracial children well because you may not be able to understand them really well if you don't intentionally exert efforts to understand their lives because their lives as a biracial can't be the same as your life because you're from one single racial background.

As suggested by Kim, being open-minded and putting intentional efforts to understand biracial children's lives were the parenting strategies that were frequently discussed throughout the interviews with both mothers and biracial participants in the study.

**Mothering vs. Fathering: “Our parents are different, but complement each other after all.”** Biracial participants in this study also discussed the parenting differences between their parents. In terms of their parents' differences in parenting styles, several participants pointed out several cross-cultural differences in parenting styles: 1) the authoritarian style of parenting tends to be more emphasized in Korean American families than in White American families in which the authoritative style of parenting is more commonly practiced; and 2) it seems that intersection between culture and parenting styles is an interesting phenomenon in that their Korean immigrant mothers acculturate to American culture at different degrees.

According to Baumrind Parenting Typology, parenting styles can be defined by their status on two dimensions of parenting: level of expectations (e.g., parents' controlling behaviors) of the child and level of responsiveness to the child's individuality (e.g., parental warmth) (Baumrind, 1971). Parents with authoritarian parenting styles exhibit behaviors that include high levels of control coupled with low warmth, whereas parents with authoritative parenting styles exhibit behaviors that include warmth, a high level of control with respect to child compliance

with parental expectations, and high maturity demands (Baumrind, 1971). These two types of parenting exist in all cultures, however, people tend to consider most Korean mothers as exercising authoritarian parenting approach, whereas White fathers utilizing authoritative parenting approach. In most cases, biracial participants' experiences were in line with this concept. Larry shared his experiences:

I think they [parents] are quite a bit different. My mom's side is probably a little stricter and disciplined, and probably more academically oriented. And my dad's side is more creativity... however; I think they have similar expectations. Maybe my mom is a little more... I don't know how to say it, but like enforcing of those expectations where my dad is more like, "Do your best." He has expectations but a little more like, "Work hard." The only thing my dad says is "work hard." Maybe a little more relaxed... my mom will try to like, "Study." Or "Do homework more." And my dad will be like, "Just leave him alone, he'll understand when he gets a bad grade that is the reason why he got the bad grade." If it would be anything, it would be growing up in a different culture. In terms of parenting differences between my mom and dad, I think for the most part is balance. Sometimes when there are stressful situations, it gets a little more conflicted but for the most part I think it is pretty balanced.

As noted by Larry, there were parenting differences between his mother and father due to their cultural differences, especially in relation with academic expectations. His Asian mother placed more emphasis on working hard to get good grades, while his father wanted to give his children more time to relax. Larry also talked about cultural and personality differences that might have influenced her mother's parenting approach:

I think there is a personality difference, but also the culture and the way she grew up. She grew up in tough conditions like walking to school and getting water. It is a little bit different the way my dad was brought up... my mom had to help out on the farm and stuff. Then coming here she had hardly any money and did not know any English so she had to work really hard. So it is kind of what she expects from us as well...: Sometimes I think it is annoying, but I think it has also helped me get to where I am...I guess in the long run, yeah. But there are times where I just kind of get tired.

As pointed out by Larry, along with the cultural differences in parenting styles between his parents, upbringing seemed to play a pivotal role in parenting differences. Paul described the

differences in parenting approach between his mother and father, for example, his mom's providing more practical supports when compared to his dad:

Oh yeah. At least for me, my dad at least, he took a role of, like giving guidance, but he doesn't really provide any tangible support. So it is like, "You should do this, but I'm not going to tell you how to do this. You have to figure it out yourself." However, my mom would be like, "This is how you do it." "This is what you need to do." "This is how I'm going to help you accomplish it." Yeah, she is the one who helps me out, like if I need extra money for college or something like that, she has helped me, not my dad.

Tom's experiences with his parents were similar to Paul's:

Yeah my father is perhaps a little more laid back and very hands off when it comes to raising us. My mother is perhaps a little more hands on. She is not so much like a tiger mother or something like that but... It is just that my mother has always been the one who is a little more organized. My father is the one who works when my mother retired from being a physician. She sort of assumed the role of "mother" [nurturing and caretaking].

Candice also echoed Tom and Paul's experiences:

My mom always says you should go to school, you need to do this, right then and you have to finish it right now, and then my dad's more like, laid back, relaxed whenever I have a problem, I can go to my dad to talk about it cause my mom will make it more analytic, like analyzed in a different way but then my dad can be like more laid back, not making it too complicated. I can definitely talk to my mom about certain things. When I want to be comforted, I would go to my dad because he's more comforting and telling me "It's gonna be okay soon," but my mom will actually talk back to me when I want to be comforted.

As can be seen from the above four biracial participants' descriptions about differences in parenting approaches between their mothers and fathers, when compared to White fathers, Korean mothers tend to have higher parental expectations for her children's academic achievement and provide more practical, hands-on support and advice.

***Parenting conflicts between spouses.*** There are multiple factors that determine parenting styles and behaviors, including parent and child characteristics, the ways each parent was raised, and cultural and social factors. Thus, it is plausible to think that some parenting conflicts arise between spouses who came from two distinctive cultural and racial backgrounds. A 1.5-



generation immigrant mother Yoon talked about some conflicts with her husband due to her high parental expectations:

Generally, we don't argue much, but once in a while we do because I just can't stand it when he lowered the bar for our sons, you know, he thinks everything's fine with our sons because they're doing well in school, but it's because, he just compares my sons with the normal American kids and I don't like the normal American culture, especially when it comes to children's education.

Yoon disclosed that her coworkers called her a "tiger mom":

Yes, that's what they call me in the lab, they [coworkers] told me I'm like a "Tiger Mom," and I'm not gonna say that I'm not. I think that many American parents have no discipline and they don't promote their kids' motivation enough. See that's the thing that American parents don't understand about raising kids. American parents often say "well, I'm gonna let them choose". But think about this, how many kids could make the really right and wise decisions for their future? None, if you ask me. I know I'm being a bit harsh, but that's what I've thought...

Angie had a similar philosophy with Yoon in terms of guiding children's future in the right direction, "As a parent, we need to foresee the future because the children cannot. And you need to give them they need to make all kind of choice but you need to make sure the choices are such it's going to the right direction." Yoon provided an example to support her claim on the parents' roles:

I often heard...for example, from my husband's family. My husband quit piano lessons. Now he regrets his decision now. When he was young, he wanted to quit learning the piano, and his mother just let him do without a second thought. And his brother says... well... I heard that he was extremely brilliant, but when he found certain classes were too hard for him to take, he just quit. My parents-in-law just let him do that without even trying to persuade him to try harder for his sake. And now, he blames his parents, saying "My parents had never tried to discipline us." As parents, I believe they should have worked hard to make their children to stay motivated. They [parents-in-law] should have encouraged my brother-in-law and supported him so that he could be more successful than now. He had potentials, but my parents-in-law failed to support their son properly. I will never do that for my sons.

Yoon continued to describe her experiences regarding parenting:

So I have a tendency to have a very high expectation, and believing in great minds and good work ethics. On the other hand my husband trying to free them [children] so much

because he's raised by his parents like that...yeah, I know, it's so unbalanced, and it may sound paradoxical, but I think that it's a nice balance because my kids also need to do some silly things and relax at times.

Yoon also talked about how her husband's parenting style has been changed:

I taught my sons a lot of sports and when they're young, I did a lot of studying with them and then checked how they are thinking, and now my husband does a lot of those things with our sons, I think, because he likes it. My husband has a great patience and he just loves to be with the kids...yeah, he has changed a lot, and he also raised the bar. He realized that how I worked with our sons over the years and saw good outcomes...I think it's very important because I want my husband to learn good Korean work ethics, and sharing and supporting your family. I'm not saying that his family isn't good. I do know that he's parents are very creative, very honest, and they are very kind. It's just that their parenting values are very different from mine.

Yoon seemed to admit that her parenting style is similar to "tiger moms" who people consider mothers who are power-assertive and controlling and emphasize the importance of competence in their children. She also thought that her parenting approach had a number of strengths and was effective to promote academic excellence in her sons. Yoon shared an anecdote:

Once we [Yoon and her husband] had a big argument because my husband thought that I'm pushing my older son too much. I told my son to study harder and then my husband said, "No, he's already studying hard, so he should play" and I said, "why do you always try to lower the bar?" and my husband told me that our son's very bright, so we need to give him a break, but I told him that in the world, there are so many bright kids, thus as parents, we should raise the bar so that my son can be really successful. Anyway, my son heard our loud voices and everything in the end. But he did not say anything about who's right or who's wrong. He just cited his teacher's saying, "Well, Mr. Miller [pseudonym] said that we are not really well-prepared for college anyway," which in fact, his way of showing that he's siding with me, and I really appreciated that he recognized my parental efforts, and I was able to see that my son also wanted to be the best and felt okay to be pushed even though it might not be pleasant to be pushed by me. My son knows that my standards are high, but he does think that he will be benefitted in the long run.

It seemed that Yoon prided herself on being a good mother. She was a highly motivated person who believed in hard work, so naturally, she expected her sons to do well. Yoon seemed to think that raising the bar for her sons was the right way, whereas her husband thought that she pushed the kids too much. Another mother, Jean's case was similar to that of Yoon:

I fight to get whatever I want. I always win. My kids think that their mom's bad and dad's good because I am stricter and more of a disciplinarian. I know I've got a bit strong personality. All my Korean friends have that in fact. It may be characteristics of Korean moms...I don't know. Anyway, it's better for the kids to have a strict mom and soft dad, not vice versa.

Celine shared her views on balancing parenting styles of both parents:

My husband is very strict and that's exactly what I wanted to steer away from, I really did not want that for my kids. And in some odd way, my husband became such an Asian parent, while I became the more American parent. Thus, I've tried to balance my husband out. I try to make it work. I try to make it a happy environment for my kids. Ultimately, at the end of my life, I want them to know that I tried to do my best for them, try to give them whatever they want...give them a happy life... that's all I want for them. And I'm gonna do everything in my power to allow them to reach their dreams. Because, you know, ultimately you think about your life and that's what it is. It's not about the money that you make or how hard you work. It's about allowing yourself to help your kids to reach their dreams the way they need to reach it. Not the way you force them to reach it. And it's ultimately their decision and their choice. The seed that you put on them is that they make the right choices. And that's what you pray for every day of your life, that they make the right choices because ultimately it's their life. Yeah, I mean, that's how I look at it [role of mothers].

When drawing an ecomap, it was found that Celine was the only one who reported that she had a weak positive relationship with her husband, while the rest of the mothers ( $n = 8$ ) reported that they have a strong positive relationships with their spouses. Celine and her husband seemed to have experienced some marital discord due to their personality and parenting style differences. Celine reported that she did her best to balance two different parenting styles for her children's sake. Celine talked about her strategy to make it work:

It's, it's what I do, I will allow my husband to win as much as he wants, okay, and get his way, but ultimately if important things related to our children come up, it's my way or you go to the highway. And that's how it should be done. Because the husband, the father is the head of the household and there is a respect there, so that's very important to me.

Celine's approach to work through spousal disagreements was to allow her husband to dictate the rules in the family, but when it came to the important things related to her children, she seemed to take charge of them.

In case of Jenny, she wasn't able to raise her sons according to her parenting philosophy because her husband was strongly against her way of parenting:

I tried to push my kids, but my husband wouldn't let me because he thinks that if I tried to control the kids too much that they won't like me, and you know, I ended up fighting with them a lot so he said just let them do whatever they like. I think I had a lot more control over my kids when they were little. I was a stay-at-home mom then. I was a typical Asian mom sitting down making my children do the math and review everything and my husband had no control over it because he's at work then. But as my children got older and because they're sons and not daughters, my husband took over some aspects of parenting like disciplining them and everything because they're boys.

Jenny lamented the fact that she was not able to have her way with parenting her kids due to her husband's strong resistance:

Well, once I said to my middle son, "If I had my way with parenting, right now you would be in Harvard and you would have all sorts of scholarship, but since your dad dominated it [parenting] you wouldn't let me make you do extra work and that's why you're ended up like this." My younger ones were all valedictorians, they did well, but my oldest one rebelled at that Christian school and after graduated from high school, he totally rebelled, and the other two went to the public school, but they did alright and I don't get it. Anyway that could happen I guess.

Liz's case was similar to that of Jenny's:

The most difficult thing was that my husband thought that I was a strict Asian mom who tried to control children's lives, which was not true at all. Thus, whenever I was going to say something to my sons, especially about school work, he tried to prevent me from saying it because he thought I was trying to restrict their lives by making them study hard. However, when compared to other Korean mothers, I was really flexible, giving my sons more than enough autonomy. My husband thought all Korean mothers were disciplinarians whose focus was on only make their kids study, and he strongly believed that I was one of those strict Korean mothers. I've tried to persuade him to change his mindset, but he just did not listen to me. You can consider me a victim of my husband's wrong preconception about strict Korean mother. My husband was, he still is, really headstrong and has so many fixed ideas about Koreans, so those things made me really difficult, especially raising my sons.

In the cases of Jenny and Liz, due to their spouse's preconception or fixed idea on Korean parents, particularly negative parenting practices, they faced difficulty when raising their children. Asian parents tend to emphasize education and academic performance, but not all of

them are strict disciplinarians who try to control their children's lives, but because of those common stereotypes attached to Asian parents, some Korean mothers seemed to face conflicts with their White American husband.

A parenting styles conflict is not an unusual occurrence between spouses who were even from the same racial and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, oftentimes parenting conflicts arise from each spouse's childhood experiences being raised by their respective parents. Some of the Korean mothers in this study also experienced parenting style conflicts, and there seemed to be two different outcomes associated with their parenting style conflicts: 1) move toward one dominant parenting style to avoid confrontations; and 2) modify one's parenting style to better meet the needs of children.

It seemed that most couples in this study fared reasonably well even though they encountered parenting style conflicts because of their harmonious relationships with each other. If one was authoritarian and the other was authoritative, there seemed to be also some common ground that could be found in constructing a viable plan for their biracial children in the family unit. Most parents appeared to work out disagreements in parenting, look for things they agreed upon, and try to adapt their parenting style to promote the wellbeing of their children.

**Middle-ground parenting: Modifying parenting styles for children's sake.** All mothers in the study reported that they have experienced some conflicts with their husbands, in-laws, and their children due to their parenting styles. Most of them realized the need to modify their parenting approaches because raising biracial children living in the United States should not be the same as the ways they were raised by their monoracial Korean parents in Korea or by their Korean immigrant parents. Therefore, those mothers who realized the needs to modify their parenting styles have tried to find a middle ground to better serve their biracial children's needs.

Amy described in detail how her Korean mother modified her parenting style:

My mom, compared to other full Korean parents, I would say, like both are Korean, I think they grow up super strict, super, and I don't know how can you be, like when you're in Korea, it works because everyone is raised that way, but when you're in America, you have to change your parenting to adapt to society here. My mom, when we're younger, she tried real hard to instill good values in us and have us to be involved a number of extracurricular activities to develop our various talents, and I think, because of her, we grew up with really good sets of personality and my mom gave us enough leeway to explore, like you know, develop our own personalities so whenever we would disagree with her, she tried to understand our views and find common grounds and that would be really good way to raise kids....my mom listens to us. My mom is, like when we disagree with her and we yell about it and try to have our own way, she eventually gives up saying, I don't wanna fight with you anymore. I think she understands the way kids are raised by American parents. I think she gets it that she can't raise us the way she was raised by her parents in Korea because number one, we're half American, and number 2, we grew up in America, so it's gonna be different. Furthermore, she's also modified her parenting style for each kid because our personalities are all different from each other...If a parent forces kids to do something, they're just gonna resent their parents in the long run and then you're not gonna get a good relationship between parent and child.

As in the case of Amy and her mother, the efforts of mothers to cultivate their children in a number of ways were also clear in the interviews. They tried to have their children to be involved in a number of organized extracurricular activities throughout their childhoods. Activities ranged from sports teams, music and dance lessons, and peer helpers (e.g., tutoring their peers in school). As Amy explained, providing children enough leeway to explore and allowing them more autonomy are important for their positive development. By doing so, the conflicts between parents and child could be decreased. In terms of allowing more autonomy to children, Yoon explained the ways she employed when raising her two sons:

I raised my sons in a Montessori philosophy, so they make their own decision, but then I always explain what's the importance of it, and when you do this, what are the consequences, what are results, and what are the purpose of that. And then they usually understand, and they tried to make wise decisions. And if they decide to say 'no' to a certain task or activity, I never force them to do it.

Mary emphasized the importance of communication in the family:

Communication is the key. Communicating with one's family is really needed, like making decision on matters together. There should be lots of discussions in the family. For example, I always talk with my son. There will be times when lots of choices are given, in your life, so you have to choose wisely. You may face some discrimination, and in that case, you have to effectively deal with those as well. Decision making, reaching a consensus among family members is very important. When you do things, you have to think about consequences as well. You have to be your own man. Since you've grown up, you have act like a responsible individual.

Mary continued to explain about allowing her son to make decisions:

There was not much restriction in my family. Whenever we tried to decide certain things, we always talk with each other, when he applied to college, I really wanted him to go to some prestigious university like other Korean moms did. However, Aaron said, "I am going to U of [a prestigious state university] because all my close friends will go there." I really wanted my son to change his decision because I knew that he's got a good chance to get admissions from some Ivy League schools, but my husband said, "That's his decision, and as parents we should respect his decision, so don't try to push him to the direction he doesn't wanna go." Although I tried to persuade him, but it's like, as usual, we ended up in the middle ground.

Jean's case was also similar to Mary's:

I just found a middle ground, yea, I had to do it. Otherwise, my kids would have gone to somewhere if I had forced them so much, so I had to give in. Anyway my kids just turned out well, so I'm not complaining.

Angie talked about the importance of love in relationships and parenting:

The relationship between husband and wife should be very sound before they bring any children to the world. I think that you have to make sure what I and my husband bring to the relationship is love. Make sure your kids know you love them. Say loud and give lots of hug to your children so that they know your love. You have to blame only yourself if you're not close to your in-laws. You have to be strong as a parent. Whatever you're doing is your own doing, so you have to be responsible.

In order to reach a middle ground between parents and children, Korean mothers seemed to utilize certain strategies including: 1) allow more autonomy to children as they grew up; 2) provide children enough leeway to explore on their own; 3) never force; 4) communicate when making decisions; and 5) show love to your children.

**Parental racial socialization practices.** Racial socialization that goes on within each family context is vital for biracial identity development. Racial socialization has been defined by Rotherman and Phinney (1987a) as “the developmental processes by which children acquire the behaviors, perceptions, values, and attitudes of an ethnic group, and come to see themselves and others as members of the group.” Racial socialization can be generally defined as race-related communication (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). This communication includes the implicit and explicit messages regarding racial groups, race relations, and racial discrimination and can be conveyed verbally, by modeling, and through exposure to culture, beliefs, and values (Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990).

Hughes et al. (2006) have identified five dimensions that commonly appear in the racial socialization literature: 1) cultural socialization; 2) preparation for bias; 3) promotion of mistrust; 4) egalitarianism; and 5) other. Of those five dimensions, Hughes and colleagues focused on the first four themes that have emerged most often in empirical research. Cultural socialization refers to parenting practices that teach children about their racial history or heritage and is sometimes referred to as pride development. Preparation for bias refers to parenting practices focused on preparing children to be aware of, and cope with, discrimination. Promotion of mistrust refers to the parenting practices of socializing children to be wary of people from other races. Egalitarianism refers to socializing children with the belief that all people are equal and should be treated with a common humanity. Other domain includes global socialization, teaching nothing about race, emphasizing self-development (Hughes et al., 2006). Among the five dimensions identified by Hughes and colleagues, the mothers in the study seemed to have only employed some cultural socialization approaches.



***Cultural socialization.*** In terms of cultural socialization, only several mothers seemed to have exerted their effort to teach Korean culture and/or language to their biracial children, whereas most mothers did not put much effort doing so. However, the transmission of Korean cultural beliefs and values, such as the importance of hard work, emphasis on education, and importance of showing respect toward elders, seemed to be embedded in most mothers' parenting practice.

There seemed to be a close relationship between religion and cultural socialization because several mothers utilized the Korean church as a place to transmit Korean culture. Three mothers in the study reported that they tried to teach their biracial children about Korean culture through providing them an opportunity to learn Korean from the Korean language class in the church they attended. The biracial participants varied in the degree and time of exploration of their biracial identity. The variations were greatly influenced by reinforcement of (or lack of reinforcement) Korean culture experienced while growing up, which was found to be closely related to their maternal adherence and enforcement of Korean culture as well as the amount of exposure to and association with other Korean people including maternal extended family members.

There seemed to be several reasons behind the lack of cultural socialization by Korean mothers: 1) mothers' lack of knowledge on Korean culture and language; 2) mothers' negative perceptions toward Korean American community; and 3) lack of exposure to Korean culture. In terms of mothers' lack of knowledge on Korean culture and language, there existed differences according to each mother's immigration generational status and the length of US residency. When compared to first generation mothers, 1.5 generation mothers were more acculturated to the US culture, more proficient in English, and had less connection to the Korean American

community. Furthermore, all three 1.5 mothers reported that they had very limited Korean proficiency and lacked knowledge on Korean culture, so they were not well-equipped to teach Korean and Korean culture to their children.

One of the 1.5 generation mothers, Angie elaborated how she lost her ability to speak Korean:

I was in the third grade when I first came to the States and my older sister was the fourth grader and my brother was in the first grade, and we weren't accepted by the young kids and during that age group, they don't care they just wanna play. My sister who was in the fourth grade, it took her one year for the prejudice and the name calling and all that to come out, and it was her personality too because she was very shy, you know, so when she came home crying every day after school, my dad forbade us to speak in Korean, so he said we can't speak Korean any more. I think he thought he's doing the right thing, he thought as soon as we could start speaking English, we could be more acclimated, faster and be more accepted. And plus the fact that he was very busy at that time and we did not go to Korean church and anything like that. My mom was RN and working too, so we're basically left alone. We've never had babysitters. It was only three of us, this is the olden days....We learned and commanded English within six months. We spoke Korean when there were only three of us at first because we did not upset our mom and dad, so we never spoke Korean at home, and we rapidly forgot Korean.

Immigrant parents' decision for speaking only English seemed to be the reason Angie and her siblings lost their heritage language -- Korean. As the language was lost, Angie was not able to speak in Korean herself, and there was even less reason for her to teach Korean to her biracial sons. She disclosed her lack of knowledge on Korean culture:

We don't do anything that's related to Korean traditional holidays. I don't even know what those are because I wasn't raised in a traditional Korean household. Again there's no Korean family anywhere near me while growing up...How am I supposed to know?

Angie's case also echoed the other two 1.5 generation Korean mothers in this study. Jenny explained:

I've never known about what Korean values are myself. I was raised by Korean parents, but my parents were strange people. They came here, it's like they were the very first Koreans who moved to the US. I don't think that we're like other Korean immigrant families...my parents were fluent in English...My family did not hang out with other Koreans at all. They did not socialize with people from Korean community. Growing up,

there's no Korean family in our neighborhood. Plus, I was always the only Asian in school....I probably have many Korean values in me that I don't know about. I don't know whether those are Korean values or Christian values in fact.

Jenny described her first 'real' exposure to Korean culture was at the university she attended:

When I went to University of Diversity [a pseudonym for a prestigious state university], I was like totally White inside. I don't have any concept of being Asian then, but when I started attending Asian church and that changed my views and at U of D, I took a Korean American experience course in the 80's and that changed my views as well. There was a nice Asian center there. After I took the course, I've been changed. I've been more open to being Korean.

Kenny acknowledged that his mom was not familiar with Korean culture:

My mom, she's born in South Korea, but she moved to the US when she was 14, so I guess, she herself is not very much familiar with Korean culture. Like her English is really good, she doesn't have any Asian accent, so I don't think she has any special advantages or disadvantages being Asian American. I think she's so Americanized.

***Ways to culturally socialize biracial children.*** Several ways to culturally socialize their children mentioned by the mothers were: 1) sending their children to Korean culture camp for Korean adoptees; 2) visiting Korea to see the maternal side of extended family; 3) eating Korean food; 4) attending Korean church with their children; and 5) having their children attend Korean language class.

Jenny sent her son to Korean culture camp for Korean adoptees so that Kenny could learn about Korean culture there:

I've been to Korean culture camp, but that was a long time ago. I went there for two consecutive years, and the second year, I was a camp counselor-in-training. I guess my mom sent me there so that I could learn about some Korean culture. She's never been big on me teaching about Korean culture. It may be I am the youngest...I am more American than Korean for sure. I've never been to Korea. I know not much about Korean culture even though I attended the Korean culture camp.

While growing up, Jenny was not exposed to Korean culture much because her parents intentionally avoided socializing with other Koreans and teaching Korean culture to her. As in the case of Angie, Jenny disclosed that she lacked knowledge on Korean culture, which in turn

prevented her from effectively teaching Korean culture to her children. Jenny said, “You have to understand that there’s a difference between being really really Korean woman [meaning first generation Korean immigrant] and being Korean American woman [1.5 or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation] like me.” Celine, another 1.5 generation Korean also admitted that she did not know about Korean culture. Her son, Eric, talked about his limited exposure to Korean culture:

I’ve gone to, like Korean churches with my mom and things like that. That’s about as much Korean culture I’ve been exposed to... and her cooking Korean food....Once I visited Korea when I was really little. I don’t remember it though.

Korean mothers who did not provide much opportunity to teach Korean to their children, they exposed their children to Korea in lieu of teaching Korean. Michelle shared her experience:

I’ve only visited Korea once when my sister was teaching English there, like two years ago for two weeks. I loved there. I really like it. When I was over there, I got to meet one of my uncles, but he couldn’t speak English so we just sat there, but it was cool seeing my relatives in Korea. My uncle has children, so I have two cousins over there and they could speak English a bit. My sister can only speak some Korean as well, so communication with them wasn’t easy, but it was a good experience. I learned a little bit about Korean culture when I was there.

Michelle talked about her future plan to go back to Korea:

I am thinking about teaching English there after I graduate from college like my sister did, like teaching at a private school, maybe going for a year ‘cause my sister loved it. She traveled to many parts of Korea when she was there.

In case of Michelle, her older sister positively promoted her motivation to experience more of Korean culture. It is an example showing that not only parents but also siblings can be active agents who could culturally socialize their family members.

Among nine interracial families, Kim’s family visited Korea the most:

In my family, we’ve never celebrated any Korean traditional holidays. However, our family has visited Korea many times. My husband went to Korea three times and my daughter went there five times at least. All three of us went together when my daughter was 8 years old and she loved there, and the next year, I sent her alone there to stay with my mom. When she was staying, she learned a lot of Korean because nobody could speak English.

Kim's daughter, Candice talked about the differences between Korea and the United States and also between her maternal and paternal extended families:

I went to Korea four or five times, and it was like, totally totally different from here. In Korea, it's like, there are total different atmosphere, total different rules, and how their family does things and how American family does things are totally different. When I go to my dad's side family, it's also totally different from my mom's family in Korea. And it's like, it's funny, for example, sometimes when my mom says something, my dad doesn't understand what she's saying, but I can understand, so it's like just funny.

As can be seen from Candice's experiences, she was able to learn the differences between Korean families and American families through visiting Korea and meeting her Korean side of extended family, which was a good example of her parents' explicit effort at cultural socialization.

***Cultural socialization through eating Korean food.*** Eating ethnic-specific food is also considered as one of the examples of cultural socialization. For some biracial participants and their families, eating Korean food seemed to be the only experience associated with cultural socialization. Candice said that she would only get connected to Korean culture through eating Korean food:

I guess I've been raised more in American way and culture than Korean way. Back in Michigan we did not really celebrate any Korean holidays, there's like a dinner at Thanksgiving, New Year's Day, I was more raised in American way. We don't really celebrate any Korean holidays or anything like that, except that we always call my grandma on the New Year's Day. Other than that, we don't do anything Korean. Sometimes like, my mom will cook Korean food and let me know the name of the dish and how to make it, and that's about it.

Like Candice, several biracial participants mentioned that their only connection to Korean culture was through Korean food. Jean pointed out, "Food is the best source for introducing other culture, so I cook Korean food for my family." Kenny talked about his dad, "My dad has pretty much accepted Korean culture, like eating Korean spicy food and stuff like that he pretty much

eats most Korean food.” As Jean pointed out, cooking Korean food and sharing it with family appeared to be an effective way to introduce Korean culture. However, in some families, this did not happen. Mary lamented the fact that she was not even able to provide her son, Aaron, the opportunity of learning Korean culture through eating ethnic food:

Unfortunately, I don’t like to cook, so I rarely cooked Korean dishes, so he doesn’t even have a chance to learn Korean culture through Korean food, which I do regret. I told Wes, one of the regrets I have was my inability to give him some kind of memory as other mothers have given to their children. For example, I remember the foods my mom made for me and I miss those foods, but I wasn’t able to give those precious memories. That is my regret. I did not have lots of time to give him the opportunity.

Mary who recently retired from her work as a university researcher talked about a lack of exposure to Korean culture:

Most of the times, I am surrounded by White Americans, so there’s lack of exposure to Korean culture in my life. Once my family was invited to a close Korean friend’s house, and we ate Korean food there, and that’s the only time Wes has experiences some kind of Korean culture. Sometimes, I think, if I had joined the bible study group consisting of Korean women, I might have had more opportunities to visit other Korean families’ homes, and then my son would have been more exposed to Korean culture.

As Mary explained, a lack of exposure to Korean culture could be a hindrance to culturally socialize biracial children. Mary had worked as a researcher at a state university for over 30 years and socialized mostly with her colleagues and her husband’s friends, all of whom were White Americans. During the interview, she discussed her lack of socialization with other Koreans in the community made her feel alienated from other Koreans. She also talked about the lost opportunities (e.g., not joining Korean groups) and seemed to think that her lack of trying to do so might have become an obstacle in the way to culturally socialize her son, Aaron.

***Utilizing Korean church as a key agent in cultural socialization.*** Several mothers in the study tried to utilize Korean church as a place to transmit Korean culture to their biracial children as well as for their children to learn Korean language. To those who attended Korean church,

church served not only for spiritual guidance and as a socialization network for them, but as a place that aided them to culturally socialize their biracial children. Jean shared her story as to how she tried to have her children to embrace Korean culture:

All my kids went to Korea. They went to Korea twice. My sister lives in Korea. My kids went to Korean language class in the Korean church throughout the elementary school. It's not as intensive as Korean language school, but still my kids learned Korean there. I also fed them Korean food and exposed them to Korean culture by sending them to Korea, so I can say that I did as much as I could for them to embrace their heritages. I want them to feel positive about their Korean heritage although I don't know how well I did. However, I can say that I did try my hardest.

Similarly, Liz attended a Korean church with her sons, "When my sons were young, I used to take them to a Korean church because I wanted them to meet other Korean people there and learn some Korean culture." Both mothers provided their children opportunities to participate in the life of an ethnic religious organization by the act of bringing them to gatherings such as Korean language classes offered by churches and youth group participation. However, in some cases, there existed an obstacle to utilize Korean ethnic church as an agent of cultural socialization due to language barrier. Jenny shared her experience with Korean ethnic church associated with cultural socialization:

I've tried to get them to have more balanced views toward their identity through attending Korean ethnic church, but it's been hard because, I think, the language barrier is always there, and the population in the church is mostly Korean speaking, and it's not like the churches in some big cities in which there are all Asian American speaking English, so my kids might have acculturated to those kind of churches really well, but if I bring them to a local Korean church here, they probably have some issues...I don't know. Anyway I've tried to make them take the best of the both worlds, but that did not work well.

As Jenny mentioned, a lack of Korean language skill could be an obstacle to participate in the activities held in local Korean churches because most people attending local Korean churches tended to speak Korean. Therefore, in addition to their lack of language skills, different physical

appearance seemed to arise the feeling of being left out or emphasize their “in- between” status for some biracial participants when they were at Korean churches. Eric shared his experience:

I don't think I've ever really felt like I was Korean. Well, like even when I go to Korean churches and stuff, I still don't exactly feel like... I belong there, like those are my people. I would go to Korean church quite a bit when I was in middle school and maybe freshman year in high school. And I think that showed me like those aren't like my people. I don't really belong there. So I guess maybe that had more of an influence on me thinking I'm more White or something. I don't know. When I feel like I can hang out with like White people and it's really easy, it just comes naturally. And then, I can hang out with Korean people at school or something like that, but then when I go to Korean church where everybody's just Korean and it's like I don't belong here... first, I think one of the biggest thing was like the language barrier because they speak Korean a lot there, and I wouldn't have any idea what they're doing, like what they're saying.

Similarly Michelle experienced being left out in Korean church, “When I went to Korean church and Korean language school, I was separated from the other kids there because I looked different. I hated that.”

For the biracial participants who experienced being alienated from other Koreans in Korean churches, their mothers' efforts at cultural socialization were turned out to be rather negative, making them realize their in-between status as a biracial individual.

***Lack of cultural socialization.*** Unlike the mothers who have tried to help their biracial children to embrace their Korean heritage through various means within the limit of their situations, Yoon disclosed that she has never tried to expose her sons to Korean culture:

I think I've never tried to expose my kids to Korean cultures... so my sons don't understand any Korean...because I don't associate with my Koreans so... I don't know it might be a bit weird...I don't care which culture it is, but as long as they healthy and good and they are productive and happy I really don't care. I mean, they never... they always appreciative of what my family do and they know that my family's different. And even grandparents, I mean my mother doesn't speak much English, but they know that how much she loves them and so that's how they understand the Korean family bonding. I think it's not nice if they disrespect other cultures. I think I would not be happy about that mindset.

Yoon seemed to have somewhat negative views toward Korean community:



There're certain things going on in the Korean community here that doesn't sound so healthy, also if, when they learn Korean and if it... I don't want, I don't know there might be an opportunity to work in Korea but I do not like myself working Korea 'cause I don't know how because I never did even though I grew up in Korea until 21 years old.

Unlike Kim, Jean, and Jenny who tried to expose their children to Korean culture, Yoon intentionally avoided doing that and she also explained the reason behind her decision of not teaching Korean language and culture. Yoon appeared to have negative views toward Korean American community, so she did not want her sons to be associated with it.

The variations of each biracial individual's preference and knowledge about Korean culture seemed to be greatly influenced by reinforcement of and exposure to Korean culture experienced while growing up, which was found to be associated with their Korean mothers' adherence and enforcement of Korean culture. Each mother appeared to have different degrees of preference towards Korean culture, and in the case of Yoon, it was minimal due to her negative perceptions on the Korean community.

***Language socialization.*** All but one mother-child (Liz-Paul) dyad reported that English was the only language spoken at home. Among nine biracial participants, only Paul was bilingual. Almost all biracial participants were exposed minimally to Korean language, so they were typically not fluent. In fact, six of them reported that they only knew about 10 Korean words. Two biracial participants said that they could understand some Korean, but they were afraid of speaking in Korean because they did not want to be teased by other Koreans due to their bad accent and pronunciation. There were several reasons for biracial participants' not wanting to speak Korean or not being fluent in Korean: 1) children wanted to avoid teasing from other Koreans; 2) parents gave up motivating their children to learn Korean; 3) children's efforts or aspirations to learn Korean did not work out well; and 4) children did not want to learn Korean when they were young.

Mary shared the reason why her son was not bilingual:

When my son was young, I tried to teach him Korean, so I sent him to Korean school, but it did not work well. The reason was that I was busy working. I tried to teach him Korean vocabulary and read books in Korean together for some time. However, later I found out it was not working as well as I expected, so I gave up...at that time in the Korean language class, there were 4 or 5 students. Among them, one boy was very aggressive and Wes was afraid of meeting the boy in school. My son begged me saying that he did not want to go there because the boy hit him and he swore, and it was so hard on Aaron, so I decided not to send him to Korean school after that.

Mary wondered about whether her son regrets quitting Korean learning:

Right now I wonder whether Aaron may regret not learning Korean because knowing two languages can be beneficial. However, since Aaron will be living here in the US where he can live well without speaking Korean, I think that it won't be that much a big deal. However, I wish I can talk to my son in Korean.

Like Mary, Kim also wished that she could communicate with her daughter in Korean, so she exerted a great deal of effort to teach Korean to her daughter, but it did not work well as she expected:

I wanna speak Korean with my daughter, but she can't understand and she's afraid of speaking Korean because she doesn't want to make mistakes. I took her to a Korean language school every Sunday for almost 10 years, but she did not study. I took her to the school, and while she studied Korean from 9:30 am to 11:30 am, I waited there....I think she can understand some Korean. She can read and write Korean, but she doesn't really know what they mean. That's why she doesn't want to speak Korean.

Mary's son, Aaron talked about his thoughts on Korean language:

It's not so important in my family because almost everyone can speak English well, but it'll be nice to know how to speak Korean. You know sometimes I wish I had learned Korean. I think it would be more important if I go to Korea, or if my families live in Korea, but here again you don't need it much and all my extended families live in the U.S. or in Australia, so they speak English as well. I've never needed to know, so I've never focused on it [learning Korean], but I still like to learn. It's very easy to be monolingual because even when I traveled to Europe, I was able to communicate in English. American society doesn't make you learn another language, so you don't need to put much effort to learn, but in other countries you have learn other languages, like a lot of Korean people came here to learn English and in Europe everyone knows like five languages, and American students don't have to, which is unfortunate.

In case of Aaron, since most of his extended families could speak English, whether he was able to speak Korean did not matter much. However, Aaron commented that he wanted to learn Korean and wished that he had learned it when he was young. Unlike Aaron, Paul talked about how he regarded his Korean speaking ability as a great impact on developing his racial identity:

When I was growing up, I went to a local Korean language school. I can read and write, and also I can speak Korean. Speaking Korean is probably the most important in developing my racial identity... Yeah because when you're a kid it is important to learn the language because it is easier to pick up new languages. So a lot of the stuff that was time limited, my mom was very like, "We need to do this." But then once I am like 18 or 21, she left that up to my own, so I was old enough that I could make my own decision.

When Paul was young, he often balked at his mother for insisting on teaching him Korean, but now as an adult, he admitted that he was grateful for her persistence. While growing up, Paul's mother also ensured that he and his younger brother visited their extended family in Korean a few times. Paul said that being bilingual would be beneficial for his career, "Especially the fact that I am an accounting major, being bi-lingual gives me an advantage." Paul's mother, Liz shared her experience on promoting Korean language proficiency:

I strongly believed the importance of Korean language education. Since my sons are surrounded by English speaking people here, naturally their English will be excellent. However, in case of Korean, unless parents intentionally exert a great deal of effort to provide opportunities to learn the language, it won't be easy for biracial children to master the Korean language. I can't say that I was successful teaching Korean to my two sons because only my older son, Paul, is proficient in Korean. However, it's still better than having no child who can fluently speak Korean I guess. I always talk with Paul in Korean and I think that he understands Korean culture better than any biracial kids around us. Since Paul can speak Korean, he's also close to me.

In the case of Paul, his 50-year-old mother Liz did not give up teaching Korean to her first-born son even though Paul strongly resisted to learn it. As a result, Paul has become a fluent speaker of Korean and has been able to communicate in Korean with his mother. To Liz, being able to talk in Korean with her son was a blessing because as she admitted, she was not fluent in English. Liz commented that her son, Paul could understand her better than anyone in her family.

Sometimes when she talked with her husband and her younger son, due to her limited English skills, some misunderstanding could occur, but not with Paul. As Liz pointed out, if a Korean-White biracial individual denied one's Korean heritage, the relationships between a Korean mother and her biracial child might not be positive. Liz also advised:

Korean mothers should try hard to provide various opportunities for their biracial kids to be exposed to Korean culture and language. If the mother can't teach her child herself, she should send her child to Korean language school at least. I believe that the most significant factor is communication in terms of parent-child relationship after all.

Another first generation immigrant mother, Kim shared her effort to teach Korean to her daughter, and how her daughter struggled to follow her advice on learning Korean:

I also told her that since she has the look of Asian, people in America may not think that she's a 100% White American, so I told her, "You need to speak Korean because people will ask you where you come from, and when you reply that you're half Korean and half White, it would look good when you have a command of Korean because they might expect you to speak your heritage language then." She's tried to learn Korean and she struggled a lot because, you know, Korean language is so hard, and the language structure is totally different from English, so she's had a lot of hard time, she used to complain, "Mom, I'm American, why do I have to learn Korean, I don't have to speak Korean to anybody here." And I told her, "When you go to Korea, don't you want to speak Korean with your friends even though some of them can say English, there are also many who can't speak it and if they talk to you in Korean and you can't understand what they said, you'll look stupid, so you have to learn Korean to communicate other Koreans and know more about your heritage culture." And then she studied, but it wasn't easy because she's kept saying, "Mom, I'm not Korean and we're not living in Korea, and it's such a waste of my time going to the Korean language class."

Kim was one of the three mothers who exerted a lot of effort to teach Korean to her daughter.

However, when she faced a great deal of resistance from her daughter, she eventually gave up trying. Although most Korean mothers valued their heritage language as a resource and took positive actions to maintain the heritage language in their children, their biracial children failed to see the relevance of heritage language learning in their life and tended to resist their mothers' efforts in heritage language teaching.

***Lack of parental effort at promoting Korean language learning.*** Most mothers in this study did not exert much effort to promote their children's motivation to learn Korean, and there were several reasons for the lack of parental efforts: 1) children's strong resistance to heritage language learning made them give up teaching; 2) some mothers lacked time to teach Korean to their children; 3) 1.5 generation mothers could not speak Korean themselves; 4) White father did not want their children to learn Korean because he did not want to feel alienated; and 5) several mothers did not see the benefits of learning Korean. When the mothers who tried to teach Korean by sending their children to Korean language classes faced their children's resistance, they tended to give up their effort because they did not want to be in conflict with their children. However, several biracial participants wished that their mothers had pushed them harder for them to keep learning Korean. Michelle seemed to be upset because her mother did not put much effort to teach her Korean:

I can speak, maybe 10 words in Korean. I want to learn it though. I was kinda mad at my mom because she's never tried to teach in when I was young. It would have been great if I had learned to speak Korean. She said to me that she tried, but I did not wanna learn. I wish she urged me to learn Korean more, not giving up on me without trying hard. I was young, so maybe I needed more persuasion. Anyway, it would have greatly benefited me much if I knew how to speak Korean. I remember, I went to this Korean church and there was a Korean language class, but there was anyone I knew, so I did not like to go there.

Michelle's mother, Dana, had her own reasons:

I was too busy living. I didn't have time. In addition, she told me that all things about Korea are stupid. My daughter was very rebellious while growing up, so it's not easy for me to deal with her. Whenever she visited her grandparents, she was negatively influenced by them. They kept badmouthing me. What else can I expect from them? They've kept telling me that I have to go back to my country. Anyway, I failed to teach her Korean. In order for you to be able to teach your kids Korean, they should be willing to learn it. If not, parents won't be able to them. If a child is really little, you may be able to push them to learn, but when they are in their early teens, like 13 or 14, it's too late because they have mind of their own.

Dana talked about her situation that did not allow her to teach her biracial daughter Korean language, and she seemed to think that it would not be easy for parents to push their children, especially when they reached their teens unless they were willing to learn the language themselves. There were also three biracial participants who were not able to learn Korean because their 1.5 generation immigrant mothers did not speak the language well themselves, and Kenny was one of them. He said that his mother never tried to teach him Korean:

No, she has never tried to teach me Korean at all. My mom's never tried to teach me Korean language except for teaching me "hello" in Korean. She's never sat me down and tried to teach me Korean. I think if I could speak Korean, a lot of things might have been different in my life. If I could speak Korean, that would be cool. Maybe I can learn someday.

Kenny's mother, Jenny was a 1.5 generation immigrant who had a limited Korean fluency herself. Therefore, when compared to the first-generation Korean immigrant mothers in this study, 1.5 generation immigrant mothers including Jenny may be in a disadvantaged position to teach Korean to their biracial children. Furthermore, research has documented an accelerated shift to English in Korean immigrant families (Cho & Krashen, 1998; Shin, 2005). Studies on language use patterns of Korean immigrants also indicated that first-generation Korean immigrants speak almost exclusively Korean at home and at work, whereas most second-generation Korean Americans use mostly English (Hurh & Kim, 1984; Min, 2000), which was in line with the three 1.5 generation mothers in this study. There seems to be some common misconception among first-generation Korean immigrant parents that drives the parents to abandon Korean when their children are still learning English. As noted by two 1.5 generation mothers, their parents seemed to believe that studying Korean will detract resources and energy from learning English. Thus, for some immigrant children (e.g., the three 1.5 immigrant women

in the study), they never had an adequate opportunity to learn Korean because their parents decided to use English only.

Unlike Jenny's case, Yoon who came to the United States when she was 22 years old could speak a fluent Korean, but she never tried to teach the language to her children because she thought that having a good command of English would be enough for her children. Yoon commented:

I've never spoken in Korean with my kids and I've never tried to teach them Korean... yeah, there is a reason...umm...there are a lot of great things about Korea, but there're also a lot of things that I don't like about Korea. And I don't like my kids to be involved with Korean culture. I worked in Switzerland; I love European cultures and their integrities and values...so for me, I think speaking good English was good enough to be able to socialize with the nice people in the world.

Yoon was the only mother who explicitly disclosed that learning Korean would not benefit their children much. It seemed that her decision to not teach Korean came from her negative perception on Korea and Korean culture.

Another first generation immigrant mother, Jean had difficulty teaching Korean to her children because her husband opposed to that:

My kids can speak Korean although they're not very fluent, but you know, they went to Korean school so they can write and read Korean, but I don't openly do that. I speak to them in English most of the times because my husband strongly opposed me talking in Korean with our children. My husband regretted that now because of his kids.

Jean's family was the only one whose father did not want his children to learn Korean because he was afraid of being alienated from his family who could speak Korean. However, his decision caused his daughter, Amy, to blame him for that. Amy said that she resented the fact that her father did not let her mother teach Korean to her and her siblings:

I'd like to say to American parents that don't push American values on your kids. The parents of biracial children should allow their children to embrace both heritages so that they can positively develop their racial identity. When I was younger, I really resented my dad for not letting my mom teach us Korean because I feel it's a huge disadvantage.

My dad couldn't understand Korean, so he did not want us to learn Korean. I can kinda understand he did not really feel left out if we're speaking in Korean and he doesn't understand you know, but still like I feel like, I am half Korean and half White, and I should know both languages and I should be fluent at both and it bothers me that he doesn't want us to embrace the Korean culture through language because when they get older, they may hate you for that. They could potentially. Parents should help their kids to embrace their biracial culture because it's cool and not many people are biracial you know.

Amy believed that it is important to maintain strong cultural connections to their entire racial backgrounds. She also commented that biracial children should not be made to choose one racial identity over another or to be locked into a particular identity.

***Reasons for wanting to learn Korean.*** Several biracial participants talked about the reasons for wanting to learn Korean: 1) they did not want to feel guilty about not being able to speak their heritage language, Korean; 2) being bilingual would be a good quality to list on one's resume; and 3) they wanted to communicate with their maternal side of extended family. When biracial participants reach college age, Korean seems to be perceived as a desirable addition to English. Amy shared her thoughts on learning Korean:

I mean learning Korean will be a good thing, not just because I am biracial, it's just a good thing to know in general because it will good on your resume, and I have like a perfect practice buddy like my mom you know. I don't know if I grew up some more, I should know. It's the thing since I am biracial, I should know Korean, PERIOD, you know. I have two heritages and I can speak English well, but not Korean and it's a shame.

Among the nine biracial participants, Amy was one of the three biracial participants who admitted that their inability to speak Korean was a shame because they had two heritages instead of one.

Oftentimes, most biracial participants seemed to encounter communication difficulties with their extended families who could not speak English. Several biracial participants admitted feeling guilty for not knowing their heritage languages. Michelle disclosed, "It saddens me and makes me ashamed to be unilingual when I came from dual heritages, the saddest thing is that I



can't even understand my grandparents." According to Kim, her daughter, Candice seemed to regret not being persistent in learning Korean:

Last year, my daughter said, "Mom I wish I could speak Korean fluently." I guess she realized that when people looking at her asking her, "can you speak Korean?" but since she couldn't, she might have felt a bit ashamed of her inability to speak it.

Larry who never had a chance to learn Korean because her mother, Yoon, opposed to teach him Korean lamented the fact that he could not understand Korean:

Umm...I mean... sometimes I think it would be really nice to know Korean, like when we go to my mom's side of the family and spend time there....I mean outside of that I don't really. But sometimes I wish I knew a little bit of Korean.

As Larry pointed out, a lack of Korean language skill hindered effective communication between himself and people who could only speak Korean such as their maternal extended family members or other Korean students who preferred to speak in Korean. In terms of the relationships with other Koreans, Michelle commented, "Koreans tend to stick together, so sometimes it's not easy to get close to them if you can't speak the language and you're not one of them." Candice also said, "I don't really have Korean friends. I don't really have full Korean friends because they usually talk in Korean and I can't. I can read some Korean words, but I don't really know what they mean." Amy talked about the reasons why she felt closer to her paternal extended family:

All my maternal cousins can speak English now actually, so that's good, but before many of them couldn't. Once I visited Korea, and they couldn't speak English at all, and they all speak Korean together when we had a family gathering which was awkward, so then I wasn't able to understand what they're saying. All things considered, it's much easier for me to speak with my dad's side family because there's no language barrier obviously and we do the same thing and hang out with the same type of people. I feel like that's kind of weird for my mom though.

Michelle shared her thoughts on heritage language and culture:

I think it would be great if they can make their children to learn both languages, yeah basically the languages and culture because I don't know much about Korea, so think that

would be nice. My mom did not put much effort to teach me those. I wished she did. I only know basically the culture of Korean food.

Those participants who were not fully exposed to both sides of their heritage often lamented the loss, and yet some of them did not want their parents to feel guilty about sharing less or not sufficiently exposed them to heritage culture than they would have liked because there was an implicit understanding that their parents did the best they could under the circumstance. For those biracial participants who attend college may try to learn it themselves. Three biracial participants shared an interest in studying their heritage language as a way of learning Korean culture and claiming their heritage. Eric commented on his intention:

I can't speak Korean, but I'm gonna be taking Korean class next year. Yea, well, U of M you have to take four semesters of a language if you don't already know a second language, so I'm gonna take four semester of that and then after those four semesters we'll see how like, I guess how well I've picked up on it to see if I'll continue it. Or if it, if I really just don't like it, I'll just drop it.

Hughes and colleagues (2006) provided examples of cultural socialization, including talking about important historical or cultural figures; exposing children to culturally relevant books, artifacts, music, and stories; celebrating cultural holidays; eating ethnic foods; and encouraging children to use their family's native language. Some Korean mothers in this study tried to culturally socialize their biracial children by cooking Korean foods, taking children to Korea to see their maternal side of extended family, and encouraging children to use Korean in some cases.

**Preparation for bias.** There was one mother who reported that she prepared her daughter for any possible bias. Kim said that she intentionally talked about the possible racial discrimination and tried to prepare her daughter for it:

It's been hard, I mean, for my daughter. To me, it wasn't that hard, so I've tried to warn my daughter about the possible prejudice she may face. I used to tell her, "Candice, I know you go to American school, you have an American father, and you were born here

in the US, but you have an Asian as your mother and because of that, you've got Oriental feature, therefore, when people looking at you, they may consider you as a foreigner here. And then when you're in Korean, people there may see you as a foreigner because you also have a feature of your dad – a White American." I just want her to be prepared in case she may be hurt by what other people thought about her.

Kim disclosed that she tried to warn and prepare Candice for any kind of prejudice she may encounter, but for some reason, Candice seemed that she did not want to talk about that aspects during the interview. The reason might be that she did not want any negative feelings that may arise during the interview. Kim continued to describe how she addressed the issue:

I've told my daughter, "Sometimes, since you're half Asian and half White, you may be discriminated, so you should work hard to effectively deal with such unfair treatment." I usually share my experience as a minority when talking about such case, like since I can't speak perfect English, I always work extra hard to show the people at work that I can do more than what I asked to do and I can work better than anyone else, and that way nobody can blame me for my less than perfect English. So I told her that you should show your competency to people in case they unfairly judge you because of your biracial status.

Kim was one of the few mothers who attempted to prepare children for any bias. She also thought that she might be the better person to address those issues:

Since I've faced a lot more discrimination than my husband, compared to him I think I am in the better position to talk to my daughter about race, and my husband always tells my daughter to be open to other cultures and make sure there's no place for prejudice or discrimination towards others in her mind and thought.

Kim was strongly against using the term "discrimination" and described her rationale:

I did not want to use the term "discrimination" when I talked with my daughter when discussing people's prejudice or unfair treatment because I considered the term as too harsh to use, so I used "individual person's own preference" instead when she was young. I told her, "Mommy's looking at this way, everyone has one's own preference, mom has my own preference, and you have your own preference and that different preferences make people treat others somewhat differently." My husband did not like my indirect way of explaining things related to race, but I wanted to protect my daughter from the harsh reality when she's young when she's vulnerable.

Kim's husband appeared that he did not like her indirect way to address the issue associated with race because it would not help their daughter much, while Kim did not want her daughter to be

exposed to a harsh reality of life when she was young. Thus, instead of using a direct approach, she used an indirect way to prepare her daughter for bias, which could be explained by Hughes and colleagues' (2006) suggestion that parents should note a fine line between preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust.

***Lack of preparation for bias.*** When asked about whether their family has talked about race or race related issues, all biracial participants said, "no." For their families, the issue of race simply never or rarely came up. This came as a surprise because seven mothers out of nine reported that they experienced racial discrimination, however, either intentionally or unintentionally most of them did not discuss with their biracial children about race related topics or coping strategies in case their children encounter some unpleasant events associated with their race.

Eric's family discussed affirmative action because his father felt that he was unfairly treated at work due to the fact that he was White:

Our family's never talked about racial discriminations or something like that. However, something like affirmative action, that might come up sometimes... yeah, that's about it... Like my dad, he's like completely White so sometimes he'll get like frustrated if he doesn't get promoted while he works so hard and somebody else will. And he'll just be like, "Oh, that, it's 'cause I'm the White... White guy. I'm White so I am not gonna get any free handouts."

Eric's father's statement about "free handouts" may not be an appropriate term to say in front of his children because it's considered "race-linked pejoratives," however, Eric's father, who was born as White and raised as a White individual might not even recognize that some racial remarks could hurt other minorities either directly or indirectly, especially, his Korean immigrant wife who also belonged to one of the minorities in the United States.

In Candice's family, the topic associated with race never came up because it may raise negative feelings in the family:

Umm, we've never talked about race-related issues in my family. I think that our family doesn't want to talk about race or racial discrimination because we don't want to raise any negative feelings in our family, like bringing negative energy. As far as I know, my parents have never really talked about it in our family.

Aaron's mother talked about race related issues, but not in relation to him, "I think my mom has talked about it a little bit not in the context of me, but more like my mom's coming here and experiencing difficulties. We never really talked about it." Liz also commented that she and her husband never overtly talked about race and race-related issues with their sons, but she told her sons that do not get close to people who tried to hurt them. Biracial participants thought the reason that their families did not discuss race in their families were because they had not faced discrimination based on their race. Larry explained:

I don't think we've talked about race in our family. I guess it's never been a problem. I've never faced serious discrimination... Well I think, at school, at least where I go to school, kids are pretty nice about that thing. I mean some people joke about it, but I've never faced anything serious... I don't know. I guess usually the people I associate myself with don't tend to discriminate... I don't know I've never really talked about it or brought it up but I am sure if I did bring it up they would be supportive but it is not something that I have any issues about.

Amy, Kenny, Tom, Paul, and Michelle all echoed Larry's experience:

Our family doesn't talk about race or race-related issues at home. (Amy)

Not really it's never come up as a topic in my family. We've never discussed race-related issues in our family and I guess because it's not necessary to bring them up. (Kenny)

We've never discussed anything related to race... I guess, it's because there's no problem associated with race. (Tom)

I've experienced a lot of racial discrimination growing up in fact, but my parents never taught me how to handle that... nope, we've never discussed race in our family. (Paul)

No, we haven't talked about anything about race specifically... no, I wouldn't say my parents talked about race or things related to race at home. (Michelle)

Contrary to my expectations, almost all parents did not discuss race or mixed race issues with their children. In fact, out of nine biracial participants, there was no one who reported that

they discussed race in their families even though one mother opposed her daughter's claim. The parents in this study, either intentionally or unintentionally, seemed to employ color-blind approach in their parenting, by not bringing up or dismissing the topic of race and mixed race issues, they may in fact, minimize or de-emphasize race. Except for Paul who seemed to experience the most racial discriminations among the biracial participants, nobody blamed their parents for being at a loss to discuss race related issues or for not preparing them for any bias. It may be interpreted that the Korean mothers employed a "color-blind approach" because they did not want to be reminded of their own painful experiences with racism or they wanted to believe that their biracial children would not be the target of racism because of their half White heritage. Or it may be difficult for them to deal with that reality that their children may also experience racial discrimination due to their Asian heritage.

***Experience with racial discrimination.*** Although it was not very serious, four participants reported that they faced racial discrimination in the form of name calling and racial slurs, but most of their parents did not prepare for them to effectively deal with those incidents. Paul explained a racist experience from her childhood and lack of parental racial socialization:

Although I have faced racial discrimination, I never got, like, teachings from my parents about how to handle that. Well, it [coping strategy] varied as I was growing up. Like when I was a kid, I would just ignore it. And I would usually tell my teacher or tell the school principal, as a way to follow the rules. And then later on, I just ignored it because I couldn't confront them because they were stronger than me... Physical strength mattered when young. So I got bullied a lot. There was one time I got beaten up at school... in elementary school. It was different at Okemos High School because it had a large Korean population that students were kind of afraid of them. The nickname for them was the Korean Mafia, and since I was part Korean, I was protected in school although I wasn't one of them....I was also teased in middle school. People called me 'Twinkie'.... when I was at college I faced discrimination too. I would walk down through the dorm hall and I would have people call me, "Chink" or "Gook" or make fun of my Asian feature.

When asked whether she knew about her sons' experiencing any racial discrimination, Liz said that she knew her older son, Paul experienced it, while her younger son was not exposed to any racial discrimination. Although Paul said that his parents did not teach him how to deal with racial discrimination, Liz commented on how she and her husband tried to address it:

My husband and I told Paul that racism exists anywhere in the world. We also told him not to feel intimidated by anyone because he is an American. I specifically told him that even though he as a Korean mom, he doesn't belong to a group of minority because he has a White dad.

Among the nine biracial participants, Paul was the one who has faced the most serious case of racial discrimination. It should be noted that other biracial participants who resided in the same school district reported that they had not faced much discrimination. Based on the data (e.g., interview, ecomap, and demographic information), I was able to find that Paul had several factors that were different from the other biracial participants who reported less or no incidents of discrimination: comparatively low academic achievement and low family SES, physical appearance (short & overweight), and timid/introverted personalities, all of which were reported by the participant himself. Therefore, the above factors might be positively associated with more racial discrimination. Min asked her son whether as a biracial, he has faced any kind of discrimination and he said no, never. And he said, "don't worry about me, mom." Mary thought about the reason (i.e., not having faced any discrimination) and suggested it might be because of his personality, "My son is a very socialized, outgoing, and easy-to-approach type of person, so I think those characteristics might have served as protective factors." Candice shared her experience:

Yes, I've faced it [racial discrimination], like when I was younger, I was like freshman in high school, I kinds had to deal with it with new crowd of people. Sometimes, when it was brought up to me in a bad way, I really don't know how to deal with it because this is what I was, just take me or not, like I did not actually know how to confront those kinds of situations.

Candice continued to describe a time when she experienced racism by her classmate due to her phenotype and racial heritage:

I remember I had an incident in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and he called me “Chink”, and I was like in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and I still knew what he meant, but that still hurt my feeling I went home crying and told my parents what happened. My parents told me that I should overcome it myself by ignoring them because people who are like racist against Asians tried to hurt people who have Asian features, and I’ve got the Asian look, so I can’t change anything about it, so I have to ignore it and just go on with my life.

Echoing the experience of Paul and Candice, four other biracial participants – Michelle, Larry, Amy, and Kenny – shared their experience of being the target of racial jokes and slurs, and all of them also identified the “ignoring” was the strategy they typically employed in such situations:

I haven’t faced any discrimination because I don’t look much like an Asian, people don’t know I am half Asian. I think I may look like an Asian a little bit, but not much. I mean people who know me well jokes about it, but I take it, I just laugh about it or ignore it, but I haven’t really faced any discrimination based on my race. (Michelle)

I mean kids make like jokes or comments about Asian students... I guess the first few times it happened it kind of bothered me a little bit but I guess eventually I knew kids were going to do it no matter what, and most of the time I knew they did not mean serious harm. So I guess you just laugh with it or something...umm...yeah I try not to let things affect me too much, because most of the time they really don’t unless you let them affect you. (Larry)

There may have been some kinds of racial jokes and slurs, but I just brushed them up because I don’t think that’s really important. I just think that people don’t understand why I get mad at them, they just don’t get it, so now I just ignore them. (Amy)

I’ve never faced a bad case of discrimination, like unfairly treated, or discriminated... Discrimination wise, it’s just like joking around with friends, like a stereotype, but I’ve never discriminated based on my biracial status. It’s just like a usual joke associated with Asian, nothing awful though. Sometimes it can be annoying, but I just ignore it.(Kenny)

When asked about coping skills to deal with racial discrimination, Kenny suggested the same thing Candice’s parents asked her to employ, “If someone faces racial discrimination, I want to tell him to do your best ignore it. Don’t let them bring you down, keep doing what you’re doing and don’t worry about it. You don’t have to listen to them. They don’t matter.” As can be seen



from Candice's parents' advice on coping skills to deal with racial discrimination, her parents' advice seemed to be at the superficial level, which might not help biracial children much.

As stated above, biracial participants reported that they encountered with racial slurs and jokes targeted at them, and they tried to deal with those incidents in their own way – ignoring or laughing at those jokes together with their friends. Even though the passive coping strategy seemed to be working reasonably well for most biracial participants, they did not realize that their passive reaction might facilitate racism because what they employed as a coping strategy might be color-blind approach. Remaining silent or ignoring implies that one agrees with such racist beliefs. Thus, it should be noted that speaking up when one hears racist slurs or jokes can be more proactive.

Amy's case seemed to be different from others because she was hurt by an adult neighbor instead of peers at her age:

Just once that I can remember, like people may have said something behind me about my racial background and they may have made some stereotypical comments about me, which I doubt it and I don't care. Anyway one day, I got into a fight with the daughter of my neighbor who drove me from school because we carpooled together, she has said something to me and I got really offended, when I looked back, she was talking about one of my friends who were not very close to me and not even a good friend of mine to begin with, anyway she said something bad about her and I was like, "what're you talking about, you don't even know her" and obviously that escalated the situation and we're screaming at each other and my neighbor's mom said "You shouldn't talk to my daughter that way because she's an American and I'm not." And my mom made me go to their house to apologize which was obviously the worst part because I did not want to apologize. Obviously she's the racist, she made a racist remark, but anyway my mom made me apologize and I hated that.

Dana also shared her daughters' exposures to discrimination:

Although I think there are more positive sides of being a biracial family, there have been also some unpleasant experiences. While my kids were growing up, especially when they attended elementary school, I recognized that my daughters were picked on because they had slanted eyes and they looked Chinese. My two daughters told me over and over that their friends taunted them about their looks, about their being different. One time I got a call from the principal due to name-calling because my older daughter was very upset by

it. I had to go to her school, but soon I found the principal to discriminate Asian people herself because she kept defending the White kids who were the instigators of discrimination, not my daughter who was the victim of discrimination.

As a first generation immigrant, Dana seemed to be bitter about the unfair society, “Many people say that it got better, but I don’t think that’s true. It may have become slightly better, but there still exist lots of discrimination and prejudice towards minorities like me.” Dana also complained about lack of societal support for parents of biracial children:

I don’t think we have such a thing which can be called support for parents of biracial children. I don’t think so... I had absolutely no information about that. I just raised my kids by instinct. I have had no guidance, no support. I’ve done all by myself. Since I worked out, one of the most difficult things was finding a good babysitter. Working full-time, raising three children has been really hard. I don’t wanna think about how many babysitters I went through. The money I spent on it. When my kids went into school, they were so behind because they weren’t able to learn properly prior to attending school. I did not have time and the babysitters weren’t able to provide that kind of support to my kids. Raising two kids with no support has been really hard. My husband did not help much, so it’s like raising my kids all by myself. I was working even during the weekend, so there was no way for me to provide a good environment for my kids. I just felt tired. I hadn’t had any kind of holidays. I worked and worked consistently.

As noted by Dana, there seemed to be lack of social support for interracial families in the United States. All except one mother mentioned that they were not aware of any social support that specifically aimed to help interracial families and their children in the local community. There should be educational programs that intend to help bi/multiracial children and their families. As indicated by the participants’ statements, there existed a lack of knowledge on interracial parenting. For example, many monoracial parents did not aware of the importance of racial socialization (e.g., impacts of racial socialization on their biracial children’s identity development), and they seemed to possess limited knowledge on coping skills associated with racial discrimination. Yoon with two biracial sons talked about how she deal with issues related to race:

I always tell my kids and also other people that in terms of uh... discrimination, everyone

has it. If it's not about race, it'll be a look, or it'll be a social status, it'll be gender based, or it'll be either money or power. But what's more important is that what you think and what you do.

Jenny talked about her sons' experience with racism and how she perceived it:

I think all my three sons encountered race discrimination, but what can you do? It's just part of life. I think I had a conversation with my middle son once I told him that if he was like in Hawaii and everybody looks like him more like him, there White person will be discriminated. I think intellectually my middle son understands more about racism than anybody in our family. My third child I don't think he recognize discrimination at all even if he got discriminated he wouldn't know.

As a 1.5 generation immigrant herself, Jenny has also experienced racism. However, she seemed that she did not think that there was nothing to be done because everyone may face some kind of discrimination in one's life. Her reaction to racism appeared to be very passive because there can be various ways to deal with racism. When she recognized stereotypes in media (e.g., TV, movies, and books), as a consumer, she can contact the people behind those racist products and explain her objection. As a highly education individual with a PhD in education, she can be an active member in educating others about racism as well as join non-profit organizations that support tolerance and human rights as well. Jenny continued to say that God will take care of her sons:

The way I look at things like I had this kid and I feel that God is in our lives I don't have to worry too much, I mean I worry but I think that God takes care of them. In terms of racial discrimination, I feel that it could shape their characteristics in certain ways and I mean, when I faced discrimination it was very hurtful, but I believe it also helped shape the way I view the world and I just feel that God is in control if they I don't worry that much about discrimination those things will change in the future.

Everyone has their own coping strategy to employ when faced with difficulties, and it seemed that Jenny had a faith-based coping strategy, believing that God will take care of her children. In addition, she acknowledged that her painful experience with racism, in fact helped shaped the way she views the world, so she seemed to expect the same for her sons. Jenny's

youngest son, Kenny talked about his mom's encountering racial discrimination due to her Asian background:

I mean, like from my point of view, I don't see any weaknesses of being a biracial individual. I haven't faced any problems being half Asian and half White. I am not really sure, but maybe my mom's had some problems with her coworkers at her previous work due to her Asian racial background.

Biracial participants in the study reported that they haven't faced much racial discrimination, and that might be the reason that parents did not prepare them for bias. However, as Paul pointed out, it would be ideal for parents of biracial children to prepare their children to be aware of, and cope with, discrimination.

**Summary.** The task of parenting a biracial child with a spouse who was from different racial, ethnic, and cultural background can be challenging for any interracial parents. Most biracial participants in this study acknowledged that the relationships between themselves and their parents were the major factor in shaping their own values, thoughts, and attitudes as well as influencing their overall development. Although all biracial participants discussed the impacts both of their parents have on their identity development, they also disclosed that their Korean mothers have served as the main support system providing guidance and hands-on supports. All mothers in this study were from either a first generation immigrant or a 1.5 generation immigrant themselves. Therefore, their parenting styles and behaviors were different from those of their White American husbands due to their difference in cultural upbringings. While some interracial couples in the study have faced some parenting conflicts, most couples seemed to have a harmonious parenting practice through continuously communicating and modifying their parenting styles to meet the needs of their children.

In terms of racial socialization, almost all parents in this study did not discuss race or mixed race issues with their children. The parents, either intentionally or unintentionally, seemed

to employ a color-blind approach in their parenting; by not bringing up or dismissing the topic of race and mixed race issues, the parents seemed to minimize and de-emphasize race. One participant, Paul, brought up the issue of his parents' not preparing him for bias or racial discrimination and wished that they provided practical coping skills when faced with such encounters. As to one of the racial socialization domains, egalitarianism, many Korean mothers utilized strategies such as emphasizing hard work, self-acceptance, respecting diversity, and equality. The parents did not practice another domain in racial socialization, promotion of mistrust, by not communicating cautions or warnings to their children about other racial groups or barriers to success as biracial individuals. In terms of cultural socialization, about half of the mothers exerted efforts to culturally socialize their children to a certain extent, but their efforts were turned out to be ineffective in most of the cases. This is one of the most crucial areas parents of biracial children should pay more attention to.

### **Theme 3: Biracial Individuals' Outcomes related to Racial Identity**

Based on the interviews with the biracial participants and their mothers, a number of systems were identified as being supportive in the identity development of biracial individuals. Most systems including parents, siblings, peers, extended family members, school, and community were perceived to be much more positive than negative even though there were some factors (e.g., racial tensions between paternal side of extended family members and Korean mothers, parenting style conflicts) that might hinder their identity development. Biracial participants also identified other factors such as inherited personal traits and positive mentality that helped facilitate their development. All biracial participants in the study seemed to possess a great amount of positive mentality that enabled them to self-motivate and work hard, which, in turn, made them succeed in their pursuit. Most biracial participants appeared to be highly

competent and be proud of their achievement (e.g., academic achievement, musical competence, varsity players, etc.) .Of the nine biracial participants, five of them reported that they were aiming to be a medical doctor, and all of them were high achievers, i.e., attending or planning to attend top-tier universities, and two out of those five already took the MCAT to apply to a medical school. One participant who was a high school senior also a 4.0 student. Two biracial participants reported that they were “B” average students, but they also discussed that they were trying hard to meet expectations of their own and their parents.

A number of factors could explain why these biracial participants were able to become a high achiever: 1) high parental expectations; 2) supportive and resourceful parents, especially Korean mothers; 3) relatively high SES including high parental educational attainment level, high income, and parents’ having professional occupation; 4) high expectations from people (peers, teachers) around them; 5) high motivation promoted by parents, especially Korean mothers; 6) safe and inclusive school and community environment; 7) supportive peers and extended family; 8) continuous parental monitoring about their progress; and 9) living in an intact family with both biological parents. All the biracial participants explicitly acknowledged that they were happy with their “unique” biracial status and that they had a healthy sense of racial identity. The following section discusses the important factors related to the identity development pointed out by the biracial participants.

**Influences of inherited personal traits on identity development.** In addition to supports from various systems (e.g. parents, peers, school, & community) around biracial individuals’ lives, some inherited personal traits such as phenotype, birth order, and characteristics as well as learned attitudes and mentality seemed to influence the racial identity development of biracial participants in this study. Although most biracial participants reported

that they had not encountered a bad case of racial discrimination, they became the target of racial slurs or racial jokes at times, or for several participants almost every day. However, a majority of them employed their own coping skills to deal with such cases. As inferred from the interviews with the biracial participants, most experiences related to their inherited personal traits and their biracial status have helped them to develop their racial identity in a more positive way.

***Does phenotype matter? – Yes, but we have the Mentality of “Not much to us!”***

According to biracial participants, their phenotype has been associated with their interactions with people. However, since they could not change who they were and how they looked, they acknowledged that they tried to minimize any possible negative effects based on their phenotype by employing a positive mentality. Every individual can find within himself/herself a constant struggle between two opposing elements (i.e., the positive and the negative), and in order to develop a positive quality, one should restrain or inhibit its opposing negative, whereas to restrain or inhibit a negative quality, one should develop its opposing positive. Thus, using this strategy, biracial participants seemed to shift their situation into a more positive direction.

Generally, biracial individuals tend to identify with a racial group based on how others perceive them, as opposed to identifying with their actual racial composition (Brunsma & Rocquemoire, 2001). All biracial participants in this study reported that people were curious about their racial makeup, especially for those who have somewhat ambiguous physical appearance. One's appearance and phenotype appeared to serve a critical role in their interactions with people, particularly with their peers as well as in the employment of situational identity among the biracial participants in the study. One commonly shared theme among several multiracial participants in the study was the experience of being identified as “Asian” by their peers. Kenny considered his general phenotype more Korean, thus identify as such:

In terms of physical appearance, I know when people look at me definitely think me Asian. Some people easily recognize me as half Asian and half White, but sometimes people label me just as Asian. I mean I'm used to it. I've been exposed to it as long as I can remember... Me myself, I don't know... I feel like I am 70% Korean and 30% White in physical appearance may be. I always say first I am Asian and then half Asian and half White. I mean I view myself the same as the other American kids pretty much because I don't like to speak Korean, I dress like just other American kids, I just talk like an American, so I don't really see myself differently.

Although Kenny thought that he looked more Korean, he rather viewed himself the same as “the other American kids,” implying that for him, being identified by others as Asian due to his physical appearance did not necessary mean that he was acting and thinking like an Asian individual. He voiced his opinion, “Don't think you're different based on your look... consider yourself just think like everyone else and keep going, treat yourself the same. I don't think you should be treated differently because you're part Asian.” Like Kenny, most biracial participants reported that people believed they looked “Asian.” According to Kibria (2002), the Asian American experience with the ethnic American model results in a confrontation with its underlying racial premise of “Whiteness” which makes it difficult for Asian Americans to become ethnic Americans. As Gudykunst (2001) postulated, for many European Americans, being “American” is related to being “White.” Unless “proven” otherwise, Asian Americans are automatically presumed to be foreigners regardless of generational status, whereas White Americans must emphasize their ethnicity if they wish to be associated with a different ethnicity (Tuan, 1998). As the above researchers posited, Asian Americans tend to be regarded as “foreigners” even though one was born in the U.S., thus being the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrant and American. Therefore, being labeled as Asian may imply that one is not “authentic American”. However, most biracial participants were not bothered by being called “Asian” instead of Asian-White biracial. Larry shared his experience of people asking his racial makeup:



It's usually people asking me like either, are you completely Asian or what type of Asian are you... Probably when they see me they think Asian. Because I look more Asian than White... but I think you can tell I am not White... I guess I just answer whatever it is they want to hear. I mean whatever they ask I just tell them... Yeah usually someone will ask what I am and I usually just say half Asian and half White. But if they ask me what kind of Asian am I, I will say Korean.

In depicting the ways that other people perceived mixed race individuals, visible differences often became determining factors although sometimes those visible differences could be somewhat ambiguous. As Larry commented, at times he just called his racial identity according to what others wanted to hear because that was what they perceived him. Larry also talked about people's attempt to put him into one category:

Um... I don't know usually people just put you in one category. I don't think of myself as one category though... I don't think it bothers me on a very personal level, but sometimes I think it is just a little bit annoying. Yeah I think it is what is said. It's what makes me think about it. Otherwise I don't think about it, but when other people comment or say something to categorize you as one or the other I guess you think about it.

All biracial participants, even those who phenotypically looked White experienced what Rockquemore (1998) called as the 'what are you? experience'. According to Rockquemore (1998), this 'what are you?' question may be due to the ambiguous appearance of biracial individuals, and some questions like the 'what are you really?' question may be more problematic because "Others may approach the question of the biracial individual's racial background to clarify a discrepancy between the appearance and the professed identity" and that "there can either be a renegotiation of the identity, or an interactional rupture can take place in which no shared meaning can be agreed upon" (p.206). Paul experienced the 'what really are you' question:

People tend to ask me because they are confused at, umm... they know that I am Asian, they just do not know if I am Chinese or Japanese. Yeah because I don't have... well they probably know that I am White. But they don't see it that way. White people see me as being Asian. Korean people see me as being White. Yeah I'm always going to be in between... Well now I feel good about it, but when I was young, there were just too many

negative things, like I couldn't associate with either one. Because I feel like, especially the media, they portray Asians as being really successful, so like the other racial groups, I won't call it like jealousy, but they felt like Asians were like invading into their racial circles. And so they would lash out by making fun of us. Likewise, for instance, the one that I actually have experienced a lot of is a lot of people trying to discredit me or make fun of me, like attack my manlyhood because I looked Asian. And that is the other group's way of attacking us; because that is one of the things they feel like they can attack, that they have confidence in.

Paul disclosed that he faced people's stereotyping him due to his physical appearance. When he was young, he admitted that encountering occasional prejudices and stereotyping hurt him, but as he got older, he learned how to deal with those unpleasant incidents, "I just ignore those now.

I'm studying really hard to get my degree and aiming to be an accountant as soon as possible, so my strategy is to ignore and to make sure I am going to be successful and them not going to be."

Eric explained his usual reaction to the 'what are you?' question:

I was like, um, I don't know, you make it, like a laugh out of it. It was like, "Oh, I'm half Korean and half Polish." And it was like, "Wow, I've never met a half Korean half White person before. That's, that's pretty interesting." I don't look totally Asian.

Eric rather tried to make a somewhat annoying situation into a rather casual one in which he could get some fun out of it. Michelle shared her experience, "If people ask me, I tell them I am half Korean and half White. Some people would say, I look a bit like Asian and some people ask 'what really are you' because I don't look like 100% Asian...sometimes it bothered me a lot, but it doesn't really matter to me anymore." Michelle also talked about the fact that she could get rid of her Asian feature if she put her full makeup on:

I don't have unpleasant experience because my racial heritages, and if I put my full makeup on, I just look like White, no trace of Asianness at all. Maybe my darker complexion may make people wonder if I am Italian or something like that, but other than that, I don't really look different from other White people.

Due to her dark complexion, Candice was perceived by others as Hawaiian or Mexican along with Asian:

Whenever I am going to be auditioned for dancing, I will feel more Asian because I barely look American, it's pretty much stereotypical, but everyone will think I am Hawaiian or Mexican or Asian. Normally like during dance, I will feel like Asian and stick with that way. Normally when I was working, I feel closer to my Korean side, but I also think I have many American qualities. It's like physical appearance. Mentally, I am close to my American side. I used to go to Korean school to learn Korean language and culture, but I no longer do that, so mentally I am more American than Asian.

For Candice, her physical appearance, particularly what she believed was communicated by her dark complexion and Asian features, appeared to make the thought of identifying as anything other than half Asian and half White out of question. Although the biracial participants were not overly vocal about their annoyance being asked the blunt question of asking who they were, it appeared that they experienced at least a moment of defensiveness or defiance because they considered the situation as an assignment to explain their racial makeup although they have no obligation to do that. Notwithstanding some unpleasant experiences, Eric seemed to enjoy his having Asian phenotype, "I feel like I look more Asian than White...well, I'd say I'm better looking than a lot of White people." Tom had experienced that some people placed him into another racial group:

My family goes to Cancun every year for a week and I get tan from there sometimes. When I come back a little darker, some people mistook me for being Hispanic, but I don't think how people racially identify based on my look is that important...yeah, it depends on the person. A lot of how you're seen, I don't think that there is one way society labels me. It's not like it is saying, "You are Asian." Or "You are White." It is just, "You are Tom, and what kind of person you are affects how I treat you."

As in the case of Eric and Tom, most biracial participants responded to racial identity perceived by others based on their phenotype in a complacent manner. They seemed to acknowledge that their physical appearance prevented them from being fully affiliated with either heritage. Nevertheless, they appeared comfortable about their biracial status. However, several mothers expressed their concern over their biracial children's physical appearance because it was partly associated with their in-between status. Kim shared her experience:

In Korea, people consider my daughter as a foreigner even though she looks Asian in America. My daughter takes after her dad, but she also has slanted, oriental eyes. When people looked at us, they just consider us, me and my daughter, as Asian even though I'm married to White man and we're interracial family. When people in the States look at my daughter, they consider she's Asian even though she has an American last name. People just consider her as a foreigner, not an American.

In order to prepare her daughter in case she encounters any unpleasant events due to her Asian look, Kim told her daughter, Candice:

How people are looked, what their skin colors are, and things like don't matter. Having different physical appearances doesn't mean that some people are inferior to others or some people are superior to others because looks are just superficial, so you should make sure that you don't judge people based on their physical appearances. It's not a way to treat people.

Candice voiced her thoughts on physical appearance and the way she dealt with others' perceptions:

I would tell them [biracial individuals] that basically you are who you are and you can't change the way you look. So I mean everybody in this world is different from each other, but we're all gonna be different, but obviously we're gonna look more different because we're not from monoracial White people, but it doesn't mean that you can't go out to do whatever you set your mind on, like it doesn't mean that you should be home sitting and stop because you're different, basically I will tell them be who you are not to be afraid to be different, do what you want to do, don't make you deter because of your look. Let it blow over.

As mentioned above, the continued salience of physical appearance as a factor that limits racial identity options appeared to work in ways to restrict some participants' racial identity options. On the other hand, as Candice suggested, since one could not change their phenotype, it would be better for them to accept their physical appearance and act in a more productive way. Jean seemed to acknowledge the fact that they children tended to shift their racial identity depending on each situation:

I think my kids identify themselves as just American. I don't know. Maybe sometimes I hear that, they're saying we are Asian, or Korean. It depends on situations. When they are with their friends who are White, they call themselves Asian because they look more

Asian when they're with their White friends, but when they're with Asian, they look more White, so they identify themselves as just White.

Most biracial participants (n = 7) talked about the utilization of situational identity and encounters of occasional racial jokes and slurs, which they treated with a sense of humor and complacency. Kenny described his experience:

Umm, when I am home with my family, I don't really think about it that much, but I guess I may identify with more Korean because most of the time we eat Korean food and there's like pictures of my mom in Korea and everything, so I guess, there's like, a kind of Asian atmosphere at home. On the other hand, when I am at school, I feel more American, or actually I feel more Korean because everyone else is White, and easily like couple of times a day, I'll get an Asian joke geared at me. It happens, you can't escape it. I don't care.

As Kenny pointed out, different atmospheres seemed to be closely related to how one can identify oneself. When surrounded with things associated with Korea, as Kenny commented, one can feel closer to that culture. Thus, as other biracial participants acknowledged, identifying oneself could be closely associated with each situation one was in. A 49-year old, first generation immigrant mother, Yoon shared her advice given to her biracial son regarding physical appearance:

I always told my kids that it really doesn't matter how you look, I mean, your physical appearance doesn't really matter, what's more important is what you think, what you do, and what value you in your life putting in self. So I always put a lot of emphasis on those valuable inner beauties than looks.... and if someone gives a hard time because of his physical appearance, the most effective way to deal with the situation is to ignore because whatever words based on appearance should be counted as meaningless.

Yoon's advice on phenotype echoed that of other Korean mothers in the study. One of the most frequently used coping skills suggested by either parents or biracial children seemed to be "ignoring" – a passive way of resistance. While interviewing the participants, I did not hear any other more proactive coping strategies. Many biracial participants in this study reported that they faced racial jokes or slurs aimed at them, but they only dealt with those incidents very passively.

They did not recognize that racial jokes were also part of racism because their attitudes about a certain ethnic group (i.e., Asians) based on outward differences are also known as racism, which can also lead to discrimination. Therefore, parents of biracial children should properly prepare their children for bias, not just giving them a simple, not very practical advice, in case their biracial children encounter race-related incidents.

***Does a birth order matter? – Yes, it seems to influence one’s preference toward Korean Heritage.*** Except for two biracial participants who were the only child in their families, there seemed to exist birth order effects on the levels of preferences towards Korean culture among siblings. Firstborns appeared to have more preference towards their Korean heritage. Jenny, a 1.5 generation immigrant mother of three sons, shared her experiences:

All my kids look more Asian than anything. My oldest son knows more about Korean culture than anybody else and then my second son understands that he looks more Asian than anything, but I think he still wanna journey to figure out what that means, and then my third child has no clue at all.

Jenny continued to talk about the differences among his three sons:

I think for my oldest son, it is important that he has White friends and all of them readily accepted my son’s biracial heritages, and for my second son, I think he thinks more negatively about his racial identity, especially Korean aspect of it than my other sons. As for my third son, he just makes fun of it. He has some Korean friends who were adopted, but they are all like my third son. For example, when they see me they ask, “Can you make some *kimchi* and *bulgogi*[names of Korean food]?” and that’s all they think about Korea. My youngest son and his friend have no clue about their Korean heritage.

Jenny talked more about his oldest son and his embracing Korean culture more than his two siblings:

In terms of cultural preference, my firstborn son embraces Korean culture much more than the other two, my middle one not really, and my third one only thinks Korean in lieu of Korean food. I am closer to my oldest, I always talk to him a lot of things compared to others in my family.

Jean also shared variations in knowledge about Korean culture among her three children:

I don't think my kids are really knowledgeable about Korean culture. My two daughters don't have any Korean friend because they did not have Korean students at their school in the first place and they stopped going to Korean church when they're in high school. However, my son who's my oldest child has Korean friends. He's very positive all things about Korean and he's outgoing. He has lots of American friends as well. Everybody likes him. He's very sociable and a great leader, so I believe that he's the only one who's taking advantage of both sides of culture among my three children... You can call him a well-rounded person.

Except for the two families with only child, all mothers acknowledged that there was a close relationship between the birth order of each biracial child and their preference toward Korean heritage. It seemed that the mothers exerted much more efforts and time to teach Korean cultures to their oldest child than their younger child(ren), thus naturally the oldest/older child in each family had become more familiar with Korean culture and language.

Amy also commented on different levels of preferences toward Korean culture among her siblings:

I think my older brother identifies a lot more with Korean than me, and I am probably in the middle. When compared me, my younger sister is a lot more American. I don't think that's because of physical appearance because my younger sister actually looks the most Korean among three of us. She's also the youngest and that point of life, I don't know. Her Korean speaking is the worst among us as well. I don't know why, but as time goes on, parents have more kids and they may not have enough time to teach the younger kids as much as they did with their older kids. But my brother read Korean comic books and he has tried a lot harder than me, like he will speak Korean with my mom sometimes.

Amy continued to elaborate her older brother's enthusiasm to explore Asian culture and how much her mother invested her effort and time in her older brother:

My brother has been really into Asian culture, he even went to China for two months on a mission trip when he was, maybe, 11. I think my mom has tried hard to invest so much time and efforts in him, so if he did not succeed, and I think she will be really depressed, so like she did not invest that much time in my sister whatever she does. I always did things on my own, so my mom did not invest much in me either.

As Amy pointed out, her mother's investment (e.g., time, efforts) in her older brother helped him to acclimate more in Korean and Asian culture.

A 50-year old Liz talked about her two sons' difference:

Compared to my older son, my younger son has been pretty much Americanized. I also taught him Korean for some time, but since Brian really did not like it and I was very busy and tired, I wasn't as persistent as I taught Korean to my older son, so both of us just let it go. Of course, I do regret now because when Paul and I talk in Korean, I can see that Brian seems to feel alienated from us. I always speak in Korean with my older son. I can't deny the fact that I feel closer to Paul. Due to the language barrier, Paul has become closer to his dad. I think that he also needed to be closer to his dad. I always try not to make him feel sense of alienation even though it's not easy due to my limited English skills and his inability to speak in Korean. I also feel sorry for my younger son because I wasn't able to support him as much as I was with my older son because I was always too busy when he's young...Paul does like all things Korean, but I don't like that fact because I want my sons to embrace both cultures, especially American culture because they will live here in the States permanently. I don't want Paul to be hurt by his strong preference toward Korean culture. I just want him to always stay on middle ground. I like the fact that he likes and respects Korean culture, but I don't want him to attach too much importance in his Korean heritage.

Liz had a great concern over her son's putting overemphasis on his Korean heritage because she thought that it might not be beneficial for her son's life in the United States in the long run. Paul said that unlike him, his younger brother could not speak Korean, "My brother doesn't know. He is trying to learn though." According to the participants, the older the biracial child was, the better they could understand Korean culture and language. Dana also commented, "Among my children, my oldest daughter can speak Korean the most, it's probably because I put some more effort teaching her Korean compared with my younger children." Angie also commented that her older son seems to embrace Korean culture more than younger son does:

Well, again it's, its, I have one son that embraces his Korean culture, and I think the other one does too, but he hasn't gotten to the maturity yet. And he's an easier child to raise because he's superficial-- that is easier child to raise than a child who is a deep thinker. Anyways, you know, he is into looks, you know, and popularity and acceptance. And of course, I think he's handsome. He told me, "People look at me and I am Asian," but he looks more Spanish to me. He takes that to heart and he doesn't wanna be labeled as Asian or Korean, you know. I did that too for a while in high school because it's the popularity thing. The high school I went to, there were very few Asians and I did not want to be associated with them. I think it's because I wanna be like everybody else. Now I would give more credit to Tom [older son] than Daniel [younger son]. Right now, I



embrace who I am. People accept me who I am, but I think there's the period where you just want to be American.

Angie's depiction about differences in preference toward Korean culture between her two sons also showed that older child seemed to have a tendency to embrace Korean/Asian heritage more than younger child.

As the participants discussed, the birth order of each child influenced the level of their preference toward and knowledge on Korean culture. One of the most significant reasons for those variations was different levels of Korean mothers' efforts on culturally socializing their biracial children.

***Does a biracial status matter? – Yes, it enables us to utilize “Situational Identity”***

Biracial participants in this study often use the situational identity with other people including their peers. Some participants reported that they tended to identify with the race or ethnicity that fit them best at any given moment. They shared their experiences of either publicly or privately managing their sometimes shifting racial identities; often due to racially ambiguous appearance and/or racial/ethnic identities perceived by others. The biracial individuals in the study viewed the nature of their fluid racial identity as strengths, not drawbacks because it provided more options when compared with their monoracial counterpart's fixed identity. Aaron commented:

I think that half Asian students can integrate more like White students when compared to full Asians. They don't become a part of that bubble I mentioned earlier. I think that's because when I am around my Asian friends, I can relate to them so much, and I think that may be stronger for students who are only Korean, like when they're home, they are surrounded by only Korean culture and then they can relate to other Korean friends, but by doing that in school, you can't become part of mainstream culture. It's sort of like, for me, I can go back and forth, but they can't....I would say, it's kind of similar to my general identity.

Tom also reported that he shifted his identity depending on situation, which also enables him to be an impartial party on certain subjects:

I think that I identify myself a little more with the Korean side than I do with the White side, I don't typically identify myself Whiter than Korean I have to say. It is either half and half or a little more Korean than the other. It is just depending on who I am with. When I am with my Korean side of the family it is like I am Korean because I am doing Korean things. At school, we were having a discussion in my government class. Someone brought up an article about Asian people in the military and how they are being treated there. You know there aren't as many Asians in the military. A lot of kids were saying things that maybe I did not agree with. A lot of them were Asian so the things that they said made me sort of... not angry but maybe wanting to correct their opinion on things. Well, not correct their opinion but maybe inform them a little more. Say, "Have you considered 'this'?"...while I am not 100% Korean or of orient decent...yeah. I feel like I am a lot of an impartial party. I spoke to those kids and it's like I can't speak for everyone who is 100% Korean, but from my experience as half Korean, this is what I feel about the subject.

As can be seen from Tom's experience of self-identification, biracial participants in the study tended to identify themselves depending on the person they were with and the situation they were in. Aaron elaborated upon his experience regarding his fluid racial identity in his daily life:

If I have to like fill out, like a bubble, I identify myself multiracial. I do see both Korean and American. I would say Korean American although sometimes I identify myself as Asian American that may be having two close Chinese friends. On the form where Korean is an option I fill that out, but it's not always an option. Sometimes when I was with my friend we say "yes we are Asian"... Exactly, it's kind of fun sometimes. When I tell my friends that I am half Asian and they are like, "no way" because I look like more White than Asian. I think it's interesting. I can almost surprise people with it. I never pretend that I am only White. I enjoy telling people I am half Asian, you know, because it's unexpected.... I guess... if I have to answer to yes or no question, I guess I would say yes, but only because I am not really thinking about it most of the times. I think that's more true, just when I am at work, or like just out doing stuff, when I am with my friends, especially with my Asian friends, I feel more Asian, probably because I am with them. When I am home, I feel more Asian. But then, it's kind of environmental, like if I am with my Asian friends, I feel more like Asian, which is actually more frequently because we hang out all the time. It's not that, like I choose like that. But probably when I am out on my own, people look at me and assume that I am just White, and it's like a casual interaction, but you know, I don't think that it's so important that it means to come up, and I don't wanna say it doesn't really matter, but I think that in certain times, you know, which if it doesn't come up and that's ok and then other times it does come up, and that's also ok, but I definitely think that made me more of well-rounded person than if I were like just one race.

According to Aaron, the fluid nature of his racial identity has provided him to have more options and to be more accepting of other cultures. As reported by the biracial participants, they altered

their identity depending on the environment and factors influencing the peer relationships, linguistic abilities, and physical appearance.

Amy explained her ability to understand Korean could make her identify with Korean at times even though she usually identify more with Americans, “I don’t really speak Korean, but if people talk to me in Korean, I can understand and answer to them in English. So I can identify more with Korean in that sense, but mostly I identify more with American side.” Eric described that having more White friends influenced the way he identified himself racially:

Most of the time, I feel like I identify myself like more as a White. Just probably because my friends are White....Like if I had lots of Asian friends, that I hang out with more Korean people I’d probably identify myself as Korean then. I have mostly White friends, that’s probably the most significant thing to make me more White. But I still feel like I don’t identify myself as more White. I still feel like I’m just half Korean and half White. The only reason I hang out with more Whites I just because there are more White people around.

Paul’s case was a bit different from Eric’s because he wanted to identify himself mostly as Americans because he had political ambition:

I identify myself as American only at most times because I understand that, if I ever want to go into politics, I have to identify myself as American. But for the most part, I kind of like don’t really bother with identifying myself as either Korean or American as a separate class. Percentage-wise, I guess, from my track record, I would identify myself like probably the opposite. So like 98% Korean and 2% White.

Like Paul, Yoon recognized there were times when identifying with Asian might be working in her son’s favor:

I think it’s important to be an Asian, so you can belong to the group of minorities. It’s because when you go to college and you’ll see each college has a certain bracket or percentage to fill in. So if my biracial can be considered as minority, he may be able to be benefitted. If my son only identified himself as only Caucasian, he won’t be able to be benefitted because as a typical Caucasian male applicant, he you won’t get any benefit because the competitions among them will be very high. Although Asian students may not be counted as a minority because they are doing so well compared to other minorities, I think that there’re still some top tier universities that are trying to fill the diversities of their campus. And in such cases, I think, my son’s biracial status may be beneficial.

Therefore, when he filled out the college applications, I made sure Larry to indicate his being half Asian and half White.

Biracial individuals are considered to have dual minority status, meaning that they may not be perceived as White enough to gain all the privileges associated with being White, but not quite minority enough to be perceived as a full member of a racial minority group (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Regardless of some concerns related to some ambiguities, almost all biracial participants in the study expressed pride in being mixed race, indicating that their dual heritage made them special and unique. They also said that they were comfortable with their racial identity. Furthermore, the participants disclosed that the fluid nature of identity offered ample opportunity to recreate themselves.

**Emphasizing strengths of dual heritage.** The last theme consisted of the biracial participants' views towards their biracial status, i.e., how they perceived their dual racial heritages and how their perceptions helped them to develop their identity in a positive way. Most biracial participants reported that they tried to embrace both heritages even though it was not easy at times due to language barriers, physical appearance, and lack of exposure to Korean cultures. As several biracial participants noted, they knew that they should exert more effort to embrace Korean heritage because they live in the United States in which American culture is the norm, and they have more difficulty seeing their maternal side of extended families due to the geographic distance. Regardless of some hindrances to embrace both heritages, all biracial participants reported that they were satisfied with their being biracial, indicating that there were many more benefits than drawbacks in their lives.

All biracial participants acknowledged that their fluid racial identity has given them more options. Other aspects that have been discussed are their feelings empowered through knowledge

to understand their racial identity and influence of their identity on the course of education and future career goals, and the positive aspects of biracial identity.

***Acknowledging strengths as a biracial individual: “I am the BEST of both worlds” mentality.*** Although several biracial participants have experienced racial discrimination and almost all participants have been the target of Asian stereotypes or Asian related racial jokes, over half of them (n = 5) reported that they have a very positive view of their dual racial heritage and they could see much more benefits than drawbacks. Tom shared his experience:

I haven't had any instances of bullying or anything like that because I am half Korean and half White. I am very fortunate to have the experiences that I have had. I have had a very wonderful and healthy childhood. As I am going off to college I do not see anything that has brought me harm, and I have only grown from my experiences, from my mother and my friends. So I feel that it is only positive things that I can see from being bi-racial.

Angie commented on her children's having dual heritage, “I've tried to tell them the brighter side, that you have two cultures, rather than one. You should cherish the fact that you're from the best of both worlds.” Aaron pointed out the importance of having a positive mentality:

They [biracial individuals] just need to find, like the healthy mid-point, I think. Yea, there's a mid-point I think. You shouldn't just completely throw it away in case you did not like it because that's like denying a half of yourself. I guess I am closer to the White American side, but I'd also like to know my Korean side although I have to try to learn. I've thought about taking a class.... No, it's like a Korean is over here and American is over there. I don't think that it is entirely possible for me to be one than the other, just need to find out what works best for you, it's sort of you have to go where your interest is. If you're more interested in exploring being biracial and then go for it. And you're just, if you just feel more comfortable with just not emphasizing it, I would say that it's fine for you to go that way as well. If you're just interested more like certain other activities, just go for it, not just because of you're either Asian or biracial, anything like that. The most important thing is not for you to choose any, or to embrace both equally. Just be yourself and think positively about who you are. I believe the most important thing is having a positive mentality.

Aaron's mother, Mary, shared her parenting approach that emphasized the positive aspects of being biracial:

I always tell my son you've got the very best thing from both your Caucasian side and Korean side so you're so special. He knew he's special. He's very proud of being part Korean. One time he came home and told me "Mom, there were three first chairs in his orchestra whose racial backgrounds were Korean including him who is half Korean." He seemed to be very proud of that fact.

As with other mothers in the study, Mary also tried to instill the value and positive aspects of being mixed race to her son, which in turn might have influenced her son, Aaron's view toward his biracial status. Mary continued to describe how her son identified himself:

He always writes down he's half Korean and half White. He's living in the US, so I let him choose his own racial identity. It doesn't really matter to me. If he identifies himself as only White, I can't correct him because it's what he's decided. He's an adult, so I let him choose his own identity. However he's been always proud of his being half Korean and half White.

Mary did not specifically point out, but she seemed to feel grateful that her son's being proud of his dual heritage. Many mothers in this study reported that they let their children choose their own identify and they were perfectly fine with the case in which their children identified themselves as only White. Yoon also talked about her thoughts on her son's mixed race, "I think they should be proud because they have the strength of the double cultures... the cultures that other kids don't have. And if you combined the both cultures and they can have incredible, powerful, enriching life." Jean had similar thoughts with Yoon and Mary on her children's dual heritage, "I believe my kids are positive about their biracial status and I've tried my best to make believe that they are the best of both worlds." Kim chimed in, "My daughter's half Korean and half White, meaning that she's got two great racial backgrounds, so I've told my daughter many times that she's the best of both world, so she should be proud of her dual heritage." Liz also commented, "I always tell my sons that you're very special and unique because not everyone has dual heritage like you do, so you should appreciate what you have."

From the above four mothers' comments, we could see that the mothers put efforts to enhance their children's ability to develop a healthy sense of identity based on positive self-concept and appreciation of their dual heritage. In line with the mothers' efforts to make their biracial children to have positive views toward their dual heritage, Tom shared his thoughts:

I think it [dual heritage] is a very positive thing. I think that I've only experienced positive things. I can definitely see where someone can say that they have had negative relationship with that where they are having conflicting issues of identity where they don't know which side to embrace. And I would say to those people, that it is not a matter of embracing one side or the other. It is just being comfortable with who you are. If that involves rejecting one side, then that is what it involves. But I would have to say that I embrace both.

Tom talked about his embracing both culture dearly and also described how one should define oneself:

As with everything in this world, it depends on the individual. Having a mother who is very controlling and is damaging to yourself or having a lack of cohesiveness. For instance, the father is saying you are White, and the mother is saying you're Korean. To those people, I would have to say to step outside of the family and friends. When people ask you what you are, do you say you are half White or half Korean? I can't say it is the best choice, but I have chosen to embrace both and be very accepting of either side. You can't let your racial background define who you are. You don't let your race do that. You let your actions and values define who you are. If you define yourself based on something that I believe is merely superficial, then that is just as silly as defining someone based on if they wear jeans or khakis. You can't structure who you are based on your race. You can't look at your father's side or mother's side and say, "Look at them. I need to be like them." You just need to close your eyes from the influences and the skin and just say, "These are my values. These are what I want, and I am going to hold them dear, and if both sides happen to share them then so be it. I am accepting of both sides." You shouldn't let where you come from define you. While it is a good thing to be supportive of, if it is going against your values, then why keep with it if it is difficult for you.

Tom, an 18-year old high school senior, seemed to have balanced views on his dual heritage and be very satisfied with his life in general. While interviewing, he appreciated his parents because they did not force him to choose any one side of heritage over the other or to embrace both cultures equally, and they let him decide who and what he wanted to be. As Tom pointed out, providing autonomy seemed to work well in his case.

Larry talked about his mixed race, “Just think about the good things that it comes with, and I guess, it is who you are and you can’t change that. Just try to find the positives because there is nothing you can do about it.” Celine, a 44-year old mother of three biracial children wanted her children to embrace the positives and leave the negatives:

I would hope and wish for my kids that you would pick up in the positives and leave the negatives because there are positives to both ethnicities. My children will identify those as they’re going along and they will make their mistakes. And they’ll identify, “Oh, this is the positive to Korean people. There are the positive to the Polish people. And I will adapt to these because these are the ones that I like.” And then they become a better person for that.

Tom talked about his experience as a biracial person:

I think that a lot of what my future holds is just dependent upon what kind of work... I have not experienced any racial prejudice before. I haven’t had anyone say, “You are Asian and because you are Asian you get this, this, and this or you don’t get this, this, and this.” Or had someone say, “You are White and because you are White you get this, this, and this or you don’t get this, this, and this.” So I think the only thing that can come from that are positives. I think that It is very nice to have a mix in my life because the only thing people can fault me for are my own actions. They can’t be prejudice... well I don’t think prejudice is a good thing, so if someone has prejudice for me just because of my race, I would probably not associate myself with that person.

Throughout the interviews, many biracial participants talked about the importance of thinking positively because it would enable them to develop positively. According to them, positive thinking was a mental attitude that was conducive to growth and success. The mothers such as Celine in this study were hard at promoting the positive mentality in their children. Paul elaborated on how he views his dual heritage:

Yeah, I get to understand the cultural stuff and just the different ways, like I know how to prepare American food and Korean food. I can appreciate both cultures like movies. I enjoy foreign movies because I watch a lot of Korean movies and dramas. So I can appreciate that. I understand that it’s someone’s accomplishments that really define them, and coming from two precious racial backgrounds means that I have to try twice harder to show others that I’m an accomplished individual who is unique and special because I’ve come from two distinctive cultures... Yeah, inside the family, it is not so different, but when I go outside into society, it’s different... it depends on who I meet. Like someone who is really ambitious, like wants to get a project done, they will see me as



being both Asian and being White as beneficial. Like I am a hard worker, but at the same time I understand the White American culture, so that is one of the big things that divides Asians and Americans, the culture gap. Americans sometimes get suspicious of the other culture, but because I am both, it is easier for me to get closer to the cultural gaps.

Several biracial participants further emphasized the uniqueness they felt about having biracial heritage. Eric commented, “I feel I am different, no one else is half Korean and half White. I think I am much more interesting than other monoracial individuals.” Kenny also chimed in, “The way I look at is, it’s kinda cool because it set me, like aside like just my being White, I am kind of unique in that sense.” Celine shared her thoughts on how her children would define their racial identity:

My three kids don’t identify completely that they’re White. They know they’re not. ‘Cause, you know, I make, I play a huge, critical role in these three kids’ lives... You know, I mean, I’m not very Asian, but I’m Asian, so they [kids] have to identify themselves as being both. They have to embrace the concept they come from two distinct racial backgrounds.... Sometimes, you know, kids try to minimize their Asian heritage, because it’s like a minority in this society. And so they just want to like, maximize their being White.

A 44-year old, 1.5 generation immigrant mother, Celine shared her children’s experience related to their racial identity. She noted that sometimes, her children maximized their White heritage because in the American society, Asians were considered minority, whereas White individuals were not. However, she also had a strong opinion regarding embracing both heritages because those were where her children came from. Celine’s son, 18-year old Eric commented that he had a healthy racial identity:

Well, I feel like I have a healthy racial identity, like I identify myself as like half and half although I still hang out with mostly White people, but that’s just because of how things have just worked out. I think just leaving them, leaving that topic alone, just not pushing it is pretty good because they what my parents have done. They’ve never really said, “Oh, you’re more White” or “You’re more Asian,” or like, “You’re half and half.” It’s just like, okay, you mom is Asian, your dad’s Polish, and that’s how it is.”

Although Celine wanted for her three children to embrace both heritages, as Eric reported, she

did not force them, which also led her son to develop a healthy racial identity. As many biracial participants repeatedly commented, their parents' providing autonomy to decide their own identity helped them to develop a positive and healthy racial identity. A 21-year old, Amy positively viewed her biracial status:

I think I like it [being biracial] because I think it's good because people they can't really pinpoint exactly what I am. When people look at me, they sometimes ask if I am Hawaiian or something because they can't really figure out, so I think that was kind of cool that they can't really figure out what exactly you are and then, umm, in addition, like you have like a lot of, I feel like I know globally like a lot more than someone who just comes from a single race family because I can understand both sides of the arguments in terms of like different issues, I guess. My mom always tells us that we're very special and we're the best of both worlds, and I really like her saying that.

Compared with an individual from a monoracial background, Amy talked about her having more worldly views because she could understand multiple sides of two cultures. Her mother, Jean, repeatedly told Amy that she was very special and the best of both worlds, which also helped Amy to develop her identity in a positive way. A 20-year old Michelle pointed out positive aspects of her mixed heritage:

I think it's great just because, if I weren't born biracial, I wouldn't have had an opportunity to experience two different cultures, like knowing about Korean culture. It was part of my heritage, like where I come from. I get to experience great Korean foods. I see more positive aspects being biracial.

Paul talked about promoting the positive aspects of both cultures, "If you're biracial, you should try to embrace the positive sides of being Korean as well as the positive aspects of being White.

Aaron suggested ways to make biracial individuals to embrace both cultures:

In general, exposing them to both cultures, maybe not equally, because especially if they are like half American and half Korean like me, the type of people you'll find, they will be in the American society almost all the time, and so I think that there's certain amount of like, Korean society is less prevalent all the time, so I don't that it's easy to make that equal. In a sense, when you're going to school, you're in the American society, and going to the mall you're still in American society, hang out with your friend, depending on who your friends are, but I found that half Koreans usually have a more diverse group of friends than full Koreans. And I found that full Koreans I know, they almost all have only

Korean friends. I think I usually have more than diverse groups of friends. There are people whose friends are almost all Koreans. Getting back to the question, how parents can help mixed children. I think there has to be certain emphasis on the other race that is not mainstream America because otherwise you kind of fall into just focusing on one culture. One can have be mostly in the American culture and still have a healthy sense of biracial identity, I would say that I have a healthy sense of my own racial identity, it's not as strong as it could be probably, but I think that's an important part of it and I think that's sort of healthy. You should also put lots of effort to understand both cultures."

Aaron suggested ways for parents of biracial children to make their children to embrace both heritages: 1) expose biracial children to both cultures, but it does not need to be equally; 2) try to make friends from diverse racial backgrounds; and 3) emphasize the minority culture (i.e., Korean culture) because biracial children have less opportunity to experience Korean culture in the US. Aaron also suggested biracial individuals to exert a great deal of effort to understand both cultures to develop a healthy sense of biracial identity. Candice talked about the benefits she had due to her biracial status:

Umm, I mean I think there're benefits of being a biracial person. I'm not the same as everybody else is, I'm different and unique, and I like that. I'm also knowledgeable about two cultures, not one like everybody else. I have two different sets of extended families that make my life more enriched and interesting. There's also practical benefit. When I was applying for a college, when compared to monoracial White students, there're a couple more things I could do because I was mixed. I don't see any drawbacks, maybe people on the street might be talking and looking at us, but other than that, I can't see any negatives.

According to Candice, there are several benefits of being biracial individuals: 1) being unique and different; 2) having more knowledge on two cultures; 3) having two sets of interesting extended families from two different heritages; and 4) being eligible for benefits only allowed for minority students.

In terms of the strengths of being biracial individuals, Dana shared her experience raising her biracial daughters:

I don't see any negative aspects [of biracial children]. In fact, I see my younger daughter is very popular among her friends because of her exotic look, so I see more positive

aspect of being biracial. When my daughters were young, their friends found them more interesting since they're from two different racial backgrounds. They were treated a bit unique, but in a positive way. Her friends asked to be invited to our house because I made delicious egg rolls. I think my daughters' friends in general found my daughters to be more attractive and interesting than other monoracial kids.

Some biracial participants seemed to consider their biracial status as inherently better than a monoracial status because they were exposed to two different cultures, could understand both sides of cultures, and could be more inclusive toward other cultures. Overall, biracial participants appeared to be proud of their dual heritage, have positive opinions about their mixed race, and feel that they were unique and special when compared to those from a monoracial background.

***Influences of model minority myth: “Let’s convert negatives into positives for our own good.”*** Several biracial participants talked about their experience of being the target of Asian stereotype jokes, which they found a bit annoying at times, but it seemed that most of the times, they did not find those jokes as malicious or hurtful. Except for two biracial participants, seven participants had not faced serious cases of racial slurs or jokes, which were especially aimed at one’s physical appearance (e.g., Asian’s having slanted eyes and short, etc.). Some of the common Asian stereotypes jokes they heard were mostly related to a certain set of model minority characteristics including, Asians are awesome at math, excel at some kind of musical instrument, are very studious and try hard to enter the medical field, have very strict parents (regarding mostly school work), and get straight A’s all through school and college. As can be seen from the list of Asian stereotypes the biracial participants talked about, most of them were not negative, which could partly explain the passive reactions the biracial participants in this study employed when they faced with racial stereotyping.

The myth of Asians as a model minority, based on the success image of a few elite individuals, has been regarded as a negative and debilitating influence on the general population

of Asian Americans. However, most biracial participants in this study rather utilized it as a tool to motivate themselves by working hard and trying to meet others' expectations because they realized, for them, using it as a motivator would be beneficial to them, rather than treating the model minority myth as a burden and pressure to succeed. Most of them seemed to possess a mentality of converting negatives into positives for their own good.

Larry talked about two different kinds of stereotypes that can be applied to an Asian-White biracial individual like him:

Yeah I guess personality-wise, I guess I consider myself more American. Umm...I think it is not true for all of them, but I think there are higher standards of Asian kids. But there are definitely a lot that don't study hard. However, I think that it [model minority myth] is definitely true what kids think. Academically I would probably consider myself Asian. I don't know... there're a lot of smart kids that are Asian, there are less White kids. But I don't know, when I go play sports or something, it is more White I guess. For example, I am more Asian in academic stuff and also when I play piano and violin, whereas I am more White, probably when I play sports and when I hang out with my friends because most of them are White.

Eric shared his experience related to model minority myth:

It would be like, "So, Eric, how'd you do on the test?" "Oh, I did really well." And they would be like, "Oh, well, it's 'cause you're Asian." You got them smart genes in you. I've also had Polish genes. It's just like everyone's hard-working. Like on my dad's side, everyone's really hard-working and then, I know that they taught me to be really hard-working and so I just do well in school because I work hard at it.

Eric talked about his parents' work ethics that motivated him to work hard. As can be seen from his friends' remarks, people tended to perceive him to be smart because of his having Asian heritage, not his working hard. Tom commented, "Maybe I noticed that I did a lot more musical things than the average White children. And when you look at the Asian kids, most of them don't play sports." As Tom did, most biracial participants also tended to stereotype others, e.g., Asian students play musical instruments, whereas White kids play sports.

Paul talked about his sociology class in which students classified people based on their race:

And I also had another experience in a sociology class. The professor gave out an experiment of three pieces of paper and you had categories of White, Black, Latino, Asian—like the major groups in the US. And you would write something next to them that was like a racial stereotype, and for White people it would be like “KKK”. And for black people it would be like “uneducated”. Latinos would be like “working at the coffee fields”. While the Asian one would be like “study hard” “engineering”, “doctor”... Yeah, and actually one person in the back row asked why do Asians have so many positive things, while gave such negative things? And I started laughing during class...If people consider me as Asian, I try to like meet their expectations...because it’s usually like their expectations are based on grades, or if like I am good at math—those stereotypes.

As Paul commented, sometimes Asian stereotypes could be a factor that promoted biracial participants’ motivation to work hard. However, the stereotype can be a nuisance at times, especially when making friends. Candice shared her experience on the effect of Asian stereotype had on her interaction with her peers in school:

In high school, when I was 14, I noticed my being biracial influence my interaction with others socially. When I was young, I did not even notice the difference. People usually said, oh you’re Chinese, then I said, I am Korean. When I was older, like 13 or 14, I realized there’s more like high school people casted me out saying that there’s a nerdy Asian girl who does homework every day, and then when they found out I wasn’t like that and then I was like hang out with people, it was wild....My friends are like cracking jokes. Why don’t go home studying or doing math or playing violin? I know they’re kidding. Obviously those are the stereotypes attached to Asian students. It doesn’t really affect me in a negative way, I know somebody’s just making jokes. I will with them it’s just fun.

As Candice experienced, Asian youth were supposedly academic oriented, disciplined, and somewhat boring. As a result, many youths who came from Asian background are rejected by peer groups based upon an image that may be untrue for someone like Candice, and are also held to different standards by peers, teachers and society in general.

Notwithstanding some drawbacks mentioned above, most biracial participants were very self-motivated and tried to employ a positive mentality to overcome some hindrances. However,

biracial participants also acknowledged that they felt pressure from parents and peers to be the best in every activity they pursued because they were mostly considered as Korean/Asian who were perceived by their peers to be academically superior due mostly to the Korean/Asian culture's emphasis on working hard. Furthermore, because of the Asian belief in the value of education has been firmly instilled in all Korean mothers, they often place a huge amount of pressure on their biracial children to succeed. For example, Eric talked about himself, "I'm a student who's gonna try my absolute hardest to do as well as I can in school, that will eventually make you someone who can be successful in his life." However, he also disclosed, "At times, I seem to overdrive myself because everyone around me expects me to do academically very well."

Amy explained her thoughts on academic excellence:

I've worked really hard ever since I was little because I wanted to be proud of myself and I also want to make my parents to be proud of me. Most of all, academic excellence probably acts as a buffer, it may sound, like terrible, but it's almost like you down on people not being smart. Once you put yourself on the pedestal, nothing really bothers you that much. It's like having a lot of pride in yourself, not being really as cocky, like you need to be proud of yourself, so you don't need other people to decide, like your worth I guess. I also think that the smarter one is, the more one can realize human nature....thus to me, doing my best to achieve excellence is really important. In addition, since my career goal is to be a medical doctor, I have to be able to talk to people, so I also tried to be more extroverted, and now I've become much more outgoing and sociable than when I was young.

As Amy indicated, high academic performance seemed to protect biracial individuals from discrimination or unfair treatment. Amy was a very determined young woman, working hard toward her goal—being a medical doctor. When I asked her whether it was her decision (to be a doctor) or her parents wanted her to be the one, she said that nobody forced her to pursue the path. Unlike people's perceptions on Asian parents' wanting their children to have a professional job such as a doctor and a lawyer, the five biracial participants in the study who wanted to

become a medical doctor reported to me that it was their own decision, and they would work hard to achieve it.

Paul talked about Asian stereotypes like model minority myth and how one should turn their negative situation into more positive one through working hard:

Well I acknowledge some negative things attached to Asian stereotype, but I understand those negative things can be actually positive things. Like the Koreans are known for being hard-working. Like studying-wise. Like education is top. People tend to consider Asians as model minorities in this society. So that's beneficial to me because it forces me to study hard. Umm... if you don't want someone to look down upon you or you don't want to be the target of racial discrimination, then you should improve your life to get to a situation where you don't have to deal with it anymore.

Paul reported that he had faced lots of racial discrimination; his unpleasant experience seemed to make him want to cling to a positive Asian stereotype, e.g., the model minority values and excelling at education. He previously mentioned that he felt rather proud when the Asian stereotype of being smart was being applied to him. It was also one area in which he felt that he had an advantage over other American peers. As can be seen from the statements of the biracial participants in this study, the idea of the Asian as a model minority seemed to be as pervasive as any stereotype has ever been in the US society. However, most biracial participants seemed to consider it as a tool to motivate themselves; almost all biracial participants were highly driven and strongly committed to their academic work.

**Being more open and tolerant of other races/culture.** Since biracial participants came from two different cultural backgrounds, they reported that they could be more open to different cultures. This open-mindedness has helped them to be tolerant of others. Tom talked about his being biracial making him more accepting of others:

My friends and I are very accepting of other races because all of us came from diverse racial backgrounds. I have a friend who is Irish and White. I have a friend who is Persian. I also have a friend who is Cuban, and I have a friend who is half Japanese and half Chinese. On top of coming from diverse backgrounds, I also think that the whole idea of



being biracial has sort of made me more accepting of others I think... Yeah, I think that because my father or mother did not strictly stay with one group, and they chose who they loved. I think that has rubbed off on me. I mean just look at my friends; there is no pattern. It is just “nice guy”, “nice guy”, “nice guy”.

Kim talked about her various efforts to provide opportunities for her daughter so that she could be more open-minded and be more respectful toward other cultures:

I always try to find opportunities to volunteer and have my daughter to be involved in those because I want her to know the pleasure of helping others, like disabled children, and the bank I work at also is promoting volunteer work for their workers, so I also participate with my daughter. Especially, the bank I work for is focused on diversity, so there are workers from diverse racial backgrounds and I want my daughter to see and feel the atmosphere, so I had her involved in the volunteer work even though it's only once or twice a year. While growing up, I've done my best my daughter take part in the good causes so that she could become more open and respectful towards other cultures and other people from diverse racial backgrounds.

Kim was a self-made individual who worked hard to support her study without any help. Her daughter, Candice was proud of her mother who achieved so much from nothing. Throughout the interview with her, I was able to see how much she exerted efforts to raise her daughter. One of the examples was that she took her daughter to volunteer work in which Candice could learn to appreciate and respect diversity. As several biracial participants discussed, parents' role modeling seemed to be effective in promoting a healthy sense of identity development.

Angie, a retired medical doctor with two biracial sons, talked about the importance of tolerance and acceptance:

I strongly believe that everyone is equal in every way. Acceptance and tolerance are very important factors to keep, especially in this diverse society. Regardless of one's race, gender, class, and sexual orientation, class, people should treat all people decently and embrace others' differences. Thus, I've taught my sons to be more open-minded and accepting of others and other cultures.

***Society's changing views toward multiracial people.*** Liz echoed Angie's thought on acceptance:

I don't want my sons to think about their racial background too much. The United States is a country in which people from a number of different racial backgrounds reside relatively harmoniously. If one thinks about too much about one's race and be exclusive, that can be a great obstacle in one's life. One thing that I really like about America is, it's the place where diversity is respected when compared to other countries. Even though racism still exists here, I think, it's a lesser degree. Since the US is becoming more and more diverse, I am pretty sure people will become more and more accepting other cultures, so I just want our sons to focus on positive aspects of their heritage and also be a person who respect others and accept their cultures as they are.

The participants pointed out that substantial rises in the number of interracial families in the United States have caused people to change their views on race mixing and diversity, making them more inclusive. This changing climate in the United State seemed to help them to view their biracial identity more positively. Eric shared his views on diversity, "I really haven't encountered negative experiences about being biracial, especially like now in, like in today's society people push diversity so much." Michelle talked about people's acceptance of Asian culture:

No, I feel like people are more accepting the Asian culture, I know a lot of people who like Asian culture, like nowadays. I feel like a lot of Asian people hang out with White people and it's like a lot of them intermingle.

Paul commented that Americans became more favorable towards biracial people:

At this point I almost feel like they don't really care since the US is such a diverse society, but the Korean side may have like their own views about mixing of Korean and White. It would just be like... um... My dad, he understood that Koreans kind of looked at him differently because of the fact that he was White.

As seen from the above participants' comments about the society's views and attitudes on diversity, the American society seems to be gradually changing its attitudes on multiracial individuals. Miville and colleagues also noted that beginning with the change in the 2000 U.S. census that allowed respondents to identify as members of more than one racial group, the society began to acknowledge the existence of multiracial people (Miville, Constantine, Baysden& So-Lloyd, 2005). Furthermore, when Barack Obama was elected as the president of

the United States in 2008, he became not only the nation's first black president, but the first biracial (Black-White) president, showing the society's changing views and attitudes towards race, mixed race, and diversity.

**Summary.** As most biracial participants disclosed, they seemed to have a healthy sense of biracial identity, were willing to embrace their dual heritage, and possessed a positive mentality of converting negatives into positives. In terms of the influences of personal inherited traits such as phenotype and birth order, although the biracial participants commented that their phenotype did not matter much, it seemed that it affected the way they interacted with people. However, most biracial participants seemed to employ situation identity, enjoying the benefits of their fluid identity.

Most biracial participants acknowledged that they were self-motivated, but they also felt pressure from parents and peers to be the best in every activity they pursued because they were mostly considered as Korean/Asian who were perceived by their peers to be academically superior due mostly to the Korean/Asian culture's emphasis on working hard. The model minority stereotype was considered as a factor that could either help or hinder their development: They worked hard to meet the expectations (being positive) vs. they often became the target of racial jokes (e.g., Asian students' being smart, always studying, being nerd, etc.) due to their Asian heritage (being negative). Most biracial participants in this study utilized model minority myth as a tool to motivate themselves by working hard and trying to meet others' expectations because they realized, for them, using it as a motivator would be beneficial, rather than treating the model minority myth as a burden and pressure to succeed. Overall, most biracial participants seemed to possess a mentality of converting negatives into positives for their own good, which, in turn, helped them to develop a healthy racial identity.

## **Chapter 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This study focuses on Korean-White late adolescent and emerging adult children and their monoracial Korean mothers, specifically to understand: (a) how biracial individuals perceive to be the role of various ecological systems in helping them develop an identity and cope with the challenges they face; and (b) how mothers' unique cultural/racial background and personal characteristics impact their parenting approach including racial socialization of their biracial children. Based on the study findings and two theoretical frameworks (i.e., Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) ecological systems theory of human development and Root's (2003) multiracial identity development model), I have developed a model related to social support systems facilitating a healthy development of Asian-White biracial individuals, which I will introduce at the end of discussion.

The ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994) emphasizes the interaction between the individual and the environment in which an individual develops, and as Bronfenbrenner postulated, development cannot be understood without accounting for the interaction between the individual and the systems (i.e., micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chrono-system). Along with Bronfenbrenner's model, this study also employed Root's (2003) multiracial identity development model based on ecological approach because it helps assess the overall well-being and adjustment of multiracial family and individuals, within various systems introduced in the above Bronfenbrenner's theory. Root's (2003) ecological approach appears to encompass the complex interaction of the immediate environments including family, friends, neighborhood and broader context including socioeconomic status, region, societal acceptance as well as identity development process across the lifespan and dynamic flexible identity choices. Root's (2003) model also included factors such as inherited influences (e.g., phenotype,

language), traits (e.g., social and coping skills, temperament), social interactions inside the community (e.g., school/work, peers, community), identity choices (e.g., monoracials vs. multiracials). These two frameworks have helped examine the links among interracial parenting practice, family relationship, psychological adjustment and well-being of biracial individuals in various systems surrounding them, such as families, schools, religious institution, and neighborhood.

### **Perceived Support**

**Influences of positive peer relationships on identity development.** Most biracial participants reported that they did not have problems forming friendships during childhood because their biracial status did not matter much. They appreciated the opportunity to develop friendships with like-minded individuals even though their friends were limited mostly to White peers because they grew up in a predominantly White neighborhood. However, biracial individuals had more access to other biracial peers (e.g., Korean-White or Asian-White biracial), they might have attached some significance to being Korean-White biracial individuals.

**Lack of exposure to other biracial peers.** Only three biracial participants reported that they had close friends who were from bi/multiracial families. In order for them to make biracial friends, there must be a way of access to other mixed individuals, but as discussed, they were usually the only Asian-White biracial in their respective schools. One biracial participant had Korean-White biracial cousins, and through the relationships, they could normalize their experience. Those who did not have this family connection developed friendships with others in their neighborhoods or schools, but most of their friends were White. As opposed to my expectations, nobody talked about the mixed race role models, rather six biracial participants

claimed that there was no need for role models because they were self-modeling. Nobody brought up the idea that having a mixed race role model would be beneficial.

**Extended family.** Extended family members have the power to either promote or hinder biracial individuals' healthy development. Most biracial participants reported that one of the most influential factors in their lives that helped them to develop their identity was their extended families even though their influences were not as strong as those of their immediate family and their peers. However, it seemed that close extended family relationships generally related to each parent's relationship with their own families and the geographic proximity or ability to travel that made for consistent contact. In addition, each extended family's view on cultural diversity was also closely related to the levels of closeness, in other words, closeness to each extended family was determined by whether the extended family members accept people whose racial background was different from their own. Staying in touch with both sides of extended family members can be an effective strategy of racial socialization in biracial families even though it will not be easy due to the geographic proximity, language barriers, and exclusive culture in some families.

**Inclusive school & community environment.** When compared to parental influences, community and school environments influenced the participants to a lesser extent, but there were still significant relationships that the participants associated as influencing factors of their development, especially viewing their differences in a positive way. Seven participants discussed the influence of the community on their development. All biracial participants reported that they grew up in predominantly White, affluent neighborhoods located in suburbs. When depicting their neighborhood, they described their suburban neighborhood as either "mostly White," "majority White," or "predominantly White." When asked whether they were discriminated by

others based on their racial background, most participants said, “no”. Among the biracial participants, five attended a large racially diverse public school at some point in their lives, while four attended school in which there were a majority of White students except for a few racially diverse students. Currently, six biracial participants were residing in a college town, and their descriptions of the community were all very positive.

Schools have been regarded as an extension of the community, in which important messages about race and race-related issues are conveyed through day-to-day experiences. Knaus (2006) posited that as the social institution in which youth spend a significant amount of time interacting with same-age peers, schools are primary socializing agents, reproducing and transforming social norms. As Reid and Henry (2000) posited, in order for a biracial child to develop positively, assistance and sensitivity from the adults in their lives are required. In line with this notion, a majority of biracial participants viewed their interactions with influential people such as school teachers and peers in this setting, school, in a positive light. Three biracial participants reported that they had positive relationships with teachers, professors, and coach. Furthermore, for biracial participants in high school or college settings in this study, finding acceptance among a group of peers seemed to set the tone for social development and provide feelings of comfort and safety.

### **Revisiting Roles of Parents**

**Importance of parents’ roles.** The findings have shown that all biracial participants strongly voiced the importance of their parents’ role in their identity development and psychological adjustment throughout their lives. As identified by the eco-mapping activity, all nine biracial participants had positive relationships with both ( $n = 5$ ) or one of their parents ( $n = 4$ ). As they acknowledged, the relationships between themselves and their parent(s) were the

principal factor in shaping their own values, thoughts, and attitudes as well as impacting their development, which is in line with the studies that found the importance of parents' feelings, racial attitudes and overall self-concept because of its influence on the development of their child's identity development (Bryant & Morrison, 1991; Sebring, 1985). A number of scholars also referred family as a social factor that can influence racial identification and the way in which a biracial person experiences the process of racial identity development (Gibbs, 1987; Poston, 1990; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005; Root, 1990).

Even though all biracial participants pointed out the impacts both parents have on their identity development, most of them also reported that their Korean mothers served as the main figure in their lives providing supports and guidance, which may be explained by study findings on Asian immigrant parents. According to researchers who studied about Asian immigrant parenting practices, Asian immigrant parents tend to ensure their children's welfare through providing instrumental support by continually ensuring their daily needs are met as well as providing parental involvement and resources they need to succeed in school (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Hyman, Vu, & Beiser, 2001). In a study examining mixed race youth, Gibbs (2003) also postulated, "Positive outcomes are predicted for those youth who are reared in supportive families, have a sense of competence and high self-esteem, and are involved in supportive schools and social networks" (p.155).

In this study, all participants appeared to be raised in supportive families. Many times, the participants pointed out their parents' continuous and unconditional supports, and those supports influenced them to have a healthy sense of their identity. During the adolescence, a key developmental task is to achieve confidence in one's self-identity and group identity (Erickson, 1963). Developing a racial identity (group identity) is crucial, however, even though they



reported their racial identity as “biracial, mixed race, half Asian/half White, or half Korean and half White), they also mentioned that they consider their identity is rather “situational” and “fluid”, which supports the multiracial identity model developed by Maria Root (2003).

**Different cultural norms in parenting practices.** Cultural norms about parenting practices play an important role in how children are raised (Lubell, Lofton, & Singer, 2008). The mothers who came from Korean families had somewhat different cultural values and parenting styles from their husbands who mostly came from White middle-class families. For example, compared to their White American husband, Korean immigrant mothers placed a greater importance on their children’s education and academic achievement. Therefore, at times when the White husbands found their wives to push their children too much, conflicts between them arise. For several first generation Korean immigrant mothers, misunderstandings between them were caused by the language barrier and lack of knowledge on each other’s culture.

Notwithstanding the occasional conflicts between their parents due to their parenting differences, most biracial participants expressed their gratitude to their parents, especially to mothers who provided endless efforts and support for their academic success. Most biracial participants seemed to be high achievers, for example, out of nine, five were aiming for medical schools and they had a mindset, “If you try harder, you’d be like a really smart person” which was promoted mostly by their Korean mothers’ emphasis on work ethic.

**Parenting differences between spouses.** Several mothers complained about their husbands’ having a lenient parenting style that, according to the mothers, came from their American parents-in-law’s too flexible parenting practices. These mothers lamented the fact that they were not able to raise their biracial children by their own parenting style (e.g., a Korean parenting style) because their husband was strongly against it. Researchers found that in terms of

parenting, there were some similarities between parents from minority groups and those from the dominant culture, but minority parents possess values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are quite different from American mainstream culture (Garcia Coll, Meyer, & Brillion, 1995; Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990). Therefore, it may not be so uncommon to find some conflicts related to parenting between spouses from two different cultures. Among nine mothers, three were 1.5 generation immigrants and six were first generation immigrants. Since three 1.5 generation Korean immigrants and their parents' immigration status was a critical factor that ran throughout many of the interviews. Because of the strong immigrant influence in the interracial families in the study, their stories related to immigration were also shared in the findings chapter. For the Korean mothers who are the first generation immigrant themselves, language issue loomed large for them, and this lack of English fluency often became the source of misunderstanding and conflicts between spouses as well as mother and children.

Several biracial participants also commented that they experienced some conflict with their mothers because of cultural misunderstandings. As noted, six first generation immigrant mothers spent their youth and adolescence in Korea, so they were more used to Korean culture and Korean parenting style because they were raised by their Korean parents. These mothers had experienced difficulties in parenting. However, they knew that they could not raise their biracial children living in the United States the same way they were raised. Therefore, most mothers modified their parenting style to accommodate their biracial children's needs. This is an excellent example showing the interactions monoracial Korean mother and biracial children, and how the interactions changed the mother parenting attitudes and behaviors.

Most mothers in the study believed that Korean/Asian parenting style is superior to somewhat lenient American parenting style. In fact, one first generation immigrant mother

whose older son got an admission from a highly prestigious university was called “tiger mom” by her colleague, and she seemed to find it to be a fitting title for her. Although some negative connotations were attached to the term “tiger mom,” she rather seemed to regard the title as a compliment. However, many biracial participants reported that they were glad because their mother’s not like other Asian mothers. As inferred by their claim, interpretations of Asian parenting seem to be closely associated with negative connotations, including being too pushy, strict, controlling, excessive emphasis on parental authority and academic performance. Most of all, in traditional Korean family, absolute obedience of the children to the parents is expected with respect for all elders being the central concept of traditional Korean family values (Jo, 1999). These Korean American parents are automatically presumed to expect absolute obedience from their children along with excellence in academic work and the pursuit of professional careers (Jo, 1999).

Several biracial participants talked about Korean mothers’ being stricter than their White father, which may, in part, be caused by the way the Korean mothers were raised by their parents. As known, Asian American parents typically place greater importance on parental authority than do their White counterpart. Interpretations of Asian parenting emphasizing the harsh, stifling nature of parental authority also influenced the way some White husbands dealt with their Korean wives in parenting. However, as some mothers said that they tried to modify their Asian parenting style to fit into raising their biracial children.

**Effects of supportive parents on healthy adjustment of biracial children.** Most of the participants believe that their parents’ ability to be supportive is the key factor in their healthy adjustment. The types of parental support that should be provided included being present, providing for basic and emotional needs, listening and responding to the children’s concerns, and

appropriate role modeling. Most biracial participants appreciated their Korean mothers' dedication and support for their education because they knew that their mothers played a vital role in promoting their academic excellence. All mothers stressed the importance of education and of doing well in school, especially beneficial for minorities in the US even though they seemed to not classify their half White and half Korean into the group of ethnic minorities. The mothers seemed to believe that doing well in school and going to a competitive college would enable their children to overcome any obstacles related to biracial status. In this way, the concerted effort to promote academic achievement also seemed to serve as a strategy of racial socialization even though no mother overtly talked about it.

**Close Relationships between mother and children.** Several biracial participants admitted that when they were young, they did not like their mother's strict parenting. Notwithstanding having some complaints on their mothers' being strict, most participants specifically credit their mothers' educational values and high expectations with their success. They acknowledged that their mothers have helped them to shape and construct their biracial identities, while their mothers also promoted their academic achievement at K-12 schools and guided them to pursue a professional career. Most biracial participants described their relationships with their Korean mothers as supportive and close. Almost all participants had parents who took their role seriously, spending time mentoring and reassuring their children, listening carefully to them and taking an active part in their lives. Most of them also had positive relationships with their extended family, but three mothers did not have close relationships with their in-law, which made their children uncomfortable because they felt that their paternal side of extended families were not accepting of their Asian mother.

All mothers in the study reported that they experienced some conflicts with their husbands, in-laws, and their children due to their parenting styles. Most of them realized the need to modify their parenting approaches because raising biracial children living in the United States could not be the same as the ways they were raised by their monoracial Korean parents in Korea or by their Korean immigrant parents. In regards to immigrant parents' generational differences in parental efforts to support their children, Tom commented:

I think a lot of it is the whole generation type thing. What happens is you have the parents or grandparents coming to America from Korea and they are searching for a better life or some reason, but it is a lot of the second or third generation that are going to be the doctors and lawyers, whereas the first generation is going to be the hard worker who sets it up so the next generation can be whatever they want to be.

As Tom mentioned, many immigrants came to the U.S. searching for a better life, especially for their children. They work hard to provide a good opportunity to their children and at the same time, they expect their children to repay their efforts by achieving academic excellence, going to a good college, having a professional occupation, eventually leading a successful life.

**Importance of parenting practice and socialization.** Parenting practices and socialization appear to have a significant influence on biracial individuals' adjustment outcomes such as success in school and career aspirations as they do with the process of developing their identity, comfort in both cultural environments, and the quality of the parent-child relationship. Although biracial participants voiced that their parents played a significant role in the overall development of their identity, there seemed to be some areas that parents' roles did not quite fulfilled. For example, supportive parents should help their biracial individuals to integrate the racial/ethnic identities of the two parents, and thus assist in the development of a strong self-concept in their children. However, only several biracial participants indicated that their parents acknowledged both cultures in a positive way during their upbringing (e.g., stressing a biracial

identity by exposing them to bicultural environments). It appears that exposure to bicultural environment, including a broader range of values, roles, norms, and behaviors, had a variety of benefits. When compared to others who had limited or no exposure to such environment, they were able to interact with individuals from diverse cultures more effectively, had closer relationships with their maternal relatives, and had better understandings about both heritage cultures. In some cases, it seemed that mothers wanted their biracial children to lead a life as a White individual, rather than an Asian-White person.

**Providing autonomy to children.** According to biracial participants, one measure of parents' sensitivity toward their biracial children is ensuring that the children never have to choose between their two heritages. They firmly believe that biracial children should develop their self-concept of who they are. All participants' parents were able to successfully accomplish this: There was no parent who insisted that the child choose one side of their heritage over another or identity in a particular way that suited the parent but not the child. In other words, all parents have given full autonomy to their children when defining their racial identity.

Emerging adulthood often is characterized by changes in residence, employment, and education (Arnett, 2000). As Arnett (2005), and Schulenberg and Maggs (2002) postulated, emerging adulthood is a time of identity exploration and self-focus; initiation of new roles; development of new social networks; separation from families and old friends; increased choices and opportunities; increased independence; freedom from time constraints and social control; and decreased parental support, guidance, and monitoring (as cited in White & Jackson, 2004). Therefore, parents of biracial children should begin socializing their children when they were young because when they reach their emerging adulthood, as indicated by Arnett (2005) and Shulenberg and Maggs (2002), parents' influences will be gradually decreased.

## **Importance of Racial Socialization by Parents**

**Definition of racial socialization.** According to Hughes and colleagues (2006), the terms racial socialization and ethnic socialization are used generally to refer to the transmission from adults to children about race and ethnicity related information. Racial socialization can be also broadly defined as race-related communication (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). This type of communication typically includes the implicit and explicit messages regarding racial groups, race relations, and racial discrimination and can be conveyed verbally, by modeling, and through exposure to culture, beliefs, and values (Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). Research findings suggest that it is through interactions with others, parents in particular, that biracial children gain insight into their racial heritage and their respective position within society (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Although Hughes and colleagues (2006) assumed that parents from all ethnic and racial groups probably transmit messages to their children about various issues associated with their cultural heritage and group social status, including discussions such as the prevalence of stereotypes and discrimination based on phenotypic characteristics, language competencies, and other group characteristics, unlike their assumption, there was an obvious lack of such efforts by the parents in this study.

**Lack of racial socialization.** As posited by Hughes et al. (2006), parents' ethnic and racial socialization are critical for their bi/multiracial children's positive development. However, contrary to my expectations, almost all parents did not discuss race or mixed race issues with their children. In fact, out of nine biracial participants, there was no one who reported that they discussed race in their families even though one mother opposed her daughter's claim. By not bringing up or dismissing the topic of race and mixed race issues, or making those "non-issues", they seemed to minimize and de-emphasize race in their family. As previously discussed in the

results chapter (p. 105), it may be interpreted that the Korean mothers employed a “color-blind approach” due to the fact that they do not want to be reminded of their own painful experiences with racism or want to believe that their biracial children will not be the target of racism because of their half White heritage. Or it may be difficult for them to deal with that reality that their children may also experience racial discrimination due to their Asian heritage. Maybe they also felt protected by their affluence and their White partner.

Most mothers in this study wanted their children to embrace both cultures, but they did not have any helpful strategies that could address how their children should identify their racial identity. When I initiated this project, I believed that I would find that Korean mothers exerted a lot of effort to racially socialize their children. However, the findings suggest that there was a serious lack of parental efforts related to racial socialization. Particularly, there was obviously a lack of discussing race or race-related issues in the family. It seemed that parents of biracial children intentionally or unintentionally avoided discussing race with their biracial children, falsely believing that their biracial children would be free from racial discrimination because they had a White parent.

According to Helms (1995), since race and racism are central to human experience in the United States, all people undergo racial socialization, and the content of this socialization varies by each racial group membership. All individuals are exposed to powerful messages about what it means to be a White, Asian, Black, Native American, or Latino living in the United States. However, as Shih and Sanchez (2005) postulated, there are no consistent social messages about multiracial people and what it means to be multiracial (Shih & Sanchez, 2005).

Most biracial participants reported that they did not experience any discrimination based on their race. However, four biracial participants indicated that they experienced discrimination



in the form of name calling and racial slurs, but most of their parents did not prepare for them to effectively deal with those incidents. The participants who encountered racial discrimination had typical Asian features (e.g., slanted eyes, dark hair, darker skin compared to White race only individuals) and their physical appearance became an obvious identifier to their peers. However, as previously discussed, all nine families in the study have never or rarely talked about race or race related issues. For their families, the issue of race simply never or rarely came up, which came as a big surprise because seven mothers out of nine reported that they have personally faced racial discrimination while living in the United States, however, whether intentionally or unintentionally, most of them did not discuss race related topics or coping strategies in case their children may encounter some unpleasant events associated with their race.

**Mainstream socialization.** Instead of employing racial socialization typically employed by minority parents, the mothers in the study seemed to use mainstream socialization. They socialized their children to be successful within mainstream society by emphasizing the importance of negotiating the dominant culture and downplaying racial group affiliation (i.e., deemphasizing connections with Korean culture). Unlike minority and cultural socialization, mainstream socialization decenters race. Individuality, as opposed to group membership and solidarity, is promoted, and discussions of race, racism, and discrimination are avoided (Hughes et al., 2006), which is exactly what most families in the study did. Studies found that mainstream socialization messages include self-development, positive character traits, and an endorsement of mainstream cultural institutions and values (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Stevenson, Herrero-Taylor, Cameron, & Davis, 2002). Most mothers in the study appeared to convey the mainstream socialization messages listed above to their biracial children to prepare them to be successful within the dominant cultural context—mainstream society.

As studies indicated, multiracial people face the types of racism experienced by monoracial people of color, but they also face specific forms of racism directed only toward people of mixed race (Collins, 2000; Rockquemore & Brunson, 2002). Experiences of racism and discrimination and the adaptive culture environment synergistically could impact family and individual characteristics and eventually minority children's experiences and development (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). Research suggested that youth who are only socialized within a mainstream and/or egalitarian worldview may be unprepared to handle the complexity inherent in race relations (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Therefore, parents of bi/multiracial children should address this critical issue for their children, by teaching ways of coping when encountered race-related challenges.

**Color-blind ideology.** Researchers postulated that instead of the blatant racism of the past, covert race issues persist because people from both the dominant and subordinate groups tend to use color-blind racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Carr, 1997). Color-blind ideology, a typically macro and/or group-level concept, tends to minimize race and ethnic distinctions as well as maintains that racial differences should be ignored. It seemed that the mothers in this study did not seem to understand that their lack of acknowledgement of race as a social fact could facilitate the persistence of White dominance and work to perpetuate White privilege. Bonilla-Silva (2003) claims that color-blind ideology or color-blindism is the "new racism," one that "explains contemporary racial inequality as an outcome of nonracial dynamics" (p.2). Therefore, it may not be an appropriate approach that parents of biracial children should utilize in parenting practice.

If the parents in this study did not employ color-blind approach, another explanation may be found in McClurg's (2004) account on monoracial parents raising biracial children: "as single-race individuals, the parents of biracial children may have only minimal understanding of

or experience with the conflicts their children are facing” (p. 170). Not fully understanding their biracial children’s experiences might have made the monoracial parents to neglect the racial socialization of their children.

**Perpetual Foreigner Stereotype.** In addition, perpetual foreigner stereotype may explain the seemingly lack of racial socialization efforts by Korean American mothers in this study. Researchers posited that “the perpetual foreigner stereotype,” which is one common stereotype attached to Asian Americans, may contribute to the discriminatory treatment of Asian Americans by mainstream society (Kim, 1999; Uba, 2002). Asian Americans are frequently regarded as strangers in the United States regardless of their birth place or the lengths of US residency, especially those with limited English language proficiency are more likely to be stereotyped in this way. When people speak English with a nonstandard American accent, they are easily recognized as “foreigners” (Rodriguez, Myers, Mira, Flores, & Garcia-Hernandez, 2002), which may, in part, explain the case of Korean mothers in the study who did not teach their biracial children Korean language. As immigrants themselves, most of them experienced that speaking a different language at home can cause challenges to master English language like a native speaker. In fact, two 1.5 generation mothers’ parents prohibited them to speak in English at home because their parents also understood that even a hint of bad accent could be connected with foreignness or immigrant status, which in turn made their children to experience with racism. There is a study that supports those parents’ concern. According to Qin, Way, and Mukherjee (2008), minority adolescents are harassed by peers at school due to their poor English skills and for speaking English with a nonstandard American accent.

All things considered, it is plausible to think that Korean immigrant mothers who were treated as “perpetual foreigners” by mainstream society intentionally avoided racially socializing

their biracial children because they did not want their children to be perceived as “perpetual foreigners” by mainstream society as they were. One biracial participant voiced that he wanted to identify himself as a person who belongs to mainstream society, which supports the notion that some biracial individuals may be afraid of the fact that people may perceive them as those who do not fully belong to mainstream society because they have an Asian parent who belongs to an ethnic minority group in the U.S.

**Positive outcomes associated with racial socialization practice.** Notwithstanding some possible concerns the mothers in the study might have, some studies found the positive outcomes from adolescents whose parents employed racial socialization approach in parenting. For example, adolescents who received messages about racial barriers and who were cautioned about interracial contact had higher grades (Bowman & Howard, 1985), and African American adolescents’ resiliency was increased when they were racially socialized by their parents (Miller, 1999). As Hughes and Chen (1999) posited, understanding racism and discrimination and being prepared for bias can help youth deal with inevitable experiences of racial conflict, however, to avoid any possible detrimental outcomes, parents also have to carefully balance those messages with messages of pride and culturally enriching experiences.

Most biracial participants reported that they have led an ordinary life, not marked by any racism or deprivation. They did not suffer taunting from other kids for being different. However, it should not be interpreted that most Asian-White biracial individuals face less discrimination and lead a problem free life because the biracial participants in this study had more protective factors compared to others. First, they had loving and supportive parents, which served as a significant protector in their lives. Secondly, they came from relatively high SES background, which could be considered as another protective factor. Thirdly, they have lived in an intact

family with two biological parents, which also acted as a protector. Lastly, most biracial participant's high academic achievement might have served as a buffer against racial discrimination. Therefore, it should be noted that the findings of this study can be generalized to all Asian-White biracial individuals.

**Importance of parental racial socialization.** Needless to say, socialization is an integral part of any individual's life course. The process of socialization begins at birth and continues throughout our lives. In this process, individuals learn culture, social expectations and social norms and are given the skills to participate in society (Stoller & Gibson 2000). This socialization process consists of a number of factors and among those factors, race is considered as a major factor. Racial socialization is the transmission of messages from adults to children that promote an understanding and awareness of race, racism, and cross-race relationships (Hughes, Smith, Stevenson, Rodriguez, Johnson, & Spicer, 2006). Researchers indicated that when parents of multiracial children are supportive of their children, and acknowledge their children's complicated social experiences due to race, and openly encourage pride in their children's multiple racial backgrounds, their adult biracial and multiracial children report feeling confident, comfortable, and content with their racial heritages (Gibbs, 2003; Jourdan, 2006; Pinderhughes, 1989). Mixed race youth, who are socialized as multiracial, often have an enhanced sense of self and identity, greater inter-group tolerance, and an appreciation of minority group cultures (Schwartz, 1998; Williams, 2006). Thus, parents of biracial children should exert effort to racially socialize their children for better psychological outcomes. The Korean mothers in the study may not inherently possess the knowledge and resources needed to provide racial socialization for their biracial children. Therefore, race-specific parent education may help parents negotiate this complex socialization process and proactively address race-related issues.

## **Emphasis of Individual Strengths**

**Effects of phenotype on interactions with others.** Although biracial participants tried to claim that phenotype does not matter much except for being the target of others' curiosity, phenotype appeared to have influenced on and was related to how the participants identify themselves. If one looked more Asian than White, they tended to identify themselves as Asian which they regarded as one's public identity, which is not always the same as their private or real identity. Research has indicated that some multiracial individuals reported that they feel different or abnormal (Miville et al., 2005). The feeling different was also experienced by the biracial participants in this study, but most of them accepted it as positives rather than negatives. In fact, they described that they felt "unique" and "special" because they were different from most people due to their dual heritage, which can be considered positive. However, if the feeling different and alienated is caused by their lack of knowledge on heritage culture and language, it may arise some negative psychological outcomes. For example, two biracial participants commented that they were ashamed of their inability to speak Korean. As pointed out previously, there was only one biracial participant who could speak Korean fluently. Except for that participant, all biracial participants reported that they had limited or no Korean language skills. Thus, in addition to physical differences, cultural differences might lead to rejection from Korean side of extended family or peer group, and these experiences of rejection could potentially lead to the development of a self-perception of difference that could be generalized to some areas in biracial individuals' lives.

**Protective factors.** Most biracial participants in this study reported that they struggled little with their biracial status. It may be also explained by their family's relatively high SES and their high academic performance. All biracial participants also came from an intact family in

which they lived with their biological parents. It can be argued that living in an intact family with two biological parents served as a protective factor regardless of racial status for reasons, including bonding with both parents, feeling of security and belonging, financial stability, supervision, and consistency. In addition, living with parents from two different ethnic/racial backgrounds will likely to provide chances for biracial children to be exposed to dual cultural context including customs, traditions, religions, and languages, which in turn increase the biracial individuals' feelings of belonging and inclusiveness in their family and in the society.

**Fluid racial identity.** As reported by most biracial participants, their self-identification tends to be very fluid depending on the social context they are situated in. They also commented that being biracial allowed for flexibility in deciding who and what they are going to be. Furthermore, as biracial individuals, it is impossible for them to fit into either racial mold perfectly, which may cause some challenges for them to racially identity themselves at times. According to Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2003), when an individual chooses a racial identity that may be “routinely invalidated others, especially other who are emotionally significant to that individual,” a great deal of difficulty could occur (p. 121). Further, some studies found that active use of chameleon-like identities and self-inconsistencies might be associated with lower psychological well-being (Campbell, Assanand, & Di Paula, 2003; Downie et al., 2006). Notwithstanding these negative study findings, the biracial individuals in this study seemed to consider their somewhat ambiguous racial identity as strength; they described that their biracial status also allowed them to have a fair amount of flexibility that likely would not otherwise be granted. Most biracial participants reported that they tend to alter their racial identity according to each situation and context. In line with the biracial participants' claim, some people with multiple identities may adopt a strategy of identification called “compartmentalization,” meaning

that some social identities become more important in certain contexts than others (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Downie and colleagues (2006) also suggested that some bicultural individuals are more likely to have a chameleon-like cultural identity, meaning that their cultural identification can be decided based on the social context.

Standen's (1996) study found that Korean-White individuals have two different levels of ethnic identities: micro level and macro level ethnic identities. The micro level identities or private and personal identities tend to be more fluid, in that they are not "static or confined to a particular definition. Rather, it changes with each situation, depending upon specific elements" (p. 254), whereas macro level identities that are expressed to others and dominant society tend to be less fluid. Korean-White individuals are limited in labels, as they are confined in society where individuals are categorized in rigid and outdated racial categories. The findings related to utilizing situational identity in this study were in line with Standen's study on Korean-White individuals. Biracial participants in the study reported that they tend to shift their identity according to each situation, meaning that they employ "compartmentalization" and have a "chameleon-like cultural identity" -- a phenomenon that may be unique to multiracial populations and relatively common among multiracial adolescents (Harris & Sim, 2002; Hitlin, et. al., 2006). Although the biracial participants seemed to take advantage of their fluid identity and considered their situational identity as a benefit, cautions are needed because research has found some negative consequences. According to Hitlin and colleagues (2006), multiracial adolescents who changed their racial categorization in a 5-year period, either by adding or subtracting racial identities, reported lower self-esteem than multiracial adolescents who reported consistent racial categorization.



**Influence of biracial status on peer relationship.** Biracial status is experienced by the participants as both helping and hindering social relationships, but mostly helping them. Experiences with peers, whether in the school or neighborhood context, significantly contribute to identity development of biracial participants. Being easily accepted by a group of friends seems to be closely related to the biracial participants' psychological adjustment and social development. As participants in Renn's (2000) study on biracial college students pointed out, even though sometimes the borders were more clearly defined and more subtly delineated at others, being accepted into a group was often a matter of demonstrating a shared set of cultural experiences (e.g., knowledge of language, food, religion, or values of the group's culture) and how one looks (e.g., physical appearance). However, unlike the study findings (Renn, 2000), although the biracial participants in this study acknowledged the importance of peer relationships on their identity development, they also said that their cultural experiences associated with their biracial heritage and their physical appearance were not closely related to their being accepted into a group of friends. However, some participants described the feelings of not belonging to either cultural group at times. Particularly, biracial participants talked about their experience of feeling alienated when they attended Korean church or other Korean gatherings, which might be caused by language barriers and also their physical appearance.

Asian-White individuals often feel most racially marginalized in environments that are exclusively Asian because they do not feel that they are accepted as "real Asians" (Grove, 1990, p. 624). According to Gaskins (1999), the Asian-American communities are known for their belief in racial purity and for not accepting of multiracial people. Thus, those individuals who find it meaningful to embrace their Asian heritage often find that they are not embraced back. Spickard (1989) found that ethnic Asians coming from traditional backgrounds often do not

accept Asian-White individuals into their communities. When presented with such struggles, Asian-White individuals, due to the privileged status of Asian-Americans, can explore other racial identities to discover where they “fit in.” All things considered, parents of biracial individuals, especially Asian parents should discuss the above aspects with their biracial individuals so that they could be better prepared for such bias.

Regardless of some drawbacks, most biracial participants in this study were very positive, in fact, most of them had the mentality of they are “the best of both worlds” which seemed to be instilled by their parents. With these positive attitudes and Asian side of “hard work ethics” enabled most of them to be successful in their educational pursuit.

Unlike Black-Asian biracial individuals who seemed to face more discrimination than any other mixed race people, the Korean-White biracial participants in the study appeared to have more protective factors in terms of racial backgrounds. According to Xie and Goyette (1997), people of Asian descent have “received social status on par with the White majority” (p.550), which may afford biracial Asian-White individuals the option to choose their racial identification, albeit as a member of White or non-White racial group. When compared to other minority groups, the social distance between Whites and Asian Americans is relatively reduced, leaving many Asian-White individuals to transcend racial boundaries and experience little to no resistance in how they choose to identify (Xie & Goyette, 1997).

As noted by the biracial participants in the study, the positive and productive interactions between biracial individuals and surrounding systems were found to be the most significant factor in their lives, helping them develop their identity and achieve their past and current goals (e.g., academic excellence, career aspirations, etc.). The following section describes how each

system has facilitated the biracial participants' identity development and promoted their psychological adjustment.

## **CONCLUSION**

The goals of this study were to: (1) uncover how biracial children have perceived their parents, families, and other ecological systems as either helping or hindering them to develop a positive racial and ethnic identity; and (2) examine the various ways the Korean immigrant mothers have addressed their children's biracial status and challenges they have faced while raising biracial children. The information gathered from this research led to a number of conclusions that are closely associated with promoting identity development and psychological adjustments of biracial individuals: (1) modifying parenting styles to better accommodate the needs of each biracial child is the most useful strategy in interracial parenting; (2) parents should be the primary facilitators in the racial socialization process of their biracial children to help them develop a healthy identity and effectively deal with race-related matters; (3) supportive peers and extended family are positively related to biracial individuals' psychological adjustment and identity development; (4) inclusive and safe school and community where diversity is valued and recognized help promote positive development of biracial individuals; (5) inherited personal traits such as phenotype, birth order, and biracial status could either positively or negatively influence the identity development of biracial individuals, however, having a positive mentality can help promote a healthy development for biracial individuals; and (6) emphasizing strengths of dual heritage through acknowledging strengths as a biracial individual, exerting efforts to convert negatives into positives, and being more open and tolerant of other races/cultures will help promote overall development of biracial individuals.

The above six significant factors facilitating the identity development and psychological adjustment of Asian-White biracial individuals were determined by the analysis of the data. Based on the six significant factors, Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1994) ecological systems theory,

and Root's (2003) multiracial identity development model, a proposed model for identity development of Korean-White biracial Americans (see Figure 5.1) has been developed. This figure represents the proposed identity formation for Korean-White biracial individuals.

The most significant factor in the formation of identity was each biracial individual him/herself. Their inherited personal traits (e.g., phenotype, birth order, and personal characteristics) as well as cultivated personal traits (e.g., individual performance and competency, motivation, and social/coping skills) seem to be the most critical influence on the various outcomes of biracial individuals, including identity development, educational outcome, and psychological and social adjustment. Furthermore, biracial participants' positive mentality (e.g., being positive about their biracial status) seems to help promote a healthy sense of racial identity for biracial individuals, which is in line with Bracey, Bamaca, and Umana-Taylor's (2004) study suggesting that when biracial people are positive about their biracial identity, they may have a healthier self-esteem than those who feel more negatively about this part of their identity.

In addition to individual factors, biracial participants' active utilization of situational identity should be regarded as a significant factor that influences the development of biracial individuals. Five strategies for resolving the tensions of biracial identity occurring as a result of environmental and personal factors (e.g., societal racism and internalized oppression) were proposed by Root (2003): acceptance of the identity society assigns; identification with a mixed identity; identification with a single racial group; identification as a new racial group; and choosing a White identity. As noted, most biracial participants in this study regarded the nature of their fluid racial identity as strengths, not drawbacks because it provides more options when compared with their monoracial counterparts.

Parents were found to be the most significant microsystem that promotes overall development of biracial individuals. Of the parents, Korean mothers in particular were identified by the biracial participants as the most pivotal figure in their lives. Each mother's immigrant generational status was also noteworthy because this study was able to detect the different parental socialization practice between first- and 1.5- generation immigrant mothers. The ways mothers were raised by their respective parents were distinctive from one another; therefore, different cultural upbringings were found to be another crucial factor that was closely related to each mother's parenting style.

In terms of cultural socialization, 1.5 generation immigrant mothers acknowledged that they were not equipped with sufficient knowledge on their Korean heritage culture themselves. However, unlike first generation mothers, all three 1.5 generation mothers spoke a native speaker level English, which served a useful vehicle in communicating with their husband, children, in-laws, and others in the U.S. society. Most mothers reported that they had to modify their parenting styles as their children grew up because they realized that their US-born, biracial children could not be raised the way they were raised by their two Korean parents. Since mothers and fathers in this study came from two remarkably different cultures, their respective parenting style was also different. However, the mothers reported that they tried to find the "middle ground" to better accommodate their children's needs, which seemed to be effective considering the close mother-child relationships identified by their children in the study. In relation with parenting practices, family characteristics such as family SES (parents' income, educational attainment level, and occupations), siblings, and geographic distance of extended families were also found to influence the biracial individuals' development.

Another significant factor related to biracial participants' racial identity development was parents' racial socialization practice (or lack of racial socialization for most families). As discussed, parental racial socialization is critical for the development of each individual, especially when one is considered as a minority in the United States. However, most parents did not actively employ this practice, claiming that there was not much need because their children have not experienced with racism. All nine biracial participants reported that their parents did not prepare them for bias at all. Furthermore, race or race related issues were rarely discussed in their family. Most parents employed mainstream socialization for their children. This is an area that should be further examined in other SES groups of interracial families.

Social norms and social acceptance also influenced the biracial participants. Their very first experiences of being readily accepted came from their close friends, which positively impacted on the identity development of biracial participants. According to most participants, the racial backgrounds of their peer group did not matter much to them because the most salient factor to them was the acceptance and friendship from like-minded peers at school. The local community in which they grew up also influenced the psychological adjustment of biracial individuals. Most biracial participants were rarely exposed to discrimination with racism, and the inclusive school and community environments were one of the significant factors that contributed to their not being exposed to race-related incidents. Thus, it is plausible to think that along with utilizations of Root's (2003) five strategies proposed by the biracial participants, supportive microsystems such as parents, family, school, community as well as positive experiences with macrosystems such as social acceptance and society's positive views towards diversity were the significant variables to help promote the healthy development of biracial participants in the study.

The findings of this study were in line with Maria Root's (1997) claim. In her proposed ecological model, she focused on "the intersection of perceived significant experiences through the lenses of gender, class, regional history of race relations and generation" (p. 37), and she also added that within these larger frameworks, the inherited influences (e.g., language, parents' identities, nativity, presence of extended family, given names and nicknames, home values, sexual orientation, and phenotype) tend to interact with traits (e.g., temperament, social skills, talents, and coping skills), which also interact with each biracial individual's experiences in other systems (e.g., home, school, friends, work, and community). In my study, some of the above influences were not as much mentioned by the participants, but still all the variables pointed out by Root (1997) can be significant influences in any bi/multiracial individual.



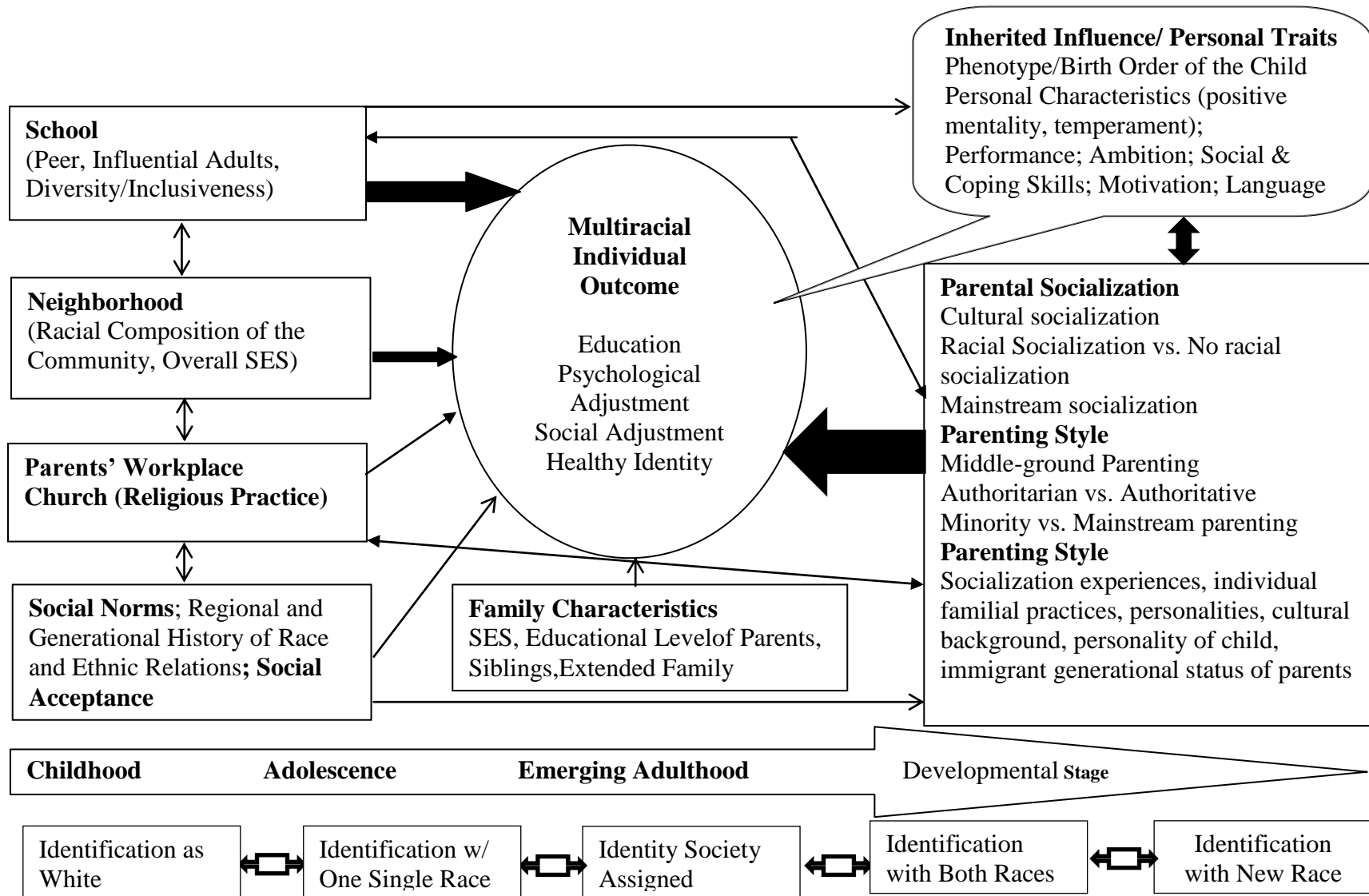


Figure 5.1. A proposed model for identity development of Korean-White bi/multiracial Americans

## **Limitations of Study and Suggestions for Future Research**

This dissertation was an exploratory study of biracial Korean-White late adolescent and emerging adults and their monoracial Korean immigrant mothers' lived experiences. Particularly, it examined strategies these biracial participants have employed to facilitate and negotiate the difficulties they face due to their biracial status in the society as well as factors that facilitate their identity development by looking closely at the interactions between the biracial individuals and various ecological systems surrounding them. In addition, I explored the lived experiences of Korean mothers' interracial parenting, specifically focusing on family dynamic between parents and the child, and how the family interactions have impacted on the formation of their biracial children's identity as well as on the children's psychological well-being. While this research has provided valuable insights into the influences and dynamics of various ecological systems on the identity development of Korean-White biracial individuals, there is still much work to be done. The main goal for all research endeavors invested in is to move the research in this area forward. In that spirit, with the findings of this dissertation and the unanswered questions in mind, I would like to suggest several directions for future research.

One limitation of this research is the homogeneity of my sample. While this study revealed a detailed account of Korean-White biracial individuals and their mothers on the interactions between them and various systems and how their experiences helped or hindered their identity development, one serious limitation is that most of them came from comparatively high SES backgrounds. Homogenous samples describing particular subgroups in detail could reflect the lived experiences of biracial individuals, but as noted in the results chapter, since most of the sample came from high SES, many were not exposed to discrimination with racism, which was opposed to some study findings. For example, researchers found that many multiracial

people report victimization experiences with multiple types of racism (Herman, 2004; Shih & Sanchez, 2005), and these race-related experiences might be common for multiracial individuals living in the U.S. (Miville et al., 2005). However, only one participant in the study reported that he experienced some severe cases of discrimination; three reported that they experienced a mild case of discrimination when they were young; and the rest of the participants said that they never experienced any discrimination. In addition, since the sample for this study was recruited from one specific region (e.g., a state in Midwest), it might have affected the findings according to Root's (1996) theory indicating that the region of the country of individuals influences racial identity attitudes and beliefs in biracial individuals. Thus, in order to capture more realistic pictures of biracial individuals, recruiting samples from diverse SES backgrounds and regions is recommended.

In addition, all my samples came from intact families in which they lived with their two biological parents. I think that a more diverse and varied sample will add new insights to my study findings. Thus, future research should further examine the lived experiences of people from varied SES backgrounds (especially those from lower socio-economic standing) and diverse types of families (e.g., single parent household).

Another suggestion for future research would be studies comparing biracial individuals from different interracial families (e.g., Chinese-White, Filipino-White, and Japanese-White). This study only included a mother-child dyad from each family, but it would produce more compelling and comprehensive findings if other members of the family (e.g., father, siblings, and extended family members) can be included in the sample. Adding these influential people to the sample might reveal different analysis with regard to familial interactions. Most of all, it would be meaningful to observe if similar findings emerged with regard to various outcomes of biracial

individuals. However, as Root (2003) pointed out, researchers should be careful about research questions as well as whether or not a heterogeneous mixed race sample can address certain questions. Furthermore, as Root (2003) claimed, it is also crucial to study individuals who identify with specific combinations of mixed race to make sure the findings and their implications are understood.

Similarly, diversity in the socio-economic standing among biracial individuals might help distinguish social standing and class position as a buffer to discrimination and other unfair treatment by society in general. One mother in the study specifically acknowledged that her family's high education attainment level (both parents had a medical doctor degree) and high income served as a tool that enabled them to be well-received by the community and society. Her claim can also be related to the fact that their socio-economic privilege buffered their biracial children from negative external experiences. Therefore, a sample with lower or more varied socio-economic status might clarify whether high SES does serve as a protective factor in biracial individuals. In addition, the inclusion of samples with varied SES might lend itself to further exploration of the intersectionality of race and class, possibly explaining the reasons why some parents do not exert efforts on racially socializing their biracial children.

This study only employed qualitative measures for the intention of gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the participants, and I believe that my research was successful in that regard. However, the present research methodology was not able to pinpoint the reasons behind the lack of parental racial socialization (e.g., finding more plausible reasons why most mothers did not prepare their children for bias as well as why almost all families did not discuss race or mixed race related topic with their children.). Furthermore, although most mothers seemed to employ a color-blind approach in parenting, they did not acknowledge that

that was the case, and capturing the complexity of their color-blind racial attitudes appeared to be difficult by using the current research methodology. Using a mixed method, i.e., combining qualitative and quantitative approach will help examine in depth about parental racial socialization practice. For example, Hughes and Chan's (1997) 16-item scale representing three dimensions of racial socialization (cultural socialization, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust) will examine whether or not parents had ever engaged in a race-related socialization behavior with their child. Stevenson's (1994) Scale of Racial Socialization (SORS-A), a 45-item measure, would also assess adolescents' own experiences of racial socialization in four factors including spiritual and religious coping, extended family caring, cultural pride reinforcement, and racism awareness teaching.

This study also tried to explore psychological adjustment of biracial individuals, but it had to be relied only on the self-report of the participants. Using an existing instrument such as the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992) will more accurately measure various aspects that could be related to overall psychological adjustment of biracial individuals. Although MEIM is a broad measure of ethnic identity that is intended for use with individuals of all ethnic backgrounds, it evaluates the extent to which individuals participate in ethnic behaviors, have feelings of pride, happiness, and attachment to one's ethnic background, are interested in learning about their background, and feel clarity about what their ethnicity means to them. Thus, combining this quantitative instrument and qualitative approach will make the study more comprehensive, meaningful, and valid compared to the study utilizing only one research method.

Finally, as Shih and Sanchez (2005) posited, a longitudinal analysis could help find more clear patterns of the identity development of biracial individuals as well as see more dynamic interactions between biracial individuals and significant ecological systems across time. A

longitudinal study would be specifically beneficial with regard to process – various effects of ecological systems on the formation of identity in each biracial individual. It would allow for a deeper look into the interactions between biracial individuals and various systems surrounding them across time.

It is my sincere hope that the proposed model for identity development of Korean-White biracial Americans can help people including interracial parents to understand the lives of biracial individuals better, especially the aspect of what systems can either help or hinder the identity development. While conducting this study, I have seen that some parents did not possess sufficient and/or appropriate knowledge that could better accommodate the need of their biracial children. Their intentions were usually good, but since they were from monoracial background, there were critical factors that they did not take into consideration when raising their biracial children. The Asian-White biracial participants in the study shared similar experiences with one another, but there were also variations among them due to different parenting styles and behaviors, family characteristics, individual experiences related to exposure to heritage cultures and also to bias and discrimination, and personal traits. Thus, each individual's life and identity formation process are unique. However, the roles of parents and other notable microsystems (maternal and paternal side of extended family, peers, mentors, school, work, and community) are found to be particularly significant to facilitate the identity development and psychological adjustment of biracial individuals. Thus, all parties involved in the lives of biracial individuals should be informed of the current study results, in order to help promote their process of developing a positive, health identity, increase their comfort in surrounding environments (school, community, workplace), and strengthen the quality of relationships with influential people including parents, peers, and extended families.

## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

### INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

**Study Title:** Korean Mothers' Socialization and their Biracial Adolescent and Emerging Adult Children's Identity Development: A Grounded Theory Approach

**Researchers and Title:** Dr. Desiree Qin (Assistant Professor)/ Eun-Jin Han (PhD student)

**Department and Institution:** Human Development & Family Studies/ Michigan State Univ.

**Address and Contact Information:** 103E Human Ecology, East Lansing, MI 48824

#### I. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine biracial identity development from the perspectives of both parents and children in Asian-White biracial families. Particularly, this qualitative study focuses on the mothers of Korean-White interracial families and their biracial adolescent children, specifically to understand: (a) how Korean monoracial mothers define their role in the racial identity formation process for their biracial children; (b) what specific parental practices may facilitate healthy identity development for their children; and (c) how various ecological systems (e.g., family, peers, school, and community) may impact racial identity development and well-being of biracial children. For this study, biracial families are being defined as at least one monoracial Korean American mother and one monoracial White father and one of their biological, biracial adolescent or emerging adult (ages 18 and older) child. Approximately 15 families (a mother and an adolescent or young adult child from each family) will be interviewed about their experiences of race and biracial identity development within their own family. They will also be interviewed about how they express their racial identity to others outside the family. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

#### II. Procedures

You are invited to participate in the abovementioned study conducted by Eun-Jin Han under the guidance of Dr. Desiree Qin at Michigan State University. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in one interview session which lasts about 1 hour to 2 hours including the time to complete an ecomap and a genogram. An ecomap is a graphic representation of a person's connections to other people and/or systems in their life, showing the strength and effect of each relationship. A genogram is a pictorial display of a person's family relationships that shows detailed data on relationship among individuals. The researcher will help create both an ecomap and a genogram. The audio tapes (and transcripts) of interviews, field notes, ecomaps, genograms, and all other information that are obtained during this research project will be stored securely. The audio tapes will be coded to remove the participants' names and will be erased after the project is completed. Pseudonyms will be substituted for the names of participants who may be represented in the audiotapes. While being interviewed, if you feel uncomfortable answering particular questions, you may skip answering to those questions. You will receive a \$25 gift certificate as compensation for completing an interview session. Your confidentiality will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. All information provided will be kept strictly confidential. In any sort of report we make public we will not



## Appendix A (cont'd)

include any information that will make it possible to identify you. The interview data will be kept in a locked file or a password protected computer; only the investigators mentioned above and Institutional Review Board (IRB) will have access to the data. Your personal answers will not be shown to anyone.

### III. Benefits and Risks

With every research study, there are potential risks. However, the risks of this study are minimal. Potential risks for this research are that the interview will stir up anxiety or troubling feelings for some of the participants resulting from being asked to reflect on some of the topics being explored. The interview may also elicit feelings of worry or fear for those who have experienced stress during the development of their racial identity (in case of adolescent and young adult participants) or those who have faced difficulties while raising their biracial children (in case of mothers). Please feel free to refuse to answer any questions that trigger feelings of discomfort presented during the interview. If you feel discomfort or upset from taking part in the study, you can tell the researchers, and they will inform you of resources available to help. The potential benefits of participating in this study may include gaining more insight into your racial identity (for biracial individuals) or parenting practices (for mothers). Furthermore, the participants will be part of providing information to other multiracial families regarding the racial identity development process as well as helping professionals working with multiracial children and their families.

### IV. Freedom to Withdraw

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will be any negative consequences. Please be aware that if you decide to take part in this study, you are free to withdraw your participating at any time and you may decide not to answer any specific question.

### V. Inquiry about the Study

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact Eun-Jin Han (Tel: 517-648-9859, e-mail: [jinnnyhan@msu.edu](mailto:jinnnyhan@msu.edu), 5453 Jessalee Circle, East Lansing, MI 48823 or Dr. Desiree Qin, (Tel: 517-432-2267, e-mail: [qindesiree@gmail.com](mailto:qindesiree@gmail.com), 103E Human Ecology Bldg., MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your role and rights as a research participant or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may anonymously contact: Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at (517) 355-2180, Fax: (517) 437-4503, or e-mail: [irb@msu.edu](mailto:irb@msu.edu) or regular mail at: 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824. We appreciate your consideration of this request and your cooperation. Your opinion is very important for our study. You will be offered a copy of the consent form to keep.

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## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, confirm that I have read this consent document and have had the opportunity to ask questions and the questions asked have been answered to my satisfaction and comfort. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I am free to withdraw my participation at any time, without giving any reason, and without my rights being affected. I will be given a signed copy of the consent form to keep.

I agree to allow audio-taping of the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No    Initials \_\_\_\_\_

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Participant Print Name

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Participant Signature

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Date

## Appendix B: Interview Guide (for Biracial Participants)

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	INTERVIEW PROMT QUESTIONS
<p><b>Ecological Theory</b></p>	<p>What do biracial adolescents perceive to be the role of <b>other systems*</b> in helping them develop an ethnic identity and cope with the challenges they face?</p> <p>(*extended family, peers, school, neighborhood, &amp; community)</p>	<p><b>Family Identity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What does it mean to your family to be interracial?</li> <li>▪ How does your family label/identity itself?</li> <li>▪ How do you feel your family will ultimately be seen by society?</li> <li>▪ How would you say your family's racial identity has affected your interactions with other (extended family, friends, and community)?</li> </ul> <p><b>Family Influence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Please tell me the things about being in your family that were/are important to your racial identity development.</li> <li>▪ Please describe an example of how your parents were supportive or not supportive of your explorations of race.</li> <li>▪ What aspects of your relationship with your mother and/or father contributed to your development of your racial identity?</li> <li>▪ How does your mother (or father) talk about race and what does that mean to you?</li> <li>▪ What were some of the most important experiences you had with your parents regarding your development of a racial identity?</li> <li>▪ What do you think parents can do to help their children develop a healthy sense of biracial identify?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ecological Theory</b></p>		<p><b>Self-Identification</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When did you first become aware of being biracial? Can you tell me about the experience in detail?</li> <li>▪ At what point in your background and upbringing did you notice your being biracial making a difference in terms of the quality and type of your social relationships?</li> </ul>

## Appendix B (cont'd)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	INTERVIEW PROMT QUESTIONS
<b>Multiracial Identity Development Theory</b>	<p>What do biracial adolescents perceive to be the role of <b>other systems*</b> in helping them develop an ethnic identity and cope with the challenges they face?</p> <p>(*extended family, peers, school, neighborhood, &amp; community)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How do you currently identify yourself racially and what does your racial identity mean to you?</li> <li>▪ How do you deal with living with two racial heritages?</li> </ul> <p><b>Other Support Systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What were some of the most important experiences you had socially, outside of your family, regarding your development of a racial identity?</li> <li>▪ Who/what have you been most helpful in dealing with challenges you face as a biracial individuals?</li> <li>▪ What support systems have you had that encouraged or discourages your biracial identity?</li> <li>▪ What do you think has most influenced your racial identity?</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues &amp; Problems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What are issues that you think associated with being a biracial individual?</li> <li>▪ How do you cope with issues of racial identification, diversity, and difference?</li> </ul> <p><b>Coping Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent, if any, have you encountered or experienced discrimination?</li> <li>▪ How have you chosen to deal with discrimination?</li> <li>▪ Have you had to cope with people/institutions misperceiving your identity? How do you deal with this?</li> <li>▪ What suggestions would you give to other biracial individuals to effectively deal with challenges they face due to their biracial status?</li> </ul>

### Appendix C: Interview Guide (for Parent Participants)

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	INTERVIEW PROMT QUESTIONS
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ecological Theory</b></p>	<p>How do the mothers' unique cultural/racial background and personal characteristics impact their interracial parenting approach and experience?</p>	<p><b>Family Identity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What does it mean to your family to be interracial?</li> <li>▪ How does your family label/identity itself?</li> <li>▪ How do you feel your family will ultimately be seen by society?</li> <li>▪ How would you say your family's racial identity has affected your interactions with other (e.g., extended family, friends, and community)?</li> </ul> <p><b>Experience of Raising Biracial Children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How would you describe your general experience of being a parent of biracial children?</li> <li>▪ What opportunities or challenges have you had as a parent of biracial children?</li> <li>▪ As a parent, how have tried to shape your child's racial identity or tell your children how to identify himself (or herself)?</li> <li>▪ As a parent what do you believe to be the importance of your child identifying as Asian/White/ or biracial, etc.?</li> <li>▪ As parents, what is the most important value to you as you raise your biracial children?</li> </ul>

**Appendix C (cont'd)**

<b>THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b>	<b>INTERVIEW PROMT QUESTIONS</b>
<b>Multiracial Identity Development Theory</b>	How do the mothers' unique cultural/racial background and personal characteristics impact their interracial parenting approach and experience?	<p><b>Racial Socialization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How important is it for (your child) to know about (his/her) racial background?</li> <li>▪ How often does your family celebrate any special days connected to your racial background (both mother and father's heritage)?</li> <li>▪ How often do your family talk to (you child) about how much discrimination (he/she) may face because of (his/her) race?</li> <li>▪ Describe the parenting approaches you use to socialize your children? (e.g., cultural activities, language) Please provide some examples.</li> </ul> <p>How do you feel if your children seem to embrace only one aspect of their ethnicity or none at all but the mainstream culture</p>
<b>Ecological Theory</b>		<p><b>Extended Family &amp; Friends</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ With whom do you normally socialize (e.g., another interracial couple, Asian or White friends)? Please describe your current friendship groups</li> <li>▪ Does your status of being interracial couple influence your relationship with others (e.g., family, friends, colleagues, etc.)?</li> <li>▪ Are your extended family members helpful in raising your biracial children?</li> </ul> <p><b>Neighborhood/ Local Community/ School</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is/was the racial make-up of your neighborhood while raising your child/children?</li> <li>▪ What resources do parents want to have available for biracial children in the community?</li> </ul>

### Appendix C (cont'd)

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	INTERVIEW PROMT QUESTIONS
<b>Ecological Theory</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How does your environment (e.g., your living neighborhood, workplace, friends) influence your experience of being parents of biracial children?</li> <li>▪ What memorable experiences have your children has in your family, school, or community that may have had a positive or negative effect on development? (e.g., any family holiday events, social events within the neighborhood or community)</li> <li>▪ What recommendations do you have for how society and the school might contribute to experiences that may increase the well-being of biracial students?</li> <li>▪ What suggestions would you give to other interracial parents in order to parent their biracial children effectively?</li> </ul>

## Appendix D

### Demographic Questionnaire (for biracial participants)

Please answer the following questions. Please provide only one response per question.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Best way to contact: Phone E-mail (circle one)

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

D.O.B (month/day/year): \_\_\_\_\_ Birthplace: \_\_\_\_\_

#### I. Education & Employment

Education: Please state completed education (e.g., grade 12; 2<sup>nd</sup> year college; BA; MA; PhD)

Employment: Please indicate whether employed and type of work (e.g., at-home mom, teacher)

Education	
Employment (if applicable)	

#### II. Nationality/Culture/Race

Do you identify yourself as a member of any particular nationality, culture, or race?  
(Please elaborate)

\_\_\_\_\_

#### III. Parents' Race

Mother's race: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthplace(country): \_\_\_\_\_

Father's race: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthplace(country): \_\_\_\_\_

\*If your parents are from different countries:

Did you ever visit your mother's homeland? \_\_\_\_\_ Father's? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you ever live in your mother's homeland? \_\_\_\_\_ Father's? \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix E

### Demographic Questionnaire (for Parents)

Please answer the following questions. Please provide only one response per question.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Best way to contact: Phone E-mail (circle one)

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

D.O.B (month/day/year): \_\_\_\_\_

#### I. Family Relationship (Fill in the Table)

- Who lives in your home with you?

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	Age (of children)

#### II. Education & Employment

Education: Please state completed education (e.g., grade 12; 2<sup>nd</sup> year college; BA; MA; PhD)

Employment: Please indicate whether employed and type of work (e.g., at-home mom, teacher)

	Education	Employment
Mother		
Father		

#### III. Nationality/Culture/Race

Do you identify yourself as a member of any particular nationality, culture, or race?  
(Please elaborate)

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E (cont'd)

### IV. Racial Composition of the Neighborhood

1. How would you describe the racial composition of the neighborhood you currently live in?

\_\_\_\_\_ Majority White or European American

\_\_\_\_\_ Majority Black or African American

\_\_\_\_\_ Majority Latino/a or Hispanic

\_\_\_\_\_ Majority Asian American/Pacific Islander American

\_\_\_\_\_ Majority Native American

\_\_\_\_\_ I live in a racially diverse neighborhood (please indicate largest racial groups represented in your neighborhood:\_\_\_\_\_)

2. How would you describe the racial composition of the neighborhood you grew up in?

\_\_\_\_\_ Majority White or European American

\_\_\_\_\_ Majority Black or African American

\_\_\_\_\_ Majority Latino/a or Hispanic

\_\_\_\_\_ Majority Asian American/Pacific Islander American

\_\_\_\_\_ Majority Native American

\_\_\_\_\_ I grew up in a racially diverse neighborhood (please indicate largest racial groups represented in your neighborhood:\_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_ I lived in several different neighborhoods with many different racial compositions.

### V. Family Income

Please indicate your family's approximate yearly income:

\_\_\_\_\_ 0-9,999      \_\_\_\_\_ 10,000-19,000      \_\_\_\_\_ 20,000-29,000

\_\_\_\_\_ 30,000-39,000      \_\_\_\_\_ 40,000-49,000      \_\_\_\_\_ 50,000-59,000

\_\_\_\_\_ 60,000-69,000      \_\_\_\_\_ 70,000-79,000      \_\_\_\_\_ 80,000-89,000

\_\_\_\_\_ 90,000-99,000      \_\_\_\_\_ over 100,000

Table 4.3

*Findings: Main Themes and Sub-themes*

Main Theme	Sub-theme
<b>Perceived Support</b>	<p>Influence of peer relationship on identity development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race doesn't matter when forming friendship</li> <li>• Having mostly White friends</li> </ul> <p>Peer relationships in school: The importance of valuing diversity</p> <p>Influences of having friends from diverse backgrounds on identity development</p> <p>Influence of community on identity development</p> <p>Influence of extended families on identity development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships bet. heritage language fluency and closeness to their extended family</li> <li>• Relationships with extended families: Distance and frequency of contact matters</li> </ul>
<b>Importance of Parental Support</b>	<p>Maternal support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typical Asian parenting: "My Asian mom pushes me, but I know it's for my own good."</li> <li>• Atypical Asian parenting: "My mom's not like other Asian mothers"</li> </ul> <p>Modifying parenting styles</p> <p>Acknowledging the difference between biracial and monoracial individuals</p> <p>Mothering vs. Fathering: "Our parents are different, but complement each other after all"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parenting conflicts between spouses</li> </ul> <p>Middle-Ground Parenting</p> <p>Parental racial socialization practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Socialization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ways to culturally socialize biracial children</li> <li>▪ Cultural socialization through eating Korean food</li> <li>▪ Utilizing Korean church as a key agent in cultural socialization</li> <li>▪ Lack of cultural socialization</li> <li>▪ Language socialization</li> <li>▪ Lack of parental efforts at promoting Korean language learning</li> <li>▪ Reasons for wanting to learn Korean</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 4.3 (cont'd)

Main Theme	Sub-theme
<b>Importance of Parental Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation for bias <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of preparation for bias</li> <li>▪ Experience with racial discrimination</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Biracial Individuals' Outcomes related to Racial Identity</b>	<p>Influence of Inherited Personal Traits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does phenotype matter? – Yes, but we also equipped with the Mentality of “Not much!”</li> <li>• Does birth order matter? – Yes, it seems to influence one’s “preference toward Korean heritage”</li> <li>• Does a biracial status matter? – Yes, it enables us to utilize “Situational Identity”</li> </ul> <p>Emphasizing strengths of dual heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledging Strengths as a Biracial Individual : “I am the BEST of both worlds” Mentality</li> <li>• Influences of the model minority myth: “Let’s convert negatives into positives for our own good.”</li> </ul> <p>Being More Open and Tolerant of Other Races/Cultures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society’s changing views on diversity</li> </ul>

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