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Catherine C. Huh
“What Do You Mean,
‘Separate Identity?’”: An
Exploration of Separation
and Individuation for Second
Generation Korean American
Adolescents

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to explore how second generation Korean Americans negotiated separation and individuation during the life cycle phase of adolescence. This qualitative study, based on in-depth interview with 12 second generation Korean American adults, examined the participants’ separation – individuation process during adolescence and currently. In addition, the project addressed the applicability of the Western concept of separation-individuation theory to Confucian based collectivistic cultures.

The previous research conducted on this psychodynamic process has focused on the Western ideal that this developmental stage is vital to a young person’s psychological formation to adulthood. There is a dearth of research on how separation and individuation occur in Asian American families and even less research has been done which is not framed within the model of individuation and differentiation.

Several major findings emerged from this study which remarkably parallel the theoretical literature on the second generation Korean American experience. The primary findings of the study suggested that adolescence was not recognized as a developmental stage; separation was delayed into adulthood; participants reflected a familial rather than individualistic identity; participants adopted the culture of their parents as they grew

older; participants developed adaptation strategies to negotiate their multiple identities and participants had immense gratitude for their parents and for their culture. This investigation highlights the clash of expectations and theories around separation and individuation and can provide a useful cultural lens for treating this population. Finally, participants' recommendations for parents to increase communication with their children and for their children to learn more about their parents' culture provided implications for future treatment and program development.

“WHAT DO YOU MEAN, ‘*SEPARATE IDENTITY*?’”:
AN EXPLORATION OF SEPARATION AND INDIVIDUATION FOR
SECOND GENERATION KOREAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2008

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Asian Americans are among the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States, making up 4 percent (4%) of the United States population as of 2000 (Zhou & Xiong, 2005). From 1970 to 2000, the number of Asian Americans residing in the United States increased from 1.4 million to 11 million, largely due to the 1965 immigration law and the historic resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees after the Vietnam War in 1975 (Zhou & Xiong). According to the US Census Bureau, the number of Koreans has dramatically increased from 69,130 in 1970 to 1,076,872 in 2000 (Chang, Rhee, & Weaver, 2006). Despite the profound rise of the Korean population, this group was not listed as Koreans in the U.S. Census Bureau but were classified as “Chinese,” “Japanese,” or “other Asians” up until 1958 (Choy, 1979).

The thriving Asian population in the United States is comprised of first generation immigrants (64%), while 27% are comprised of second generation individuals (US born) and less than 10% are of the third-plus generation (US born of US born parents). The Korean American community is delineated along generational and language lines, consisting of the *il-se* (immigrant first generation); the *i-se* (second generation Korean Americans); and those who came during adolescence, referred to as the *il-chom-o-se* (1.5 generation) (Hurh & Kim, 1984). Commonly, Asian Americans are known as the “model minority” with a greater tendency to live in married/couple and multigenerational

families than non-Hispanic whites, have a significantly high level of education and tend to settle in large metropolitan areas in the West (California houses 35 % of all Asian Americans) (Zhou & Xiong, 2005). Due to the fact that Asian Americans have become a valuable part of American society, there is a significant need to understand these immigrant cultural groups (Thomas & Choi, 2006).

As previously noted, there has been a dramatic rise in the population of Asian Americans over the past 30 years in the United States. The influx of those immigrating from Third World countries to the United States has sparked research on immigrants and their children. However, investigations of the children of post 1965 immigrants or the “new second generation” in the late 1980s became available only less than a decade ago. Major survey data on the new second generation have focused on children of Latino, Caribbean and Filipino immigrants, and Indochinese refugees (Hong & Min, 1999). However, studies on other major Asian American groups are limited. The research question for this study is: What is the process of separation-individuation like for second generation Korean American adolescents?

For the purposes of this study, *first generation* will be defined as Asians who were born in foreign countries and immigrated to the United States as adults; they are the “first generation” to be living in the United States. Next, *1.5 generation* will refer to those foreign-born Asian Americans who immigrated to the United States before or during their early teens, spending most of their life in the United States. Lastly, *second generation* is used to describe individuals who were born in the United States to Asian immigrant parents (Choi, 2002).

In terms of separation and individuation, the previous research done on this psychodynamic process has focused on the Western ideal that this developmental stage is vital to a young person's psychological development to adulthood (Agbayani-Siewert, 2004). Noteworthy theorists contributed to the development of separation-individuation theory of child development, which articulates that the primary developmental task that an adolescent must accomplish is to achieve a sense of his own identity in order to become a healthy member of society (Choi, 2002). From this Western perspective, very little research has been done on how separation and individuation occurs in Asian American families and even less research has been done which is not framed within the model of individuation and differentiation (Agbayani-Siewert).

Meanwhile, although there has been an increase in the literature on ethnic identity, the literature tends to focus on pan-ethnic identities, i.e. Asian, while there is little research focusing on sub-ethnic identities (i.e. Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese) (Pyke & Dang, 2003). very little research has been done on how separation and individuation occurs in Asian American families and even less research has been done which is not framed within the model of individuation and differentiation (Ying & Lee, 1999). Huang (1997) eloquently summarized that cultural competent clinical work with Asian American adolescents is a field needing further development.

It is important to note that there is a gap in knowledge about the process of separation-individuation for Korean American adolescents. Yang (1999) stated that previous research done in the United States on family system dynamics have mainly used white, middle-class families as their subjects. The current research will not only provide more research on cultural family dynamics using Korean subjects, but it will also show

how Korean parents and their children might cope with navigating relationships during adolescence as their Confucian based collectivistic culture does not value autonomy as do their American counterparts.

This study is qualitative and exploratory in design using flexible methods for research with a focus on narrative data collection. For example, the study is based on in-depth interviews with 12 second generation Korean American young adults between the ages of 25-35 who were recruited via a snowball method, using a non-probability purposive sample of convenience. The participants were interviewed by phone or in person, using the researcher's own interview guide to collect narrative data about the participants' adolescence and experience with separation and individuation. Through this, the study explored the participants' experiences with being raised in the United States as second generation Korean Americans along with their personal accounts on adolescence and separation and individuation. Also, the study investigated their family backgrounds and traditional Korean attitudes and beliefs practiced in their culture. Lastly, this study examined participants' negotiation of their multiple identities and explored their current identities as adults.

There were two primary audiences for this study. First, the intended audience is social work students and social work professionals as the findings will raise the consciousness of students and clinicians alike to issues of cultural competency when working with second generation Korean American adolescents and young adults. It is important for professionals to understand the social and familial context within which Korean American adolescents negotiate this developmental stage. A second audience is Korean parents of adolescents as it would provide insight into both the struggles and the

special dynamics that their adolescents are experiencing, leading to a better understanding of their child during this transitional developmental stage.

The findings of this study will educate the growing social work population about the clash of expectations and theories around separation and individuation. This study on Korean American adolescents and young adults and the process of separation and individuation can aid clinicians and various health care providers in appropriately diagnosing presenting symptoms, which could improve treatment recommendations or destigmatize lack of individuation. It is also hoped that this empirical investigation will motivate fellow Asian American clinicians to contribute their findings to literature in this topic and leaders in formal training programs to incorporate this work into their curricula to produce more clinically culturally competent workers.

In conclusion, it is anticipated that the results of this study will provide empirical data regarding treatment issues for social work professionals working with second generation Korean American adolescents and adults. This study sought to provide clinical insight and information as well as increased awareness of the applicability of the Western concept of separation-individuation to professionals who may not be aware of the attitudes towards separation-individuation in Eastern cultures and may have a tendency to pathologize a client instead of assessing the client through a cultural lens. Thus, this thesis contributes to cross-cultural competency of those working with Korean American individuals. Finally, this study attempted to give voice to the second generation Korean Americans who may have felt alienated while negotiating adolescence in the cultural context of their immigrant homes and to fulfill the wish of one participant “to really help someone feel like there’s another person out there.”

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review will focus on previous research pertaining to the experiences of how second generation Korean Americans negotiate separation and individuation. Despite the rise of the Asian American population in the past 30 years, studies have primarily focused on Hispanic and African American adolescents (Shrake & Rhee, 2004) and as a result, there is limited research on the Korean American adolescent (Cho & Bae, 2005). Since epidemiological studies on Asian Americans are limited (Wong & Mok, 1997), literature related to the separation-individuation process of Korean American adolescents is scarce. Hence, there appears to be a lack of literature examining second generation Korean American experiences with separation and individuation during adolescence.

For the purposes of providing context for this study, the first section will explore Korean culture, attitudes and beliefs based on Confucian values, highlighting collectivism, gender inequality, education, religion, respect, and shame. The second section of the literature review will focus on separation and individuation during adolescent development based on Western theorists. The third section will examine cultural identity formation for the second generation Asian American adolescent. This section will focus on acculturation issues and review the four developmental strategies of adaptation: marginalization, assimilation, separation, and integration/biculturalism. In

addition, this section will address internalized racism and experienced racism. Finally, the literature review will conclude by exploring separation and individuation in Korean American adolescence and the applicability of Western beliefs of separation and individuation to Korean families.

Korean Culture, Attitudes and Beliefs

Historically, the Koreans are an ancient and homogenous people with their own language, character, and culture (Kim, Kim, & Park, 2000). Therefore, the social and cultural ties among Korean Americans are very strong, probably the strongest among all Asian Americans (Hurh, 1998). Kitano and Daniels (2001) acknowledged that Korean culture places a strong emphasis on hierarchical order within the family, respect for elders, family duties, filial piety and obedience to rules and authority (as cited in Chang, Rhee, & Weaver, 2006) Also, children are expected to show unquestioning obedience to their parents' wishes and needs. Though Korean immigrants may change their traditional values as they interact with American mainstream culture, the fundamental belief system remains relatively unchanged for many Korean immigrants.

Subsequently, Korean researchers have suggested that it may be difficult for Korean American individuals to achieve integrated acculturation because they tend to possess stronger ethnic attachment (maintaining cultural traditions and associating primarily within ethnic social networks) than all other Asian immigrant groups (Farver & Lee-Shin, 2000). Based on their research, Farver and Lee-Shin stated that acculturation may be especially challenging for Korean Americans because there seems to be stronger attachment to immigrant culture as evidenced by the tendency to speak, read and eat Korean. Confirming this, Hong and Min (1999) suggested that second generation Korean

adolescents seem to maintain strong Korean ethnic identity mainly because of the cultural and historical homogeneity of the Korean group.

In Korea, many of the soon to be immigrants were told of the economic opportunity and political freedom in the United States but once in this country, they faced difficulty in finding meaningful employment in their own fields because of the language barriers, cultural conflicts and lack of training (Choy, 1979). About 85% of the Koreans in the United States belong to the working class, while 5% belong to the professional class and 10 % to the business class (Choy). Korean immigrants are three times more likely than other Americans to be engaged in small business enterprises such as dry cleaning, small grocery and liquor stores, fast food shops, clothing stores, and photo processing businesses; however, no Korean merchant because of prior education and aspirations is *only* a merchant (Kim & Yu, 1996). Success in Korean American small business has always depended on long hours and unpaid family labor (Kim & Yu). As a result of being self employed, Korean immigrants are more likely to be segregated from mainstream society. Furthermore, they are associated typically with a Korean immigrant church, thus maintaining Korean identity (Farver & Lee-Shin, 2000).

Reinforcing this, Hong and Min (1999) commented that 95% of Korean immigrants identified as Catholic or Protestant and all attended a Korean congregation, while Kim (1997) reported that only approximately 60-70% of Korean immigrants attend Korean Christian churches in the United States. Nonetheless, for the majority of Korean Americans, church has become a way of life and is positively related to their mental health (Hurh, 1998). The ethnic church functions to provide immigrants with a fellowship that is both religious, Christian, and ethnic, Korean (Hurh & Kim, 1984). In

the Korean American community, Christian church has become the most important community organization, since it is the central place for developing networks, making friends and exchanging information about business opportunities, social service programs and schooling for children (Kim & Yu, 1996).

Church also played a role in the effort to perpetuate Korean traditions in the Korean community; many immigrants send their children to Korean language schools often housed in Korean churches to learn the Korean language, history, and culture (Choy, 1979). Similarly, Hurh and Kim (1990) reported that a large majority of Korean immigrant families regularly participate in Korean churches with established Korean language programs (as cited in Hong & Min, 1999). The researchers also stated that church provided not only spiritual support, but also emotional and social support to the immigrants who may have felt isolated and may have served as extended family.

Meanwhile, family ties and loyalty to family are highly valued in the Korean culture, which is based on Confucian ethics of collectivism and interdependence. According to Segal (2000), the traditional Asian family structure provides stability, interpersonal intimacy, social support and a relatively stress-free environment for its members. Divorce rates of Korean Americans are far lower than those of the general population in the United States reflecting norms from Korea, where the divorce rate is one of the lowest in the world (Hurh, 1998). Hurh concluded that the main reason for this marital stability derives from the contrast between Korean collectivism (family interest comes before the individual interest) and American individualism (self-interest comes before family interest).

From the traditional Asian cultural perspective, one's sense of identity stems from the family group, hence diminishing the importance of the individual in comparison to the family or the collective and recognizing the need for interdependence (Huang, 1997; Yang, 1999). Confirming this, Doi's study (1973), and Markus and Katayama's study (1991), found in their studies how Japanese individuals view themselves as part of a larger network of relationships and develop their sense of self based on their dependence on others; their behavior is strongly influenced by members of that group (as cited in Yeh & Huang, 1996). Furthermore, for the culturally collective family, there exists a cohesiveness and interdependence born of critical family attachments (Kalsner & Pistole, 2003).

With this, collectivistic cultures value family cohesion and encourage strong attachment and identification with nuclear and extended families (Baer, Prince, & Velez, 2004). In Hong and Min's examination (1999) of second generation Korean American adolescence, a questionnaire was administered to 486 Korean junior and senior high school students in New York from 1989-1996; 237 respondents were second generation. From this study, it was found that 18% of the respondents were living with one or more grandparents. Additionally, Higgins and King (1981) found that in their study of cultural comparisons between Asians, Europeans and North American subjects, Asian subjects responded with 20-52% more "collective" responses than the non-Asian subjects (as cited in Yeh & Huang, 1996). Similarly, Lam (1997) argued that the Western construction of adolescent development that evolves into the "autonomous self" is alien to the Chinese cultural system. The author found that the separation-individuation stage in the Western construct of adolescence is not applicable to Chinese adolescent development which

rejects the Western notion of “autonomous self,” (p. 107) but rather accepts a “self-in-relational-network” (p. 108). Also, children are perceived as extension of their parents throughout their parent’s life span (Segal, 2000). Therefore, more interdependence between parents and their adult children can be expected among those with collectivistic attitudes which are commonly practiced in traditional Confucian based cultures.

The little research that has been done on traditional Asian collectivistic attitudes has found that independence, within the context of Eastern culture, is viewed as an insult to traditional views of family since collectivism and fusion of family are valued over all else. To summarize, interdependence is fostered while self-identity is inhibited (Segal, 2000). This study explores the applicability of the Western ideal to Korean immigrant families to see whether or not they facilitate their adolescents’ attempts to gain their own independence.

Along with collectivism, another attitude influenced by Confucian principles in Korean immigrant families is gender inequality, as male and female children have different responsibilities, sex role expectations and receive different treatments. Typically, the Asian family structure is patriarchal and hierarchical (Ringel, 2005). Based on the literature, children from Asian families (especially males) are indulged by their mothers and allowed to remain dependent until age 4-6 compared to Western cultures in which they are expected to take steps toward separation at an earlier age (Ringel). While males appear to have more freedom outside the home as they grow older and are expected to be more assertive, females are more restricted, expected to be compliant, and have more caretaking and home responsibilities (Shrake & Rhee, 2004). However,

regardless of gender, the value of education seems to be instilled in all children of Korean immigrant parents.

The recent Korean immigrants are the most highly educated group among Asian Americans (Hurh & Kim, 1984). Based on a *Los Angeles Times* survey conducted in 1992, it was found that Koreans immigrated to America for economic reasons and educational opportunities for their children (Farver & Lee-Shin, 2000), along with reasons of political and social unrest in South Korea (Kim, 1997). This passion for education originated from the Confucian emphasis on learning as the best way to attain the wisdom and virtue needed by the ruling class in China (Hurh, 1998). Hence, Confucian tradition views education as the vehicle to social mobility, honor and family respect (Farver & Lee-Shin). Reflecting this, Cho and Bae (2005) discovered in their study of 340 Korean American adolescents that there exists a strong focus on education as a way of reflecting honor on the family.

Additionally, Korean parents commonly sacrificed by working night and day, all week, in order to provide the best education for their children (Park, 1995). As a result of these sacrifices, parents have high expectations for their children academically (Farver & Lee-Shin, 2000). On the other hand, Zhou and Xiong (2005) argued that second generation Asian Americans pursued college as a way to fulfill primarily their own occupational desires and not just because their parents were pressuring them. Still it seemed as though their educational and careers goals may well have been born out of respect for their immigrant parents.

According to Park (1995), the Korean immigrant parents continued to retain old cultural expectations of respect and obedience in a new society with different values and

rules. In Ying, Coombs, and Lee's examination (1999) of family intergenerational relationships using a sample of 218 adolescents' essays, it was demonstrated that the majority of Asian American adolescents uphold Eastern values of family and respect. Further, Baptiste (1993) described how generational boundaries are more rigid in immigrant families than in dominant culture families, especially about children accepting advice and respecting and being obedient to their elders (as cited in Kalsner & Pistole, 2003). Moreover, Crystal (1994) and colleagues (as cited in Kwak, 2003) found that Asian adolescents in China and Japan did not blame their family for their depression, while American adolescents did.

Personality attributes of Asian Americans tend to be compliance, emotional prudence, non-verbal communication and conformity in order to preserve harmony within the family. However, Americans are more likely to emphasize autonomy, independence, emotional expressiveness and encouragement of verbal communication and conflict (Ringel, 2005). In a study conducted by Liem, Lim, and Liem (2000), the links between acculturation and the emotionality of Asian Americans were investigated. The researchers contrasted the *ego-focused* experience of Westerners and the *other-focused* emotions of East Asians. In addition, it was also discussed how emotions like anger may be highly threatening in a culture that stresses the interdependent self since it disrupts interpersonal harmony (Liem et al.).

In regards to parenting, Kim, Cain, and McCubbin (2006) stated that Korean American parenting has been classified as authoritarian, characterized by the use of strict discipline and control with little expression of affection or communication. However, these researchers found that as the Korean immigrant parents adapted to Western culture,

they tended to stop punishment and expressed more affection. In contrast, there have been some studies conducted on the use of corporal punishment by Asian immigrant parents on their children. Segal (2000) conducted an exploratory study of the prevalence of child abuse among Southeast Asian refugees and his findings suggested that as intergenerational conflict occurs between parents and children who are acculturating, parents often resort to physical discipline that is not acceptable in the United States. Capturing the essence of the importance of corporal punishment as discipline among the Vietnamese is a Vietnamese proverb that states, “When we love our children, we give them a beating; when we hate our children, we give them sweet words” (Segal, p. 179).

In a similar study conducted by Chang et al. (2006) where they examined the characteristics and patterns of child abuse among 170 immigrant Korean families in Los Angeles, it was found that Korean parents used physical abuse to discipline their children. The belief that corporal punishment is necessary for the purpose of disciplining children is reflected in the traditional Korean saying, “*Sarang-Eei-Mae*,” which refers to “the whip of love” (Chang et al.). Another study on child maltreatment led by Kim (1998), reflected this sentiment through findings that reported that 80% of parents in Korea used physical violence toward their children in Korea (as cited in Chang et al., p. 883). In sum, through the eyes of the Korean parents, physical discipline comes from a place of love.

Nonetheless, Korean parents do not feel that it is necessary to express their love through verbal or nonverbal behaviors. Rather “the parents believe that their adolescents...implicitly understand and feel parental love because it was so for the parents when they were children” while their adolescents wished their parents would

express their affection more overtly (Kim et al., 2006, p. 124). In tandem with this, a recent survey distributed among Vietnamese-American teenagers found that adolescents wanted their parents to take time to talk with them. One survey respondent stated, “They don’t think that is as important...just focus on study, stay home, and finish homework” (Cramer, 2008, B6).

Concurring with the need for Asian American children to have increased communication with their immigrant parents, Park (1995) showed that while almost all (97%) of the students felt that their parents loved them, a majority expressed concern around parents not understanding or listening to them, criticizing them too much, being too strict, being too busy to help them with school work, and wished they would stop forcing them to do things they did not want to do. Again, in Park’s study, 207 Korean American students from grades 2 to first year at college (though 85% were adolescents) responded to a questionnaire to identify special needs or thoughts. While eighty percent (80%) responded that they wished their parents were able to speak English well, ninety percent (90%) of the respondents expressed interest in wanting to know more about Korea and its culture (Park). As these second generation Korean American adolescents became adults, they were found to clash with their parents’ desires (academic, career choices, dating, financial planning), but continued to feel internal pressure to conform to their wishes (Choi, 2002).

Also, shame is a cultural value that precludes many Koreans from disclosing emotions or secrets. Yeh (2003) investigated age, acculturation, cultural adjustment difficulties and general mental health concerns in her study of 319 Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrant adolescents. In Yeh’s findings, Korean immigrants were found to

have higher level of mental health symptoms than the rest of the sample. Previous researchers have found that Korean immigrants have unique concerns due to cultural stress, specifically around shame and humiliation in seeking professional help (Yeh). Once in therapy, it is proposed that reframing may be a useful tool in working with Korean Americans because it “saves face” by examining situations in a positive light, which can facilitate change and avoid stigma (Kim, 1997).

While the goal of a collectivist culture is to maintain connectedness among members by fulfilling obligations in interpersonal and intergenerational relationships (Choi, 2002), the United States is a culture which celebrates the “rugged individualist” in which autonomy is achieved by becoming independent from others through differentiating oneself. Erikson (1968) noted that this primary task of autonomous identity is achieved during adolescence.

Adolescence: Separation and Individuation

Adolescence is a life cycle stage of human development where individuals are physically and mentally transitioning from childhood to adulthood. As adolescents explore the questions of whom they are and where they belong, they also begin to gradually separate from their parents and family (Huang, 1997). It is important to note that Erikson (1968) stated that a central task of adolescence is achieving a sense of identity which would create a foundation for adulthood. In the same vein, Choi (2002) cited the works of other noted theorists to illustrate the traditional Western perspective on the psychodynamic theory of separation-individuation as the primary developmental task that an adolescent must accomplish in order to become a healthy member of society. Moreover, separation-individuation is an important construct in adolescent development,

especially in the United States where emotional distance, independence and self-reliance are stressed more than in other countries (Baer et al., 2004). As youth try to achieve balance during this life cycle stage, it is thought that adolescents who achieved successful individuation have a stronger sense of self-efficacy, self esteem, coping and academic success (Baer et al.). Commonly, Western theorists believe that failure to establish a coherent, stable identity may lead to confusion and psychological distress.

Further, Chun and MacDermid (1997) described individuation as a process whereby an individual forms a concept of oneself that is separate from one's family, resulting in autonomy (as cited in Hung, 2006). Likewise, Allen and Stoltenberg (1995) drew upon works of Mahler (1968) and Kohut (1971) and family system theorists Olson, Russell and Sprenkle (1983) to demonstrate how vital the individuation process is for adolescents to emerge into adulthood by owning more responsibility for their behavioral and emotional needs. Theorists defined this stage as a time where adolescents disengage from being dependent on their parents through a series of developmental tasks which result in freedom from the role of child into independence (Allen & Stoltenberg). Frequently separation-individuation is viewed as a process involving the adolescent and one's family where the relationship is renegotiated and is considered successful when it results in a distinct and stable sense of identity (Kalsner & Pistole, 2003).

The term *separation and individuation* is often used during the adolescent phase of child development. American object relations theorist Margaret Mahler (1975) studied separation-individuation in children and concluded that a successful separation from the mother would result in a well-differentiated self (as cited in Nichols, 2006). As Mahler (1975) and her colleagues observed that beginning at about 16-18 months, a toddler

became anxious about his/her attachment with his/her mother, Davies (2004) explained how the child was aware for the first time that the parent exists distinct from himself/herself with his/her own feelings and intentions. Later, Blos (1962) examined *second individuation* which occurs during late adolescence where adolescents take responsibility for themselves, separate psychologically and physically from parents, establish sex lives and prepare for work as adults.

At the same time, *differentiation* refers to how a person can maintain a sense of self in relationship and also refers to how a family can experience a balance of both connectedness and separateness in their relationships (Hung, 2006). Just as individuals go through a life cycle, so do families (Nichols, 2006). Many Western family theorists concluded that families must reorganize their emotional boundaries as each family member moves through a life cycle stage. Supporting this notion, McGoldrick (1999), observed that families with adolescents increase the flexibility of their boundaries to allow the teenagers to move in and out of the family system during the life cycle stage of adolescence.

First, families must reorganize to accommodate to the growth and change of their members; second, developments in any of the family's generations may have an impact on one or all of the family's members. (as cited in Nichols, p. 104)

Hartup (1987) eloquently summarized that there is an accommodation by the family to redefine relationships to support the development of the adolescent (as cited in Trad, 1995).

Attaining separation from parents and consolidating a sense of individuality help adolescents make the transition into early adulthood. Investigating this process, Boles (1999) explored the process of individuation by *psychological differentiation*, one's

ability to take more responsibility for oneself by viewing himself/herself as distinct from parents and peers and *psychological dependence*, one's inability to look at oneself as independent of others, and how they are influenced by the quality of an individual's representation of his/her parent (Boles). As previously noted, Boles' study was comprised of 150 participants between 18-22 years of age. The results confirmed that individuals who possess object representations of their parents as affectionate and encouraging autonomy are more likely to experience themselves as psychologically differentiated, while those who have mental representations of their parents as non-affectionate and discouraging of autonomy are more likely to experience themselves as psychologically dependent on others. Thus the findings indicate that "the quality of an individual's parental representations can facilitate the process of individuation" (p. 508).

Some researchers have found that excessive control, overprotection by parents, strong family cohesion and boundary fusion have been associated with faulty separation-individuation in adolescence and some results show that ethnic minority families are more likely to embody these traits than white families (Gnaulati & Heine, 2001). In contrast, McDermott, Robillard, Char, Hsu, Tseng, and Ashton (1983) considered that those traits can also have advantages maintaining that individuals who retain strong relationships with their families are more mature than those who are completely differentiated from the family. This contradicts the conventional wisdom of theorists such as Erikson (1968), and Blos (1962).

As a result, it appears that Asian Americans are faced with the challenge of forming a cultural identity based on negotiating the strong cultural values, traditions, and

beliefs of their ethnic heritage with the cultural beliefs and the psychosocial traditions of the Western culture.

Cultural Identity Formation

The development of an individual's ethnic identity is a pivotal task during adolescence (Kalsner & Pistole, 2003). Just as there are varying theories to how cultural or ethnic identity is achieved, there are varying definitions of what it represents. Pyke and Dang (2003) focused on ethnicity as relating to cultural practices (language, appearance, customs, culture). Similarly, Phinney and Alipuria (1987) defined ethnic identity as "an individual's sense of self as a member of an ethnic group and the attitudes and behaviors associated with that sense" (as cited in Yeh & Huang, 1996, p. 36). Further, Huang (1997) explored the developmental tasks for Asian American adolescents in forming an identity and used previous research to prove how parental and racial identification influenced this process.

Phinney and Alipuria (1990) stated that for adolescents of ethnic minorities, identification with their own culture may also be an important and positive aspect of identity development (as cited in Shrake & Rhee, 2004). The challenge for minority youths is to balance the values of both their dominant society and their families of origin's culture as they become a member of their own ethnic group, age group, as well as the dominant group. Acculturation is defined as "the extent to which individuals have maintained their culture of origin or have adapted to the larger society" (Farver & Lee-Shin, 2000, p. 316). There has been much discussion about the values inherent in each strategy of acculturation.

According to Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok's acculturation model (1987), four adaptation strategies exist: *assimilation*, rejecting one's own ethnic culture and accepting the dominant one; *integration/biculturalism*, accepting both ethnic and mainstream cultures; *separation*, valuing one's own cultural identity exclusively and rejecting or withdrawing from the dominant culture; and *marginalization*, rejecting one's own culture and refusing to adapt to the majority culture (as cited in Yeh, 2003). It is important to note there has been extensive research done on these four acculturation strategies. Studies have shown that acculturative stress was higher with those who practiced *separation* and *marginalization* which distanced them from the dominant culture, and that there was much less conflict with those parents who had an *assimilated* or *integrated* parenting style (Thomas & Choi, 2006).

From Kim, Cain and McCubbin's study (2006) on Korean parents, the researchers discovered that Korean parents were *assimilating* when they stopped Korean style discipline and adopted some American parenting principles. Meanwhile, Western theorists believe that *integration/biculturalism* strategy produces good psychological outcomes. Again, some empirical evidence indicated that maintaining one's ethnic traditions as well as contacts with the majority culture generates less stress than does *withdrawal* and *separation*, thus pointing to integration as the most adaptive form of acculturation (Huang, 1997).

There has been research documenting the divide between first generation parents who are tied to the traditional values of their ethnic culture of origin and their US born or US raised children who are conflicted by dominant culture values (Shrake & Rhee, 2004). It can be anticipated that having such different orientations will create conflict.

Demonstrating this conflict, Kwak (2003) described how intergenerational families are living in between two cultures, while Huang (1997) acknowledged how first and second generation Asian American adolescents must straddle multiple cultures: their ethnic culture, the mainstream culture and the culture of adolescence. Consequently, adolescents must try to adapt to the differences of the cultures and most likely will experience discord at the inevitable clash among the three cultures.

In 1999, Hong and Min (1999) conducted the first major study that focused on the children of other immigrant groups besides Latino and Filipinos, bridging the gap in information about second generation Korean adolescent's cultural, social, and psychological dimensions of ethnic attachment. Based on the survey by Hurh (1998), it was found that an overwhelming majority of the participants used English more often than Korean and that Korean parents will speak to their children in Korean while their children respond in English. Strikingly, only 7% of the respondents spoke only Korean to their parents. It can be assumed that a source of conflict for second generation adolescents is the language barrier which can exist between parent and child. Cho and Bae (2005) agreed that an increase in conflict between the adolescent and their families could be attributed to the lack of effective communication.

Therefore, acculturative stress occurs when individuals experience stress in the process of learning to adapt to new culture (Thomas & Choi, 2006). However, it may not be maladaptive as the importance of the intact and extended family and role of social support networks provide healthy adaptation for the adolescent (Kagitcibasi, 2003). Similarly, in a study conducted by Thomas and Choi, acculturative stress was measured among 165 Korean and Indian immigrant adolescents and the findings showed that social

support activities, such as friends, church and parents, reduced the level of acculturative stress, with support from the parents being the most mitigating factor of level of stress. Lastly, Asian Americans adolescents are challenged not only by acculturative stress and the clash between the Western individualistic and Eastern collectivistic cultures, peer and parental expectations, but unfortunately also by racism and racial/ethnic prejudice (Cho & Bae, 2005).

According to the United States commission on Civil Rights in 1992, US born Asian American students, although fluent in English, still experienced racial violence perpetuated by their white peers and even by their white teachers (Min & Kim, 2000). Such institutionalized racism certainly impacted their sense of self and had the potential to lead to internalized racism. In a paper examining the paradigm shift in regard to the clinical study of racism, Dobbins and Skillings (2000) explored the structural model of racism and the effects of racism on its targets and on its agents. Ethnic minorities are described as targets of racism since they belong to the “non-dominant culture” and due to a power imbalance, discriminatory behavior creates privilege for the agents (those belonging to the dominant culture). This cultural bias influences the non-dominant groups as adults and children of both groups view the dominant culture as morally superior (Dobbins & Skillings). As racism informs the attitudes and opinions of all, including the oppressed, internalized racial oppression is a reaction to the forces of racism but is not necessarily a source of racism (Pyke & Dang, 2003).

One such example is how Asian Americans are considered the “model minority” due to the stereotype of economic and educational success (Pyke & Dang, 2003, p.149). Likewise, Segal (2000) agreed that “model minority” Asians are perceived as

professionally successful and are emotionally and mentally well adjusted (Segal).

Contrary to the general stereotype of a model minority, Korean families were reported to experience the highest rate of domestic violence among various Asian immigrant groups in Los Angeles County (Chang et al., 2006). Likewise, Wong and Mok (1997) argued that since young adult Asian Americans are often in need of interventions and mental health counseling for issues such as depression, suicidality, substance abuse and relationship stress, they are far from being the “model minority.” It seems as though there are conflicting views on this designation.

Desiring to move beyond the “model minority,” there are still those who are striving for assimilation, “regarded at times as ‘honorary whites’ ...they are still keenly aware of their inferior racial status, internalizing the disadvantages associated with it” (Zhou & Xiong, 2005, p.1149). In their study of 184 interviews of Korean and Vietnamese immigrant adults in California, Pyke and Dang (2003) examined how the terms “FOB” (“fresh off the boat”) and “whitewashed” are used to denigrate coethnic “others” as either too ethnic (“FOB”) or too assimilated (“whitewashed”) as opposed to the bicultural middle (“normals”). The authors suggested that these are adaptive responses to the racial oppression of the dominant culture, reproducing racial stereotypes. Findings showed that for the subjects, the term “whitewashed” is reserved for those who self identify as an accepted member of the dominant culture and who have not retained many ethnic traditions, but rather behave and dress in “white ways,” do not speak Korean or Vietnamese, have white friends and only date non-Asians. Meanwhile, the term “FOB” refers to those who speak with accents and primarily associate with other recent immigrants.

Pyke and Dang (2003) explored how their subjects view “real” Americans as white, reflecting the internalization of the dominant racial ideology. In their struggle for the ambiguous bicultural middle, the subjects might claim an ethnic and an Americanized identity but acknowledge that they can never really be “American” (p.1158).

Furthermore, most 1.5 or second generation Asian Americans tend to identify themselves as hyphenated American such as Chinese-American or Korean-American and not simply “American.” Concurring with this, Hong and Min (1999) discovered that 72% of the respondents chose the Korean American label, while 21% identified as Korean. It was striking that more than 90% of the second generation participants identified as Korean or Korean American, speaking to their strong sense of Korean identity.

By contrast, the “whitewashed” who are assimilated feel successful in being viewed as “American” in their quest to join the white society. The researchers concluded their study by commenting about our society’s unwillingness to explore internalized racism within racial/ethnic groups (Pyke & Dang, 2003). However, that does not negate the harsh reality that it exists.

There is a significant difference between immigrant and second generation Korean adolescents in terms of their ethnic identity (Hong & Min, 1999). Furthermore, Ying et al. (1999) suggested that second generation Asian American adolescents are more likely to be engaged in separation-individuation as compared with immigrant adolescents while immigrant adolescents were more likely to espouse their ethnic culture’s values than second generation or American born Asian youth. Second generation youth construct their identities in relation to the dominant culture as opposed to the culture of their parents, so defining Korean American falls on them (Pyke & Dang, 2003). In

addition, Nguyen (1992) explored the complex interaction between the cultural and developmental processes of first-generation Asian Americans and attempted to prove that this population may struggle with identity because they must negotiate both the Eastern and Western perspectives of identity. Illustrating this point, Ying and Lee (1999) found that immigrant adolescents tend to be marginalized or separated, while second generations are more likely to be assimilated or integrated. Phinney and Alipuria (1990) stated, “Although there are a variety of outcomes for youth in dealing with minority status, there is increasing empirical evidence that adolescents with an achieved ethnic identity show better psychological adjustment and higher self-esteem” (as cited in Huang, 1997, p.183).

However, Liu, Yu, Chang, and Fernandez (1990) found that second generation Asian adolescents may be lacking in self-concept as they are not perceived as native Americans while the 1.5 generation struggle with the clash of values between their immigrant parents and American peers (as cited in Huang, 1997). Even so, researchers have pointed out that although many Asian Americans are assimilated when they are young, they “increasingly adopt the ethnic identity of their parents as they grow older” (Min & Kim, 2000, p. 738). Perhaps having achieved acceptance by the dominant society, they feel free to embrace their own culture. The following section will address the process of separation-individuation in Asian American adolescents.

Separation-Individuation in Asian American Adolescents

Erikson (1968) asserted that the struggle to achieve identity is a universally expected part of adolescence, regardless of cultural and ethnic background. However, Baer et al. (2004) argued that ethnicity is an important context when considering

adolescent development since autonomy varies by culture. The Western concept of adolescence and the formation of one's psychosocial identity is absent in the Asian culture as one moves directly from childhood into adulthood (Segal, 2000). As Huang (1997) noted in most Asian cultures there is no developmental stage that is similar to adolescence, and Nguyen (1992) indicated that "adolescence...does not exist as such in Eastern cultures" (p.214). Furthermore, Tang (1992) asserted that the process of psychological separation and individuation may be different for those who are raised in Confucian-based collectivistic cultures (i.e. China, Japan, Korea) due to their focus on interdependence, family and collectivistic cultural expectations which do not allow for children to attain psychological independence from their parents (as cited in Choi, 2002, p. 469). Hence, several theorists counter the belief that separation-individuation is expected and viewed as an important developmental stage since it may not occur in collectivistic cultures (Choi, Ying, & Lee, 1999).

Clearly, a separation-individuation process does not appear to be "universal" as Erikson (1968) posited because it cannot be applied to culturally diverse populations. In Gnaulati and Heine's study (2001) of gender and ethnic differences in separation-individuation of 125 male and 175 female white, Hispanic, African-American and Asian undergraduates, ethnic variances in separation-individuation were studied. The researchers found that Asian Americans, who possessed different dependency attitudes than their white counterparts, showed a greater reliance on parental support and placed less importance on establishing autonomy from parents than did the white adults (Gnaulati & Heine).

This also concedes with Choi's study (2002) which explored how separation-individuation from parents, collectivism and individualism relate to adjustment among 170 Korean American college students. Choi remarked that the more collectivistic attitudes they possessed the more dependent they were on their parents emotionally and functionally. Interestingly, the author argued that their dependence may not be pathological, but rather that they are fulfilling cultural parent-child expectations. Additionally, his findings showed that 1.5 and second generation Korean Americans benefit from the collectivistic model as their families provide resources, security and support needed for adaptation. In fact, Baer et al., 2004 argued that close family ties provide protection from stresses related to acculturation and adolescent development. For Korean American youth "maintaining psychological interdependence with parents during their college years [was found] to be a more adaptive form of development" (Choi, p.472). In contrast, Yu and Kim's study (1993) on Korean American adolescence explored how their conflicting feelings toward both their ethnic group and host society were the source of alienation which may contribute to dysfunction and distress (as cited in Shrake & Rhee, 2004).

Again, due to the disparity of Eastern and Western ideals of individualism, the successful completion of this separation-individuation in Asian families may not be a fair measure of successful psychological adjustment. Thus, Nguyen proposed that promoting "...separating and individuating becomes a horrendous task" (p. 212) for Asian immigrant parents due to their own unresolved feelings. Nguyen's application of Western object-relational models to non-Western individuals further demonstrated that these models may not allow room for cultural competency.

Accordingly, Ying et al., (1999) reported that the majority of Asian American adolescents favor an Eastern collectivist orientation over the Western ideal of intergenerational independence, thereby calling into question the developmental goal of differentiation from the family of origin for Asian Americans. In addition, Yang (1999) expressed that a lack of separation and individuation within Asian American adolescents should not be assumed to be an indication of immaturity. Likewise, Lam's study (1997) concurred that the Western theory of separation-individuation in adolescents does not apply to Chinese adolescents.

Along the same lines, Hung (2006) used a multi-disciplinary approach to explore individuation, differentiation and boundaries in Asian American families. Hung presented research findings on the universal applicability of the above concepts among non-Western collectivistic groups, along with definitions of individuation, differentiation and boundaries. The results were mixed, therefore, requiring further study. Lastly, Hung's study established the need to investigate the discrepancies of individuation between Western and Eastern cultures and whether or not applications of Western psychological ideals to Asian Americans were faulty.

Similarly, Kwak (2003) and Kagitcibasi (2003) explored cross cultural intergenerational family relations among immigrant and non-immigrant families and discovered that immigrant adolescents' focus was on having positive relations with their collectivistic families, and developing their autonomy slowly and later than those from those from the dominant culture. Through this, Tseng and Hsu (1991) concluded, "The physical 'launching' of Asian children may not occur until they are in their 30s" (as cited in Huang, 1997, p. 196).

Hence, the Asian view of adulthood emphasizes the individual's ability to live in harmony, finding her or his proper place within the family and the social structure (Ringel, 2005). Wong and Mock (1997) discussed how Asian American young adults tend to retain close family ties during adulthood, in contrast to Western cultures, where young American adults fully engage in separation and individuation. The authors argued that this continual contact is not pathogenic, but rather vital for the family's survival.

Finally, the concept of the autonomous self differs vastly from the interdependent self in Asian cultures. Roland (1998) differentiated between the Asian "familial self," self embedded in the family, and the "individualized self," which is secondary and not emphasized (as cited in Ringel, 2005). Further, Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, and Weisz, (2000) discussed cultural differences of "close relationships" in Japan and the United States in terms of meaning and dynamics. Though separation-individuation is different in Japan, it does not mean that it is necessarily weaker than the path that is taken in America. Interestingly, second generation Asian Americans may have a higher level of adaptive skills than typical American adolescents as they need to learn how to separate and individuate from their families in an appropriate way and at an appropriate time while honoring their familial ties.

Summary

A review of the literature on Asian American adolescence and the life cycle phase of separation-individuation revealed that there is extensive literature on ethnic cultural identity formation and on the Western theories of separation-individuation during adolescence. But there exists a dearth on the marriage of separation-individuation,

adolescence, and ethnic identities, particularly on separation-individuation in non-dominant groups based in Confucian culture.

Therefore, while Western theorists like Erikson (1968), Blos (1962), and McGoldrick (1999) stressed the importance of completing this life cycle stage during adolescence, other mainly Asian theorists, such as Ying, Coombs and Lee (1999), Lam (1997), Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, and Weisz (2000), Choi (2002), Ying and Lee, (1999), Nguyen (1992), Yang (1999), and Wong and Mok (1997) argued that the Western construction of separation and individuation during adolescence may not be applicable to those with Confucian based collectivistic backgrounds. These Asian theorists countered that “rather than independence, which is the Western norm, Asian families continue to value familial interdependence” (Wong & Mock, p. 196).

More literature is needed on how second generation Asians view their own processes of separation and individuation and how they negotiate the clash between Eastern and Western paradigms. This current study seeks to address the gap in the research on Korean American young adults in terms of if and how they negotiate separation and individuation during the adolescent stage of development and how they negotiate this stage in their current lives.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore how second generation Korean Americans negotiate separation and individuation. My research question focused on the special dynamics that second generation Korean Americans face during the separation-individuation phase of adolescence due to their family's cultural context. This qualitative study was exploratory in design using flexible methods for research with a focus on narrative data collection. A flexible research design was selected for gathering information from the participants via open-ended, semi-structured interviews, which allowed for the participants to share their experiences as second generation Korean Americans.

Sample

Study participants were limited to second generation Korean Americans (either American-born or immigrated to US before age 3), between the ages of 23-35, with both parents having immigrated from Korea and living in the United States. Additionally, those not conversant in English (the language used when conducting interviews) were excluded from the study.

A non-probability technique of a snowball sample was used in order to recruit the participants for the study. The researcher began the recruitment process by calling or e-mailing personal contacts among individuals who work in this field, who attend the same graduate school as the researcher and additional personal contacts who are not in the

social work field. Efforts were made through selection of initial contacts to promote economic, geographical, and gender diversity. If by telephone, the researcher provided the contacts with all pertinent information, such as statement of purpose, the researcher's role in the project, as well as the nature of the study. If using e-mail, the researcher emailed the brief recruitment letter (see Appendix A). In both instances, the researcher expected the contacts to inform the potential participants about her research. The researcher asked her contacts to request permission that the researcher might contact the potential participants directly by telephone or e-mail if they were interested in participation or have them contact her directly by telephone or e-mail. Once the potential participants were contacted by telephone or e-mail by the researcher, she determined if they met the inclusion criteria (see above) and answered any questions about the nature of the study.

The researcher also did an internet search for Korean Americans in Los Angeles and found a Ph.D. candidate's website and contacted this potential participant. Through this contact, the researcher was referred to a person involved in an Asian association who then referred her to a fellow member of the association. Then the researcher was invited to an association event where she met her final participant. Face-to-face and telephone interviews were scheduled at that time. At the close of each interview, participants were asked if they knew anyone else who met the study criteria and if they would get permission for the researcher to contact that person or have that person contact her directly.

Participants

This study was comprised of 12 participants, 7 women and 5 men. One participant immigrated before the age of 2 and the rest of the participants (n=11) were born in the United States. All 12 participants identified as second generation Korean Americans. The participants ranged between the ages of 23-35, both parents were Korean and immigrated from Korea to the United States and are currently residing in the United States. The median age of the participants was age 29, a majority reported “single” for “relationship status” and 2 reported “married.” Thirty percent of the “single” participants lived with their families of origin and 30% of the “single” participants lived with their significant others. All of the participants were college graduates, 4 had advanced degrees, 3 were currently enrolled in graduate programs and 1 was in the process of beginning an advanced degree (he had been accepted into a graduate program but had not yet entered). Of the participants who were employed, a majority were white-collar professionals and a smaller minority had middle-income professions.

Data Collection

Data collection was gathered via semi-structured, open-ended interviews conducted at mutually convenient and private locations. The format of the interview included a pre-established schedule of structured demographic questions and semi-structured open-ended questions about their experience of separating and individuating during adolescence as a second generation Korean American. A pilot test was administered by the researcher to a fellow intern who was a second generation Chinese-American before the researcher began her interview process.

Procedures to protect the rights and privacy of participants were outlined in a proposal of this study and presented to the Human Subject Review Board (HSRB) at Smith College School for Social Work before data collection began. Approval of the proposal (see Appendix B) indicated that the study was in concordance with the NASW *Code of Ethics* and the Federal regulations for the Protection of Human Research Subjects. Prior to each interview participants were given an informed consent document describing their participation in the study and their rights as human subjects, as well as any potential risks or benefits of participation (see Appendix C). The participant and researcher each kept a signed copy of the informed consent document, and the researcher will keep these documents in a secured environment separate from the data for three years and after three years all materials will be destroyed unless they continue to be needed in which case they will continue to be secured.

Participants were first asked to read and sign the informed consent, and the researcher went over the informed consent with the participants and provided an opportunity for questions. Once this was done, interview questions, including a small section on demographics, were asked sequentially, which were intended to bring forth the participants' knowledge and ideas regarding experiences around adolescence specifically for second generation Korean Americans (see Appendix D for Interview Guide). At times the researcher clarified questions, gave time for participants to elaborate on questions, and occasionally asked for further ideas regarding a question. Each interview was digitally recorded and the researcher took written notes. The interview process ranged in length from 48 minutes to one hour and 10 minutes. All interviews took place

between March 1, 2008 and April 5, 2008. Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and transcribed at a later date (all identifying information was deleted or disguised).

Data Analysis

Transcripts were reviewed to identify data relevant to the specific research area and were also analyzed for important themes or ideas that had not been targeted by the semi-structured interview guide but which were raised during the interviews by participants.

During data collection the researcher took notes on relevant information and highlighted particular common themes or unusual responses. The data was then transcribed and reread again for commonalities or themes. Finally a process of data reduction was undertaken by way of coding the content of the interviews. First the transcripts were compartmentalized by question, and then into discrete categories based on occurrence of similar words, phrases and themes across the responses of the study participants. Representative quotations were used to substantiate these themes or illustrate the range of responses. Data were also compared to determine similarities and differences with respect to the literature review.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths of the study include enthusiasm and willingness on behalf of the participants to share their experience during adolescence as second generation Korean Americans and the potential for this study to fill the gap in the literature on the negotiation of separation and individuation for Korean American adolescents. A majority of the participants expressed a hope and loyalty to the cause of aiding in the research on Korean American adolescence. Another strength was that the researcher, who shares the

same cultural experience as her participants, was able to detect nuances of language and experiences of being a second generation Korean American. Limitations of the study include the small sample size in spite of the good geographic range of participants (West Coast, New England, Mid-West, Rocky Mountain, and Pacific Northwest). Another limitation was the potential for researcher bias, though the researcher was highly self reflective and vigilant and used her advisor to check for the use of neutral language. However, based on the findings, any researcher bias did not seem to be communicated to the subjects. While the small number of participants gives the study limited generalizability, hopefully insights gained through the research will inform future studies.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter contains the findings from the interviews conducted with 12 second generation Korean Americans who have completed their adolescent stage of development in the United States while living in the context of their cultural homes. It is important to note that there is a gap in knowledge about the process of separation-individuation for Korean American adolescents. The interview questions were structured to elicit how these participants navigated between Western and Eastern cultures and how their families of origin shaped their lives. Participants were asked to talk about their families, what language was spoken in the home, their parents' education, migration stories and presence of extended family.

A major focus of the questions revolved around the meaning of adolescence to them, their individual experience, and their observation of non-Asian friends' experiences with adolescence. Participants were also asked how they coped with these differences. Next, participants were asked about traditional Asian beliefs around parenting, culture, and values and how their adolescence was shaped by being a second generation Korean American. Then, participants were asked to discuss their current identity by identifying if they had a separate identity from their families of origin and if they had any advice to offer second generation adolescents and their parents. And lastly, participants were asked if there was anything additional they would like to share on the topic that had not been addressed by the interview questions.

The data from these interviews are presented in the following order: demographic information, family/social context, parenting, cultural identity, impacts of traditional Asian attitudes and beliefs, adolescence and current identity.

Demographic Data

This section contains information of the demographics of the participants. The data is presented in the following subsections: family of origin data and participant demographics

Family of Origin Data

The geographical makeup of the participants' families of origin include West Coast (n=7), New England (n=1), Mid-West (n=2), Rocky Mountain (n=1) and Pacific Northwest (n=1). In terms of the racial/ethnic makeup of the neighborhoods in which the participants grew up, half (50%) grew up in predominately white or "all white" (n=1) neighborhoods, a quarter (25%) in white/Latino neighborhoods, and the remaining 25% in neighborhoods with a significant Asian population. Socio-economically speaking, the participants ranged from living in working class (n=1), lower middle class (n=3), upper middle class (n=7), and upper class (n=1) families.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of the participants' parents were small business owners and the other 25% reported holding various white collar jobs. As far as religion, participants reported being raised in families which were Christian Protestant (n=8), Catholic (n=3), and with no religion at all (n=1). One of the participants converted to Protestantism during high school and one of the participants left her Christian faith during high school.

Participant Demographics

This study was comprised of 12 participants: 7 women, 5 men. Ages of the participants ranged from 25 to 35 years of age with a median age of 29. All but one participant was born in the United States and the remaining one immigrated by the age of two. All 12 participants identified as second generation Korean Americans: both parents were Korean and immigrated from Korea to the United States and are currently residing in the United States.

All the participants were raised with siblings and had various places in the birth order. It was noteworthy that 67% came from three generational homes in which grandparents resided and helped to raise them. A third grew up speaking mostly or only Korean (n=4), another third spoke mostly or only English (n=4), and the final third spoke a combination of the two languages (n=4).

This was a highly educated sample. All participants were college graduates and 75% had received or were pursuing advanced graduate degrees including MBA (n=4), Master's in Journalism (n=1), Master's in Asian American Studies (n=2) including one now pursuing a PhD (n=1), MSW (n=1), MD (n=1) and JD (n=1). All were either currently in school or employed in white collar or professional occupations. Seventy five percent (75%) of the participants attended college in their home state with all of the subjects from the West Coast remaining in the area. One student lived at home for college and two students came home every weekend, breaks and summers. The two participants from the Mid-West left the area to attend highly competitive universities in New England. The participant from New England went to an Ivy League college in New England but in another state.

As for relationship status, there were 2 married participants, 3 cohabitating, and the remainder single. Twenty five percent (25%) of the participants were in a relationship with another Korean. One participant married a white partner, the other participant married a Taiwanese partner. Only one of the participants was living with someone ½ Korean American. Of the single participants (neither married, nor cohabitating), 17% were currently dating Korean Americans. All subjects presented as heterosexual. None of the subjects report children.

Family/Social Context

This section contains participants' reports on their parents' backgrounds and familial and cultural factors that played roles in their development. The data is presented in the following subsections: immigrant experience, work/family life, education, religion/cultural beliefs and domestic violence/emotional conflict.

Immigrant Experience

One hundred percent (100%) of the participants' parents immigrated to the United States either to pursue their education and for better employment opportunities. It was striking that 50% of the participants' extended families migrated together from Korea and 75% of the participants were raised among extended family, particularly aunts, uncles and cousins. These participants generally expressed gratitude for having grown up with extended family because they enjoyed spending time with them and appreciated having grown up with siblings and cousins which compensated for "[the] lack of friends."

One male participant in his 20s discussed how his extended family migrated together: "My grandfather was influential in North Korea and he was able to buy property

on the West Coast – 7 or 8 brothers and sisters my dad has. He bought an apartment complex for them to transition to American life...they all lived together.”

Another male participant in his 30s described a similar communal arrangement. “I think we had two or three families living in one apartment at one time...They come to this country and eventually you helped the other families move out to different locations, purchase their own home or apartment and establish businesses for them.” Along the same lines of helping one another, a female participant in her 20s noted that though she received financial aid due to her parent’s low-income bracket, she also received financial support from her extended family. “...My relatives chipped in a lot, too...they would hand me money all the time. Like, ‘make sure you eat well and take care of yourself and don’t tell your parents we gave you this money’...they really help each other out.”

A large majority of the participants seemed grateful to have the presence of an extended family. A majority of the respondents stated how they spoke to their grandparents *only* in Korean but could speak English or a mixture of both with the rest of their family members. A few of the participants observed that language was a barrier for their immigrant parents which caused them to go into business for themselves.

Work/Family Life

Most of the participants acknowledged how hard their parents worked and sacrificed in the United States to provide a better education, more opportunity and better life for their children. A female participant in her 20s stated,

I just feel like 2nd generation or parents who have immigrated have to work a lot harder and do a lot more things just to be where they are. So I see that and so I have a stronger drive I think than a lot of...people...and a very “I can do it” and “if I want it, I have to make it happen for myself,”...very self-dependent kind of attitude.

Seventy five percent (75%) of the participants' parents had small business or were "entrepreneurs" with one even being described as a "pioneer," while one quarter of the participants (25%) reported that their fathers had "various jobs" growing up. One male participant in his 30s described his father's development into his career:

So...it was the typical immigrant beginnings...And my mother assisted him along the way. Yes, he was a very hard worker. So...that's the beginning part and eventually he became an entrepreneur, started going into [the food] business which we still do today and with that...came into real estate as well because our [food] also comes with the land. [It] became more lucrative with the property business than the [food] business.

The fact that so many parents were business owners was significant in terms of the families' socialization. One female participant in her 30s stated how since her parents had their own business, they were in their "...own cocoon – insular and isolated" and as a result, she reported that her parents were not social and hypothesized that they were "a little bit more insecure and sort of uncomfortable in social situations." A few participants noted how their parents did not have many friends and simply worked really hard at the *ka-ge* (store). They reported how their parents were often not at home but busy working and how the participants grew up spending time playing at the store rather than at home.

A common refrain was "they were really busy...always working...never home." One male participant in his 30s discussed how, "They're always busy, if I was doing school activities, my parents were never around. Even having football games or wrestling matches which I was a part of, in high school, they were never there but it wasn't a sad thing for me because I understood why. They were all busy working."

Furthermore, many reported the experience of being raised by relatives since running a business required both parents to work long hours. A majority of the

participants commented on how their first generation Korean parents were focused on success and providing financially for their children in order for them to grow up to be secure adults. And, according to these participants' responses, their parents believed that security came from pursuing a rigorous and advanced education. Most of the respondents agreed that their parents worked really hard to create a successful life for their family and desired security for their children, which they believed stemmed from education.

Education

One hundred percent of the participants (100%) stated that education was initially taught as the vehicle to obtain security and success, which is the reason why so many Korean parents are "...all about studying and education." A male participant in his 30s reiterated how his parents were "really, really focused on academics which I'm sure was pretty common with a lot of other Asian cultures. Maybe a lot of immigrant cultures in general because that's kind of thought of as the key to succeeding in a new country."

One female participant in her 30s reported how much of her adolescence was spent preparing for college which was "a big focus" in her life. Another stated that her parents felt that success is "...all graduate school driven. I mean our parents really wanted all to be school driven because it's safe." Participants discussed how their parents emphasized education, remarking "my parents were totally into school," and "it's all tied to education." On the other hand, 16% of the respondents reported that their parents did not pressure them academically after they noticed a lack of interest in studying and only one participant stated that his parents were not involved in his academics at all.

However, he also valued education: "I felt as if I was on my own. I had to get my grades, I didn't want to ruin my life forever."

Parents were reported to view clubs, pets, part time jobs and art as less important than academics, preferring tutors and activities which would enhance college admissions. Spending time with friends was viewed as a “waste of time,” as evidenced by the reports of one young man who had been told he could not play at a friend’s after school because he had to be mentally prepared for school the next day. One male participant in his 30s captured what appeared to be the sentiment of a majority of these immigrant parents:

One thing that my mom would always say, “So if you are going to succeed, you have to study when they’re not studying, study when they’re playing...so the ones who succeed in life are the ones who really...don’t join in all those other things...if you want to succeed than you have to kind of give up and sacrifice in some ways.”

A female participant in her 20s stated, “They would do anything for me to get ahead...they would pay extra money...I’d be like ‘I need it for school’ and they’ll buy it for me. So definitely I think [for] Asian families in general, education is *very* stressed.”

Another female participant in her 30s concurred, “I’m sure my parents sacrificed in other ways. I’m sure they didn’t get like a nicer car so they can pay our tuition.” In addition, she discussed how if she wanted clothes or if there was a class trip to another country, she was not able to participate, “but...I had all the SAT classes.”

To help motivate their children to pursue their education, one third of the participants stated that their parents would bribe them with material things to get all “A”s, attend a specialized academic school or pursue a certain field of study. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the participants’ parents rewarded straight “A”s and re-taking the SATs with material gifts. Almost all of the participants agreed that their parents were extremely focused on studies and education as a way of obtaining success in this country and that this was part of their cultural belief system.

Religion/Cultural Beliefs

The Korean church is an important part of not only the Korean community but also, the Korean culture. Especially for those living in predominately white areas, church was the one place where socialization with other Koreans occurred. Seventy five percent (75%) reported growing up “religiously.” One quarter of the participants’ parents received a degree in seminary school and one participant’s father was a minister. Religion permeated family life and one respondent recalled being told “make sure that God’s in the picture, that He’s the reason why you do certain things.” A large majority of the participants explained how they went to church every Sunday and that some of their parents were daily church-goers. According to one respondent, “Going to church was a big part of the family.” One participant said that her parents were founding members of a new church and another participant stated that her family even had a family Bible study during the week and prayed before meals.

Another cultural aspect of the Korean American experience seemed to be related to gender roles and gender inequality. A female participant in her 20s disclosed that she was a “tomboy” growing up but that her mother wanted her to be more “*yam che neh*” [ladylike].

“Don’t talk so loud, don’t laugh so loud, don’t run around, like the boys, try to walk like a lady, cross your legs like a lady.” You know all those things...I had a hard time dealing with because I saw all the strong women in my family...telling me to be *yam che neh*...to me, that was a huge contradiction.

In addition to stereotypic gender roles, there existed gender inequality in the Korean culture. One quarter of the participants discussed the importance for Korean parents to have sons. One female participant in her 20s talked about how her father

would always say, “I have only 1 daughter and 3 generations [of sons].” Another female participant in her 20s complained, “in Korean culture...boys are more treasured ...he [father] kind of wanted me to be the boy and then when I wasn’t...but regardless, he would still play sports with me.” Confirming the gender differences, yet another female respondent discussed how being a girl was difficult due to the “gender preference for my brother.” She noted, “I think she’ll [mother] let him get away with things that she would never let me get away with.” This female participant describes a story about how her brother wanted to go paint-balling with his friends instead of going to her mother’s birthday dinner and her mother allowed him to go. The respondent stated, “But if I said I wanted to go paint-balling on her birthday, that would never fly.”

A large majority of the respondents’ reported that religion and the church were an integral part of their family life. Along with religion being an important part of their experience, some participants included gender preference and different expectations for males as males are venerated in the Korean culture. Another important factor in these participants’ adolescence was the presence of domestic violence.

Domestic Violence and Emotional Conflict

Seventy five percent (75%) of the participants reported domestic violence, either emotional, physical, or an incident of sexual abuse in their households. As a result, the participants shared that there was “constant stress” and anxiety in their homes. A female participant in her 20s graphically reported, “There’s a lot of domestic violence within my household...I never hit anyone because I was the smallest, youngest and I was the girl, but my dad would hit all three of us and my mom hit me and my brother and my brother hit me.” One male participant in his 30s described how his father would engage in

“insane bursts of rage over nothing.” The respondent explained that he had no idea what happened but by the next morning “it was normal and we couldn’t even bring it up.” As a result, he felt that there was an unpredictability factor which made him feel as if he could never be on firm footing because he never knew if he did something wrong:

I just never was given the sense of “I’m home” and “I’m really wanted here” or something. Which is weird, I mean, it wasn’t like a nightmare, you know, growing up? But it kinda was...I think these violent outbursts that would happen periodically just left me feeling really...I don’t know if guilt is the word...but maybe traumatized, maybe just...thrown off my center, you know?

A few participants reported incidents of extreme physical violence. A male participant in his 20s talked about he hated his life growing up and the constant fighting and arguing between his parents and him:

I remember one thing that really traumatized me, the one time my father threw a chair at me; he missed. I left the house. I wasn’t ever planning on coming back home. I ended up having to come home, by my father’s bedside and apologizing to him without saying a word. Just my mother, said, “Go and apologize.” And ever since then, it was a defining moment.

Another female participant in her 20s recalled a story when, after fighting with her mother, her father came home from working the graveyard shift came into her room and threatened her. “He threatened to kill me basically because I was fighting with my mom. Even around that time, the Korean parents, they would beat you, so it was...a little scary...I mean he woke me up while I was sleeping.” She whispered that she “really hated” him growing up. At the same time, a male participant in his 30s discussed how his parents’ discipline style was very military and that he would receive whippings and spankings. He remembered that he had to hold up a chair over his head or keep himself up in a certain physical push up position and remain there until his muscles burned.

In addition to the physical violence in the home, other struggles brewed. Although only one participant's parents divorced, 50% of the participants' reported that there was much fighting and bickering between their parents. Conflict ranged from fighting about money to how to raise the children. One female participant in her 30s noted that one of the reasons for her parents fighting was "my mom...trying to be independent." Subsequently, the fighting took its toll. A male participant in his 30s stated, "I think both my parents were pretty depressed. They fought a lot; my mom was definitely just in a bad mood most of the time. I don't remember her smiling a lot."

It was interesting to note the prevalence of conflict and domestic violence in the homes of the participants ranging from mild to very extreme cases of emotional, verbal and physical violence, and the effects that it had on all the members in the home. One might speculate on the extent to which cultural clashes fueled the tension.

Parenting

This section contains participants' reports on the parenting styles of their parents. The data is presented in the following subsections: strictness and discipline, authoritarian style, fear of failure, importance of parenting and idiosyncratic parenting / superstition.

Strictness and Discipline

Seventy five percent (75%) of the participants reported growing up with restrictions by their "overprotective" parents. One female participant in her 20s explained that her parents were "overprotective" because being in America, "they didn't know what to do" because it was totally different than how they grew up. "Living in the US they're not too sure about other people," but she suspected that if she grew up in

Korea, her parents would have let her go out and put makeup on because “it probably wouldn’t have mattered.” This same female participant noted a representative scenario:

Lots of rules. My dad was really, really strict. We couldn’t watch tv on the weekdays...I had a strict curfew...I couldn’t wear makeup, I couldn’t go to like the dances and stuff. I couldn’t have a boyfriend...I couldn’t sleep over at other people’s places and no one could sleep over at our place. I always bugged them about that, because all my friends would have these sleepovers and I couldn’t join in.

Additional rules included no parties, no friends over, no biking around, no going to friends’ houses, no driving until 18, no going out on a school night, no talking on the phone with the opposite sex, no going outside, and no friends.

A majority of the participants reported feeling stifled by their overbearing parents. A female participant in her 20s provided a metaphor to describe first generation Korean parents: “Helicopter parents...you know how helicopter don’t take off like this, they just...hover and so that’s the idea of a Korean parent hovering over their kid...it completely captures what Korean parents do, they just hover.” Some participants observed that their non-Asian friends’ parents were not as involved with what their children were doing and they especially did not stress academics as much. One female participant in her 30s reported how her friends did not receive “as much surveillance” as she did and thought there might have also been some neglect.

However, a small minority of the participants reported occasional compromise and negotiation. This same female participant stated how she would negotiate with her father because he, more than her mother, would understand her logic about why she thought a restriction was unfair and they would reach an agreement: “‘You can go to the sleepover but you can’t sleep over’. So like all these compromises.”

Not only did participants report how their parents were restrictive, but some also stated how their parents would not explain the reasoning behind the rules. One female participant in her 20s explained how she fought with her parents to be able to do what all the other kids could do. "...If I asked her, 'I want to do something,' she'll be like, 'NO you can't do it.' And I'm like 'Why?' 'Because you can't!' You know, there's no reasoning with her." Another female participant in her 20s discussed how her parents would not let her sleepover at her friend's house. She suspected that they might not have been comfortable with her sleeping at someone else's house, but she stated, "I'm sure now if they think about it, it was probably really frivolous, and really wasn't that big of a deal. I'm not too sure, why. They didn't really give me a good reason why." One male participant agreed that it was difficult to comprehend the cultural differences without being given an explanation:

...it's a thing where it can be dealt with easier when you're an adult but as a kid it's very difficult because you don't understand their reasons why. It wasn't explained. If I had known...the reasons why there were differences, I think it would've been easier.

There was also the issue of not having the opportunity to make choices. One male participant in his 30s noted, "I think the main issue is that during adolescence, I never had a chance to try things or choose things." He discussed how once he went to college and suddenly had all of this freedom, it took him a long time to pick a major because he did not know what it felt like to choose something. "Activities...like they chose piano and clarinet...and every time I tried to change they'd sit me down for two or three days in a row, trying to convince me to stick with it and so I would." Likewise, a female in her 20s described how she wanted to make her father happy by going into finance and

remembered that her father made her stop taking art classes in high school. “So I was so sad that I [was] always suppressed and knew that I didn’t have the right to choose. Me doing what I wanted to do was never really a reality.”

On the other hand, a male participant in his 30s described a much more permissive upbringing during adolescence. “This is interesting. So there were almost no rules. We had to call home at midnight and that was it, we didn’t have a curfew.” He described a story about how his friend suggested “sneaking out” of his house and how the participant did not know understand the concept but played along and just as they were creeping down the stairs, the participant yelled, “Bye Mom!” and his mother said, “Bye,” much to the shock of his friend. “I think he was a little disappointed too. You’re supposed to sneak out. It takes all the fun out of it.” The participant recalled that his friend thought his parents were “totally cool.” Similarly, one female participant reported that she “didn’t feel restricted” while another female participant in her 20s noted that her parents were “fine” except that they did not want her to smoke or drink or act out sexually as her father informed her: “One time, awkwardly, he was like, ‘Don’t let any guys touch or anything like that.’ I was like, ‘*OKAY, DAD!*’”

Though a few participants reported that their parents were much more lenient “than [their other] Korean friends,” a majority of the participants felt restricted by the rules dictated by their overprotective parents. There appeared to be a sense of frustration because there was rarely reasons given for the rules other than that their parents wanted to protect them.

Fear of Failure

On the flip side of the drive toward success, some of the participants reported how they suspected their parents had a fear of failure. One female participant in her 30s explained how, because Korean parents are so academically driven, if one did not want to become a doctor or a lawyer, then there seemed to be a big void. In her experience, she remembered moving forward with the goal of getting a good grade without really knowing what she could do with that or what was next. “So I think there’s a lot more, like, wait a second, you’re like running, running, running, you look over the cliff. What is that? There’s a huge cliff. I had no idea that was there.” After pausing, she noted:

I think Barack Obama’s wife Michelle Obama was saying that her parents were always saying, “It’s okay if you fail” and I feel like a lot of Korean parents can take that in a little bit more...I think our parents are always...afraid...one wrong move...suddenly, all their plans for you would crumble and so it’s like, I don’t take risks that easily...if I had grown up in a white household, say, I would’ve tried acting more seriously for a couple of years, like really tried it, but...I think I wasn’t...prepared for the uncertainty of it.

Another female participant in her 30s stated, “I think if you grew up in a family where people take a lot of risks, you sort of...open up [to] that realm of possibility for you. But I just didn’t really see that a lot around me.” Some of the participants agreed that their parents passed on a fear of failure and therefore, they were not as risk taking as their other non-Asian friends.

Importance of Parenting

While Korean parents were criticized as being “hovering,” one respondent felt that some American parents were neglectful. Another female participant in her 30s recognized the positives saying that her parents were pretty involved and that her friends always considered them “really, really great parents.” A few participants acknowledged

how their parents encouraged other activities, besides school, to nurture them. One female participant in her 20s reported how her mom, who would take her and her brother to museums and to the Richard Nixon Library, saw those activities as valuable expenditures while her father thought they were frivolous. In the same way, a male participant in his 30s described how his father took him on hunting and fishing trips and exciting vacations. Another female participant in her 20s stated:

They weren't around home that much but we did a lot of family things together. Like we went on a lot of family road trips all the time, sleeping in cars, like by the ocean or going to Las Vegas...a lot of things to try to keep the family together, family dinners.

One set of parents even went as far as seeking help to improve their parenting skills. A female participant in her 20s told a story about how her parents decided to go to a famous parenting conference given by a Korean woman with a doctorate in education from Korea to help new Korean parents raise their second generation children in the United States. "So after that seminar, things kind of changed a little bit. They were open, they were more willing to talk about certain things...They were kind of more lenient and more accepting of things that I was doing. But before that, my dad was really strict." Though their Korean parents were reportedly strict, some of the participants' shared how much effort their parents put forth effort to create enjoyable experiences for their children and attempted to do what was in the best interest of their children.

Idiosyncratic Parenting / Superstition/Abdicating Authority

Some parenting styles defied classification. For instance, life and death decision making which parents abdicated. According to one male participant in his 30s, "I almost died when I was 7." He explained how he experienced kidney failure and was

hospitalized. The doctors strongly advised a kidney transplant cautioning that if he did not get one, he would most likely die before he was a teenager. “They said, ‘You really need a transplant’ and for whatever reason, my parents asked me, ‘Oh what do you want to do?’ and this was like when I was 7. I was just deathly afraid of getting surgery, so I said, ‘Oh can we pray?’” Since this participant did not want surgery, his parents took him out of the hospital against medical advice and they prayed for him. “It really was a miracle that I survived...I never got a kidney transplant.” His family and his entire church prayed that God would heal his kidneys and two years later when he got checked by the doctor, he was completely healed. During that time while his parents were praying for him, he reported how his parents got saved, born again and that is when his father decided to attend seminary to become a minister, living his life to serve God. Perhaps because of their immigrant status, sometimes parents lacked the knowledge to intervene. A male in his 20s recalled how his guidance counselor recommended to his parents that he attend a more academic junior high school. “My parents didn’t know any better and they asked me what I wanted to do and I chose...the school by the projects...because I wanted to be with my friends.”

Another idiosyncratic example of parenting was the role superstition played in the participants' upbringing. One male participant in his 30s stated how his father went to a fortuneteller when he was 45 years old and the fortune-teller told the participant’s father that he was going to die, so the father proceeded to spend money that they did not have.

Interesting parenting styles of note were parents relinquishing their power to others by turning to their children to make important decisions and relying on the words of a fortuneteller.

Cultural Identity

This section contains reports on the participants' cultural identity. The data is presented in the following subsections: feeling different, internalized racism, experiencing racism, straddling two worlds, becoming Americanized, and Korean pride.

Feeling Different

Ninety two percent (92%) of the participants reported that they "felt different" growing up. Many reported feeling isolated and alienated due to their racial and ethnic identity. A male respondent in his 30s reported, "I guess the biggest thing is like alienation, isolation, that's probably the most powerful feeling you'll have as an Asian American growing up." One female participant in her 20s said:

I mean, you know, obviously you're very conscious of being different, you're very conscious of looking different...even though you sound just like everyone else, or you act like everyone else...even as early as kindergarten, I realized that there was a difference between me and the person next to me.

However, not all of the participants agreed that they sounded like everyone else. One male participant in his 30s stated, "I grew up in a culture that was not my own, like I don't speak white. There is a white language. Like, "Hi, how ya doing?" That is *soo* white, like I never would have come up with that on my own." Subsequently, these participants felt like they did not quite belong. One male participant in his 30s concurred, "I grew up in...not small... but suburbs, pretty safe...town, white...completely white. One Chinese couple on the same block and then...I think that's it. I didn't know any better growing up besides that I was different from everyone."

One third of the participants reported being the only Korean American in their schools, while a few participants noted being the only Asian families on the block. A

male participant in his 20s reflected on the isolation he felt being the only Korean American in his school. “In elementary school, I would go to school and people would say, ‘So what are you?’ I’m like, ‘I’m Korean.’ [They asked,] ‘What is that, some sort of Japanese?’ [I responded,] ‘I don’t know, I think so.’” Similarly, one female in her 20s recalled:

I always felt a little kind of different. I mean, although I would be in a group of friends, mostly Caucasian and then there will be like me and maybe one other Asian girl. She wouldn’t be Korean, she’d be like Filipino or something. Then [the others were] predominately white and then, I felt close to the other Asian girl. But I still felt a little like I was not really part of their group.

Another female participant in her 30s reported, “It was just always kinda like threatening to be around people who were so, you know, white and pretty and everything. I felt like maybe I was not meant to be around them.” The above illustrated how their ethnic differences contributed to their sense of alienation and most likely led to internalization of that difference.

Internalized Racism

One third of the respondents evidenced internalized racism through disclosing that they wished they were Caucasian or had thought they were white. The themes of feeling unimportant or inferior are characteristics of internalized racism. A male participant in his 30s stated, “I wish[ed] I was white a lot, I think. And then...either that or I didn’t think about it because everyone else was white around me.” One female participant in her 30s reported “being obsessed with self image” and described how she wished she looked more American and would sit in front of the mirror for hours, wishing she had a smooth nose with a bridge. “Anytime I looked at an Asian person and thought, ‘Oh they were beautiful,’ it was because they looked really white to me.” She also attempted to

make her eyes look bigger by using eyelash glue and put on lots of eye makeup so she could “look more Americanized.” The same participant said:

I have all these things that a lot of my friends have and the only thing I don't have is that I don't look like them...I'm not them. And that I don't have parents who...who speak the way they do and I don't look like them.

Most of the participants disclosed that they not only disliked “feeling different” due to their cultural identity but also because of their family context. One female participant in her 20s who grew up in a white neighborhood in the Pacific Northwest shared her embarrassment of her ethnic culture while growing up:

I think that if you were...a Caucasian Mormon's life is perfect there, but me being a Korean American...also a Christian. It was very difficult, honestly growing up. I guess I went through a stage of recognizing that I was different and not liking that obviously, like “Why didn't my grandma make chocolate chip cookies?” “Why did she make rotten cabbage?” “Why does my house smell funny?” I was embarrassed to bring people over...

Similarly, one male participant from the mid-West discussed how there weren't many “cool Asian...well adjusted Asians” but that there were many Asians who “...didn't speak English very well, who wore sort of backwards clothing and kind of stuck out like a sore thumb.” He stated how his mother shared a similar attitude toward Korean people, disparaging “very Korean things,” for example if a Korean person or their house smelled like Korean food, she would become very critical and she would say that it was “totally backwards.” Also, another male participant stated how his parents did not want he and his sister to be “lower class Korean,” for example, those who would speak Korean really loud in restaurants, so his parents told them never to be that way and “...we would always kind of be a little quieter around tables around us growing up.”

In addition, a minority of the participants felt inferior because their parents were not the ones attending field trips and sports games. One female participant in her 20s stated, “The white parents would come on trips with us.”

With internalized racism, the targets, as a way of managing the stress of oppression, became agents against themselves as a way of dealing with oppression. However, in cases of externalized racism, the participants remain the targets but the agents were people of the dominant race.

Experiencing Racism

While some of the participants experienced internalized racism, they also reported experiencing varying degrees of interpersonal racism, from being called names to being victims of hate crimes. A noteworthy finding was that accounts of interpersonal racism were raised spontaneously by 100% of the males reporting incidents of slight to extreme cases of racism while only one of the female respondents voluntarily reported racial incidents. A male participant in his 30s stated, “I felt like I really didn’t belong...like my friend made fun of me cuz I had a flat face...I just remember it was sort of harrowing cuz you don’t want to think you sort of know that you’re different but you don’t want anyone to acknowledge that.” He explained how his friend who made fun of his “flat face” thought it was funny, but “to me...it’s kind of annoying...there’s always a chance a kung fu joke will come or some shit...” The one female in her 20s who reported racism also stated, “I got made fun of because I had a flat face but, I mean, whatever.”

Two male participants in their 30s talked about name calling, for example, “chink,” “gook,” “nip,” and being taunted by people through gestures. One male participant in his 30s not only described being “raced upon” (i.e. the target of racism)

during high school but even as recently as within the past year. He described an incident that happened while he was camping with his wife:

Oh just the, you know, chinky sounds and noises and things, cat calls... a few years ago we were victims of a hate assault while we were camping. Two white guys in a speedboat tried to run us over in a canoe but these other white people in their boats came in, ran over, and yelled them off. They never got caught. Well, we got used to it.

A significant majority of the participants reported “feeling different” and feeling like they “really didn’t belong” growing up in the United States as second generation Korean Americans. They reported struggling with isolation, internalized racism, issues of wanting to be “white,” and interpersonal racism.

Straddling Two Worlds

Participants not only felt different around whites, but also around other ethnicities, including their own. One male participant in his 30s said:

So then when I hung out with other Korean kids, I just didn’t understand why were they so angry?, why they were so weird? and they felt frivolous to me in all...their relationship hierarchy and all this shit...just didn’t make any sense to me, and I was kind of an outcast. You’re straddling two worlds...like you don’t feel like you belong in either...and I never really felt that Korean I guess.

Similarly one female participant in her 20s also noted she did not fit in with the Asian stereotype. “I felt like I wasn’t typical Asian...I wasn’t all academic and like...I was a mascot...I did lots of random things that made me very unique...so I felt like I was...[an] individual.” Another participant recounted how even being incredibly fluent in Korean, she did not “feel Korean” especially in Korea:

When I went to visit Korea...when I was 15, I was totally not considered Korean to the Koreans in Korea. So after that I remember being confused and somewhat disappointed in who I was because I didn’t feel like I really fit in anywhere...so I always felt a sense of void in my life.

Some participants echoed the sentiment of “not really feeling that Korean” earlier in life, but discovering “feeling Korean” when they moved out of their predominately white neighborhoods. A female participant in her 20s stated,

Well I always felt like I was really white. I mean, I grew up, mainly in a Caucasian area...and wanted to be more Korean because in high school, I found more Korean friends...I didn't really feel Korean, it's only now that I'm living here [in a large metropolitan city] surrounded by Korean people.

Another female participant in her 30s reported, “I also think...it's always troublesome in dating when you grow up in a town that's predominately Jewish...being a Korean woman is...so different.” But after living in places where there was more of an Asian population, she found that it became less of an issue and said, “Being Asian is almost like being white. It's kinda bizarre.”

Beyond not feeling white or Korean, one female respondent reported not fitting into any ethnic type; not “that Asian type or that white type or that Latino type.” She began to wonder where her identity lay amongst these cultures. “So there's gotta maybe be a third culture out there. And in college is where I really discovered that. There's a Korean American culture and, and largely there's an Asian American culture.” One female participant in her 20s stated, “I definitely do remember though wanting to be very ‘Korean.’ I wanted to be very Korean because I knew I couldn't be very American.” She continued,

...what's different for me as opposed to a lot of the Korean American kids that grew up in Southern Cali where the population of 2nd generations are so much greater...there was no middle ground. You were either Korean, very Korean or you weren't. You were “white washed” or “banana”...You were the one or the other, as opposed to...with the Korean American group they could just be them. If that makes sense. They were their own culture.

It appeared that identity confusion still exists among some of the participants. One male respondent in his 30s reported, “Like I’m not Asian. I’m Asian American. I’m still very American.” Yet this same participant explained how he felt when he started spending time with fellow Asians. “There’s a missing connection that I didn’t realize at the time, but I realize it now when I hang out with other Asian people, ‘oh my God, this is so much more comfortable.’” The previous insight may illustrate the identity confusion that occurs when negotiating one’s minority culture within the dominant one. For some, there was a desire to find a third culture, Asian American, but still for others, there still remained a wish to just American.

Becoming Americanized

A small minority of the participants reported how their parents wanted them to be accepted into mainstream society and did not force the Korean culture upon them. One male participant in his 30s described how even though his parents spoke Korean, they were “intent on us becoming pretty well integrated into American society...They didn’t force us to be culturally Korean...I’ve noticed that some people were more prideful about their Korean heritage, but my parents didn’t say, ‘Oh it’s so honorable to be Korean,’ they just...wanted us to be kind of well accepted by American society.” Another male participant in his 30s explained how his parents really wanted him “to conquer American...and to be white,” so they only spoke English to prevent him from having an accent and his mother would only cook Korean food in the garage so that their house would not smell foreign. He also described how his parents sent him to various camps, joined a country club, and how his father took him on hunting trips which seemed to be “sort of a stab at America.”

Another male participant in his 30s shared in an incident that has always stood out for him:

I think for my 18th b-day, my dad took me out and...he said, “You know, you’re actually an adult now and so...from now on, I’ll give you advice and I’ll kind of give you recommendations, but you’re an adult, so you can make your own decisions and you don’t have to do what I say.” So...I just...didn’t really think he’d be like that. But...I realized, “Oh wow, he really is kind of Americanized in his thinking.” I didn’t realize how Americanized he really was.

Yet another male participant in his 30s stated, “It was always encouraged by my father, ‘Now that we were in America, be American. Do what the Americans do.’ That’s why there was no pressure to learn the Korean language. My father was always working and there was not much time in learning about the Korean values.” But at the same time, this participant added how he was also given the mixed message: “You’re Korean number 1.”

While some of the participants’ parents encouraged their children to be Americanized, other parents directed them to be proud of their heritage, which then became internalized by the participants.

Korean Pride

For the small minority (33%) who grew up in more Asian populated areas, their experience was strikingly different from the participants who felt isolated by their ethnicity. A female participant in her 20s stated:

My city was so Korean, so growing up, I never really had issues with being Korean cuz everyone around me was Korean. I was proud to be Korean. I was really proud to be able to speak Korean, [to] read Korean and stuff like that...and being Korean was very cool for me.

A quarter of the participants discussed how they went through a “Korean pride” stage during adolescence. A female participant in her 20s who grew up in a mostly Korean

neighborhood on the West Coast, explained that although she did not look at race when she was younger, she did notice that around junior high school there was a Korean wave emerging.

...the Korean singing, the pop star, Korean dramas and stuff like that became really popular and that was probably the beginning of the Korean wave, like popular culture coming through. So, it became really cool to be Korean in my high school like even the Chinese and white kids would want to know what music we were listening to, and they would come over and watch all our dramas with us like with subtitles and stuff...it kind of became more and more intense to be involved in Korean culture. We had like Korean culture club; we had Korean language class and stuff in school...

However, even within the Korean community in a large metropolitan city, one participant reported still not feeling accepted. This respondent described the difficulty of networking and navigating with other Korean individuals at Korean events, reporting how difficult it is to find one's way in the Korean American community:

I am Korean American, but I don't feel as if I'm part of the K-Town community...There's extreme cliques...[the] Korean community is hard. Within [the] Korean community, there are their own leaders...it's just a different culture out here...the Korean community.

What the participants were describing was varying degrees of racial identity: some identified with everything Korean, while others did not. The respondents seemed to be on a mission to find a culture to identify with, but, different cultures existed even within the Korean community.

Impacts of Traditional Asian Attitudes

This section contains participants' reports on the impacts of traditional Asian attitudes of their families of origin on their lives. The data is presented in the following subsections: values, dating/marriage and "adolescence" as a Western construct.

Values

According to a male participant in his 30s, all first generation Asian families are based on Confucian values, thus dealing with a clash of Western ideals. “Hard work...no laziness...studying hard, education is always important, that’s the way to improve your status in society. Working hard, working efficiently.” Along with the work ethic and education, these participants’ parents valued family. A female participant in her 20s recalled how she and her sister would joke that if they were not sisters they would never be friends and “my mother always emphasized that blood is thicker than water and you’re all you’ve got...After your dad and I die, you guys only have each other.”

Another Confucian value, according to a male participant in his 30s is the non-expression of love. He explained how his parents believed, “love is a sign of weakness, so therefore you should only display love in a private manner.” This participant disagreed with this perspective and believed that expressing love is a sign of strength. He expressed how he watched other families expressing their love by hugging and that he and his sister always wanted and craved affection. “We’re like that because we never had that when we were kids.” A third of the participants reported how it made them feel isolated because their parents did not express affection like their non-Asian friends’ parents did. One female participant in her 20s said, “I just remember going over to their households and thinking, ‘wow...their relationship between the parents always seemed to be much more affectionate than the relationship between my parents and I.’” Another female respondent in her 20s noted, “My mom doesn’t hug me like Jerry’s mom does. My dad doesn’t do things with [me] like Bob’s dad does.”

An additional value that was mentioned was respect. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the respondents related that respect to their parents, to elders, to their siblings and to others was highly valued in their homes. One female participant in her 20s illustrated this point:

So respect was definitely #1...even when we went to visit other Korean families and stuff, always “*een sah*,” bow properly, too. We couldn’t give it the half ass one...they really liked it when we see other families that we were very respectful.

While these Confucian values of work ethic, education, family, not expressing love and respect were highly esteemed, some of the participants discussed how material items were regarded as “frivolous.” According to these participants’ parents, “anything that was extraneous, something not to do with school...was frivolous.” One male participant agreed that since he grew up poor, he was taught to use money wisely. He was unsure if his parents were “brain washing me,” but he decided not to go to his senior prom because he thought it would be wrong “...to waste all that money in one night.”

Dating was another concept that was considered frivolous by an overwhelming majority of the participants’ parents.

Dating/Marriage

Sixty seven percent (67%) of the respondents’ parents viewed dating during adolescence as frivolous and either discouraged or forbade it. One third of the participants’ parents said, “Dating is something you did when you were looking for a marriage partner.” However, now that they are adults, these participants reported that their parents are now pressuring them to get married. A female participant in her 20s stated how her parents, who viewed dating as frivolous before college, changed course once she entered college, asking, “So do you have a boyfriend? Is there someone that

you can [get] married to? When are you going to get married? When are you going to give us grandkids?” And a male participant in his 30s shared how his parents formerly were strict about no dating, “But...now you have to date. You have to get married. Marriage *now*.”

On the other hand, a third of the participants could date in high school. In fact, one of the female participants in her 20s said, “When they found out I had a date to go on, they didn’t care and...[were] glad that their daughter was not a homosexual. They were actually happy for me.”

There was a strong correspondence between parental and participant preferences that they only date other Koreans. While 60% of the single participants’ parents either preferred or only wanted them to date someone Korean, 70% of the single participants themselves are choosing to date Korean Americans. These participants expressed a strong desire to retain their Korean culture, religion and identity. One female participant in her 20s who is prohibited from dating non-Koreans explained her feeling about the parental restriction: “It’s okay because I’m more into Korean guys anyways I really want to find a Korean guy just because of our backgrounds...I feel like the Korean culture is very important so I would definitely want someone who’s Korean so we can share that similar culture and background.”

However, just dating a Korean did not always satisfy their parents. A couple of the participants stated that their parents did not want them to date a first generation Korean. One male participant in his 30s stated, “They say, ‘Don’t ever marry a Korean from the old country. Marry, if you want...a Korean from the new country.’” Another female participant in her 30s discussed how her parents had a sense of disdain for her

Korean dates' families and were always attuned to their backgrounds. "I thought that was very bizarre that my parents had such an obsession [with] where these kids' parents came from; [however] both these guys commented...that it might not be an approved relationship because of where *my* parents came from." One female participant in her 20s feared that her [Korean] boyfriend's parents would not approve of their relationship due to her parents' divorce. This female respondent disclosed that her parents got divorced when she was 18 years old and stated that she feels as though it was a

...black mark on my reputation when it happened. So I always worried about [it] when I started dating, what if someone doesn't want to date me or his parents have issues with me because my parents are divorced and stuff like that, so...I worried about that a lot.

And then she stated that her current boyfriend, "...doesn't care. And I don't know if his parents know."

What is striking in the participants' accounts is the matter-of-fact acceptance that their parents have the right to have opinions about such a personal choice, to express those opinions, and to have those opinions respected. There appeared to be a contradiction that a large majority of the participants' parents did not permit dating during adolescence yet pressured their children now to be married. It was a significant finding that more of the participants wanted to date within their same ethnicity than their parents demanded. This may suggest a wave of instilling traditional Asian values in this new second generation.

Adolescence as "Western" Construct

A few of the participants' parents definitely recognized adolescence as a separate stage deserving of recognition. A female participant in her 20s reported that her parents

would warn their friends who were also having problems with their teenagers, stating, “Oh it just is like that for a couple of years and it’s just the teenager times and they’ll grow out if it” recognizing adolescence as a rebellious and tumultuous time.

However, a third of the participants’ parents’ did not view adolescence as a separate phase of development. A female participant in her 30s stated, “I don’t think they had a sense of teenage years being sort of like a transitional year...I don’t think they saw adolescence.” One male participant in his 30s agreed:

...In adolescence you’re supposed to study all the way through [until] you go to college. And then in college you study all the way through. So I don’t think it was a separate phase, from birth to...I was expected to work, work and study.

Another female participant in her 20s stated, “I think they viewed adolescence not as a separate stage of having teen angst or whatever, but you’re just still the same child that you’ve always been.”

A minority reported that their parents still treat them like children. One female participant in her 20s noted, “I think ...we’re always children in their eyes.” Another female participant in her 20s who is a full time student and living with her mother explains that her mother still dictates a lot of things:

She’ll say things like, “Because you’re my daughter and I’m the Mom, so you have to listen to me”...And I’m like, “But you need to treat me as a human because I’m 28 years old. You need to treat me as an adult.”

At the same time, a male participant in his 30s stated that after going away to graduate school and returning home to live with his family, he observed how his mother would bicker with his older sister, who is in her 30s, about staying out late with her friends. “It’s like, we’re...in our 30s...if we wanna stay out late then it’s our choice.”

To the extent that adolescence is considered a time to achieve autonomy, these participants' experiences differed from the American norm. A final traditional Asian attitude is that participants' autonomy was most likely thwarted because their parents continue to treat and view them as children. As this continues to produce conflict in their adult lives, it was certainly a major source of conflict during adolescence, while the participants were trying to become separated and individuated, the Western goal for this life cycle stage.

Adolescence

This section contains participants' reports on the adolescent stage of development in the life cycle. The data is presented in the following subsections: attitudes, resentment/acceptance, mental health, good kid versus rebellion, coping and striving for independence.

Attitudes

A large majority of the participants defined adolescence as a "transition," or "a personal awakening" and a period of time between 13-18 years of age that is "messy," "awkward," and "confusing" along with being full of "insecurities" about self-image. On the other hand, one female participant in her 20s was more upbeat saying that for her, it was about being "young and naïve and not caring too much about anything, no responsibilities...just school. Having fun with friends. Extracurricular activities."

In terms of relationship with parents, a minority of participants described their relationships as "a rebellious period of time," "a tug of war," "a push and pull," "topsy turvy," and "roller coaster ride." One male participant in his 30s stated that it was "the most miserable time of my life." While one female participant in her 20s reflected the

ambiguity of this stage, “It’s a time of transition and challenges...transition into adulthood, into full maturity, into being responsible for yourself...and not dependent any longer on your parents although I’m 28 and still sort of dependent on my parents.”

Many of the participants agreed that adolescence was a time of transitioning from childhood until adulthood. As there was a display of two extremes from having fun to being miserable, there was also the dichotomy of respondents who spoke of individuation but who still remained dependent. The following section also reflects the varying reactions to restrictions placed by their parents during adolescence.

Resentment/Acceptance of Restrictions

Seventy five percent (75%) of the participants reported having many rules and restrictions placed on them during adolescence and as a result, more than 50% of those participants described feeling different from their non-Asian friends and at times, feeling extremely resentful. As one male participant in his 30s recalled:

So...there was a language barrier, cultural barrier, that I had to deal with and so...there were many times where...even basic, basic rites of passage in the American culture, prom, or school dances, I was prevented to participate in... Or being questioned about going...my parents didn’t understand why we have these dances. So...not having the support from parents, either because of cultural reasons...

A female participant in her 30s agreed, “I think it was a little hard, you had a lot of rules at home, but then, outside, you wanted to do what everybody else was doing, going to dances even wearing the make up, just like little things.” One participant summed up her experience by stating that she “couldn’t be like regular kids.”

Most of the participants reported that their home life was combative and filled with fighting because they felt that their parents were so restrictive. They used powerful

terms such as “rocky,” “drama,” and “domestic violence” to describe the emotional climate in their homes. A female participant in her 20s explained how she grew up in a combative environment during adolescence because she was engaged in a “tug of war” with her parents. “I saw a stark difference between the way my parents were raising me versus the way that my white friends or even some of my Asian friends were being raised by their parents.” She continued to describe how she could not do some of the same things, like going to school dance. “I had to ask permission and the answer was no, but I would always fight back...saying, ‘Why can’t I do this? Why I can’t be like the other kids? What’s so wrong about going to an after school dance? Don’t you trust me?’” Similarly, one female participant in her 20s recalled how she used to say to her parents, “Why can’t you be more like Whitney’s parents? Or why can’t you be more like Brooke’s parents or Karen’s parents?” not necessarily pinning the differences “down to race.”

However, a significant minority reported that their adolescence was “straightforward.” A female participant in her 20s stated how initially her parents wanted her to be a doctor or a lawyer or go to an Ivy League university but when they realized that she not going to comply with that, “I think they were fine with it because I think they would just let me do my own thing and they weren’t too protective or anything like that...But I was a good girl, too...My adolescence with my family was relatively easy and fine.” A few of the participants praised their parents for being more focused on studies than their non-Asian friends’ parents. Illustrating this, one female participant in her 30s stated, “My parents were dedicated, they were absolutely, much more than my white friends’ [parents]. They were the parents who checked your homework.” While

some participants were able to acknowledge some benefits during adolescence, many participants may have been psychologically impacted by the restrictions placed upon them during adolescence and reported a range of mental health symptoms experienced during adolescence.

Mental Health

An alarming 92% percent of the participants reported sadness, low self-esteem, loneliness, anger and insecurity while 67% reported depression. An unexpected finding was the high rate of domestic violence (75%) within participants' families including incidents of attempted suicide within one family. One participant in her 20s described how she kept things to herself and did not tell anyone about the domestic violence in her home.

I just pretty much kept to myself. I think I was a little depressed kid, like in high school, I would say, compared to how I feel now. I was pretty depressed kid. I tend to keep a lot of my feelings inside so, a lot of people didn't really know what might be going on behind the scenes I guess.

One third of the respondents (33%) reported having "really bad temper[s]" or "[being] driven by anger." One male respondent in his 30s reported, "I think I just detached myself...they sent me to a counselor and I really didn't say anything to him. I thought it was a joke. So I really didn't...I was not aware of my issues at all."

At the same time, one third of the participants reported having eating disorders: two female participants stated having anorexia and two male participants reported being obese. Of the participants with anorexia, one participant "almost died" and described that she was "trying to commit suicide." She stated, "I found my identity and happiness from that void through being in so much control and being thin...I wanted to feel in control of

something.” Meanwhile, the younger siblings of the other female participant who was anorexic both attempted suicide by overdosing on over-the-counter medication and a sibling of one of the male participant’s had suicidal ideation during adolescence. A significant minority of the female respondents reported that their mothers were obsessed with them being thin and one of the female participants in her 20s remarked not fitting that “like Asian, china doll girl type.”

Of the male participants who were reportedly obese, one male participant in his 30s said, “...being fairly almost obese adds another social pressure of being fat, the fattest kid in class *AND* being a minority-so it had its certain pressures.” And the other male participant in his 30s reported, “I was the first obese person in my entire family...my parents didn’t understand the concept of being able to eat too much, they grew up half starving during the war.”

It was noteworthy that all of the participants except for one reported struggling with issues of self-esteem, sadness, or anger during adolescence, with a majority of the respondents dealing with either depression, anorexia or obesity. Although there were familial and societal pressures that may have resulted in these participants internalizing these pressures, a majority of the participants managed these pressures in healthy ways.

“Good Kid” versus Rebellion

A large majority of the participants reported having been a “good kid” and not taking risks. One female participant in her 20s stated, “I didn’t go crazy, like I didn’t go drinking or to raves or all the other stuff that some of my other friends did, but was relatively safe.” Another female participant in her 20s stated that she was a good daughter because she “listened to them most of the time, I never did drugs or like go out

and party and do anything like that.” Good behavior crossed gender lines as a male participant in his 30s also characterized himself as “...a good kid – I didn’t really disobey them, so they really loved me.” He went on to say, “But I also know that that would make them happy...for me not to go out as much.”

A female participant in her 20s captured the essence of the “good kid”:

In terms of the way I was, I mean, I was a good kid. I was your stereotypical Asian kid in terms of I studied a lot, got involved in a lot of things, a lot of resume type of things...because that was encouraged in my culture.

In contrast, one third of the respondents noted “talking back” and “fighting,” “yelling” or “screaming at parents.” A female participant in her 20s talked about fighting over wanting to be like the other girls and engaging in a tug of war: “Why can’t I be like the other kids? I hate you *oh ma!* [mother] I hate you *oh pa!* [father] I wish you guys would go to hell! I wish you guys would die!” One male participant overtly did not listen to parents or obey their rules. He confided, “There probably were [restrictions]. I chose not to obey them.” He reported being kicked out of the house once and threatened his parents that he would never come back home. Though he did state that he started drinking and smoking during his senior year of high school, he placed these unacceptable behaviors in context. “It wasn’t getting drunk; it would just be going out with certain people. I never ditched, always had perfect attendance.” He described how his parents always viewed him as troubled and that he was the main prayer topic growing up. “I’m like, shut up, I’m not even that bad.”

There was also mild rebellion reported. The same participant who fought with his parents also stated that he would do subtle things to show how much he resented them. He described how he would not eat with them or tell them not to make him food. One

female participant in her 30s explained how she was awarded an Ivy League university prize in high school and chose not apply to that Ivy League school as a form of rebellion toward her parents. As a New England native, she refused to go to college in the same city as her family and instead, decided to go to another Ivy League university in another state, which seemed “far away” to her at the time. Meanwhile, a male participant in his 30s discussed how he stopped studying in middle school as a form of rebellion and although he was “a fast multiplier,” he decided he did not want to put forth the effort in being a good student.

A female participant in her 30s’ rebellion took place in a few different forms. One example is how she decided that while her parent’s friends’ children were doing what their parents were telling them to do in order to go to an Ivy League school, she decided that she did not want to try to achieve that. She said that she would rather take drama and acting classes and enjoy herself. “I don’t know if I was thinking ‘enjoy myself’ but definitely [become] even more of an individual than I’d been before.” Another form of rebellion was sneaking out and dating older guys in her acting class. “That was like my source of kind of freedom from my parents and a sense of identity for me.”

Along the lines of rebellion, almost half of the participants disclosed telling untruths as a technique for separating. This same female respondent stated, “I snuck out a lot...if I had to go out late, I would say I’d be going one place, but actually be going to another place. I find...I’m a very good maker up of stories, like you know, covering up for my lies.” She told a story about when her mother found cigarettes in her backpack and woke her up at 7 in the morning. When her mom questioned her about the cigarettes,

the participant denied having any cigarettes. And then she told her mother that when she went to the supermarket, the contents of her backpack spilled out and she “scooped it all up and put it in my backpack and the cigarettes must’ve [been] scooped back in with that.” This female participant reflected on this story with pride.

Though many of the participants reported being “good kids,” a wide range of rebellion was reported. However, even the most extreme cases seemed relatively tame compared to mainstream society. Some of the participants described the overlap between mild rebellion and coping strategies in their immigrant household.

Coping

One hundred percent (100%) of the participants were involved in extracurricular activities during high school. Extracurriculars included band, drama, tennis, swim team, basketball, Korean club, National Honor Society, varsity softball, being a school mascot, student council, student body president, spirit squad, dancing and internships.

Forty two percent (42%) of the participants reported using activities as a way to get around their parents’ restrictions. A female participant in her 20s stated, “Our parents would let us do anything if it [was] school related, so we found a loophole. I mean, we weren’t necessarily lying to them, but we weren’t...maybe we weren’t telling the whole truth.” She talked about using sports and becoming president of different clubs and art and music and all these extracurricular activities as a way of pleasing her parents because it was seen as a way of getting into college “but for us, we saw it as more of a social context...this was a way for us to hang out with our friends...to get out of the house once in a while.” She went on trips, like one to Disneyworld, with her friends in the choir. “I mean, [it was like] killing two birds with one stone.” For another participant, being

involved in student council helped her to gain some freedom. “I would definitely lie about...where I was going and I was...a good student, so I...got away with a lot of things. So student council really helped me to get around certain things. That helped a lot.”

One male participant in his 30s stated how he had to frequently bend the truth, telling his parents that he was going to the library because his parents were very overprotective and instead, he would go to the movies or to the bowling alley. He stated that most of the time he did go to the library due to his classes, but there were times when he did not. “I don’t study Friday nights. I set a rule for myself. ‘Okay Mommy, I’m gonna study on Friday night. Or Saturday night.’” And he would go out with his friends.

Another main method of coping for the participants was finding religion. A female participant in her 20s described how her spiritual rebirth in junior high took her from the depths of despair and helped with self-acceptance, giving her more peace. “I think I felt a lot of solace through religion.” She discussed how she learned to forgive her parents and how the grace of God reached out to her, comforting her. Once she was forgiven by God, she could forgive others and see them as flawed human beings just like herself. She noted, “I knew that God was in my life.” Similarly, a male participant in his 20s, when asked what helped him during adolescence, responded, “Part of this is not the answer that you wanted. But my parents’ prayers. I didn’t have anyone to turn to.”

Other ways of coping were described by the respondents ranging from music to peer support to eating. One female participant stated that she would “hole [herself] up in her room” and listen to music turned up really loud. “I wasn’t even allowed to call my friends, so I really had very few outlets...I would complain a little bit to my sister but she

was really young.” She did have a young aunt who was a 1.5 generation and would be empathic towards her. Another female participant in her 20s reported that her adolescence “wasn’t that bad because I had a lot of Asian friends...They all had the same experiences.” Meanwhile, one male participant in his 30s stated, “I ate junk food...and watched a lot of tv, played ping pong with my sister.” On the other hand, one male participant in his 20s countered, “I don’t think I coped with that at all. I just held it in and then when I went to college, I exploded.”

The participants reported using several coping mechanism during adolescence but the most prevalent one appeared to be “bending the truth,” using extracurricular activities as a lifeline to socialization and individuating. This demonstrates the respondents’ resilience as they discovered these “loopholes” to cope with their lack of autonomy and at times, led to their finding it.

Striving for Independence

Eighty-three percent (83%) of the respondents reported feeling “independent” at times while they were growing up. One male participant in his 30s said, “They had no idea what I had to go through on a day to day basis in my community, like in my school cuz it’s not about being hip or cool or feeling left out, it’s literally about survival.” This male participant revealed how he grew up in a very underprivileged community in a large metropolitan city where violence was prevalent but that his parents were not aware of the ongoing danger.

A female participant in her 20s reported how being the first child made her very independent. “It’s the first child, obviously, you know, the immigrant parents. It’s their first time, so I was very incredibly independent and I didn’t abuse that.” She continued

by saying, “I was very proud that I did things on my own...during the times that one of my parents did ‘intercede,’ in wanting to be my ‘parents,’ by telling me what to do, I remember being very turned off by that.” She said that she had done everything from figuring out what tests to take, the whole college process, how to do her taxes and how to get a job, all independently. Fifty eight percent (58%) of the respondents stated that they studied for the SATs and applied for college on their own while a small minority even filled out the financial aid applications themselves to pay for their college tuition. Another female participant in her 20s stated, “It didn’t even occur to me to ask my parents for help like actually moving into my dorm, carrying stuff.” Another female participant in her 20s talked about how she did not want to ask her parents for too much because she did not want to burden them with things they did not understand or have time to do.

A significant majority of the participants exhibited independence in certain ways during adolescence despite their parents’ authoritarian styles and “hovering,” thus paving the way for their individuation in adulthood.

Current Identity

This section contains participants’ reports on their current identities. The data is presented in the following subsections: duty to please parents, separation and individuation, looking back, coping, and gratitude for culture and parents.

Duty to Please Parents

Fifty percent (50%) of the participants discussed the current importance of making their parents happy and proud of them. A female participant in her 30s commented, “They took pride in us doing more academically and I probably fulfilled a

lot of my parents' mission for me academically.” A few of the participants talked about how their parents were proud of them, bragging about the participants' academic achievements to their friends; one participant reported how her parents went so far as to put an article in the Korean newspaper when she became class president. A female participant in her 20s added, “I was really excited about going to college, especially [a prestigious public university in a large metropolitan area] because I knew it brought my parents a lot of joy and pride...I really do like giving them bragging rights and making them proud of me.”

One male participant in his 30s noted how his parents were happy when he seemed happy in his life. In response to the question of feeling free to living life the way he wished to live, this respondent stated,

...but I feel like If I choose something like [being a white collar professional] then I get all the full support of everybody which means when I'm in the down parts, when I wanna quit, I have a very supportive family in terms of both finances and emotional support but if it's something they don't understand...maybe I just need family support to do things and when I don't get that, I don't really feel [like doing] it on my own.

He explained how it was not until he seemed pretty happy with his job that his parents seemed happy with him.

While participants often managed to please their parents through educational and occupational achievements, satisfying relational goals was something they could not control as readily. One female participant in her 20s expressed current regret about displeasing her parents in this part of her life. She noted, “My parents both really want me to get married and not fulfilling that for them I think is really hard, because I feel like I fulfilled a lot of other things for them, like, especially education.”

As more than half of the respondents shared how they strived to fulfill their parents' goals for them in terms of academics and career, along with their own, it was difficult to determine whether they were achieving for themselves, or for their parents. Similarly, having a Korean spouse appeared to be a common goal of the single participants and their parents.

Separation and Individuation

It was striking to note that 42% of the participants did not understand the questions pertaining to separation and individuation. One male participant in his 30s was confused by the question around the process of separating: "The process between leaving and being separated? I don't understand the question." When asked, "Do you feel you have a separate identity apart from your family?" one female participant in her 20s responded, "What do you mean, 'separate identity'? I think I am very similar to my parents and my family if that's what you mean." Another female participant in her 20s stated, "But just simply by saying the word 'separate,' it makes me feel like I'm not. I love my family so dearly so to say 'separate identity'...I'm kind of confused by your question." These participants seemed to feel a conflict between having a separate identity and valuing their family as a big part of their lives at the same time. At the same time, a large majority of the participants had reported maintaining a separate identity.

The process of separating was "exciting" and a "big deal" for a third of the participants and a small minority reported having had a difficult time. One male participant in his 30s who left home when he was 28, related, "I was definitely homesick for a number of months...eventually it was huge learning curve definitely." Another male participant in his 30s stated, "Separation for me was really hard. I think I cried the

first time I went to college...I remember feeling like that sense of loss.” But at the same time, when asked if he were individuated today, “Oh totally! Very much so.”

For a small minority of the participants, close ties still remained with their families while they were in the process of separating. One female participant in her 20s stated, “In college I used to go home every weekend, and every summer vacation and winter vacation and spring break. I would always be home, you know?” During college, these participants discussed how they would still go on trips with their families and call their parents often.

One male participant in his 30s, when asked if he felt as if he had his own identity, stated, “I think I do very much.” A couple answered with “I think so, but they’re still a large part of who I am...it’s where I came from.” A male participant in his 20s specified, “Separate now, no. Growing up, yeah, of course.” He acknowledged feeling closer to his parents now. Yet he did assert that he felt like he was his own person, does not feel bound by them nor does he feel obligated to fulfill their wants, which leads this interviewer to believe he viewed separation as estrangement. A female participant in her 20s equivocated, “But it’s not, it’s never completely cut off either” while another female participant in her 20s gave a mixed response. “I pretty much live on my own now...but they’re still supporting me in other ways, financially and definitely like we keep in touch with each other.” One male participant in his 30s shared how he claimed independence, “Oh, independent. Dude! Oh totally.” He explained how his parents do not know too much about his life because he does not let them meddle in his affairs. “They’ve always told me, you don’t let us – so we don’t interfere anymore....it’s your time to grow up.” Establishing independence while maintaining family ties had

been the goal of most participants. One female participant in her 20s eloquently summarized, “I would say I have my own identity. Definitely they’re a big part of my life, I would say more now than they were in the past.”

A quarter of the participants discussed how individuation occurred due to living on their own and financial independence. One male participant in his 30s said, “So it wasn’t until I really moved out of home that I felt like I became my own person.” Financial independence seemed like a key factor in creating differentiation. A female participant in her 30s explained this process. “At 30 I had my independence and really the freedom to do what I wanted and I had also done what I really set out to do...I felt really complete as an adult when I started making money like an adult did.” She recognized that if she were “still tethered to my parents financially, I don’t think I could really feel like I was distancing myself. I think I would still be like their kid...still beholden to them.” Another female participant in her 30s agreed that her independence came with financial independence from her parents. She provided this insight: “It’s easier...if I fail at something that I did [not do it]...on their dime, which is kind of a pressure, you know?” She reported that she received a graduate degree scholarship at a prestigious public university in a large metropolitan area so her parents did not have to pay for it. “But they never set me up...like some people might be set up by Korean parents like with the apartment and all that. But now, I’m completely independent from them.” A majority of the participants stated how they felt as if they had separated when they initially moved out of the house for college and later, when they lived on their own and started becoming financially self-sufficient.

On the other hand, two participants stated that they still did not feel individuated from their parents. One female participant, age 28, reported that she felt individuated when she went away to college and graduate school, but since she is still financially dependent on her parents and living with her mother, she does not feel as though she has a separate identity. This same participant also reported how she actually did not want to go into a doctoral program and tried to explain to her parents that she wanted to get another master's in [her field] and become a practitioner.

But my mom was like, "If you're going to get another degree, you have to get a PhD," and I was like "No, you don't understand...that's a research degree. I don't want to do that. I want to be a practitioner." She's a bully, so she pretty much bullied me into doing it. So now she's like really proud of herself that she made the right decision for me, but...it just shows that...she kind of...still dictates a lot of things.

The other male participant, age 35, who did not feel separated or individuated from his parents remarked somewhat proudly:

No. No. That's really an American concept, I think. That's part of the Korean way...I'm always with my family. I'm very close with my family still. I always see myself as a representative of the family. I don't know if it's because of...the influence from the movie...*The Godfather*...but I always go back and say, "Whatever you do represents the family." But I'm also very tied to the Korean culture. So whatever I do now, it represents the Korean people. In a way, the Korean American people.

The question, "Do you feel free to live your life the way you wish to live it?" revealed some ambiguity. Only one quarter of the participants said "yes", while the rest majority of the responses ranged from "yes and no," "to a certain extent" and "no." A female participant in her 20s represented those who did feel free. "Most definitely...it doesn't make me sad to think, cuz when I think of that-free to do what I want. I don't

think of it as going opposed to what my parents would want, what my family would want.”

However, most respondents had more ambivalent responses. One female participant in her 20s illustrated this by describing how her father threatens to take away her car if she “misbehaves” and “so...in that sense as well I feel...like I’m not fully independent from my parents and I can’t live the way that I want to.” This same female participant described how she is dating a Korean American young man who is six years younger than she, but is keeping it a secret from her father, although her mother knows. “He doesn’t know I’m dating and I’m really scared to tell him because he’s probably going to be like, ‘Do you think this 22 year old wants to marry you?’” She disclosed that “My dad made me go out on like blind [date] meetings and stuff like that. They obviously didn’t work out.”

Psychological separation-individuation seemed to be a complex psychodynamic concept for these second generation participants as evidenced by nearly half of them genuinely misunderstanding the question. After explaining the question, some of the participants stated they were individuated while another significant minority were clear they had not. In between, there existed the large majority of the participants who were caught in the gray area between the two poles, thus further confirming the challenges not only of individuating and separating from their immigrant families, but also of coping with the meaning of that separation.

Coping

One male participant in his 30s shared a few of his coping techniques as an adult. He stated, “I feel like I’ve become an adult, or at least more of an adult...and it’s just through all these...tons of books on tape, like tons of motivational programs, like the cheesiest stuff...but incredibly powerful, like it really works.” He felt that he has come a long way as evidenced in his ability to talk to the interviewer in this intimate way but credited a lot to seeking help, counseling and “...pulling myself up.” The same male participant continued, “I think God is a big part of it...the more effort I put into it...but I worked really hard and it paid off and I feel like it’s God’s journey for me.” It was interesting to note that religion, which had been used as a coping mechanism during adolescence, continued to serve as a coping skill in adulthood, along with discretion (i.e., telling untruths).

A small minority of the participants discussed how they “select the details” when in relationship with their parents. A female participant, who is living with her Chinese-American boyfriend, explained that “the only thing is that they don’t know that we live together. That’s like the one thing I can never...I cannot tell them...so that kinda shows how complicated it can get, right?” This participant described how although she does have some measure of freedom, she still needs to consider and figure out how much to tell her parents. In the same way, another female participant, who stated that she felt completely independent from her parents, is not only secretly living with her white boyfriend, but her parents do not know her actual address. These two previous examples illustrate how they needed to be discreet in certain arenas in order for them to maintain both their sense of separation and individuation and family cohesion.

It was noteworthy that some of the participants refined some of the same coping skills they used when they were adolescents in order to maintain their current identity. Another example of sophistication exhibited by the adult participants is their use of retrospection and reframing of their earlier experiences.

Looking Back

A significant majority (75%) of the participants reframed the painful events and behaviors of their parents which had taken place during their childhood and adolescence. Reflecting how these participants felt, one respondent said, “I knew that they loved me and they’re doing it because they wanted the best for me.” One male participant, who reported hating his parents while growing up because they did not understand how difficult it was for him to survive in his high school, admitted that he received more parental support than his friends did: “I’m not going to knock that. I probably did. Cuz my parents did their very best. I think the problem was just the miscommunication.” Reflecting the theme of miscommunication, one female participant in her 20s explained how hard things really were for her parents as immigrants, being in a country where they are not comfortable with the language or the culture and where their education amounts to very little. Another female participant in her 20s provided the following account of her difficulty with communicating with her parents:

And I actually think not being able to communicate with my parents, when you speak English you can explain everything but I have limited knowledge of Korean so I can’t really speak everything...really tell them how I feel...we spoke on a superficial level and...there’s just so much you can say, there are a lot of things that are not explained or stuff like that. So that was hard, probably.

A small minority of the participants moved often while growing up and one male participant in his 30s remembered complaining, but stated, “So it was very stressful but it

made me a stronger person at the same time. [I] learn[ed] how to adapt and deal with different people at different times and learn[ed] how to make new friends very quickly.” Though the same participant reflected, “But seeing the other parents supporting their kids...I wouldn’t say hurt me, but it discouraged me a little bit. But...it was something that I had to do by myself so...it did reinforce more independence.”

In terms of making sense of the domestic violence in their homes, many of the participants seemed to reframe the abuse and have compassion for their parents. A female participant in her 20s, while describing the physical abuse inflicted by her father, asserted, “I can understand why like those things happened. I don’t understand why he hit me, but I can understand why he felt that way. Cuz I understand that he was kinda going through a lot, too” Similarly, one male participant in his 30s rationalized, “And I deserve[d] some of these spankings but sometimes I thought, some certain parts were excessive, getting whipped on the middle side of the belt. That really hurt. So...that kinda went over the line, but overall I think that made me a stronger person. And I myself love discipline.” He continued saying, “I don’t know if it was child abuse, it wasn’t bad, it was more of a discipline. I mean, it kind of inspired me.”

Another female in her 30s discussed how she had joined this church that was “very culty” and she became “super, super religious.” She talked about how her parents physically restrained and how her dad slapped her, which was “probably the strangest, more surreal, most dramatic thing so I stopped going to that church.” She realized that she had had enough of religion and ironically, her mother has recently embarked on a journey to get this participant back into church. She did admit, “Looking back now, they [were] probably right.”

Another male participant in his 30s shared a similar story of his parents being right. He recounted how he was dating someone in medical school who was Korean but that his parents did not approve. This same male participant stated how though his parents never met his then girlfriend, they disapproved just by looking at a photograph saying they did not like her character. He asked, “How can you even say that? You just looked at her? You didn’t even meet her?” He continued, “So I would argue...but after it didn’t work out, they actually ended up being right about some aspects of her character.” This experience has taught him to take their opinions into consideration.

A few participants talked about regret over sacrificing fun for studies. One male participant in his 30s described how he was quite ambitious and so determined to succeed that in “...jr high, high school, pretty much everyday...come home right after school, and study until 10 or 11 and then take a shower and go to sleep...only break for dinner, so I was very focused...getting to my goal of wanting to be a [white collar professional].” However, when he started graduate school on the opposite coast from his family and allowed himself to relax, this male participant started to regret that he could have done more of this during high school. He realized, “It wasn’t until I really moved out of home that I felt like I became my own person....so like hanging out with my friends in [the large metropolitan city where his graduate program was located], I just felt like, that’s when I started forming my own identity.”

Meanwhile, a female participant in her 30s described how she wished she had been more adventurous and not been on such a straight path. She wished she had done “crazy things” but seemed glad that her life did not take a crazy turn. “I just remember feeling wistful. Like maybe I had just played it a little too safe...and I hadn’t done

anything really fun.” She continued to explain how she made choices like to take a class that would help her in her major instead of studying abroad and “I don’t even remember what class I made that sacrifice for.” She regretted not enjoying herself more and not taking more chances.

I felt that I hadn’t lived enough. And feeling a little sad about actually going to college where...everyone else was so excited to go...And I remember thinking I wish I could have gone to a city school, I wish I had taken a year off because I really...thought I hadn’t lived at all. Because I really hadn’t. It was the truth.

It is often said that people have defenses for a reason. All of the participants who were exposed to domestic violence or victims of physical and emotional abuse appeared to use ego defenses, such as rationalization, to help manage feelings that might otherwise be intolerable. Though some of the participants discussed the theme of regret of the past, many of the respondents shared much appreciation for their Korean culture and ultimately, their parents, in the present.

Gratitude for Culture and Parents

The most surprising finding was that 100% of the participants who reported domestic violence or abuse in their homes expressed a deep gratitude and enjoyment of their parents and for their Korean culture. A large majority of the participants who had resented their parents due to domestic violence, abuse or otherwise, reported that they have forgiven them. One female participant in her 20s who reported physical abuse by her father said, “My dad, I really hated him. I say that now, right now I could say I love him, but before like I really disliked him.” A female in her 20s stated, “They’ve done a good job raising us despite, you know, the domestic violence, well I don’t say that, I

don't talk about that but despite everything...I really try to let them know they did a good job."

This trend of appreciation held throughout the sample. Another female in her 30s noted, "They were good parents... very, very present. It was everything for them just to raise kids." And these "kids" also enjoyed their parents. A male participant in his 30s, who judged that he was co-dependent with his parents during adolescence, reported, "I'm not dependent on their approval though I still find myself wanting it sometimes...but I don't feel like I need it...I just kinda miss them for the more human companionship than anything ...it's just nice to be around them." A female in her 20s explained how it was not until she left home that she realized how much she loved her family and could accept them as less than perfect:

...It was during college when I realized I loved my home. And I love my parents. I think I mentally left home a lot earlier than when I went to college. It was during college that I embraced them, that I appreciated them for what they did, that I realize that half the things I was angry at them for wasn't them and I learned to see my parents as human. As opposed to [them being] faulty parents, if that makes any sense.

One male participant in his 20s, who reported "hating [his] parents" during adolescence, recounted a story of how he, his brother and parents had a family discussion a few years ago with the intention of resolving their conflictual relationship left over from adolescence before he moved out of their house. "So [I said to them], 'Let's just work on this. Let's just feel this out,' so for me to leave, it's full of blessings. [They said], 'I trust you're going to do well.' As opposed to 'I hope you're going to make it okay,' or 'I hope you meet some good people.' There's a lot more confidence in me leaving...it was just perfect timing."

A small minority of the participants praised their parents, especially their fathers, for instilling a self dependent attitude in them. They explained how their immigrant parents had to work a lot harder and do a lot more things just to be where they are so as a result, the participants have a stronger drive than a lot of people. “And a very ‘I can do it’ and ‘if I want it, I have to make it happen for myself’ attitude.” A female participant in her 20s stated,

I think that who I am is because of being 2nd generation...I feel like I always have a ‘I can do it’ attitude and I think that my parents instilled that in me because they had to have that attitude for themselves when they came to America and to them, if they could be successful, not even speaking English fluently, how much more successful can I be, where I can speak the language and I’ve grown up...Their whole purpose in their jobs and everything being America was so we can have a good life. My dad made me believe I can do *anything* I wanted.

There were other benefits, such as in one case, of openness to seeking help that the participants reported receiving from their parents. A male respondent in his 30s stated:

I think they did great...they...had a ton of heart. I think they passed on a lot of the good things. Like I got a lot of good traits of stuff from my parents: the thing I like about them the most is that they’re really reflective people, like they went and saw counselors. Like, they sought help; my dad read tons of books, my mom saw a psychologist for a while that brought her out of her depression so...they kind of passed along that “We don’t know what we’re doing but we can seek help...We know that we don’t know, but we want to get better”...That was probably one of the biggest things they passed along to me.

A female participant in her 20s captured the humanity of the immigrant parent experience. She shared how she was working in a career to please her father but was miserable, wanting to change careers “but I did not let myself until I literally got my father’s word.” This female participant reflected,

And it was an amazing day when he just...let go and...spoke from his immigrant’s father’s heart where he said that he worked so hard to make sure we

didn't go through what he did but he realized that he can't protect us in that way and we have to learn to make our own life mistakes or make our own paths and so I think it was simply out of his love that he wouldn't let me make my decisions. And I truly believe that while we're learning to grow up, they're learning how to be parents.

Just as participants looked back on their parents with gratitude so also did some reflect on their Korean culture. A male participant in his 30s expressed a gratitude for the Korean culture. Growing up, he reported that he wished to be either Latino or white, but now stated, "And now instead of being ashamed of being Asian, I'm very proud to be Asian. Being an underdog compared to other minorities excites me now."

Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from in-depth interviews with 12 second generation Korean Americans between the ages of 23-35, whose parents were both Korean and had immigrated from Korea to the United States and were raised in the United States. The data in this chapter spans their experiences as adolescents as well as their reflections as adults. Some of the findings in this chapter will be elaborated upon in the discussion chapter in light of the literature on adolescence, separation-individuation and Korean American families.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to explore how second generation Korean Americans negotiate separation and individuation during the life cycle phase of adolescence. In addition, the applicability of the Western concept of separation-individuation theory to Eastern cultures was addressed. This chapter presents a discussion of the findings in this study in the following order: participant demographic data, family/social context/parenting, cultural identity, adolescence/separation and individuation, and current identity. This section also draws upon theoretical literature to broaden and contextualize the discussion, while utilizing data extrapolated from the narratives of 12 second generation Korean American adults. Finally, the chapter closes with discussions of the implications for clinical social work and general recommendations, including participant recommendations for adolescents and parents, and for future research.

Participant Demographic Data

This sample seemed to strongly reflect the statistic that 35% of the Asian Americans reside in California as 58% of the participants were originally from California and remained there. It was striking that a large majority (75%) of the respondents attended college in their home state, with 100% of those from California, choosing schools “close to home.” This finding is consistent with the previous research done on

the influence of Confucian ethics of collectivism on traditional Asian families. Baer et al. (2004) and Kalser and Pistole (2003) explained how individuals of collectivistic cultures value family cohesion and interdependence on critical family attachments. One female participant in her 20s who attended college 40 miles from her home, stated, “I lived away from home although I still went home over the weekends because of the relative distance...I still maintained that connection.” A few of the participants also echoed this connection, reporting that they would come home on weekends, breaks and summers.

Some Asian researchers postulate that behavior is strongly influenced by membership in the group (Yeh & Huang, 1996). Supporting this, one female participant from the West Coast reported how her parents really wanted her to apply to a college on the East Coast but “I didn’t want to go to the east coast but my mom...really wanted me to, so I ended up doing it.” Due to the influence of the group, namely her parents and community expectations, this same participant also entered a Ph.D. program not of her own will, but to please others.

Out of 12 participants, 33% (n=4) reported that their grandparents lived with them which is higher than the previous study conducted by Hong and Min (1999) where 18% of the respondents were residing with their grandparents. In both that previous study and this researcher’s findings, it was agreed that the Korean traditions were upheld, as the children spoke mainly in Korean to their grandparents, who did not speak English. The participants later admitted that they stopped speaking primarily in Korean to their elders when their grandparents left the house. There exists a lack of literature on the dying trend of multigenerational homes in this new second generation and the impact it may have on retaining the language, attitudes and traditions of the Korean culture.

In terms of participants' relationship statuses, it was surprising to note that 70% of the single participants are choosing to date Korean Americans, exceeding the percentage of their parents (60% of the single participants' parents) who either preferred or only wanted them to date someone Korean. One female participant in her 20s proudly stated, "I feel like the Korean culture is very important so I would definitely want someone who's Korean so we can share that similar culture and background." Supporting the participants' expression of their strong desire to retain their Korean cultural identity, the literature reflects that even for those Asian Americans who were assimilated when they were young, they "increasingly adopt the ethnic identity of their parents as they grow older" (Min & Kim, 2000, p. 738). In tandem with Min and Kim, one female participant in her 20s explained, "[In high school,] I didn't really feel Korean, it's only now that I'm here, living in [a large metropolitan city], surrounded by Korean people...now I actually feel a lot more Korean." That more of the respondents wanted to date and marry within the same ethnic culture than their parents demonstrates their desire to maintain their parents' ethnic culture.

Family/Social Context/Parenting

Several of the findings related to the participants' familial, social, and parenting context were consistent with the research on the Korean American experience. All of the respondents' concurred that their parents migrated to the United States "for a better life and [for] more opportunities." A majority of the respondents (75%) reported that their parents came to America to pursue their education and the rest stated it was for business opportunities. One male participant in his 30s reflected, "My parents...immigrated to the United States in 1971, and...came here during that time when they were looking for

better education and also a job.” This finding supports the literature that Koreans immigrated for economic reasons and educational opportunities (Farver & Lee-Shin, 2000).

An area of overlap in the findings was that the majority of the participants described how their parents, who were highly educated and trained in professional fields, decided to go into business for themselves, as described in the previous literature. An overwhelming 75% of the participants’ parents were small business owners “due to language barriers,” while 78% of them also had their masters or training in a professional field. Choy (1997) confirmed this when describing how 85% of Koreans are in the working class as small business owners as a result of language barriers and cultural conflicts and are “not *only* merchant[s].” The literature also shed light on the immigrant parent work ethic and unpaid family labor. This is consistent with the findings of a majority of the participants who agreed, “They were never home. They were always busy working” and for some participants who had to work after school at their parents *ka-ge* [store]. One participant in his 30s recalled, “I was expected to work...at the store. Everyday from school, take the public bus...alone, as a second grader...” Other participants also talked about feeling obligated to help out their parents to alleviate their burdens.

Along with the importance of hard work and education, an overwhelming majority of the participants (92%) talked about the active role Christianity (including Catholic and Protestant) and church played in their lives. This finding supports the literature that found 95% of Korean immigrants attended Christian or Catholic church (Hong & Min, 1999). One participant even went so far to proclaim, “Church was a big

part of the family.” These findings supported the research on the importance of church as a vehicle of spirituality, socialization, and maintenance of Korean traditions, especially the Korean language. A few participants described attending Korean language school, located in their churches. One female participant in her 30s remarked, “We went to Korean school for many years... We [learned to] read and write [Korean].” For some, it was the only place where they could gather with fellow Koreans. Although one aspect of the literature intimates that the Korean church kept Korean immigrants segregated, the findings showed different results. One male participant in his 30s stated, “I did enjoy church. It was a great way to socialize, [to] take the pressures off constantly defending yourself [for] being an Asian and associating once a week with people who looked like you. So it was a good experience.” On the contrary, one of the participants reported how in her attempts to individuate, she started going to another Christian church that her parents perceived as “cult,” and they forbade her to attend. This finding does not support the literature that discusses the use of church as a family system, following the theme of collectivism and reinforcing the concept of an identity forming from a group.

The literature referred to the importance of the traditional Asian family with emphasis on both the nuclear and extended families (Baer et al., 2004). Doi’s (1973) and Markus and Katayama (1991)’s findings that Japanese participants viewed themselves as part of a larger network of relationships and developed their sense of self based on their dependence on others was confirmed by this project. One male participant in his 30s stated, “I’m very close with my family still. I always see myself as a representative of the family... I always go back and say, ‘... whatever you do represents the family.’”

Another male participant in his 30s echoed the need for emotional stability from his family in his statement, "...I was happy that they were happy."

All but one of the participants were from intact families, contributing to the stereotype of Asians being the "model minority." This finding supports Hurh's (1998) suggestion that the low divorce rates within Korean families is due to "Korean collectivism" which is in sharp contrast to "American individualism." The female participant in her 20s whose parents divorced two weeks after she went away to college recalled, "My parents fought my entire childhood...they always threatened divorce but it never happened, and...when it finally did happen, I think it was...a long time coming." Again, by waiting until their children were out of the house, the parents may have been placing the interests and needs of the family, i.e. their children, ahead of their own.

A most unexpected finding was the prevalence of emotional, physical and one incident of sexual abuse in the homes of the participants' while growing up. While one female participant in her 20s stated, "I grew up incredibly deathly afraid of my father who never touched me once," another male respondent in his 30s described, "...violent outbursts that would happen periodically just left me feeling...guilt...but maybe traumatized...[and] thrown off my center." It appeared that more literature existed on physical abuse than verbal and emotional abuse.

The literature on the preponderance of physical abuse and corporal punishment in the discipline of Asian children is consistent with the finding that seventy five percent (75%) of the respondents reported "domestic violence" in their homes. However, only one participant noted the violence between her mother and father while the rest of the participants appeared to be describing their experiences with corporal punishment. As it

was stated in Chang et al. (2006, p.883), the participants seemed to ascribe to “*sarang-eei-mae*” which means “the whip of love,” acknowledging that they implicitly knew how much their parents loved them, albeit through this physical discipline style. One female participant in her 20s said, “I knew that they loved me and they’re doing it because they wanted the best for me.” Another participant shared, “I’m very blessed to know that my parents love me dearly, they want my happiness and because I truly believe they’re blessed to have children.” Though some of the participants expressed confusion as to the reasons their parents used such harsh punishment, all of the participants reframed their experiences of physical abuse. To eloquently summarize, one male participant in his 30s reported,

And if I did something bad or if I didn’t, my father would whip me...getting whipped on the middle side [with] the belt. That really hurt. So...that kinda went over the line, but overall I think it made me a stronger person. I don’t know if [it was] child abuse, it wasn’t bad, it was more of a discipline...so...I mean, it kind of inspired me.

In disagreement with the above literature, Kim, Cain and McCubbin’s study (2006) challenged that assimilated Korean parents stopped Korean style discipline and adopted some American parenting principles. One female participant related how her parents participated in a parenting conference given by a famous educator from Korea while she was in high school. She recalled, “So after that seminar, things kind of changed a little bit. They were open, they were more wiling to talk about certain things.” This participant experienced her parents, although not assimilated, practice a more American parenting style.

However, the previous findings affirmed the majority of the literature which highlighted the use of corporal punishment. This was a remarkable finding because every

participant seemed to fit in the “model minority” stereotype during adolescence, as evidenced by their reports of being from intact families, involvement in extracurricular activities and high achievement in education. However, while several of the participants were heads of student council, receiving straight “A”s and on varsity sports, there were threats of violence, screaming, and physical punishment behind the scenes in their homes, illuminating the participants’ incredible resilience. The previous literature implied the necessity for a dynamic understanding of the participants’ cultural experiences of discipline, when viewed through a Western lens, this parenting style would be seen as unacceptable and as abusive.

Cultural Identity

The project findings affirmed the previous literature outlining the clash of the Western and Eastern cultures for 1.5 and second generation Asian Americans. As noted in Shrake and Rhee (2004), Kwak (2003), and Huang (1997), the participants articulated the struggles of acculturating and negotiating their Korean, American, and adolescent identities. The idea of “feeling different” and “not [being] really American” due to their outward appearance, their family culture, and how they were parented, resonated among an astounding number of the respondents. One male respondent reflected,

Coming from a family based on Confucian values, as with all first generation Asian families, we deal with [the] clash of Western ideals. Being second generation in any ethnic group, just from talking to other second generations from other ethnic groups, [i.e.] Latino, Armenian...we grew up in similar ways and balance[d] Western culture and [our] ancestral culture.

In accordance with the literature, some of the participants confirmed that some of the conflict between themselves and their parents was due to a language barrier. Cho and Bae (2005) suggested that an increase in conflict between the adolescent and their

families could be attributed to the lack of effective communication. Echoing this, one female participant in her 20s recalled, “And I actually think not being able to communicate...[a] limited knowledge of Korean so I can’t really...tell them how I feel...all that stuff...we spoke on a superficial level...there’s s just so much you can say, there are a lot of things that are not explained or stuff like that.”

It was powerful to recognize the close relationship between the previous literature and the results of this study on participants’ internalized racism. One female participant in her 30s delicately described her process, during adolescence, of trying to make her facial features more “white.” Similarly, another female participant explained what it meant to be “F.O.B.” and “white-washed” in her high school, commenting on how some of her classmates “...dress[ed] fobby.” She continued:

You were either Korean, very Korean, or you weren’t. You were “white washed” or “banana...” But in regards to...”whitewash,”...it would be someone who was angry...[and] can’t fit in with the Korean American culture and so they choose not to...rarely, do I meet someone who’s a “banana” in a place where there are a lot of Asians. I often tend to notice a lot of resentment that they have with the Asian culture or the Korean culture... a lot of annoyance...I’ve never met anyone who was “white washed,” not thinking they were...they usually justify it by saying...[it is] because they don’t like the Asian culture. Or they...want to be “white washed” because they don’t want to be “yellow,” if I can say it in those terms.

This finding reflects Pyke and Dang’s (2003) examination of responses by 184 Korean and Vietnamese immigrants to the racial oppression of the dominant culture deconstructing how coethnics use denigrating terms such as “F.O.B.” and “whitewash.”

Another male participant in his 30s struggled with “misidentification,” believing that he was Mexican for many years but later faced the harsh reality that he was different:

And there was a point when I was dealing with self hatred, of hating my own race. Maybe internalizing, maybe even blaming my parents, even for...going to a

[heavily Latino] neighborhood that's so different from me. I didn't know there was a Korea-town or other communities that were primarily Asian. That was not in my universe. So I didn't have that concept so I decided I wish I was Caucasian...I was I was the other race...

The findings reflect the literature documenting the cultural bias which influence the non-dominant groups' view of the dominant culture as morally superior. As Zhou and Xiong (2005) and Pyke and Dang (2003) discussed minority feelings of inferiority and internalization of the dominant racial ideology, one female participant confirmed this in her statement, "...I...[knew]...I couldn't [be] just American because being American, obviously as much as we hate to admit it, but in this society, it equals white. If you call someone an American you automatically assume [that] they're white, you know?" To summarize, the findings supported the internalized racism discussed in the literature that occurred as a result of the internalization of the oppression that the participants faced as members of a target race.

Adolescence: Separation and Individuation

The noted Western literature on separation and individuation during adolescence varies greatly from the work of Eastern theorists. While Blos (1962), Erikson (1968), and McGoldrick (1999) clarify the importance of an individual separating and differentiating, many Asian researchers, such as Ngyun (1992) suggested, "...separating and individuating becomes a horrendous task" for Asian immigrant parents and their children (p. 212). It is valuable to note that the process of separation and individuation is a Western construct and, according to leading cross culturally competent theorists, may not be applicable to Eastern collectivistic cultures.

Though the participants' responses ranged as to their personal experiences with adolescence, some participants affirmed the literature highlighting that no developmental stage resembling adolescence exists in most Asian cultures. One female participant in her 30s said, "I don't think they saw adolescence." This finding supports the literature that commented on how the Western concept of adolescence and the formation of a person's psychosocial identity is absent in the Asian culture as an individual moves directly from childhood to adulthood (Segal, 2000). Another female participant in her 20s eloquently summarized, "I think they viewed adolescence not as a separate stage of having teen angst or whatever, but you're just still the same child that you've always been." Agreeing with this, a male participant in his 30s explained how his mother still harasses his older sister about hanging out with her friends late at night even though she is in her 30s. He expressed, "I'm not a kid anymore! Why are you treating me like I'm 10?...and [then], I realized, 'Oh they're too protective.'" This same participant explained that he suspects that his mother does not accept that he and his sister are grown adults now. This finding confirms the previous research that framed how Asian parents perceive children as their responsibility and extensions of them, throughout their life span (Segal).

The cross cultural researchers posit that not only does the process of separation-individuation differ in Confucian-based collectivistic cultures, but it also contradicts the traditional Western beliefs that those who successfully completed separation and individuation during adolescence have a stronger foundation for success in adulthood (Baer et al., 2004; Erikson, 1968). In fact, Choi (2002) alluded to the idea that sustaining psychological interdependence with parents was found to be a more adaptive form of

development for Korean American late adolescents. The findings of this research study illustrated the participants' varying processes of separation-individuation and for a majority of the participants, this process did not occur during adolescence. In other words, an Asian American adolescent's delayed or lack of separation and individuation should not be assumed to be an indication of immaturity. To the contrary, some researchers argued that dependence and continuing close family ties may not be pathological but rather necessary for the family's survival (Choi; Wong & Mok, 1997; Yang, 1999).

One alarming finding was the high percentage of mental health symptoms reported by the participants during their adolescence. Ninety-two percent (92%) of the respondents reported mental health symptoms including anger, depression and suicidality. As noted in Yeh's (2003) investigation of age, acculturation, cultural adjustment difficulties and general mental health concerns in 319 Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrant adolescents, Korean immigrants were found to have higher level of mental health symptoms than the rest of the sample. Supporting the literature, a female participant admitted, "I think I was a little, depressed kid...in high school...compared to how I feel now. I tend[ed] to keep a lot of my feelings inside so a lot of people didn't really know what might be going on behind the scenes I guess." This same participant reported physical and emotional abuse in her home, though "things changed" after her parents attended the parenting workshop as previously mentioned.

Current Identity

Though all of the participants (except for one) were American born, it was striking to notice how they mostly shared their parents' cultural values. During one of

the face-to-face interviews with a participant, the researcher observed a change in the participant's affect when describing a story about bringing her bi-racial boyfriend home to meet her parents. The respondent's voice suddenly changed to a whisper when she said, "*My Dad really got upset.*" This telling behavior supports the literature on how Confucian based cultures pass on values, such as respect and shame, to their children. This finding also reveals how shame precludes many Asians from showing deep emotions as evidenced by the participants' whisper; the whisper also might have indicated the participant's respect for her father and discomfort in disclosing this private story to a stranger.

Moreover, Crystal (1994) and colleagues (as cited in Kwak, 2003) found that Asian adolescents in China and Japan did not blame their family for their depression, while American adolescents did. One male participant described how his parents would not allow him to spend time with friends after school and as a result, he reported that not having any friends was the most challenging aspect of adolescence for him. This same male participant spoke of his resentment during adolescence in an indirect way, not aiming it at his parents: "It's just frustrating, I think, seeing that little kid [the participant] be really unhealthy, and watch tv day and night...I think that would be the main bitterness of adolescence for me." However, one participant's findings did not reflect the literature, as he responded, when asked about whether or not he felt depressed during adolescence, "What made me depressed was the inability of my parents to communicate and connect with me." Still, the participants, including this previous one, often reframed their debilitating experiences into affirmative ones.

Kim (1997) found that Korean Americans used reframing as a way of “saving face” through examination of situations in a positive way. This is consistent with the finding that a significant majority of the respondents did not blame their parents for their incidents of abuse or for their depression and instead, reframed the experiences by stating that it taught them independence and strength. For instance, one male participant stated, “So it was very stressful but it made me a strong person at the same time.” The literature reporting that Korean immigrants find it shameful and humiliating to seek professional help (Yeh, 2003) supports the participants’ accounts that it was hard for their parents to ask for help. One male participant in his 20s confirmed, “Asking for help...in the Korean community is like the acceptance of defeat, [admitting] that you don’t know something and it’s just something you don’t do. And that’s the most ignorant way of thinking things through; asking for help is a sign of defeat.”

On the other hand, one male participant countered how his parents sought mental health treatment and read self improvement books. He stated, “They kind of passed along that ‘we don’t know what we’re doing but we can seek help...we know that we don’t know, but we want to get better.’ That was probably one of the biggest things they passed along to me.”

Meanwhile, the project findings affirm the previous studies highlighting acculturation strategies and conclusions that integration/biculturalism is the most adaptive form of acculturation. One male participant’s description of his personal acculturation supported the research. He explained:

So almost becoming very Western, but yet at the same time, it’s important to understand where our roots come from. So I don’t want to lose that Confucian way of doing things. There are definitely advantages to ...adapting Confucian

principles in a Western society...studying hard, education is always important; that's the way to improve your status in society. Working hard, working efficiently. That's where you use Western principles, work efficiently and make room for play.

In reference to separation and individuation, it was interesting to observe how almost half of the participants were confused by the questions, "Do you feel that you now have a separate identity apart from your family?" and "Do you feel free to live your life the way you wish to live it?" The respondents' responses seem to reflect that their understanding of "separate" meant not to be close with their parents. One participant stated, "I love my family so dearly so to say 'separate identity'...I'm kind of confused by your question. Wong and Mok (1997) supported this finding in their work which elucidated how Asian American young adults tend to retain close family ties during adulthood, in contrast to Western cultures. This is consistent with the findings that asserted a significant theme of loyalty and closeness with the participants' families. One male participant, who resolutely denied having a separate identity from his family acknowledged, "No. No. That's really an American concept, I think. That's part of the Korean way...I'm always with my family. I'm very close with my family still. I always see myself as a representative of the family." In contrast, some of the participants reported having separate lives, though it is revealing that two of the respondents who claimed having separate identities could not disclose to their parents that they were living with their boyfriends. The findings supports the literature that shows that Asian adolescents and young adults may have a higher level of adaptive skills, i.e. "selecting the details," as they needed to learn how to separate and individuate from their families in an appropriate way and at an appropriate time while honoring their familial ties.

The findings showed that there might not be an absolute value attached to “separation and individuation.” Several of the participants answered, when asked if they had a separate identity, “I think so.” This reflects their ambiguity about this very Western concept. One female participant in her 20s explained, “I’m capable of being successful and doing whatever I want” but went on to share how her parents, who only recently moved out of her apartment, had previously lived with her to help her during a “hard time.” This same participant recalled how her parents said, “Why don’t we just [come] down...for a little bit to help...and my mom had dinner cooked for me when I got out of work and stuff like that. She would help me with laundry and stuff. She would baby me a lot.” For the participants, it seems as though maintaining close connections with their parents contributed to their stronger sense of self and created a familial base for their autonomy.

The previous literature agreed that the Western theory of separation and individuation in adolescents may not be applicable to Asian American adolescents. Kwak (2003) and Kagitcibasi (2003) argued that individuals from collectivistic families may develop autonomy slowly and later than those from the dominant culture. This literature supports the finding that separation and individuation may not occur during adolescence, as Western theorists recommend, but rather into adulthood. Tseng and Hsu (1991) concluded, “The physical ‘launching’ of Asian children may not occur until they are in their 30s” (as cited in Huang, 1997, p. 196). Confirming the literature, a female participant in her 30s explained, “At 30 I had my independence and really the freedom to do what I wanted and I had also done what I really set out to do...I felt really complete as an adult when I started making money like an adult did.” Many of the participants agreed

that financial independence created the opportunity for psychological and emotional distance from their parents, but many chose to perpetuate the closeness.

Implications for Social Work

Implications for social work practice and theory illustrate a need for the inclusion of more training around separation and individuation in second generation Korean Americans. As this study illustrates, the separation-individuation process does not appear to be as “universal” as Erikson (1968) posited; therefore, an exploration of this process within Confucian based collectivistic cultures is suggested. The findings of this research study, gleaned from the narratives of 12 second generation Korean Americans, acknowledged the limits of Western constructs for individuals from collectivistic backgrounds.

Education and training for the growing social work population about the clash of expectations and theories around separation and individuation is strongly recommended. This research study on Korean American adolescents and young adults and their process of separation-individuation can aid clinicians and various health care providers in appropriately diagnosing presenting symptoms, which could improve treatment recommendations or destigmatize lack of individuation. It is also hoped that this empirical investigation will motivate fellow Asian American clinicians to contribute their findings to literature in this topic and leaders in formal training programs to incorporate this work into their curricula to produce more clinically culturally competent workers

Participant Recommendations

All of the participants offered recommendations for second generation Korean American adolescents and for their parents. For the second generation adolescents, several of the participants shared with them some of their unique cultural clashes and

comforted them by stating that they “are not alone.” One female participant advised, “Know [that] your experience...it’s both unique and it’s not unique.” Some respondents also encouraged the adolescents to learn more about their parents’ Korean culture to bridge the intergenerational gap and to realize how difficult it was for their parents to raise them in “a totally different environment.” Others urged the adolescents to “embrace who you are,” to succeed in school and “to find something you really enjoy doing.” In terms of recommendations for parents, an overwhelming majority of the participants advised parents to increase communication with their children, become more involved in their adolescents’ lives, teach their children the Korean language and to be proud of their ethnic heritage. A main theme was for the parents to “chill” and try to be less intense about their children “making mistakes.” In the words of one participant, “Just...let them be kids, let them enjoy life.”

One married male participant recommended:

I’d say the one main advice is don’t ...undervalue the [negativity] of the minority culture upbringing. Like for me, looking forward, if we ever have kids, I’ll throw everything away if I need to, to get my kids into a school district where they won’t be 1 Asian among 100 white people. That would mean that nothing they are would be validated in the larger context, then they’d be forced to have white friends and inevitably end up with white boyfriends or white girlfriends whereas I’d rather [them] have a choice.

The participants shared their experience and recommendations in the hopes of helping adolescents and parents alike to have corrective experiences during adolescence.

Recommendations for Future Research

One recommendation for future research is to clarify the terms used in the study. There were also gaps in the literature about the knowledge of the process of separation-individuation for second generation Korean American adolescents. For example, the

literature did not acknowledge the psychological impact of the immigrant parents' absence from home during their children's developmental years or of the pressures to work independently at a young age which could be topics for further research. It was beyond the scope of this study to interview the parents of the second generation Korean American young adults, which could also be a topic for further research. Further research needs to be conducted on the accurate assessment of separation-individuation during adolescence for second generation Korean Americans via a representative sample.

The limitations of the study include a nonprobability sampling technique in which the findings have less generalizability. However, this research project provided a general picture about the experiences of second generation Korean Americans and revealed special dynamics during separation-individuation processes during adolescence and currently. The findings about the participants' experiences with separation and individuation are valuable because few other studies shed light on separation and individuation patterns during adolescence and adulthood of the "new second generation." Of vital importance in working with second generation Korean American adolescents is to understand their cultural dilemmas and to use a culturally sensitive approach. To summarize, cross-cultural competency is critical to effective treatment to adolescents and families from diverse ethnicities and cultures during any life cycle phase.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Letter

Recruitment Letter

Dear Potential Research Participant Contact,

My name is Catherine Huh, and I am a graduate student at Smith College School for Social Work. I am conducting a research project designed to explore how second generation Korean Americans establish their individual identities apart from their families during adolescence. This study is being conducted for the Master's of Social Work degree at Smith College School for Social Work, and may be used in possible future presentations or publications on the topic.

Participants in this study should be a second generation Korean- American between the ages of 23-36. Interested participants must have both parents born in Korea who later immigrated to the US. Participants should have been born in the U.S. Participants will be interviewed about their experience as a second generation Korean American and how they were able to manage adolescence between living in Western culture and in the context of their family's culture.

Participants will be asked to provide demographic information about themselves. The interview will be conducted on the phone at a mutually agreed time or face-to-face at a mutually agreed upon time or location that is private and convenient for them. The interviews should last between 45 minutes to one hour. All interviews will be kept confidential and secured. After three years, if participants' information is no longer needed, then all materials about them will be destroyed.

Participants will receive no financial benefit for involvement in this study. However, participants may benefit from knowing that they have contributed to the knowledge of adolescent development in cross-cultural terms.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE IN HELPING ME RECRUIT CONTACTS FOR MY STUDY.

PLEASE CONTACT ME IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS OR IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SOMEONE FOR AN INTERVIEW.

Catherine Huh
chuh@smith.edu

Appendix B

January 28, 2008

Catherine Huh

Dear Catherine,

Your second submission of amended materials has been reviewed and all is now in order. We are happy to give final approval to this very interesting project.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain signed consent documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your recruitment and with your study.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Holly Simons, Research Advisor

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Feb. 29, 2008

Dear Potential Research Participant:

My name is Catherine Huh. I am conducting a qualitative study of second generation Korean Americans to learn more about the establishing of identity separate from family during adolescence. This research study for my thesis is being conducted as part of the requirements for the Master of Social Work degree at Smith College School for Social Work and future presentations and publications.

Your participation is requested because you are a second generation Korean-American between the ages of 23-36. If you are interested in participating in this study, both your parents must have been born in Korea and immigrated to the US. If you are not fluent in English (the language used for conducting interviews), then you will not be eligible to participate in the study. If you choose to participate, I will interview you about your experience as a second generation Korean American and how you were able to negotiate separation and individuation during adolescence while living in Western culture and in the context of your family's culture. Also, I will ask you to provide demographic information about yourself. The interview will be conducted on the phone or face-to-face and will last for approximately 45 minutes to one hour. Interviews will be tape recorded with your consent, and tapes will be coded numerically to ensure your confidentiality. After three years have passed, tapes will be destroyed after the interviews have been transcribed. If I use a transcriber, he/she will sign a confidentiality pledge.

The potential risk of participating in this study may be that some interview questions could trigger uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. In case you feel the need for additional support after participating in this study, you will be given a list of resources for mental health services in your area.

You will receive no financial benefit for your participation in this study. However, you may benefit from knowing that you have contributed to the knowledge of adolescent development in cross-cultural terms. It is my hope that this study will help social workers have a better understanding of treating separation and individuation among Korean American adolescent clients not based on Western theories of adolescent development. You may also benefit from receiving the opportunity to share your experience and gain a new perspective.

Strict confidentiality will be maintained, as consistent with federal regulations and the mandates of the social work profession. Your identity will be protected, as names and identifying information will be changed in the reporting of the data. Your name will never be associated with the information you provide in the questionnaire or the

interview. The data may be used in other education activities as well as in the preparation for my Master's thesis. Your confidentiality will be protected by coding the information and storing the data in a locked file for a minimum of three years and after three years it will be destroyed unless I continue to need it in which case it will be kept secured.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to refuse to answer specific questions and to withdraw from the study at any time before May 1, 2008. If you decide to withdraw, all materials pertaining to you will be immediately destroyed. If you have additional questions about the study or wish to withdraw, please feel free to contact me at the contact information below. If you have any concerns about your rights or about any aspect of the study, I encourage you to call me or the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Catherine Huh
chuh@email.smith.edu

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

DATE

DATE

Please return this consent form to me prior to the interview to indicate your intention of participating in the study (I suggest that you keep a copy of this consent form for your records).

Thank you for your time, and I greatly look forward to having you as a participant in my study.

Appendix D

Interview Guide

Demographics

1. Could you please provide the following information?

a.	age:		b.	education:	
c.	occupation:		d.	# of siblings:	
e.	relationship status?:		f.	birth order?:	

2. Please describe the neighborhood or community in which you grew up in terms of:
 - a. city, suburbs, rural, communal, etc.
 - b. the racial/ethnic/religious makeup of the community

Family Background

3. What language was spoken in your home?
 - a. Parents' education and occupation?
 - b. At what age did your parents immigrate to the US?
 - c. Presence of extended family or nuclear family?

Adolescence

Adolescence, as stated by the researcher, is a stage of human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood, generally between the ages of 13-19.

4. What does the term "adolescence" mean to you? What was it like for you being an adolescent in your home?

[Follow up probe: How was your relationship with your parents during adolescence? Please describe using examples. Were there any rules for you during adolescence? If so, please describe. What was the most challenging aspect of growing up for you as an adolescent?]

5. What was your parent's parenting style like? How did they view adolescence? What was valued the most in your home by your parents? [Follow up probe: What were some things that they thought were frivolous?]

6. Could you describe, generally speaking, your observation of non-Asian friends' experiences with adolescence? [Follow up probe: Did your experience differ from your non-Asian friends? If so, in what ways? Please give examples.]
7. If your experience as an adolescent differed from your non-Asian friends, how did you cope with that? What helped?

Traditional Asian Attitudes and Beliefs on Individualism

8. Do you think your adolescence was influenced by the fact that you are a 2nd generation Korean American? If so, how? [Follow up probe: Do you think the process of leaving home and separating from your parents is influenced by your ethnic background? If so, please give examples.]

Current identity

9. Do you feel that you now have a separate identity apart from your family?
Do you feel free to live your life the way you wish to live it?
10. What advice would you give to other second generation Asian American young people who are entering adolescence? [Follow up probe: What advice would you give to their parents?]
11. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about this topic?
12. Who else do you know who might be interested in participating in this study?