BECOMING BICULTURAL: THE CONFLICT, NEGOTIATION, INTEGRATION OF KOREAN AMERICAN FEMALE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

By

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To Sang-Yeol and Mi-Kyeong
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<tr>
<td>Acculturation</td>
<td>Originally refers as phenomena which result when groups of individuals sharing different cultures experience changes in the original culture patterns as a result of their immersion into a different culture (Redfield, Linton, &amp; Herskovits, 1936).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural diversity</td>
<td>The representation of people with a number of distinct cultural significance, including languages, races, as well as ethnicities within one social group (Sullivan, 2009).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural identity</td>
<td>It is defined as “the emotional significance we attach to our sense of belonging or affiliation with the larger culture (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p.214).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnic identity</td>
<td>It is defined as “part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Taifel, 1981, p.255).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL</td>
<td>English for Speakers of Other Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td>International Baccalaureate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Hoffman (1984) defined four aspects of adolescent psychological separation from their parents: functional independence, emotional independence, conflictual independence, and attitudinal independence. In this study, independence would be identified as functional independence, which means that participants controlled by their parents during high school are allowed to make own decisions for their academic and social lives as they attend college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal struggles</td>
<td>In this study, internal struggles would mean negative feeling resulting in bicultural conflicts, or confusion associated with cultural differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation Korean American</td>
<td>People “who came to the United States as adults, having lived their childhood and adolescent years in Korea” (Danico, 2004, p.9).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konglish</td>
<td>It refers to “a combination of fusion of Korean and English” (Danico, 2004, p.9).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model minority</strong></td>
<td>Racial stereotypes including Asian Americans as having low crime rates or no juvenile delinquency, positive physical and mental health, higher incomes, and high scholastic achievements (Kobayashi, 1999).</td>
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<td><strong>Racial stereotype</strong></td>
<td>Stereotype refers to “a fixed idea or image that many people have of a particular type of person or thing, but which is often not true in reality” (Hornby, 1995, p.1169). In this study, racial stereotypes of Asian Americans would refer to socially and historically constructed Asian American images in the United States, including negative (e.g., the yellow peril, exotic) and positive images (e.g., the model minority).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Second generation Korean American</strong></td>
<td>Refers to people who were born in the United States and are strongly influenced by American cultural heritages. Thus, “English/ local culture are primary, and Korean language and culture are secondary” (Danico, 2004, p.11).</td>
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The purpose of this study is to understand how Korean American female undergraduate students negotiate cultural conflicts and develop their own cultural identity. This study utilized qualitative data collection and analysis methods to understand the unique world of these women students in their own voices. Five Korean American female undergraduate students who attend a large public university participated in this study. Primary data collection consisted of two in-depth semi-structured interviews with each participant of 60-90 minutes long per interview. Data analysis was based on Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist grounded theory.

Findings presented in the conceptual model indicated that the cultural identity of the Korean American college students is affected by their cultural environments. During high school, they were more likely to develop an identity in order to assimilate to the primary culture that they belonged to. As a result, participants identified themselves as either Asian (Korean) or American, depending on how much they were exposed to their ethnic culture or to the American culture. However, participants identified themselves biculturally as Korean American during their college years. College allows these students to become mentally and intellectually independent, which forms the
groundwork for developing their bi-cultural identity. In addition, it gave them more opportunity to expose culturally diverse environments resulting in deeply understanding their own cultural identities.

The cultural Identity of the Korean American students is also affected by their own personal challenges. Korean American women participants perceived distinctions between their home culture and mainstream culture, and they realized that they were controlled by their traditional values. These students also felt internal conflicts with their parents when they were expected to be obedient. Outside home, they faced racial alienation and a lack of cross cultural relationships. All of these aspects hindered these women’s efforts to integrate into their campus community, and further into American society.

However, addressing their own challenges allowed these students to learn where they stood as a bicultural individual between two cultures and how they were able to negotiate their dual cultural lifestyle. Therefore, the bicultural Identity of the Korean American students was strengthened by negotiating their personal cultural circumstances. These women did not ignore the challenges they faced. Instead, they actively negotiated these cultural struggles in their own ways, and each tried to integrate the differences into their developing bicultural identity. Consequently, their efforts encouraged them to deeply understand, “Who am I?” and to develop their bicultural identity during their college years.

The emerging theory suggests that young Korean American women needed institutional support and educational programs, which are easily accessible to students, so that they could feel a sense of belonging on their campus and emotionally safe when
developing their values. Attention to Asian American college women’s cultural lives
moves the field of diversity forward and encourages academic scholars to conduct
studies to better understand these groups of students and mitigate misunderstanding of
Asian American college women. As this study states, Korean Americans typically
become bicultural. This study ultimately suggests that these students must have support
in their efforts to negotiate their cultural lives in order to safely develop their own
bicultural identity.
American society has created societal expectations that Asian Americans are “problem-free high achievers” (Suzuki, 2002, p.29). Thus their unique cultural circumstances behind this image have been underrepresented and ignored. Asian Americans face internal struggles different than this image would imply. In particular, their challenges are closely related to their cultural dualism. An alarming issue is the fact that many Asian American students suffer from mental health issues in part related to their cultural struggles (Cho, Hudley, & Back, 2003; Hovey, Kim, & Seligman, 2006; Hwang & Goto, 2009; Lee, 2003; Museus & Chang, 2009; Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000; Suyemoto, Kim, Tanabe, Tawa, & Day, 2009; Ying, Lee, Tsai, Lee, & Tsang, 2001). However, little research has been conducted related to the cultural struggles of Asian Americans.

Asian American college students have emerged as a distinctive racial group in American higher education. These students influence the ways in which American higher education develops and responds to diversity on campus. College enrollment of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders increased from 169,000 to 950,000 from 1976 to 2004 (KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007). In 2005, the percentage of graduate degree completion among these groups (17%) was higher than the degree completion of Whites (11%), Blacks (5%), Hispanics (4%), and Indians/Alaska Natives (4%) (KewalRamani et al, 2007).

Despite their significant role in higher education, comparatively little research has been conducted on these ethnic groups (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Museus, 2009). Museus (2009) estimated that out of the five most commonly read peer-reviewed high
education academic journals, roughly only one percent specifically addressed Asian American or Pacific Islander college students. In addition, previous studies have portrayed Asian Americans as one homogenous group, and have provided aggregated data as if it were representative of the whole Asian population (Constantine, Chen, & Ceesay, 1997; Gim, Atkinson, & Kim, 1991). As a result, the statistics pertaining to some Asian American ethnic groups are inaccurate.

This overgeneralization related to Asian American ethnic groups gives rise to misconceptions, such as the model minority myth which serves to perpetuate stereotyping. Summarily, students are portrayed as “problem-free high achievers” (Susuki 2002, p.29). However, the model minority stereotype burdens Asian American college students with implicit expectations and pressures, both academically and socially. In addition, due to the stereotypes that Asian Americans face, many endure excluded attention in school and their needs often become ignored (Suzuki, 2002).

Asian American students face unique circumstances of their own. As immigrants, they are likely to encounter negative cultural experiences. Thus, Asian American students have to contend and negotiate cultural conflicts and stereotypes given by the dominant group and learn how to integrate their heritage culture with the mainstream culture. For example, despite their effort to acculturate, the dominant society still perceives Asian Americans as foreigners (Min, 2002). Because they are perpetually considered as foreigners to other Americans, some second generation Asian Americans are embarrassed of their cultural heritage and their non-White appearance (Min, 2006a).
However, these students develop their own identity by integrating their ethnic and American culture to overcome the series of challenges faced on a daily basis. In some cases, integrating these two cultures causes conflicts due to their respective differing values. In particular, conflict appears in issues related to gender inequalities (Hune, 1998). Asian Women struggle between American cultural values and traditional gender roles expected of Asian women (Yee, Dearyshe, Yuen, & McCubbin, 2007). Today, many researchers have focused on the issues of minority women; however, few studies have been directed towards Asian American women in particular (Bassett, 2002; Chhuon, Kyratzis, & Hudley, 2010; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Despite the fact that these challenges negatively impact their academic success and social satisfaction, these issues have not been given much attention by academic scholars.

For this study, I focus on Korean American female undergraduate students because they face not only the critical issues that I have briefly described above, but also unique challenges that their Korean culture pose (Kim & Yeh, 2002). In general, Korean cultural heritages grounded in Confucianism significantly impact Korean American students’ way of life in America (Chen, 1982; Danico, 2004; Hurh, 1998; Moon & song, 1998). As a result, some Korean Americans, as many other Asians first generation students, face psychological distress while they negotiate these two cultures (Ahn, Kim, & Park, 2008; Chung, 2001; Yeh et al., 2005). For example, Ahn et al. (2008) identified that Korean American students adhere to less traditional Asian cultural values than their parents. Due to the cultural gap between the two, they argued that Korean American students experience emotional struggles with their parents regarding certain issues including dating and marriage.
Many Korean immigrant families still follow Confucian philosophy, which includes a strict authoritative relationship between parents and children as well as between sons and daughters (Park & Cho, 1995). Korean American female students are likely to struggle developing their own way of life as Korean Americans given that Korean traditional beliefs impose restrictions on women in terms of education, relationships, and gender roles (Park & Cho, 1995) and these restrictions negatively impacts these Korean American female students while they develop their identity. Compounding this issue is the fact that American society pays little attention to this student population (Hune, 1998). As members of a diverse American society, Korean American female undergraduate students need to learn about their multiple heritages and themselves as individuals in order to comprehend their unique world. They must negotiate living in bicultural worlds, as Koreans and Americans. They also have to overcome the challenges that they face as women and as people of color, the fear of alienation from their families, and underrepresentation in academia. This study was designed to theorize Korean American female students' voices and to understand how these students negotiate their unique cultural circumstances and successfully develop their cultural identity.

**Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to understand how Korean American female undergraduate students negotiate Korean and American cultures and establish their bicultural identity. Because individual identities are developed based on their own experiences, understanding their unique world in their own voices is critical in this study. To accomplish the purpose of the study and signify the individual voices of Korean American female undergraduate students, this study used qualitative research methods.
By comprehending “how individuals make sense of their everyday lives” (Hatch, 2002, pp. 6-7), this study can provide insights into the unique world of Korean American female undergraduate students. The following research questions guide this study.

- How do Korean American female undergraduate students negotiate their bicultural lives?
- How do Korean American female undergraduate students develop their bicultural identity?

**Significance of the Study**

This qualitative study is designed to understand Korean American female students’ cultural negotiation that leads to their identity formation. By listening to and understanding this group of students’ individual voices, this study can gain insight into their unique world. The study attempts to disaggregate the Asian American experience. By focusing on the Korean American ethnic group, this study offers the research community an opportunity to better understand these students and provides rich knowledge regarding their cultural circumstances, which is normally veiled by the model minority image.

Through this understanding, this study can support college administrators and student services professionals in their efforts to service this ethnic group of women. For many years, men’s experiences have been used as a frame of reference to explain women’s experiences. However, it could be limited in understanding women’s way of life. Women have different voices from their male counterparts, and it is difficult to understand women through men’s perspectives. Therefore, this research provides a fitting lens with which to view Asian American women students.

By focusing on Korean American women’s cultural lives, this study offers college administrators more information about their Asian female students’ cultural
circumstances. Korean American students are often neglected when colleges and universities design support programs for ethnic minority students due to their typically high academic performance and their socially constructed racial image as a model minority. This phenomenon discourages administrators from paying more attention to this group of students. Therefore, this study results encourage administrators and service providers to pay more attention to these women students and look closely at their cultural circumstances. In particular, this research provides valuable information for counseling service and multicultural affairs department in that counselors and student affairs professionals can use findings of this study as data when they plan appropriate support services.

This study also can help high school counselors in their effort to provide service to immigrant students. In particular, Immigrant women students may struggle with cultural oppression and gender inequality originating from their ethnic cultural values, and they may face internal challenges when they feel their lives are controlled by their immigrant parents. Therefore, this study encourages school counselors to carefully monitor immigrant students’ cultural struggles and approach the students’ issues by connecting to their ethnic cultures. Additionally this research also encourages high school administrators and teachers to offer culturally and ethnically diverse issues in their class discussions. During high school most students are relatively little exposed to cultural diversity or cultural identity issues, while these students have more opportunity to experience during college years. The lack of experiences of cultural identity and diversity issues hinder students’ effort to express their own cultural identity. Therefore, this research provides high school administrators including teachers and counselors an
opportunity to better understand their immigrant students and appropriately support these students.

This study is significant in that it gives first generation immigrant parents and ethnic communities an opportunity to understand their college daughters so that they can effectively help and support them. Many Korean American female students struggle with conflicting cultural expectations including gender expectations, and these different cultural expectations may give rise to intergenerational conflicts. This research offers immigrant parents and ethnic communities insight into how Korean American female students may struggle with their dual cultural lives. It further suggests how these students may try to overcome their cultural challenges in order to maintain healthy relationships with their parents and ethnic community.

This study also theoretically contributes to bicultural identity development of Korean American female students. In order to understand their cultural identity, this study closely approached to multiple aspects concerning Korean women’s racial, cultural, and gender issues. As a result, it makes their specificities visible, and provides a broader perspective to better understand Korean American female students’ way of life.

Previous work on ethnic minority’ identity development has focused on how students acculturate or assimilate to American mainstream culture while developing their identity. This study argues that Korean Americans develop their own identity with their two cultures, rather than acculturating to one culture over the other; therefore, it is helpful to focus on bi-dimensional cultural identity development instead. Finally, this study provides educators with detailed information useful for designing future studies
related to cultural identity development of second generation immigrants in the United States.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature is reviewed in this chapter in order to understand Asian American college undergraduate students in general and Korean American students in particular. Exploring existing research and connecting it to this study is imperative to comprehending Asian Americans’ bicultural experiences. In order to better understand how this group develops their cultural identity, this chapter reviews previous research studying aspects of Asian Americans’ ethnic identity including ethnic identity development theories, acculturation, and biculturalism. This chapter then reviews literature on college experiences of Asian American students in order for the reader to understand how their dual cultural lives affect their academic and social lives on campus. In addition, this chapter reviews Asian American women’s particular struggles associated with gender and cultural issues. This chapter also reviews Korean American culture inducing brief immigrant history, Korean Americans’ daily life style, and Confucianism, to better understand how Korean culture affects Korean American women’s daily life. Lastly, this chapter discusses Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s (1997) bicultural identity theory as a theoretical framework.

The Bicultural Experience of Asian Americans

Asian Americans are described as a heterogeneous group defined by their language, cultural heritages, and length of their residence in the United States, such as long established populations of Chinese and Japanese, as well as the more recent immigrants of Hmong, Cambodians, and Laotians (Reeves & Bennett, 2004). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 11.9 million Americans, which is 4.2% of the total U.S population, are Asians (Barnes & Bennett, 2002), compared to the Asian American
population of 1940, which was less than 1% (Nakanishi, 2001). This group, including Pacific Islanders, is projected to make up 6% of the total U.S population by 2020 (Ong & Leung, 2003). In addition Asians in the U.S. are mostly immigrants. In 2000, 76% of the Asian population who were foreign–born came to the United State over the past decades (Reeves & Bennett, 2004). They settled in the United States with strong cultural heritages including language, customs, and traditions.

**Asian American Ethnic Identity**

Ethnic identity is a critical aspect to understanding Asian Americans. It is created from “the shared culture, religion, geography, and language of individuals who are often connected by strong loyalty and kinship” (Evans, Forney, & Guido DiBrito, 1998, pp.79-80). Several researchers have conceptualized ethnic identity development (e.g., Cross, 1978; Phinney, 1993; Kim, 1981). In particular, Kim (1981) developed an Asian American identity development model drawing from Erikson’s ego identity theory. By utilizing semi-structured interviews, she identified a linear progression of stages from ten third-generation Japanese American women whose ages were between 20 and 40.


First, in the ethnic awareness stage, which corresponds to the period for Asian American children prior to entering school (e.g., the ages of 3-4), Asian Americans are surrounded mostly by their ethnic culture and their family members. During this period, Asian Americans feel comfortable with their own ethnic origin. Then, the White identification stage begins when Asian American children enter school. During this stage, Asian Americans internalize the values and standards of the White dominant
group and view themselves as White. They associate mainly with White people rather than with people of their own ethnicity. Continually, in the awakening to social political consciousness stage, Asian Americans acquire their own sense of identity in the White society and are more experienced socially as well as more politically involved, so that certain issues, such as racism, could be confronted. During this stage, Asian Americans in the study “felt good about their new awareness of themselves as a minority” (Kim, 1981, p.144). In the redirection to an Asian American consciousness stage, Asian Americans begin to feel secure enough to look at their own experiences while having support from others. Lastly, Asian Americans in the incorporation stage, Asian Americans develop a clear sense of identity in the White society and acknowledge that “being an Asian American is important but not their only identity” (Kim, 1981, p.152). Accordingly, Asian Americans integrate their ethnic identity with the rest of their identities so that they feel comfortable as Asian American. Based on this, developing an ethnic identity is crucial for Asian American college students in order to adjust to campus life.

Ethnic identity is described as “a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one’s identity of sense of self as member of an ethnic group” (Phinney, 2003, p.63). Individuals develop their ethnic identity by recognizing differences among other ethnic groups and by learning and accepting the importance of their ethnicity within a broader society (Phinney, 2003). This sense of ethnic identity helps Asian American students to build a strong bond with other Asian American students, and provides the opportunity for positive interpersonal relationships as well as an open mind to embrace other ethnic groups. Developing and maintaining a strong ethnic identity is an important strategy for
Asian American students to overcome their vulnerability. In fact, many Asian American students establish positive attitudes towards the Asian ethnic culture by engaging in Asian cultural behaviors (Kim & Omizo, 2006). Many studies report a positive relationship between a well-defined ethnic identity and psychological well-being among Asian American students (Bracey, Bamaca, & Umana-Taylor, 2004; Cheryan & Tasi, 2007; Martinez & Dukes, 1997). Bracey et al. (2004) acknowledged that ethnic identity positively contributes to ethnic students’ self-esteem. Similarly, Martinez and Dukes (1997) stated that minority adolescents who had higher levels of ethnic identity also had higher levels of self-esteem, purpose in life, and self-confidence.

Strong ethnic identity plays a buffer against challenges such as discrimination as well (Greene, Way & Pahl, 2006). Greene et al. (2006) conducted a 3 year longitudinal study on adolescents from Black, Latino, and Asian American backgrounds and found that adolescents who experienced higher level of discrimination suffered lower self-esteem and more depression compared to others who experienced less discrimination. However, this study also found that ethnic identity may act as a buffer for negative effects of discrimination. Mossakowski (2003) also suggested that ethnic identity buffers the effects of racial/ethnic discrimination, and therefore well developed ethnic identity offers ethnic minorities a good coping resource. However, in some cases, it is challenging for some Asian Americans with well-developed ethnic identities to cope when they experience racial discrimination (Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999; Lee, 2005; Yoo & Lee, 2008).

**Acculturation**

An American identity is also important to Asian American college students. Establishing an American identity differs for individual Asian American college students,
and it will depend on how much each individual adopts the American culture or acculturates (Cheryan & Tsai, 2007). Acculturation is “the process of adjusting to a different culture” (Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, & Wong, 2002, p.42), and therefore Asian American college students have different acculturation processes based on their birth status and/or length of residence in the United States. For example, foreign-born, recent immigrants have different acculturation processes than second generation Asian Americans who were born in the United States or who immigrated at a young age.

Classic views of acculturation were conceptualized as a one-dimensional process, in which individuals pull away from their heritage culture while they assimilated to their new host culture in a linear manner (Trimble, 2003). More recently, researchers have conceived acculturation as a bi-dimensional process where it is assumed that identification with the new host culture and their own ethnic culture are independent. Therefore, acculturating individuals are able to adhere to their ethnic culture while they adopt their mainstream culture (Berry, 1980; Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). Applying this concept to the Asian American population, it is noted that the acculturation process of Asian American students can also be identified as bidirectional (Abe-Kim, Okazaki, & Goto, 2001; Nguyen & von Eye, 2002). For example, a study done by Tsai, Ying, and Lee (2000) indicated that American-born Chinese students developed “being American” and “being Chinese” independently. Therefore, it is possible for Asian American students to maintain two cultures and construct bicultural identities.

Many Asian American college students experience positive psychological outcomes through the acculturation process. For example, Chung’s (2001) study examining differences in intergenerational conflict indicated that highly acculturated
individuals have less intergenerational conflict than both bicultural and low-acculturated individual Asian American students. Abe and Zane (1990) proposed that more acculturated U.S.-born Asian American college students had a lower level of interpersonal distress compared to their foreign-born Asian American counterparts. Tata and Leong’s (1994) study of Chinese American college students (N=219) suggested that highly acculturating students had a more positive attitude toward seeking professional psychological help. In their study of Asian international students (N=170), Zhang and Dixon (2003) also highlighted that Asian international college students’ higher level of acculturation positively influenced their attitude toward seeking professional psychological services.

However, in some cases, Asian American students suffer from acculturation stress (Thomas & Choi, 2006; Yeh, 2003). Lorenzo, Frost, and Reinherz (2000) noted that older Asian American adolescents perceived themselves more negatively and suffered an increase in poor interpersonal relationships than their Caucasian peers did. It is this lack of social connectedness that may be a reflection of the challenges Asian American immigrants struggle with, both in western culture and their ethnic culture. The acculturation gap between immigrant parents and their children may give rise to intergenerational conflict due to differences of cultural expectations. Ying et al. (2001) found in their study of American born Chinese, early immigrant Chinese, and late immigrant Chinese students that early immigrant Chinese college students, who most likely perceive themselves as Americans, faced greater intergenerational conflict with their parents. Because Asian American second generation students who are born or raised with having lived in the United States for a long time are affected equally by both
western and their ethnic culture, balancing between two cultural influences may contribute to family conflict and poor psychological well-being. Similarly, a study done by Phinney et al. (2000) indicated that U.S.-born and raised adolescents had greater intergenerational discord than foreign-born and short residence adolescents.

**Bicultural Asian Americans**

As a result of acculturation, from a global and transnational perspective, it is common for immigrants to belong to two cultures. Some scholars suggest that ethnic minority students adopt mainstream culture and at the same time maintain their heritage culture (Berry, 1980; Birman, 1994; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). In general, Asian American students are exposed to multi-cultures from various social institutions, such as schools, family, and community. They are mainly surrounded by the American culture, but they are also strongly influenced by their cultural heritages from their parents who still maintain the transnational life style. Consequently, Asian Americans are bicultural (Devos, 2006; Lee, Falbo, Doh, & Park, 2001). These bicultural Asian Americans successfully internalize their distinct cultures and identify themselves with two cultures (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002).

Biculturalism is identified as one of the acculturation strategies (e.g., separation, marginalization, assimilation, and integration/biculturalism) among immigrants (Berry, 1980), and this biculturalism is further explained in detail by scholars through concepts such as fusion and alternation (LaFromboise et al., 1993); blended, instrumental, integrated, and exploration (Birman, 1994); or blended and alternating (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). These concepts will be explained further in the theoretical framework. These theories contribute to the understanding of the reorganization of individual differences into a bicultural identity. In some sense, integrating two cultures
may be difficult for some Asian American college students because of differences between ethnic and mainstream cultures. Thus conflict may occur while Asian Americans negotiate developing their bicultural identity. For example, Stroink and Lalonde (2009) found that second generation bicultural Asian Canadian college students were confronted with conflict between their Canadian and Asian cultures. This bicultural identity conflict is also found in other racial minorities such as Native Americans (Garrett, 1996), as well as African Americans and Mexican Americans (Phinney and Devich-Navarro, 1997).

Despite their challenges, many bicultural individuals reconcile their cultural values and successfully develop a bicultural identity (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). In order to establish their bicultural identity, some Asian American college students sustain equal fluency between their heritage language and English. For instance, a study done by Lee (2002) revealed that second generation Korean American students, who are fluent in Korean, strongly identified themselves as bicultural. Her study suggests that dual language proficiency gives Korean American students an opportunity to deeply navigate their ethnic culture, and ultimately to balance their cultural values. This endeavor promotes the fostering of a bicultural identity in these students.

**The College Experience of Ethnic Asians**

Many Asian American college students are quite visible in their academic achievement in higher education (Teranishi, 2007). Out of the Asian population in the United States, 60% achieved a bachelor’s degree in 2008 (Aud, Fox & KewalRamani, 2010), though the rate differed among the various Asian ethnic groups. For example, 80% of Asian Indian, 70.3% of Chinese, 59.6% of Filipino, and 54% of Korean college students attained bachelor’s degree in 2008 (Aud et al., 2010). Research on Asian
American college students has been conducted since minority issues emerged in American society. Most of the times, this population is considered a homogenous group and categorized as one single racial category to be compared to other racial groups (Teranishi, 2007). Consequently, the aggregated results led earlier researchers to the misconception that all Asian Americans were high achievers in comparison with other racial groups (Suzuki, 2002).

For instance, Asian American college students’ completion rates of a baccalaureate degree are higher than any other racial groups in general. However some Asian American college student groups, such as Cambodian, Hmong and Laotian, obtain college degrees at rates that are lower than both the national average and other racial populations (Lee, 2006; Museus & Chang, 2009). This academic gap within Asian American ethnic groups is invisible because of the aggregated data, and therefore Asian American college students as a whole are misconstrued as one of the most academically successful racial groups in American higher education. Because not all Asian American college students are fairly represented by these data results, some academic researchers have paid specific attention to certain Asian American ethnic groups in particular, rather than Asian Americans as a whole, and have consequently provided disaggregated data on these groups. For example, one study found that Asian American ethnic subpopulations of college students such as Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asians, and Southeast Asians have different socioeconomic characteristics, academic performance, and educational aspirations (Kim, Rendon, & Valadez, 1998).
Statistics of strong academic performance have created a veil, undermining the needs of Asian Americans. They garner little media attention, are frequently neglected in policy and scholarly venues concerning American college students’ characteristics, and their academic experiences and circumstances on campus are ignored due to their small numbers and seemingly high academic performance in American postsecondary education (Nakanishi, 2001). Campus incidents involving Asian American students happen sporadically, but persistently. Because of the lack of research on Asian American college experiences, it is difficult to understand the circumstances that they face. One study indicated that first year Asian American, Hispanic, and African American students experience a lesser feeling of belonging on campus than their White peers (Johnson et al., 2007). These students may be struggling with racial stereotypes that White students may not face during their academic life.

Racial discrimination is a negative experience for all students, including Asian American college students who are trying to develop a strong self esteem. Indeed, Rhee, Chang, & Rhee (2003) state that Asian Americans have low self-esteem compared to their White college counterparts. Several studies have demonstrated that Asian American college students face racial bias and discrimination (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Sue & others, 2007), that they do not perceive the campus environment as a safe place for them, and that they experience more incidents associated with racism than White college students (Kotori & Malaney, 2003). For example, Lubman (1998) noted in the San Jose Mercury News, at least four Asian students on University of California campuses have experienced strong anti-Asian phone calls, email or graffiti. This includes an incident during which a former UC Irvine student sent an email to 59 Asian
students and staff expressing that he wanted to kill Asians because he believed that the competition they posed was preventing him from academic achievement. This incident illustrates that the campus environment may still harbor racial bias toward Asian American students as many Asian American students face negative social integration into their campus community.

According to Cho et al. (2003), Korean American students experience social and cultural challenges associated with acculturation. These students struggle to resolve their inner selves with their social personas (Kuo, 2001). In addition, Korean American students may feel isolation because they are neither fully American nor fully Korean (Kuo, 2001). They are “no longer Asian, not yet ‘American”’ (Chou & Feagin, 2008, p.131). Korean American students typically speak English fluently, have had an American education, and have acculturated to American cultural values, so they believe that they are Americans. However, they are not typically viewed as Americans; rather, they still viewed as foreigners (Min, 2002). One Korean participant of a qualitative study conducted by Jeon (2010) described his feeling about his view of American mainstream. “I do not think I will be able to view myself as an American in this country because people will never look at me as an American….  I am often-if not always-labeled by society as a foreigner or as an Asian, but never an American” (p.50). In turn, Korean American students also may feel they cannot be Koreans because although they embrace their Korean cultural heritage, their beliefs and lifestyles are too similar to Americans, so they are not fully Koreans (Kuo, 2001).

These negative social experiences may hinder Asian American students in developing healthy relationships within their campus community. In general, positive
relationships with faculty members can affect students’ academic success and satisfaction (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Sax, Bryant, & Harper, 2005). Kim’s (2010) quantitative research on student-faculty interaction found that faculty-student interaction makes a significant contribution to the improvement of academic performance (e.g., GPA), as well as student educational aspirations. In addition, by engaging with diverse peers on campus, college students may enhance their academic, social, and community roles, and have increased self-esteem (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004; Gloria & Ho, 2003). Despite the benefits, many Asian American college students struggle with developing relationships with people due to negative campus climates, and they are confronted with “more social isolation, self-segregation, exclusion and less satisfaction with social support than non-Asian American peers” (Suyemoto et al., 2009, p.42). Consequently, as Museus and Chang noted (2009), they may suffer more from psychological challenges than other racial groups.

There are many factors related to increased psychological distress among Asian American college students. First, as mentioned above, racial discrimination on campus is a critical factor negatively affecting their psychological well-being (Lee, 2003). Hwang and Goto (2009) examined the relationship between racial discrimination and mental health for ethnically minority college students including Asian Americans and Latinos, and they found that perceived racial discrimination negatively affects mental health outcomes including stress, anxiety, and depression. In addition, cultural duality is another factor negatively affecting some Asian American students’ mental health. For instance, some Korean American students deny their own ethnic culture; however, they
may also feel rejected by the dominant White American group, so these students endure a sense of alienation (Kim & Miura, 1999).

Hovey et al. (2006) acknowledged that some Korean American students experience low self-esteem and increased anxiety and depression when they adhere to Korean cultural values. Conflict with family may also lead to poor psychological well-being. According to Cho et al. (2003), 80% of Korean Americans experience parental pressure. Parents have high educational expectations and adhere strongly to Korean culture. However, Korean American students acculturate quickly to the American culture, while their parents still adhere to their native ethnic cultural heritage.

Cho et al. (2003) assert that the model minority image may also contribute to the negative feelings of some Asian American students who have poor academic performance. The model minority image has created a stereotype assuming that Asian American students are academic high achievers, and therefore they are “not considered members of ‘underrepresented’ or a ‘disadvantaged’ minority” (Takagi, 1994, p.232). However, numerous researchers have found that not all Asian American students achieve academic success as the model minority image would imply (e.g., Hune, 2002; Hune & Chan, 1997; Yin, 2000). Some Asian American students have internalized the model minority image. In a sense, when the model minority image becomes accepted by the students themselves as a means of measurement to gauge their self-worth, this internalization may have a damaging effect (Lee, 1996). Researchers found that Asian American students may be reluctant to seek educational assistance when they struggle with low academic performance because they feel humiliated for not living up to the model minority image (Kim & Yeh, 2008; Yang, Byers, Ahuna, & Castro, 2002). As a
result, their academic challenges are more likely to become a serious issue, yet these students rarely have the chance to remedy their academic stress.

Challenges Facing Asian American Women

Asian American female students in American higher education stand out. In 1997, these students comprised 51.3% of total Asian American enrollment (Wilds, 2000) and increased to 53.8% of the total Asian American college student population in 2004 (KewalRamani et al., 2007). Despite being a distinguished and unique group on campus, they have not received attention from academic researchers. Literature on women of color has been primarily focused on the experiences of African American women, generalizing those experiences to all women of color (Bassett, 2002). As a result, little research has been conducted exclusively on Asian American women (Hune, 1998). In some ways Asian American women and other minority women have certain shared experiences, so they can sometimes be accurately viewed together with a single lens because most of women of color also suffer from gender and racial prejudice. However, Asian American women are struggling with unique challenges of their own. They are faced with not only gender stereotypes and racial stereotypes, but they also may suffer from conflict caused by significant cultural differences.

According to Hune (1998), Asian American women are a “double and triple outsider in academic institutions” (p.3). Gender stereotypes for Asian American women include conventional gender roles such as “a good Asian female as being subservient, passive, and docile” (Kawahara & Fu, 2007, p.182). These stereotypes influence Asian American female students’ relationships both inside and outside the classroom (Bassett, 2002). Classroom climate may pose a disadvantage to students who are different from the majority in relation to sexual orientation, race, social, or disability (Allan, 2002). In
the classroom where students are normally led by the dominant group, Asian American women are invisible. It may be difficult to voice their thoughts due to their insecurity, and moreover, it is an even greater challenge to express different opinions than those of the majority group. Asian American women students may perceive an unwelcoming environment with from their faculty and peers, and this experience may prevent them from joining discussions, which, in turn, gives them the appearance of being passive (Hune, 1998).

In addition, Asian American women face racial stereotypes such as “exotic and erotic” (Hune, 1998, p.10). This stereotype is not common for other minority women in American society because this stereotype is formed as a by-product of war. World War II imported the image of the “exotic geisha girl who catered to men’s sexual fantasies” (Root, 1998, p. 213). Asian women have been portrayed in American popular culture in a variety of ways, such as China dolls, geishas, Polynesian dancers, and as characters in the movie "Miss Saigon," yet all of these images show the women as an erotic figure (Hune, 1998). Consequently, World War II and the subsequent media images contributed to the stereotype of Asian American women as sexual property and perpetrated this image in American society (Kawahara & Fu, 2007). This stereotype impacts female college students’ social relationships. According to Hune (1998), Asian American women students express their feeling as “I stay away from guys who have an ‘Asian fetish’” or “I don’t want to be a Western male fantasy” (p.10). These excerpts demonstrate how Asian American women students may have limited positive interracial relationships within the dominant society, and how they consequently may feel uncomfortable in their campus lives.
In addition to these stereotypes, Asian American women students also may suffer from conflicts within their family. Family relationships tend to play a more critical role for Asian Americans than for non-Asian groups. Traditionally, Asian countries are characterized by collectivism, focusing primarily on family and being community-oriented, rather than valuing individualism (Lee, 1997). Family members are expected to support one another financially, and children are taught to respect their parents and try to make an effort to succeed in ways that will reflect well on their family. For this reason, education is an important and valuable tool to achieve honor for their family.

Historically, higher education was offered to sons, and daughters would primarily be provided with living expenses with the expectation that their time would be sacrificed to help with the household chores. Asian American families frequently experience conflict when traditional gender roles are eschewed (Yee et al., 2007), and many Asian American girls experience significant discord with their parents when challenging their gender role expectation (Tang & Dion, 1999). More specifically, some Asian American women who grow up in the United States may feel confused and discomforted with the gender inequality in family relations. Although Asian American women have achieved education equality in the United States, they oftentimes recognize gender imbalance in the greater independence and mobility that is given to their male siblings, even those that are younger than them (Espiritu, 2001), and may come to resent this cultural bias.

This family conflict persists with Asian immigrants. Most first generation parents hold tightly to their native cultural heritage and teach their children their beliefs and native cultural values. On the other hand, their children are earning an American education, which is greatly influenced by the American cultural values of equality,
egalitarianism, and individualism, so their beliefs and cultural values may differ from their parents. Because their parents do not understand their children’s divergent cultural values, Asian American women students are vulnerable to psychological health issues. Some studies proposed that the conflict with their parents gives rise to poor mental health for these students (e.g., Chung, 2001). However, Asian American women students may possess a more optimistic help-seeking attitude and promote cultural harmonization than their non-immigrant counterparts (Gloria, Castellanos, park, & Kim, 2008; Shim & Schwartz, 2007). For instance, Song and Moon (1998) found that some Korean American women students have distanced themselves from conventional gender Asian socialization to overcome their psychological distress.

**Korean Americans’ Lifestyle**

The Korean American community has grown to become one of important ethnic minorities in the United States. It greatly influences Korean American students’ way of life. In order to better understand this group, this section reviews a brief history of Korean Americans and the Korean culture.

**Immigration History**

Korean immigration in the United States is characterized by three distinct historical periods. The first period of Korean immigration started with plantation laborers in Hawaii and political refugees. Between 1903 and 1905, approximately 7300 Koreans came to the United States and settled in Hawaii (Gudykunst, 2001). Despite difficult circumstances in their new land, most early Korean immigrants established and developed their Korean identity through Korean churches, Korean language, and cultural schools (Gudykunst, 2001). In addition, picture brides, Korean women who had
arranged long-distance marriages with early Korean plantation workers, arrived in the United States during that period and joined Korean male immigrants.

The second period of Korean immigration began after the Korean civil war in 1951, and lasted until the 1965 Immigration Act (Gudykunst, 2001). During that period of time, Korean War brides and war orphans, as well as a small number of students and professional workers came to the United States (Hurh, 1998). At the end of the Korean War, many Korean orphans were adopted by American families in increasing numbers until an eventual decline of adoptions in the late 1980’s (Min, 2006b). In addition, Korean young women, who were mostly uneducated, married American servicemen and came to the United States without family members. They suffered from extremely difficult situations such as ignorance of American culture, lack of language proficiency, and culture shock after joining the American society (Gudykunst, 2001). The immigrant war brides declined in number by the late 1980’s (Min, 2006b).

The third period of immigration started after the passage of the Immigrant Act of 1965. During this period, many Korean immigrants came to the United States as large families (Gudykunst, 2001; Hurh, 1998). This population was mostly a highly educated, middle class, urban group from Korea (Light & Bonacich, 1988; Min, 2006c; Weinberg, 1997). Until the 1990’s, a significant number of Korean immigrants such as students, medical professionals, and intellectual refugees came to the United States to escape the dictatorship (Min, 2006c). Then Korean immigration declined in the 1990’s because of the economic growth in Korea (Min, 2006c). However, Korean immigration once again increased to significantly higher numbers in the last years of the twentieth century.
and the first three years of the twenty-first century, because of the pursuit of more opportunities in higher education and better jobs (Min, 2006c).

Life Style on a Daily Basis

One of the qualifications for immigration under the Immigrant Act of 1965 was for the applicant to have a close relationship with a family member already residing in the United States (Min, 2006d). After the passage of this law, many Korean immigrants arrived as a family unit and had extended relationships with their relatives in the United States (Hurh, 1998). Today Korean immigrant families maintain and develop their cultural heritage through the celebration of Korean holidays, as well as cooking and eating Korean foods while living in American society (Danico, 2004).

In addition, they speak Korean at home. Language plays an important role in maintaining the connection between immigrants and their traditional Korean family values and cultural heritage (Hurh, 1998). For Koreans, it is important to convey these values to each family member through language. Lee (2002) highlighted that Korean language fluency supports Korean Americans in developing their ethnic identity. Furthermore, Lee (2002) argued that Korean Americans promote biculturalism by maintaining both Korean and English languages. Ideally, speaking dual languages give Korean American families an opportunity to retain strong family relationships. However, frequently Korean immigrant families face an internal gap with their children due to poor communication skills (Choi & Dancy, 2009). Yang and Rettig’s (2003) study found that some Korean mothers struggle with language barriers when they communicated with their children. One mother in Yang and Rettig’s study expressed how hard it was to convey her feelings to her children due to her lack of language skills. She said, “My son
doesn’t understand Korean very well. I cannot tell him something inside my heart. I
cannot speak English well, either. I cannot fully send my heart to him” (p.365).

Religious participation has become a way of life among Korean Americans (Hurh & Kim, 1990). Korean churches in the United States provide various services for new immigrants and support them until they can adjust to their new life (Min, 1992). Many Korean immigrants obtain information about American cultures from church and emotionally comfort themselves with others who can share their ethnic language and culture. In addition, Min (1992) argued that many Korean Americans maintain their ethnic heritages by participating in Korean church activities. Their children learn how to speak their ethnic language at church and maintain their ethnic language fluency as they primarily speak Korean at their church. Therefore, Korean Americans’ ethnic identities are developed and strengthened through their religious life (Chong, 1998). Many Korean churches bolster traditional Korean cultural values, which are heavily influenced by Confucianism, and maintain these cultural values with religious values (Min, 2001). Therefore, Korean church “is organized in a vertical, male-oriented, hierarchical structure, headed by a male pastor who wields considerable authority and power, and governed by a large group of elders, all of whom are male” (Chong, 1998, p.272). The traditional values are unquestionably reproduced by Korean American communities and are pervasively taught with religious values to their Korean second generations.

The Confucian Value System

Korean Americans have shaped their lives by maintaining traditional cultural values. Korean traditional culture is based on Confucius philosophy (Son, 2006). Confucianism proposes “to establish stable, reciprocal, ethical, but fundamentally non-
egalitarian social relationships based on gender, age, and position in society” (Chinn, 2002, p.304). This doctrine impacts individual Koreans’ ways of life pervasively and has been sustained by Korean society for a long time. A kin-based society is one of the characteristic of Confucius’ ideas. The idea is that community members “are related to each other within the kin-family framework and thus are identified as uncle, aunt, and so on, instead of as Mr., or Mrs., or Miss in the individual framework” (Kim, 1998, p.26). So, Koreans call each other brother, sister, uncle, aunt, grandmother, or grandfather in the community instead of using a person’s given name. Korean Americans also treat other Koreans as family in this manner and form strong family relationships in their community, even if they are actually not related. This is possible even for Korean American second generations who have had an American education because their first generation parents hold fully to this idea and become their children’s role models in who they act within their community.

Confucian culture also shapes family structure, in which the family relationship is hierarchical in nature. Consequently the Korean male who is head of household has more power than the Korean female, who occupies a subordinate position (Park & Chesla, 2007; Park & Bernstein, 2008). Korean American women are largely influenced by Confucian ideas and predictably marginalized in their society (Moon & Song, 1998). They are expected to obey their male counterpart, and are discouraged from having their own voice in decision making (Son, 2006). The Confucian Korean American family has different gendered expectations for their children.

For example, according to Moon and Song’s (1998) study, 62.6% of Korean immigrant’s mothers believe that their daughters should live with their parents until the
daughters get married, while only 25% of their daughters agreed. However, the same mothers did not hold the same idea for their sons. In addition, 93% and 68.9% of Korean immigrant mothers and daughters, respectively, believe that it is more important to take care of family than it is to pursue a career. Furthermore, young Korean American women are faced with the inequality of their gender role. Traditionally, daughters are not only relegated to domestic responsibilities, but also are subservient toward male family members (Kim, Atkinson & Umemoto, 2001), which are not roles that are commonly experienced by sons in Korean American society. Different gender expectations in the household, which are heavily influenced by Confucian gender ideas, frequently contribute to cultural conflicts between parents and their female daughters (Pho & Mulvey, 2003).

A patriarchal family culture shapes the hierarchical relationships between Korean parents and their children. Rooted in Confucius’ philosophy, children subordinate to their parents (Park & Cho, 1995). Although parents and their children share a benevolent attitude, the child is always obedient to their parents (Danico, 2004). Parents’ authority is often witnessed in patriarchal Korean American family. Kang, Okazaki, Abelmann, Kim-Prieto, and Shanshan (2010) found in their study that many Korean parents continued to assert authority over their adult children even after they attended college and controlled certain decisions for their careers.

The filial piety is also another characteristic in patriarchal family culture. Filial piety forces Korean children to take care of their parents with respect, honor, fidelity, dutiffulness, and sacrifice (Chen, 1982). Many Korean American parents believe that filial piety is an important cultural value to establish strong family relationships, and they
expect their children to uphold this idea. A survey on Americanization shows that 62.2% of Korean Americans believe that older parents should not be sent to a nursing home, and that 74.6% of Korean Americans responded that children should bear responsibility and the obligation of supporting their elder parents (Hurh, 1998).

**Conceptual Framework: Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s Bicultural Identity**

Understanding how Korean American female undergraduate students negotiate their bicultural identity is the central element in this study. Bicultural identity is closely linked to acculturation. The seminal developments on acculturation state that, migrants discard their ethnic culture as they acquire a new mainstream culture (Berry, 2003). However, recent research has developed the concept of acculturation as a multi-dimensional process, in which individuals embrace cultural values of their new host culture while retaining their original ethnic culture (Berry, 1980). In fact, many immigrant young adults characterize themselves as bicultural (Van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006). Therefore, I drew from bicultural identity theory in my study in order to better understand how Korean American female undergraduate students negotiate cultural conflicts and develop bicultural identities. In particular, I use Phinney and Devich-Navarro's (1997) bicultural models as the conceptual framework for this study.

Much research is based on Berry’s theoretical model to understand the process of acculturation. In this process, Berry (1980; 1990; 2003) developed four identity modes: separation, marginalization, assimilation, and integration. According to Berry, during separation, individuals reject the dominant culture and retain the ethnic culture, whereas assimilation rejects the original culture and adopts the new host culture. In addition, when immigrants reject both their original culture and their new mainstream culture, identities are categorized in the marginalization mode. However, when they adopt their
new mainstream culture and retain their heritage culture at the same time, this is considered integration. The integration/biculturalism in Berry’s model is further elaborated by a few researchers with various bicultural models exploring individuals’ bicultural identity. For example, LaFromboise et al. (1993), Birman (1994), and Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s (1997) have attempted to identify various types of conceptual models of biculturalism. LaFromboise and colleagues (1993) proposed two types of biculturalism: fusion and alternation. LaFromboise et al. (1993) indicated that alternating bicultural individuals switch their behaviors between two cultures according to their situation. Fused bicultural individuals create a third culture, which combines their two cultures and therefore the two individual cultures are not distinguished anymore. Birman (1994) further expanded on LaFromboise et al.’s (1993) conceptual framework of biculturalism and proposed four types of bicultural individuals: blended bicultural, instrumental bicultural, integrated bicultural, and identity exploration. According to Birman (1994), blended bicultural individuals have the same characteristics as LaFromboise et al.’s (1993) fused bicultural individuals. In addition, instrumental bicultural individuals are behaviorally competent in their two cultures, but identified with neither and as a result they feel marginalized. Furthermore, integrated bicultural individuals are behaviorally comfortable in their two cultures; however, they strongly identified with their ethnic culture. Lastly, bicultural individuals adopting identity exploration style are highly and behaviorally involved in mainstream culture, however, they identify with only their heritage culture.

Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) integrated Berry’s (1980), LaFromboise et al.’s (1993), and Birman’s (1994) bicultural models by proposing two conceptual
theories of biculturalism: blended and alternating. According to Phinney and Devich-Navarro, blended bicultural individuals maintain their two cultures positively. These two cultures can be overlapped and consequently create a new culture. Phinney and Devich-Navarro considered this overlap as blended biculturalism. Alternating bicultural individuals identify themselves with their two different cultures. They switch their behaviors in different situational and cultural contexts. Phinney and Devich-Navarro considered each non-overlapping side of cultures as alternating biculturalism.

Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) developed their bicultural framework by conducting both a qualitative and quantitative study with African Americans and Mexican Americans. The study indicated that blended bicultural adolescents had a positive feeling about being American as well as a strong sense of their ethnicity. They identified themselves as equally ethnic and American. In addition to that, Phinney and Devich-Navarro further explained that for blended bicultural adolescents, the sense of being American is more salient for these students to develop their bicultural identity. However, because the sense of being American is more salient for these students to develop their identity, it does not necessarily mean that blended bicultural individuals could be categorized as in the assimilation stage as articulated by Berry (1980).

Blended bicultural process is differentiated from assimilation in that individuals positively develop both mainstream culture and ethnic culture. Phinney and Devich-Navarro also suggested that alternating bicultural individuals have a strong sense of connectedness to their ethnic culture all the while having a positive feeling for the American culture. Therefore their ethnic culture is highly salient for these students in developing their bicultural identity. For example, according to Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997),
alternating bicultural adolescents described themselves as “[I am] mostly Black. I am both, but I am more Black” or “I am American and Hispanic, but I consider myself more Hispanic” (p.15). Also, Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) found that alternating bicultural adolescents alter their identity in different social contexts such as their school or home.

Like other ethnic minority groups, Korean Americans live with two cultures. Their ethnic heritages strongly influence their American life and are negotiated with the mainstream culture to recreate an American bicultural life. Berry’s (1980) theoretical model of acculturation gives us the cue that many acculturating individuals are bicultural. This study further elaborates Berry’s integration/biculturalism model and uses Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s theories of biculturalism to understand how second generation Korean American female students develop their bicultural identity.

**Summary**

Literature is reviewed in this chapter in order to understand Asian American students in general and Korean American students in particular. Exploring the existing research and connecting it to this study is imperative to comprehend Asian American students. Many recent researchers have paid attention to Asian Americans’ characteristics, academic and social experiences, and their circumstances, though still relatively little known in society. Aggregated statistical data on Asian American students have resulted in widespread misinformation that all Asian Americans are successful in their life. Because of relatively high academic performance results, other life experiences including social experiences and cultural experiences are neglected. Asian American students, distinctive for their academic success, struggle negative social experiences such as discrimination, social isolation, and cultural challenges while they
attend college. In particular, Asian American female students face multiple biases as women, people of color, and Asian cultural image. These negative experiences contribute to poor psychological health. However, many Asian American students strengthen their identity to overcome their cultural challenges. In particular, developing and maintaining a strong ethnic identity protect Asian American students from negative social experiences including discrimination.

In some senses, many Asian American students integrate both their ethnic culture and the American culture and develop a bicultural identity. They are strongly influenced by their ethnic cultures from their parents while they also are mainly surrounded by American cultures. Like other Asian American immigrants, Korean Americans maintain their own traditional cultures while they adopt the American mainstream cultures. Korean traditional culture is strongly influenced by Confucian philosophy and creates patriarchal family culture. In a Confucian patriarchal family culture, Korean Americans are confined to different gender role expectations and hierarchical relationships between parents and their children. In addition, the Confucian cultural values are often times maintained with religious values as Korean Americans participate in their ethnic church activities. Consequently Confucian traditional values pervasively influence the American way of life while Korean American students develop their own bicultural identity.

As a theoretical framework, this study adopted Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s (1997) bicultural identity theory to capture the Korean American students’ experiences in developing bicultural identity. Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s theory (1997) assumes that individuals defined as blended bicultural have a positive feeling about being
American, as well as a strong sense of their ethnicity, or individuals defined as alternating bicultural have a stronger sense of connectedness to their ethnic cultures and alternate between their ethnic culture and the American majority culture.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to understand how Korean American female undergraduate students negotiate cultural conflicts and establish their own bicultural identity. The following research questions guide this study:

- How do Korean American female undergraduate students negotiate their bicultural lives?
- How do Korean American female undergraduate students develop their bicultural identity?

To accomplish the purpose of this study, this study utilized qualitative research. This qualitative study seeks to elucidate on the individual experiences and thoughts of Korean American female undergraduate students. Qualitative researchers examine how and why social experience is shaped as well as how it is given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In this section, I provide and describe my research methodology for pursuing the purpose of the study.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective of this study is transnational feminism, which focuses on gender and migration. I chose this framework because first generation Korean American female students develop a bicultural identity given that these students are normally heavily influenced by the Korean culture on the one hand and the new identity as immigrants in the U.S. on the other. Transnational feminism has emerged from introspective critiques of post-colonial feminism (e.g., Mohanty, 1991). Non-Western postcolonial feminists criticize the global sisterhood approach based on the notion that all women suffer universalized oppression (Lorber, 2005). Mohanty (1991) also argues that third world women are homogenized by Western feminists and as a result make
their specificities invisible. Women have different experiences depending on their unique circumstances associated with race, class, gender, nationality, and sexuality. Consequently transnational feminists resist the universalization of inequalities of non-western women and provide a broader perspective to better understand women and gender inequality.

Transnational feminist scholarship on migration has undergone several changes. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2005), who applied gender theory to transnational migration research, provided three stages of research on gender and immigration. According to Hondagneu-Sotelo (2005), feminists during the first stage recognized the exclusion of women from immigration research and inserted women’s experiences into the study of migration. Therefore, women were “added as a variable” and “compared with migration men’s patterns” (P.5). However, this approach gave rise to further marginalization of immigrant women by segregated women into a subcategory. Consequently, this “women only” and “add and stir” (p.6) approach moved feminists to the next stage.

The second stage during late 1980s an1990s changed the first stage of “women and migration” to “gender and migration.” During this era, feminists focused on the aspect of “how gender differentiated the experiences of men and women in migration” (Parrenas, 2009, p.3). This second stage allowed feminist scholars to actively explore women and men’s lives and focused on social institutions such as family, households, community institutions, and social networks. However, because many feminists in this era paid much attention to the domestic arena such as the household, other arenas and institutions such as the work place were overlooked. This limitation prompted feminist scholars to move to the third stage. According to Hondagneu-Sotelo (2005), the third
stage, which she calls the “gender as a constitutive element of migration” (p.10), is now emerging. She articulates that in this current stage:

Research is beginning to look at the extent to which gender permeates a variety of practices, identities and institutions implicated in immigration. Here, patterns of labor incorporation, globalization, religious practice and values, ethnic enclave businesses, citizenship, sexuality and ethnic identity are interrogated in ways that reveal how gender is incorporated into a myriad of daily operations and institutional, political and economic structures (p.10).

The third stage of transnational feminism helps feminist scholars on migration to better understand how immigrant women with different circumstances face conflicts and negotiate their unique transnational immigrant life. A number of migration researchers focus on various aspects and areas including household or family, ethnic community, labor market, ethnic identity to just name of few, in order to understand gender relations between immigrant men and women (e.g., Espiritu, 1999; Kurien, 2003; Menjivar, 2003; Toro-Morn & Alicea, 2003; Tyner, 2003). These scholars depart from concentrated domestic fields of transnational migration study and instead focus more on various social fields in which immigrant women engaged to comprehend gender relations.

For example, Espiritu (1999) examined the gender issue among Asian immigrant women’s occupations and found that Asian immigrant women experience different gender relations based on their occupations. She divided Asian immigrant occupations into three groups, salaried professional, self-employed and entrepreneurs, and wage laborers. Then she noted that immigrant women who have a professional occupation experience more gender equality in their household, while immigrant women who are in family businesses are more isolated and suffered extra work burden with no payment.

Korean American immigrants maintain a transnational lifestyle. They are closely connected to their home country by adhering to ethnic cultures and regularly visiting
Korea while they acculturate to the new host culture. Daily lives of second generation Korean Americans are affected by ethnic cultural values due to the influence of their parents’ transnational lifestyle and a strongly bonded ethnic community such as it is the case with religious organizations. Therefore, the gender inequality originating from ethnic cultural values is pervasively maintained in these second generations and affects their American lifestyle.

The third stage of transnational feminism allows me to better understand how Korean American female students struggle with cultural oppression and how gender inequality reproduces and maintains through various social institutions such as household or family, religious community, and college. In order to pursue this goal, I focus on “women only” to study gender differences. Although I am at the third stage of transnational feminism, which emphasizes gender comparisons, my theoretical stance follows feminist Parreñas’s (2009) idea that transnational feminist study of migration should focus on “the identification not of gender’s constitution but instead on the gender inequality that control the experiences of women (and men) in the process of migration”(p.5). Many Korean American female students negatively experience underlying gender inequality. If I focus on gender differences between men’s and women’s experiences, cultural oppression and gender inequality that negatively control Korean female students American lifestyle may not be deeply explained because men’s experiences may become the frame of reference to examine and understand women’s experiences. Consequently I may not be fully exploring and understanding Korean American female students’ unique circumstances, especially in instances where Korean American male students might never experience.
The transnational feminist theoretical perspective is also linked to the aspect of biculturalism in Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s (1997) conceptual theory. For the most part transnational Korean American female students are affected by both Korean and American cultural values; therefore, they are more likely to identify themselves as bicultural. These two theoretical lenses provide an opportunity to comprehend ways of integration between two distinct cultures under circumstances of gender inequality within traditional Korean values. In particular, transnational feminism will offer a perspective on how gender inequality contributes to the discrepancy given between two cultures and can exacerbate the negative impact and establishment of their own bicultural identity.

Participants and Research Setting

Five Korean American female undergraduate students participated in this study, who were born in the United States, or had come to the United States when they were school age. I recruited Korean American female students on campus at a large, 4-year, primarily research-intensive public university in the Southeastern United States. This institution has a large student enrollment and has more than 100 student organizations, offering students many opportunities to find communities based on shared backgrounds and interests. In order to protect participants, I submitted my interview protocol to the relevant Institutional Review Board (IRB) and I adhered to its guidelines (Appendix A). After gaining approval for the study from the IRB, I contacted the multicultural affair department and the Asian American Student Union, and then asked administrative assistants to forward the email addresses of Korean American female students. In addition, to contact potential candidates via email, I advertised the study within the Korean community, such as the Korean church and local Korean market. I also asked
participants to give referrals to other possible students who meet the study criteria to obtain additional participants. To establish confidentiality, I use pseudonyms for all participants in the study.

**Emily's Background**

Emily was born in the United States. She has one older sister who was born in Korea and came to the U.S. when she was young. Currently Emily's older sister is applying to graduate school. Her parents came to the U.S. to find jobs and are currently both are entrepreneurs. After many years of marriage, Emily’s parents divorced. At home, the family speaks both Korean and English, though Korean is preferred by her parents. Therefore, Emily speaks Konglish (i.e., the mixed use of Korean and English in the same dialogue) with her parents most of the time.

Emily attended public schools during elementary and secondary education. She transferred to a new elementary school when she was in 4th grade and pursued her middle and high schools in the same area. She is Christian and used to go to a Korean-American church, however she does not go to church anymore since going to college. She lives at her parents’ house and commutes to school. During her early college years, Emily developed social friendships through associating with Korean American church members and becoming involved with Asian American associations (e.g., Chinese-American Association, Korean-American Association), but she eventually developed her own group of friends to hang out. She is now dating inter-racially. Currently, she is a junior in history.
Judy’s Background

Judy was born in the United States. Her parents finished high school in Korea. They came to the U.S. 22 years ago and settled in New York City. They moved to Florida when Judy was in 2\textsuperscript{nd} grade. She has a sister who is one year younger than her and a 5-year-old sister as well. At home, her family speaks both Korean and English, though Korean is more preferably used by her parents. Therefore, Judy also speaks Konglish with her parents most of the time.

She attended elementary, middle and high school in the same area in Florida. During elementary school, Judy was in the ESOL program (English for Speakers of Other Languages) until 3\textsuperscript{rd} grade because she could not speak English. After gaining English proficiency, she took gifted classes until middle school. In high school, she took honors and AP classes. Judy developed her social friendships with various groups of students. She hung out with Asians, Whites, and Hispanics. She really likes Spanish cultures, including the language and salsa dancing. Judy is identified as the “Asian girl who speaks Spanish” by her friends. She is dating interracially now. Currently, Judy is a senior in linguistics with minor in history and sustainability studies in college. She graduated in spring 2012.

Alex’s Background

Alex was born in the United States. Her parents went to college in Korea. They came from Korea when they were in their early 30’s and her mother was an international student when she came to the United States. Her parents did not speak English very well. Alex’s primary language is Korean because she could not speak English until she was 6 years old. At home, Alex’s family speaks both Korean and
English, though Korean is more preferably used by her parents. Since she speaks Korean very fluently, Alex speaks Korean most of the time to her parents.

Alex has a little sister who is in 12th grade and about to graduate. Alex went back to Korea to attend kindergarten, but returned to America for elementary school. She started going to private elementary school, and changed to public school when she was in 2nd grade. During high school, she went to three different high schools. Most schools she attended were predominately Caucasian and had only a few Asians. Alex took gifted classes until middle school. In high school, she took honors, AP classes, and gifted classes. Alex developed her social friendships mostly with Korean Americans. Currently, she is a junior in food science.

Mary’s Background

Mary was born in Korea and came to the United States when she was five years old with her parents and younger sister. First, her mother came to the United States by herself to finish her PhD at the University of North Carolina for environmental engineering studies, and then other family members came to the United States to be with mother. They settled in North Carolina for educational purposes, because her parents were working on post-doc programs at the University of North Carolina. They moved to Florida when Mary was in high school. During middle and high school, Mary met many Asian populations because the places where she lived were academic research areas that naturally exposed her to a very diverse group of people.

At home, the family speaks both Korean and English, though Korean is preferred by her parents. Therefore, Mary also speaks Konglish with her parents most of the time. During high school, she took AP classes and was in the honors program. She was in the National French Honor Society, the National Honor Society, and Mu Alpha Theta (a
math honor society). Mary developed her social friendships with various groups of students. During sophomore year, she joined Asian-American associations, including the Korean-American Association. She also became involved with a Korean church group and hung out with many Asians who spoke English as a primary language. Currently, she is a junior in economics and political science in college.

Grace’s Background

Grace was born in Korea. Her parents came to the U.S. for university degrees and were sent to London for a research project for one year. After their time in London, Grace and her family went back to Korea. When she was five years old, her family came to the U.S. again for her dad’s doctoral degree. Once his degree was completed, they moved to city of Tampa for her dad’s permanent job and settled there. At home, Grace speaks both Korean and English, yet Korean is more preferred by her parents. Therefore, she speaks Korean with her parents most of time.

Grace went to private Christian kindergarten and later moved to public elementary school. In addition, she went to an academically famous high school and studied very rigorously to meet school expectations. During high school, Grace was in the IB program and placed at the top of her class. Her school population consisted of a White majority; however, there also were academically successful minority students and a multicultural environment. Grace developed her social friendships through certain groups including Korean-American church members and Asian-American associations (i.e. Chinese-American association, Korean-American Association) during early college years. She, eventually, developed her own group of friends outside of these groups. She is currently dating a Korean-American. Grace is a senior in psychology.
Table 3-1. Demographic of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Scholastic year</th>
<th>Academic major</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Primary language</th>
<th>Place of birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Junior</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior(graduate)</td>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Food Science</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>English/Korean</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Economics/Political Science</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior(graduate)</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>English/Korean</td>
<td>Korea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

I conducted two rounds of in-depth semi structured interviews with each participant as the primary data gathering tool. An informed consent was signed in advance of the interview (Appendix B). Participants were told the purpose of the study, the research methodology, and potential benefits and risks. In addition, they were informed of their confidentiality right and the right to withdraw from the study at anytime. I conducted an in-depth initial interview based on an interview protocol developed based on the research questions (Appendix C). The benefit of the interview protocol is that “it makes sure that the interviewer/evaluator has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation” (Patton, 2002, p.343). In the first round of interviews, I tried to follow the interview guide to closely approach research questions within limited time, while remaining flexible so that participants had more opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences.

The first interview was designed to identify aspects concerning participants’ bicultural identity. Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997)’s theoretical framework allowed me to look closely at bicultural experiences. Thus, the first interview guide is focused on
how Korean American female students perceive two different sets of beliefs and values and negotiate them. The protocol also reflects gender issues suggested from transnational feminism as a theoretical perspective in this study. Transnational feminism, which is also connected to biculturalism, provides a lens with which to explore gender inequality originated from traditional cultural values. Based on this perspective, questions include prompts on gender issues in different social institutions such as home, ethnic community, and campus.

For the first interviews, I asked twelve open-ended questions and each interview lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview started with warm up questions on their educational backgrounds and family relationships in order to build rapport, so that the in-depth interview could be fostered naturally (Patton, 1990). All interviews were tape-recorded. Following the interview, I took notes to describe my feelings and impressions. After each interview was concluded, I transcribed and analyzed it immediately to prepare for the second interview using theoretical sampling.

Theoretical sampling is meant “to develop the researcher’s theory” (Charmaz, 2003, p.325). The purpose of theoretical sampling is to gain rich additional data to fill theoretical gaps between themes and categories, and it is conducted after preliminary findings are established. I conducted follow up interviews based on theoretical sampling (Appendix D). Theoretical sampling consisted of follow up questions on preliminary findings that developed from the first interview. For example, “facing intergenerational conflict” is a code developed after the first round of analysis, so I asked some additional questions in the second interview in order to explore “facing intergenerational conflict” further. In particular:
Last time we discussed dual cultural lives and you were saying you struggled because of cultural gaps with your parents during high school and even college years. Could you give me some examples? I would like to know more detail about what happened to you and how did you feel.” “How did you deal with your challenges?” “What did you learn from those experiences?

Follow-up interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes. Additionally I also conducted member checking after developing categories to establish validity (Appendix E). First I explained how findings emerged and how each category was interpreted in the study. Then I asked participants what they thought about the interpretations. In addition, I offered participants the opportunity to review their personal background information that I used in the study, as well as my interpretations and chosen quotations from their interviews. Each participant was compensated with a $20 gift card to a coffee company. The individual interview experiences are described next.

Emily’s First Interview

I conducted the first interview at the library studying room on Friday, February 10, 2012. She was recommended as a participant for this study by a mutual friend, and she was willing to be interviewed. In order to establish rapport, we shared personal backgrounds and exchanged small talk. Her primary language is English, but she wanted to speak and practice Korean, so we spoke Korean except during the actual interview. Even during the interview, she used some Korean words (e.g., tae-mong, toul-toul-hae) to better explain what she was trying to say.

The interview lasted 75 minutes. Emily was very excited to answer the interview questions in general; however she seemed hesitant to answer some particular questions (e.g., intergenerational conflicts, gender imbalance in Korean cultures), primarily because she had never thought about the issues deeply. After finishing the
interview, I asked her feelings about this interview. She was glad to participant because it allowed her to more openly think about her two cultural values. She referred other Korean-American female students for this study.

Emily’s Second Interview

I conducted the second interview at the library studying room on Thursday, April 19, 2012. Since it was exam study week, we reserved a room for 2 people on 4th floor, which was very quiet and comfortable place to interview. She was waiting at the library main door for this second interview and greeted me in Korean. Before we started the interview, we chatted about her summer internship and future plans in Korea. The interview was conducted in English and lasted 62 minutes. During this second interview, she seemed to be more comfortable with me and my questions. She answered well, without hesitance or ambiguity. After finishing the interview, she said that she was satisfied with this second interview because she enjoyed thinking about the question, “Who am I?” She was exciting about the third interview and was willing to conduct the last interview over the summer.

Emily’s Final Interview

I conducted the final interview after Emily came back to start the semester. For this interview, I reserved the library studying room on Tuesday, August 21, 2012. Later, the time of a meeting was changed at her request due to a personal matter. However, I could not interview her at this time and place because the library was closed when we got there. Since it was too late to go elsewhere, we sat down on a bench nearby and started the interview. It was very quiet, so I was able to interview Emily without interruption. The interview lasted 35 minutes.
During this final interview, I explained my findings and how bicultural theory was developed. She was very exciting about findings and asked me about detailed information regarding bicultural theory. In addition, she shared her thoughts and suggested her ideas to clarify what I found. Because this interview was more focused on member checking, I gave her an opportunity to review my interpretations and quotations that I used. She agreed with the interpretations and did not find any issues with the quotations. After finishing this final interview, she indicated that she was very glad to participate because it was a good opportunity for her to think deeply about her identity and her cultural life.

**Judy’s First Interview**

I conducted the first interview at the library studying room on Thursday, February 16, 2012. One of the other participants referred Judy and I sent the brief summary of the study to her. She was willing to participate in the study and excited about the topic. In order to establish rapport, we engaged in small talk. We spoke Korean, even though she was more comfortable to speak English. However, the interview was conducted in English and she was glad about that. The interview lasted 57 minutes. I began with a brief introduction of myself and the purpose of the study. I then followed with the interview protocol in order to pursue the purpose of study. During the interview, she actively answered questions and shared her thoughts and experiences. Sometimes she asked questions repeatedly when she did not understand well. After finishing the interview, she was exciting about the findings and willing to participate the second interview, even though she was graduating. Judy promised to me she would participate the second interview unless she moved to another state for her job.
Judy’s Second Interview

I conducted the second interview at the library studying room on Thursday, April 20, 2012. For this second interview, I set up the schedule on April 19, 2012, however we could not meet at that time due to her work, so we rescheduled for Thursday, April 20. Luckily, despite the University’s final exam period, we were able to book the studying room for this interview. The room was very quiet, so I could record our interview without any interruption. The interview lasted 52 minutes. During this second interview, I felt we were closer and friendly, compared to the last time because we had already established rapport to a certain point through the first interview. Judy seemed to be more confident to talk about the topic because the questions were familiar to her and she already thought about cultural identity since last time. She talked more comfortably without ambiguity during this second interview. After a little more small talk, in English this time, I conducted the interview, also in English. Upon completion of the second interview, she was really exciting about findings and asked me if she could read the results later. In addition, she promised me that she could participate the final interview over the summer. Overall, she was satisfied with this second interview and was glad to have an opportunity to think about cultural identity more deeply.

Judy’s Final Interview

I conducted Judy’s final interview after she came back in town for the beginning of classes. Although she had graduated the previous spring semester, she has remained in town. For this final interview, Judy suggested that we go somewhere off campus because of her no longer having a parking pass. For this reason, we arranged to meet at a café in a book store on Tuesday, August 21, 2012. However, I ended up not
interview her there because of her personal reason and so, we conducted the final interview in her car. The interview lasted 37 minutes.

During this final interview, I explained my findings and how bicultural theory was developed. Judy was surprised to learn about bicultural theory and was very exciting about the study findings. In addition, she actively participated in the member check. Because this interview focused more on member checking, I gave her an opportunity to review my interpretations and quotations. She was very excited about the discussion of outcomes. She read each interpretation and the quotes that I used very carefully. She agreed with all my interpretations and did not find any problems regarding the quotation I had chosen. After finishing this final interview, Judy indicated that she was very glad to participate in this study and was happy to talk about bicultural identity.

**Alex's First Interview**

I conducted the first interview at the library studying room on Wednesday, February 15, 2012. One of participants referred Alex, and I sent the brief summary of the study to her and set up the schedule. We recognized each other easily at the front door of university’s main library. The library room was located the 4th floor and was very quiet. Before beginning the interview, we talked briefly about cultures, habits, and experiences. We actually became close because we have many things in common, including Korean culture, so this rapport made both me and Alex feel comfortable and led to a successful interview. Alex spoke Korean very well, and we chatted in Korean before we actually started the first interview in English. The interview lasted 70 minutes. During the first interview, I began with a brief introduction of myself and the purpose of the study. I then followed with the interview protocol in order to pursue the purpose of study. Alex was interested in the questions because she never shared her cultural
identity with someone deeply. Sometimes, we laughed about a particular element of Korean culture because of our similar experiences. Overall, Alex was satisfied with this interview and was willing to participate in the second interview.

**Alex’s Second Interview**

I conducted the second interview at the library studying room on Monday, April 30, 2012. I had had to reschedule several times for her due to her busy work schedule. The library room was located the 2nd floor and was very quiet, so there was no problem recording the interview. The interview was conducted in English and lasted 49 minutes. Before we started the second interview, we talked in Korean about how our semesters were going. During the second interview, I started with a brief explanation of preliminary findings and talked to her about how the questions for second interview were designed. She seemed to be okay with the questions because she was familiar with the topic. Also, she felt the questions were more specific and narrow compared to those in the first interview. She satisfied with this interview because she had an opportunity to think deeply and share her thoughts. She was willing to do the final interview over the summer, even though she had planned a summer trip to Paris.

**Alex’s Final Interview**

I conducted Alex’s final interview on Friday, August 24, 2012. I scheduled the interview on August 23, 2012, however we could not meet at that time due to her not feeling well, so we rescheduled for, August 24. I reserved a library room on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} floor, which was a very quiet and comfortable place to interview. The interview lasted 35 minutes.

During the interview, I provided a brief summary of findings emerging in my study and explained the theoretical model. Then I asked her about her thoughts on the
findings. She agreed with the findings, though she asked some questions in order to clearly understand the theoretical model. She reviewed my interpretations and quotations as well as personal background information that I will use in this study. She agreed with the interpretations and had no issues with her quotations. After finishing this final interview, Alex indicated that she was very glad to participate in this study and she enjoyed working with me. Also, she shared her secret with me. She had started dating a person, yet she did not tell her mother. She is a little concerned with telling her mother she is dating now because her dating partner is non-Korean American. She asked my opinion on dating non-Korean Americans. We discussed this topic for quite a long time after the interview finished. Her life is quite exciting and she is very happy with her busy college life.

Mary’s First Interview

I conducted the first interview at the library studying room on Tuesday, February 21, 2012. Someone I knew recommended her as a participant for this study and she was willing to interview. I set up the schedule and booked a library meeting room. The room was located on the first floor and was very quiet and comfortable. I could record our interview without any interruption. Before we actually started the interview, we engaged in small talk in Korean to establish rapport. Although she spoke Korean, she felt more comfortable when she spoke English, so she was glad that she could interview in English. The interview lasted 65 minutes. I began with a brief introduction of myself and the purpose of the study, I then followed with the interview questions in order to pursue the purpose of the study. She was very interested in cultural issues. During the interview, she shared her personal experiences with me and I felt her emotional hurt while she shared her some cultural experiences. Despite her negative cultural
experiences, she kept a positive attitude and proved optimistic. After finishing the interview, she was very exciting about the results and promised to participate the second interview.

**Mary’s Second Interview**

I conducted the second interview in a classroom on Friday, April 27, 2012. We were supposed to meet on Monday, April 23, 2012, but due to her busy work schedule, the meeting was moved to Friday. When we met for this second interview at the library on Friday found that our reservation had been unexpectedly canceled for some reason. My participant suggested her classroom. The room was quiet enough to record, but there was a little echo sound in the classroom it was periodically noisy outside. Before beginning the interview, we talked in Korean about light topics such as our daily experiences. The interview lasted 53 minutes.

During the second interview, I started with a brief explanation of my preliminary findings and talked to her about how the questions for second interview were designed. Then we started the second interview in English. During interview, we were more focused on her perception and experiences. She seemed to have more confidence to talk with this topic. She elaborated on what she was talking about last time. After finishing the interview, she was very glad that she had participated because she said that it was a good opportunity to think more about cultural diversity and her identity. She also was willing to participate in the final interview over the summer. After finishing the interview, she continued to study in the classroom for her final exams.

**Mary’s Final Interview**

I conducted Mary’s final interview on Wednesday, August 22, 2012. I reserved a room on the 2nd floor of the library which was very quiet and a comfortable place to
interview. The interview lasted 40 minutes. During this interview, I provided a brief summary of findings emerging in my study and explained the theoretical model. Then I asked Mary her thoughts about the findings. She agreed with the new concept.

Since this interview focused on member checking, I gave her an opportunity to review her personal background information that I will use in the study, as well as my interpretations and chosen quotations from her interviews. She reviewed all the quotations very carefully. She seemed to dislike what she had said and wanted to change some parts. I asked her what made her uncomfortable. She indicated that her answers were too simple. Then she wanted to change some expressions to explain them more fluently in English. Since her suggestions were to make responses more clear, I allowed her to revise her quotations. Again, she reviewed her quotations very carefully and revised them to make them grammatically correct. Then she was finally satisfied with her quotations. After finishing this final interview, Mary indicated that was very glad to participate in this study and was happy to talk about challenges faced by Korean American women.

**Grace’s First Interview**

I conducted the first interview at the library studying room on Friday, February 24, 2012. One of the participants referred Grace, and I sent the brief summary of the study to her and set up the schedule. The library room was located the 2nd floor and was very quiet, so there was no any problem regarding recording. Before beginning the interview, we talked briefly about cultures, habits, and her boyfriend. Grace spoke Korean very well and we chatted easily in Korean before we actually started the first interview in English.
The interview lasted 90 minutes. During the first interview, I provided a brief introduction of the study and then followed with the interview protocol. She seemed to have difficulty responding to some of questions, so I asked her feelings about these questions. She said she never thought about Korean and American cultural influences because these two cultures always stay with her, just like air she breathes. She had never thought deeply or share her feelings about this topic with anyone before. The interview provided a good opportunity for her to think about “who am I?” and she was glad about that. The interview ended successfully and I believe it was great opportunity to better understand and gain insight to the life of this young Korean-American woman. After finishing the interview, she said she was willing to participate in the second interview. Although she is going to graduate early this semester and has already been admitted to a graduate program at another university, she wanted to interview even though Skype or email.

**Grace’s Second Interview**

I conducted the second interview at the library meeting room on Tuesday, May 1, 2012. I contacted her to set up the time for the second interview and I got an email from her two weeks later saying I could schedule the interview. The library room was located on the 2nd floor and was very quiet. Therefore, there was no issue regarding recording. Before beginning the interview, we talked about her graduation and a new school for a graduate program in Korean. The interview lasted 57 minutes. During the second interview, I started with a brief explanation of preliminary findings and talked to her about how the questions for second interview were developed. Then we started the second interview in English. During the interview, she explained her experiences more deeply and elaborated on her ideas, which developed from last interview. She seemed
to enjoy talking about this topic more in the second interview. After finishing the
interview, she said that she surprised herself with what she was saying because she
had never expressed her thoughts that deeply and seriously about cultural identity.
From the interview, she learned how she understood bi-cultural identity and she was
proud of herself and what she believed. She is willing to participate in the final interview,
though she is leaving for her graduate program Chicago in the summer. She gave a
permanent email address for contact later. Overall, this interview was successful both
for me and my participant.

Grace’s Final Interview

For Grace, I conducted the final interview via email. Since she is no longer in town
due to her graduate program, I could not conduct the interview in person. I emailed her
on Monday, August 13, 2012 for the final interview and explained several options for
this interview (e.g., Skype, email, and phone). Since she wanted to review data via
email, I sent her the personal background information that I would be using, as well as
quotations and interpretations that I will use for this study. She shared her feelings and
thoughts on all of these. She was very interested to read through everything again.
Because she felt everything was as she said during the interview, she indicated that
nothing needed to be changed. She also agreed with my interpretations. Additionally,
Grace shared her thoughts on the interview experience. She said:

The interview experience was overall pretty positive. I was able to reflect
more on how my life circumstances changed the way I identify myself. I got
to laugh at some things, think over some things, and even regret some
things. I was also able to re-evaluate myself on my progress to discovering
my self-identity and also my progress towards certain goals.

Grace is busy adjusting to her new campus life and pursuing her academic goals.
Table 3-2. Data collection timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>First interview</th>
<th>Second interview</th>
<th>Third interview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>(Member checking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>February 10, 2012 (75min)</td>
<td>April 19, 2012 (62min)</td>
<td>August 21, 2012 (35min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>February 16, 2012 (57min)</td>
<td>April 20, 2012 (52min)</td>
<td>August 21, 2012 (37min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>February 15, 2012 (70min)</td>
<td>April 30, 2012 (49min)</td>
<td>August 24, 2012 (35min)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>February 21, 2012 (65min)</td>
<td>April 27, 2012 (53min)</td>
<td>August 22, 2012 (40min)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>February 24, 2012 (90min)</td>
<td>May 1, 2012 (57min)</td>
<td>August 13, 2012 (Email)</td>
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Data Analysis

Grounded theory data analysis was used in this study. Grounded theory was developed by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the mid-1960’s (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). There are several types of grounded theory designs, such as positivist, post positivist, constructivist, objectivist, postmodern, situational, and computer assisted, that have been developed (Charmaz, 2006). In this study, I adopted Charmaz’s constructivist grounded theory and its guideline as described below.

Glaser’s version of grounded theory underscores “logic, analytic procedures, comparative methods, and conceptual development and assumptions of an external but discernible world, unbiased observer, and dissevered theory” (Charmaz, 2005, p.508). Strauss and Corbin’s version of grounded theory, on the other hand, addresses “meaning, action, and process, consistent with his intellectual roots in pragmatism and symbolic interactionism” (p.509). Strauss and Corbin as well as Glaser draw upon objectivist assumptions established in positivism (Charmaz, 2005). Charmaz avoided this positivist grounded theory and developed a more “open-ended practice of grounded theory” (Clake, 2005, xxiii). Constructivist grounded theory assumes that there exists
multiple realities and by mutually interacting between the researcher and research participants, multiple subjective realities are constructed (Charmaz, 2009).

Based on Charmaz’s approach, grounded theory provides “visible, comprehensible, and replicable” processes and procedures (Brant & Charmaz, 2010, p.33). The coding in the grounded theory plays a vital role for researchers to generate emerging themes. Coding is categorizing and summarizing each piece of data by naming segments with a label (Charmaz, 2006) and through this coding, researchers can “define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means” (p.46). There are three phases of coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998) or Charmaz’s (2006) initial coding and focused coding.

The first step of coding starts with breaking the data into micro level units of meaning by going word-by-word, line-by-line, or incident-to-incident (Charmaz, 2006), and look closely at each meaning unit to see “What is this data a study of?”, “What category does this incident indicate?”, and “What is actually happening in the data?” (Glaser, 1978, p.57). In particular, line-by-line coding allows the researcher to continuously reexamine the meaning that is made from the data by asking themselves questions, and identifying gaps and directions in it for the purpose of further focusing subsequent data collection (Charmaz, 2000). The second phase of coding finds frequent and significant codes exposed in the earlier codes, which are then grouped and synthesized (Charmaz, 2006). During this coding, researchers perform more complex strategies such as comparison of similarities and differences, or finding causes and results, and try to select the most significant categories based on the relationships,
and then develop emerging ideas. The final step of coding is the practice of combining and refining the theory (Struss & Corbin, 1998). Through this final stage, the scheme is reviewed for internal uniformity and for gaps in the logic, completing undeveloped and removing excess categories, which validates and refines the theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Grounded theory is based heavily on conceptual and theoretical analysis. Grounded theory is not about “the accuracy of description units” (Holton, 2010, p.272). Instead, it is aimed at “conceptual abstraction” (p.272). This conceptual abstraction is achieved through two methods: Memo writing and theoretical sampling. Memo writing is characterized as the transitional step of connecting the coding and the first draft of the analysis (Chamaz, 2000). It is the notes on the data, as well as the links between the categories that elevate this continual process to a conceptual level (Holton, 2010). By using constant comparisons, the descriptive level of memo writing can be more abstract and theoretical.

Theoretical sampling, which is not intended to increase the original sample sizes, but only to refine ideas, develops emerging categories, making them more definitive and valuable (Chamaz, 2000). Theoretical sampling is based on emerging concepts from the analysis that display relevance to the developing theory (Straus & Corbin, 1998). Memo writing allows researchers to quickly identify where their research is lacking, as well as parts of their research that need more analysis. By performing theoretical sampling, researchers are able to identify areas that can be studied to help fill the gaps of the findings and to ensure that everything is covered adequately (Chamaz, 2006).
Data Analysis in This Study

After interviews were transcribed, I started the initial coding of data. I read each interview transcript several times before I started coding so that I was able to more clearly understand the data. I broke the transcripts down line-by-line to find meaning units and gave each segment a name. As Charmaz (2005, 2006) suggested, the initial coding was very descriptive and close to the data. In the second round, focused coding, I continually compared and contrasted each initial code, and attempted to interpret their relationships from various different angles in order to move this descriptive level of coding to the more conceptual level (Charmaz, 2005, 2006). Key categories emerged through this focused coding process. For example, the initial codes of “being expected to support siblings,” “being expected to support elderly parents,” “having pressure for job security,” “gender role imbalance,” “negative Korean culture,” and “refusing to adopt Korean culture” were later fine-tuned as the focused code of “preconceived gender role expectations.”

Another group of initial codes of “dating and marriage as critical issue,” “having certain expectations on dating and marriage,” and “being judged a partner based on Korean culture” later developed into the focused code of “restricted to social relationships.” Another set of initial codes were similar in nature: “body image controlled by parents,” “body image controlled by Korean community,” “facing internal struggles,” and “avoiding gossips.” I developed these codes into the focused code of “personal appearance.” I interpreted that Korean American female students in this study perceived negative gender expectations, which are particularly related to Korean traditional values. The differences between Korean culture and American culture provoked internal struggle. So I combined these three focused codes into a selective code of “facing
gender expectations.” Other selective codes were developed in a similar manner. As a result, four selective codes in relation to “relationships” emerged during the analysis, including “lack of cross cultural social relationships,” “facing racial stereotypes,” “experiencing power relations,” and “facing gender expectations.”

I continually interpreted that Korean American female students recognized differences between the two sets of cultural values because they were simultaneously exposed to traditional and mainstream cultures. Students perceived strong parental expectations of their social relationships. They felt restricted in their intimate relationships by their parents. The restriction of their social lives gave rise to intergenerational conflicts. In addition, these students were aware of racial stereotypes of Asian culture as they interacted with various people. Therefore, these students’ social relationships were affected by their Korean cultural values, their parents’ expectations, and racial stereotypes. These experiences affected their social lives during college. In particular, these Korean American students tended to be very selective about their social relationships (e.g., Korean American) and consequently may have had fewer cross cultural social relationships. All aspects hindered these Korean American students’ efforts to integrate into their campus community, and further American society. Therefore, these four selective codes were conceptually categorized as one and named “lack of social integration.” for theory development.

Other focused coding groups also were put into selective coding categories and named “forming cultural identity based on environment that Korean American belong to,” “exposing cultural diversity,” “experiencing independence,” and “balancing two cultures to minimize cultural conflicts.” These selective themes were continually
compared to look for relationships. I read the data again and reviewed initial and focused codes. Later three selective codes, including “forming cultural identity based on environment that Korean American belong to,” “exposing cultural diversity,” and “experiencing independence” in relation to cultural environments were combined as “cultural exposure.” Likewise, the selective code of “balancing two cultures to minimize cultural conflicts” was conceptually re-categorized as “cultural negotiation.”

Through this analysis process, three key aspects regarding these Korean American students’ cultural identity emerged for the theory development: “cultural exposure,” “lack of social integration,” and “cultural negotiation.” I theorized that being bicultural, Korean American students develop their own cultural identity by not only interacting with cultural environments that they belong to, but also negotiating their own cultural challenges. More specifically, these Korean American students’ cultural identity was affected by the primary cultures that they belong to. Thus, assimilating to the school culture was critical for developing their identity during high school, while experiencing the independence that is allowed by the cultural diversity on a college campus was more salient during their college years.

In addition, their identity was strengthened by negotiating their own cultural circumstances. Korean culture contributed to a “lack of social integration” to American society and created emotional tensions. However, I found that cultural struggling accompanied actions such as negotiating cultural challenges. The “cultural negotiation” in this study refers to integration between two cultures. Therefore, “cultural negotiation” was identified as another necessity for developing their own bicultural identity, and it
allowed them to look closely at their own cultural circumstances. It influenced these students in developing their own identities as Korean American.

While I developed key categories from the first interview, I wrote notes to myself about the process in memos. At the beginning, the memo was simple and non-analytic. I just noted emerging ideas and questions I had when I read the data. Then I tried to write analytic notes after starting the initial coding, in order to keep track of thoughts and questions I had during the analysis process. I continually wrote memos as I compared each point of data and then revised these notes after preliminary findings started to emerge. After doing two rounds of coding, initial and focused, and writing memos about the process and findings, I sorted my memo notes to discover relationships among categories. From there I developed preliminary findings.

However, I identified some theoretical gaps among categories. For instance, the category of “having sense of independence” emerged as a category in the first interview, yet it was not clearly identified. I felt I needed more data to identify this theme. In order to gain additional information about categories and fill in some theoretical gaps, I conducted a second interview utilizing theoretical sampling. All questions in the second interviews were based on preliminary findings.

For example, from the preliminary findings, I hypothesized that female Korean American undergraduate students go through “independence” during their college years. So I asked each participant additional questions based on categories that emerged from focused coding of data from initial interviews. Through theoretical sampling, I was able to obtain more detailed information on their thoughts regarding cultural identity. The process of analysis of theoretical sampling was applied in the
same way as the first interview. After I analyzed the second interviews, the category of “having sense of independence” was more clearly identified and an additional category, “confusion associated with independence,” emerged. Ultimately, three focused codes, including “having sense of independence,” “confusion associated with independence,” and “seeking outside help” were re-categorized as one and named “experiencing independence.” These categories and three aspects of bicultural identity development will be explained further in Chapter 4.

Member Checking

I conducted member checks during the second interview and the final interview. First, I provided participants with a copy of preliminary findings during the second interview. I explained how these preliminary findings emerged and how each category was interpreted in the study. Then I asked them what they thought about the interpretations before I started the second interview. Some questions for the second interview were created as a result of doing member checking, though most questions were prepared based on preliminary findings to fill theoretical gaps.

Most students agreed with my interpretations. However, some participants wanted to more clearly understand some of categories. For example, I found students changed their identity in different settings. So I developed a category, “changing cultural identity to negotiate bicultural life.” When I discussed this category with my participants, some students were confused with this finding, and some of them disagreed with this idea. Alex said:

I think I’m the same either when I’m home or out. If I’m home I’m Korean American; if I’m outside I’m Korean American so, it’s just when, I feel like this person probably said something like that because when they’re home they’re by themselves and they don’t have to, they think they’re more American because when you’re by yourself you can identify yourself as
American but when you’re out there with everyone else then you probably see yourself as more Korean. I don’t agree with it. I think I’m Korean American whether I’m home or outside.

I found that I needed to explain this category more specifically in order for it to be more specific and easily understood. So my participants and I discussed this category to obtain additional information during the second interview. Then, this category emerged more clearly after I had detailed information from them. For instance, initially Mary described her feeling like, “If I am home, I’m more like American but in public I see myself as more Korean.” I discussed this finding with Mary and asked Mary her thoughts about this idea in the second interview. She described her feelings as follows:

Yea I guess it’s like earlier when I said I change based on my surroundings. When I’m home even though I feel more American I act more Korean. Actually that’s not true, I act the same but I feel more American. I don’t know, I don’t think culture issues are that big of a conflict, at least not recently.

As a result of the interviews, I thought that participants were acting differently (e.g., “I act more Korean”) in public than in their home and ethnic community. Then I realized that participants were not changing their identity, but switching their behaviors in different settings in order to minimize cultural conflicts. Consequently, I revised the category “changing cultural identity” to “switching cultural behavior.”

The final interview focused more on member checking to validate the accuracy of interview statements, and I invited participants to discuss the emerging theory. Since I gave students time to review preliminary findings during the previous interview, there were no major revisions to interpretations or findings. Through this final interview, participants had an opportunity to check all personal background information and quotations that I would be using in this study. Also, I introduced the emerging new
theory and explained diagrams with categories. The students indicated that they were satisfied with the accuracy of the quotations, and they agreed with my interpretations.

However, one participant, Mary, wanted to change her interview statements. After she reviewed her quotes, she did not like some expressions, such as “…I don’t need to show them [professors] as much respect….” She believed that this was not what she intended to say, so she asked to change this quote. The following is her original statement:

If I am around a lot of Korean elders, I do really show a lot more respect and I try to integrate my Korean culture a lot more and attempt to speak Korean and be a lot more polite. If I'm around my professor around [University], I don’t need to show them as much respect, not that I don’t but my body language reflects my surroundings. It just depends on where I am.

The following is Mary’s revised quote:

If I am around a lot of Korean elders, my body language reflects my Korean culture. I bow in front of them and I am submissive in my manner. Also I attempt to speak Korean and be a lot more polite. If I’m around my professor around university, I have the same level of respect but I am more casual and open with them. My body language changes depending on my cultural surrounding.

These two statements are very similar, but second quote more clearly described what she wanted to say, and therefore gives a stronger explanation of her intent. It is also therefore more supportive of my finding, “switching cultural behavior.”

**Validity**

Establishing and applying validity criteria in order to evaluate outcomes are both necessary and critical in qualitative study. Reliability and validity are commonly used as criteria for evaluating quantitative study. Reliability is assumed that “the same results would be obtained if the study were replicated” and validity is assumed that “the results accurately reflect the phenomenon studied” (Richards & Morse, p. 190, 2007). Some
scholars argue that qualitative research cannot apply these criteria to evaluate outcomes and therefore they suggested new criteria for qualitative research (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Many qualitative validity criteria have been developed during the past 30 years (Mayan, 2009).

For this study, I adopted Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) validity criteria for evaluating my work. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four validity criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. However, these validity criteria have a limitation in that the idea of these criteria came from traditional positivist assumptions. They translated four quantitative validity criteria (e.g., internal validity, external validity, reliability, dependability) to their alternative validity, which was trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Nevertheless, Lincoln and Guba’s criteria contain important aspects that qualitative researchers should understand regarding ontological and epistemological assumptions of qualitative inquiry, and their outcomes should be applied based on this research paradigm.

This study used constructivist grounded theory during analysis and therefore the ontological and epistemological positions of the constructivist perspective were considered while I used these criteria. First, the ontological position of the constructivist view asks, “What is there that can be known?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.83). From ontologically relativist constructivism, there are multiple socially constructed realities and these realities are not governed by natural laws (Guba, 1987). This means that there is no single concrete reality (Guba, 1990). Instead, many unique realities exist, as individuals produce their own as a response to their distinct experiences and perspectives (Hatch, 2002).
The epistemological position of the constructivist view asks, “What is the relationship of the knower to the known?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.83). From epistemologically subjectivist constructivism, a researcher cannot be separated from research participants (Guba, 1987). Rather, by mutually engaging, they construct multiple subjective realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). The researcher continually interacts and communicates with research participants throughout the research process, and by doing so, multiple realities are constructed. Consequently, realities in the constructivist perspective are not created but constructed (Crotty, 1998).

Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) four criteria are accomplished through a variety of means, including prolonged engagement, member checking, thick description, audit trial, theoretical sampling, and peer review. Credibility associated with internal validity evaluates “whether the findings make sense and if they are an accurate representation of participants and/or data” (Mayan, 2009, p.102). It can be accomplished through a variety of means, including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, member checking, validation, and co-analysis (Morrow, 2005). To enhance credibility in this study, I used prolonged engagement, member checking, and peer review. Prolonged engagement is one of the ways to build up trust with participants (Glesne, 1999). Prolonged engagement is “the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes: learning the ‘culture,’ testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or of the respondents, and building trust” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.301). By visiting often and engaging the participants, the researchers are able to establish strong a relationship, as well as to have a chance to obtain extra in-depth sources. In my study, I interviewed five
participants two times. Multiple interviews gave me an opportunity to establish close relationships and to allow them to feel comfortable enough to share their thoughts and beliefs. By having multiple interviews, I could obtain credible interview data.

Member checking is another common strategy used by qualitative researchers to evaluate their study. Lincoln & Guba (1985) describe the member check, “whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stake holding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p.314). The member check shifts the validity procedure from the researcher to the participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Because the epistemological position of the constructivist perspective desires the mutual engagement between the researchers and participates, the member checking is a valuable procedure. By giving an opportunity for participants to review quotations and evaluate the interpretation, researchers and participants can construct meaning together, through which they achieve more a precise interpretation of data. Ultimately, the study can build up credibility. In my study, I discussed findings and quotations with participants and gave them a chance to share their thoughts. Findings, as well as any quotations, were reviewed during the second interview and before the finalization of my codes to ultimate themes.

Peer review is characterized as having someone familiar with the study of the phenomenon explored review the research process and the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). It provides researchers with multiple lenses during their analysis process, and helps them to avoid a self-justified attitude while embracing a variety of perspectives so that their study establishes credibility. In my study, I worked with my committee
members continually and used the feedback and comments they offered. Also I shared
analysis and findings with other doctoral students who were conducting qualitative
studies and offered feedback.

Dependability and conformability can be established by auditing (Lincoln & Guba,
1985). The purpose of auditing is “to examine both the process and product of inquiry,
and determine the trustworthiness of the findings” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.128). In
order to conduct an external audit, a person outside of the research is asked to
thoroughly review the study, and to then write a report on the study’s strengths and
weaknesses (Creswell, 2008). It needs documenting of data analysis as well as data
collection in order for outside auditor to review the methodological process of the study.
To establish these criteria, I provided detailed explanations of data collection and data
analysis process after having methodological feedback from my committee members.
Also, the coding trial is included as appendices for potential readers to review this
document. Additionally, I offered my subjectivity statement in the chapter so that
readers can have an opportunity to consider the influence of my experiences on my
interpretation of the data.

For the establishment of transferability, “the naturalist cannot specify the external
validity of an inquiry; he or she can provide only the thick description necessary to
enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether
transfer can be contemplated as a possibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.316). To
establish transferability in the study, the researcher offers adequate information
including the researcher, the research context, as well as the process, participants, and
relationships between the researcher and participants, in order for the reader to
determine how the findings of the research may transfer (Morrow, 2005). In my study, I am less interested in generalizability because I believe that my findings cannot be directly applied to other minorities from different contexts. However, I provided a full description of the participants and I described the data collection and analysis process in detail in order to help potential readers better understand this study and guide educators who are interested in diversity issues in higher education.

**Subjectivity Statement**

I was born and spent my childhood and adolescence in Korea. My way of life was influenced by the expectations of both Korean society and family, which were controlled by Confucius ideology. From these sources I learned my roles and responsibilities as a daughter and as a woman. There was no uncertainty as I attempted to define myself. After I came to the United States, I was not confused because I knew who I was, and what I was supposed to do. I identified myself as a Korean woman who had a strong cultural heritage, and I attempted to express my cultural values through the celebration of Korean traditional holidays, cooking Korean food, and speaking Korean. I lived as a Korean in American society.

After having a child, the bicultural issue became more salient to my life. As a first-generation mother who was born in Korea and influenced strongly by Koran culture, I will raise my daughter as a Korean; however, I also know that she will naturally grow up as an American. She might be faced with circumstances related to her race and ethnicity, and find it difficult to identify and resolve her own identity. Navigating a bicultural identity may make it difficult for her to live in American society. She could embrace and integrate both cultural heritages and develop her own positive identity, yet she could also struggle with the conflict between her identities and reject her Korean
cultural values. If I cannot understand my daughter’s circumstances, I cannot help her.

This concern has prompted my study of Korean American female students.

Second-generation Korean women are heavily influenced by their parent’s beliefs and by Korean culture. Though, at the same time, they also develop an American cultural identity as American women. While both cultural identities can be reconciled, Korean American female students may be faced with psychological, academic, and social challenges, even though society has a positive image of these students. Today, Asian American students live with stereotypes. Most stereotypes result from Asian cultural values, which have some opposite aspects of western cultural heritages. Many Korean American college students are not immune to stereotypes and cultural conflicts, and struggle with feeling invisible on campus. In some sense, college students are perceived as mature individuals; however, they are still immature young adults who need help developing their own life. The college period plays a vital role for some second generation Asian students to prepare for being members of a diverse American society. In other words, campus is a buffer zone for these college students to learn cultural diversity and establish their own identity. Unfortunately, many college students continually struggle with their cultural circumstances without educational help. In order to support them, understanding their life is critical and providing knowledge is necessary. I feel that it is necessary to encourage college and university administrators to recognize the circumstances of Asian American college students, so that administrators can consider the various challenges that face these different populations when they design support programs.
My experiences as a Korean, a mother, and a woman who has developed my own unique perspectives, this has led me to want to understand Korean American female undergraduate students’ experiences deeply. I hope that this qualitative study can help educators to understand Asian American female students with more empathy and insight.

Limitations

There are some limitations in this study that the reader should take into consideration. As a qualitative researcher, I am less interested in the generalizability of my study. Even though I developed a new theory on Korean American women students from my study, it cannot be directly applied to Korean women students from different colleges and universities or other ethnic women students. Potential participants cannot be representative of all Korean American or all Asian American women college students due to their uniqueness. However, my study would guide and support future researchers, who are interested in a study pertaining to Asian American women students, as they design their own research and develop research questions.

Also, interview data is sometimes limited in understanding participants’ whole experiences. Conversation frequently is affected by unexpected factors such as participants’ emotions or discomfort in the interviews. Although I tried to establish rapport before data collection, it would be limited with, as the participants are being asked to share their life experiences with a researcher. In addition, because the interview is audio recorded, transcriptions may not be fully reflected non-verbal communication displayed, and consequently I may miss some meaningful reactions that my participants provide. To overcome this limitation, detailed note-taking accompanied the interview recording.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

This study aims to understand how Korean American female undergraduate students construct their own cultural identities from their perspectives. More specifically, this study sought to examine how these students negotiated and developed their bi-cultural identities. Findings from the study provide a lens with which to view Korean American women who develop their identities within both Korean and American cultures.

Overview of Findings

The interpretation of findings is guided by Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s (1997) bicultural theory and transnational feminism. These two theoretical lenses provided an opportunity to understand ways of integration between two distinct cultures under circumstances of gender inequality within traditional Korean values, and ultimately the development of bicultural identity. Transnational feminism allowed me to better understand how Korean American female students may struggle with cultural oppression and how gender inequality persists through various social institutions such as one’s household and religious community. From this study, participants are strongly affected by Korean cultural values from their parents and community, yet their Korean cultural values are often perceived by these women students negatively. In particular, these students suffered from emotional struggles when they perceived traditional gender expectations within traditional Korean values controlling their social life. However, they negotiated these and other cultural circumstances and developed their own cultural identity.
Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) suggested that individuals are either blended bicultural or alternating bicultural. According to Phinney and Devich-Navarro, blended biculturals have positive feelings about being American as well as a strong sense of their ethnicity. Thus, they identified themselves as equally ethnic and American, though the sense of being American is more salient for these students in developing their bicultural identity. In contrast, alternating bicultural individuals alter their identity in different social contexts such as their school or home. These individuals have a strong sense of connectedness to their ethnic culture while simultaneously having a positive feeling of the American culture. In this study, participants were identified as blended bicultural during their college years, in that they considered their two cultures as equally valuable and established their cultural identity with these two cultures.

Figure 4-1 presents the model that emerged from the data in this study. The model illustrates the way of acquiring a bicultural identity by participant Korean American female students. From the study, the cultural Identity of the Korean Americans is affected by cultural exposure. In this regard, their identity was affected by 1) cultural environments that they belong to, 2) experiencing independence from parents, and 3) being exposed to ethnic diversity. During the high school years, these Korean American female students did not perceive a necessity to critically explore their identity because they were relatively little exposed to cultural identity issues at this time. As a result, these students did not have an opportunity to deeply understand “Who am I?” Instead, they were more likely to develop an identity in order to assimilate to the primary culture that they belong to. As a result, Korean American students in this study identified
themselves as either Asian (Korean) or American, depending on how much they were exposed to their ethnic culture or to the American culture.

However, participants identified themselves biculturally as Korean American during their college years. These students not only obtained physically independent status as they move out from their parents' house for college attendance, but also were expected to grow as independent women. Experiencing independence allowed these women students to separate themselves from drastic influence of traditional cultural values from their parents, and gave them an opportunity to develop their own thoughts. Students with a sense of independence had more opportunities to make their own decisions and thus to create their own cultural perspectives, though they faced confusion caused by the drastic change from being controlled to being independent. Since most participants were separated from their parents while in college, as they learned to grow as an interdependent person, they began to look closely at their own cultural circumstances and criticize negatively perceived cultural differences with their own thoughts and beliefs.

During the college years, Korean American participants were more exposed to a culturally diverse environment. They were aware of multiculturalism as salient when participating in various campus activities (e.g., class discussion, Asian undergraduate student organizations, etc.) in which students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds were involved. These students then sought to answer the question, “Who am I?” while they interacted with others on campus. Experiencing ethnic diversity in college contributed to these women actively exploring their own cultural identities. Their simplistic views of race became more sophisticated. As a result, participants clearly
identified themselves as “Korean American” rather than simply “Korean” or “American” as during their high school years.

The cultural identity of the Korean Americans was also affected by their own challenges. These students developed their own perspectives on identity by looking closely at their own cultural circumstances. In this regard, there are four identified categories: 1) facing gender expectations, 2) experiencing power relations, 3) facing stereotypical image of Asians, and 4) lack of cross cultural social relationships. In particular, the subcategory of facing gender expectations includes three key aspects: preconceived gender role expectations, restricted social relationships, and personal appearance. For example, Korean American women participants perceived distinctions between their home culture and mainstream culture. At home, they frequently faced negative gender expectations caused by traditional values. Specifically, these students as women struggled with preconceived gender role expectations, restricted social relationships (e.g., intimate partner), and body image and physical appearance messages from their parents and ethnic community. In addition, these students were faced with intergenerational conflicts often caused by hierarchical relationships. As a result they experienced internal conflicts with their parents.

Outside home, Korean American participants struggled with their racial image. Although Asian stereotypes affected their lives positively to some extent due to their model minority image (e.g., academic success), these students felt frustrated when they felt they were considered foreigners by the mainstream. Experiences of cultural distinction and racial bias discouraged these women students from developing cross cultural relationships. Young Korean American women in this study felt more
comfortable with Asian Americans or specifically Korean Americans with whom they could share their cultural values and their cultural struggles. Consequently, these students were very selective and limited in their social relationships during their college years. All of these aspects hindered these Korean American students’ efforts to integrate into their campus community, and further American society.

However, looking at their own challenges allowed these students to learn where they stood as a bicultural individual between two cultures and how they were able to negotiate their dual cultural lifestyle. Therefore, the bicultural Identity of the Korean American students was strengthened by negotiating their own cultural circumstances. Cultural negotiation included five aspects: 1) managing cultural conflicts with parents, 2) overcoming struggles related to religious beliefs, 3) making up for negative cultural values, 4) switching cultural behaviors, and 5) maintaining their ethnic language. This study found that Korean American students did not ignore their own cultural struggles. Instead, they tried to negotiate their challenges in their own ways and thus strengthened their own bicultural identity.

In order to integrate their two cultures, Korean Americans in this study learned to use their own perspectives to overcome intergenerational conflicts rather than just obeying their parents’ opinions, so that they could learn to maintain healthy relationships with others. Also, these students learned to overcome the cultural challenges through their religious beliefs. In particular, Korean ethnic church played a critical role for these women to better understand their Korean values and community. Moreover, young Korean Americans in this study enhanced cultural values in their daily lives based on what they wanted to adopt from both American and Korean cultures.
More specifically, these students enhanced positively-perceived values of one culture to make up for negative aspects of the other culture in their lives. In addition, they often switch their cultural behaviors within different settings in order to decrease cultural conflicts. Also, these Korean Americans maintained Korean language fluency or spoke Konglish (i.e., the mixed use of Korean and English in the same dialogue) to better communicate with other Koreans who lack English proficiency, thus creating another bicultural bridge. More details of each of these themes will be presented in the following section.

Figure 4-1. Theoretical model: Korean American students’ bicultural identity development

**Cultural Exposure**

The cultural Identities of the Korean American students in this study are affected by their cultural environments. Participant students’ cultural belonging is affected by 1) their immediate cultural environments, 2) experiencing independence, and 3) being exposed to ethnic diversity. During high school, school culture discouraged these
students from critically thinking about their identity. They identified themselves either as Americans or Asians/Koreans, depending on how much they were exposed to their ethnic culture or to American culture. In other words, these students assimilated to the primary culture that they belonged to. However, their cultural identity became more salient and sophisticated as these students were exposed to more culturally and ethnically diverse environments in college. In essence, campus culture gave these students an opportunity to develop their own perspectives and experience independence so that they might enhance their identity as Korean American. For these students, the bicultural identity was not salient during high school years; instead, it emerged and developed as they attended college. The following section describes how cultural environments affected the identity of these Korean American students, and how their bicultural identity emerged during their college years.

**Cultural Environments Affecting Identity**

Most participants in this study did not perceive a necessity to explore or challenge themselves or their identities during their high school years. Their experiences revolved around parental supervision, their daily routines, and accomplishing academic goals, with little exposure to cultural identity issues. Emily discussed how hard it was to think about cultural identity during high school. She said:

> If you are really enlightened at that age [during high school] then more power to you. I think that’s great when you start to challenge your roots at that age, but not a lot of people do because it’s not a topic that comes up in high school. There aren’t a lot of brown bag lunch series, or discussions or lectures of people challenging your view points or challenging you or your moral stances in high school because everything really seems like a rigid curriculum and people are just trying to get from high school to college.

Emily identified herself as Korean during high school. Although she lived within two cultures at that time, neither the American nor the Korean culture was more salient or
significant in her identity during high school. Because her school life was reutilized and predictable, she did not feel any need to explore her cultural identity. Emily perceived herself as Korean simply because she was hanging out with more Koreans at the time.

Like Emily, other Korean American participants did not have a need to challenge their cultural identity during their high school years. Their cultural identity during this time is often developed in order to assimilate to the primary culture that they belong to. Grace identified herself as Asian. She mainly hung out with different ethnic Asians (e.g., Vietnamese, Korean, and Chinese) during high school. Because the IB program at her high school had students from various Asian backgrounds, she naturally gravitated towards them and spent most of her time with them. Similarly, Alex developed her friendships with “whoever was in my class” during high school. However, because there were not many Asian students in her school, she had social relationships within the various racial peer groups in her classroom. In this case, race was not a prevalent issue in developing her social relationships and she was able to develop friendships with students from a variety of racial backgrounds. As a result, she more closely identified herself as American, yet she still perceived Korean aspects of her identity. Alex identified herself as American during high school. Because she was the only Korean in her school, “resources for learning about Korean society were very limited.” This limitation discouraged Alex from developing her Korean identity, even though she experienced aspects of Korean culture through her parents. Alex said, “I didn’t really think about needing to show that I was Korean [during high school]…at times it was hard to express that I was Korean because other people don’t understand what that meant…[so] I didn’t have to talk about it at school.”
Experiencing Independence from Parents

Korean American participants were expected to become independent as they attended college. These students not only obtained physically independence as they move out from their parents' house to go to college, but also were expected to grow as independent women. Experiencing independence made it possible for these women students to separate themselves from the drastic influence of traditional cultural values from their parents, and gave them an opportunity to develop their own thoughts, make decisions, and take responsibility for those decisions. Consequently they created their own cultural life during their college years. In a sense, this experience contributed to feelings of confusion during early college years because of the drastic change from being controlled by their parents up until that point. To be successfully independent, these Korean American students sought outside support. The following section described how Korean American participants obtained independence from their parents and developed their own perspectives.

Having a sense of independence

These young Korean American women experienced less parental control and more independence after leaving their parents’ houses to attend college. Establishing trust as they became independent was crucial for these students because their parents did not trust them and would not let them do things on their own during high school. However, these parents allowed their children to live on their own and supported them during college. They accepted that their children were growing into independent individuals, rather than trying to maintain the same amount of control and authority. Therefore, some participants perceived that their parents’ influence on their life changed during their college years. Grace realized that her parents gave her room to grow
independently and took her own decisions into consideration when she went to college. She perceived that her parents’ role became more to “support” and “guide” than “direct” during her college years. She said:

The really weird thing is that after I left to college I thought they [my parents] would be really strict and tell me when to come home or do this or do that. But they told me that they trusted me to make my own decisions. So like with money they trust that I would manage it well and social life, they trust that I would manage myself well and not do stupid things like do drugs or something like that. Yea, it’s been strange but I think I'm really thankful for them entrusting me.

Similarly, Emily also appreciated that her parents regarded her as an independent person when she went to college. She had struggled emotionally with her parents due to their tight control over her social life during high school. However, her feelings changed as her parents grew to support her, saying, “You really need to pick whatever you want to do in life and we'll support you.” However, in some cases, the parents’ authority remained unchanged even though these Korean American female students were in college. Yet, in these cases, the control shifted to new areas. Alex described the different types of parental control. She said:

In high school the parents’ control was more on different things. She, right now in college, parents’ control is like ‘Oh, what do I need to do in the future, where do I need to live in the future, when I need to get married.’ But in high school it was like ‘Where do I need to go to college, what time do I need to come home.’

Nonetheless, parental authority during college in some ways was more flexible. The control changed into “coaching” in certain areas, but at the same time, these students were allowed to be independent and the parents’ authority was more moderate. In other words, controlling behaviors were minimized and more “flexibility” was offered. Mary perceived that her parents influenced her academic pursuits even during college. Because her parents obtained their doctoral degrees in the U.S., they
were able to advise her on how to choose an academic major, and eventually achieve self-sufficiency through her own decisions. However, Mary did not always follow the advice that her parents offered because, she said, “I’m getting older, getting to a point where I’m going to start making my own decisions in my life.” Mary’s parents tried to influence her academic decisions, yet they also considered Mary’s personal growth and respected her decisions. She said:

I live with my parents and they’re in the same town. So they still put a lot of pressure on some of my academics and especially what I want to do for my future. At the same time, they also have become a lot more lenient…. They give me more flexibility on what I can do.

Confusion associated with independence

Because these Korean American participants were given at least some measure of freedom from their parents’ authority while attending college, they were then expected to be independent and do well in college on their own. However, it was difficult for some of these women to be independent successfully during their early college years due to the drastic change from being controlled by their parents up until that point. They did not know how to be an independent person in college. Mary’s early college years started with some questions: “What do I want to do?”, “Where do my morals stand?”, and “Am I going to go out and drink or be responsible?” Because her parents were no longer watching over her for the most part, she had to make her own decisions about certain things related to her college life. Grace also had a similar experience during her early college years. She recalled:

Freshman year I had a really hard time adjusting, because I was always under my parents authority, they told me what to do and how to do certain things, and then not having that suddenly, I realized I didn’t know how to make my own decisions, because I was just always obedient, I didn’t know what to do with myself. That affected me academically because they
weren’t there to tell me to study. I had a hard time; I didn’t make very good grades freshman year.

Some of the Korean American participants who experienced less parental control over their academic life missed their parents’ authority. Emily experienced both control and freedom from her parents during her high school years. Like other Korean American participants, her social life was controlled by her parents, but she also experienced less parental control of her academic life. Although she appreciated that her parents gave her freedom academically compared to other Korean American parents during high school, she wished that her parents had taken more control of her academic life. Even though she was less controlled by her parents during her high school years, she still struggled with adjustment during her early college years. She said:

I wish they [my parents] had more control over the greater goals in my life. I wish they had challenged me more to really dig deeper into myself to know what I really want to do in the future. Because they gave me so much freedom, I feel that when I went to college, I was lost academically where I want to go in life…their [my friends] parents kinda implement ideas, say [my friends’] parents went to college for this and they studied that, then the kids is going to college to study the same thing so they had that model. For me they [my parents] wanted me to explore that. So, when I came to college it was kind of a struggle to find what my purpose was in college.

Emily’s feelings of wishing her parents had controlled her academic life more were different from what other women participants perceived. However, all these women students felt that they struggled, even though their parents dealt with their lives differently. These students tried to overcome their struggles and become independent.

To be successfully independent, some of the Korean Americans in this study actively sought outside advice. First they wanted to have advice from their
parents. However, they felt that it was difficult to receive advice from their immigrant parents because their parents knew relatively little about the American educational system. Judy perceived her other American friends as having rich prior knowledge and obtaining educational information continually from their parents. Because their parents were familiar with the educational system, her peers learned what to do to be successful during their early college years. However, Judy could not expect academic or social advice from her parents because, “My parents don’t know how the school system work here, like my parents never finished, my mom finished high school, but they didn’t really have a good education. So that’s why they don’t really give me advice.” Therefore Judy obtained resources informally by interacting with people nearby. She said, “Mostly all information was from peers…but some of information was like from church.”

Likewise, Alex had same situation getting advice from her parents. She said, “[My mom] went to college in Korea but she doesn’t know anything about the American school system. It would be pointless to ask her because she doesn’t know what to do.” Alex also gained resources for her academic life from other people. She said, “I asked people that I know who were really successful in school.” Similarly, Grace garnered tips for her college life through her informal interactions with people. She said, “Socially, I had to figure out a lot of things on my own. So I just learned through my interactions with friends, some older people telling me giving me advice.” To overcome their struggles, these students
used their relationships with others rather than their parents or professional academic support provided by the college.

**Being Exposed to Ethnic Diversity**

Korean American students in this study were more exposed to culturally and ethnically diverse environments during their college years than during high school. College became a turning point for these women in developing their bicultural identity. These female students were enriched by new cultural experiences on campus, and began thinking about “Who am I?” within the diverse cultural environment in college. Alex was surprised when she found many Koreans on campus. She described her feelings: “I've never been around that many Koreans. It seems to be less pressure and less awkward because you are not the only one that is Korean American.” She felt more “comfortable” than she had been in high school and found more “similarities” than with her non-Korean peers. This made her identify more deeply with her Korean culture. The college environment gave Alex an opportunity to separate herself from her automatic attachment to the main culture, and allowed her to develop her own cultural identity as a Korean American.

Likewise, Emily started thinking about her cultural identity deeply during her college years. She said, “I really challenged to be like, I need to find out who I am and really ground myself in myself before I can do other things like finding a job, or dating somebody or thinking about the future in general.” College life gave Emily an opportunity to grow as a person, and address inner challenges such as, “Who am I?”, “How do I fit in society?”, and “Where do I stand as a Korean American?” Similarly, Mary identified herself as Asian during high school. For her, cultural identity did not matter then. However, when she went to college she began thinking critically about her
own cultural identity. Exploring diverse cultures allowed her to navigate her own cultural identity. She said:

I really had to think about my identity and really go through a time period where it’s like self discovery. I took a genuine interest in my own culture and really questioned who I was and how do people see me and just seeing the diversity among even the Asian American culture. It made me realize how different every one of us are. Even how ignorant I was before to think all these cultures could be assimilated into one type case of culture.

In some ways, these Korean American women had simplistic views of race during their high school years. As Mary said, they just saw people as White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian. However, the concept of cultural identity became more sophisticated as these Korean American female students experienced cultural diversity on their college campus. They differentiated themselves from the larger American culture, Asian culture, and even Korean culture (e.g., European Americans, Chinese Americans, and native Koreans).

For example, Judy identified herself as Korean during high school. Because she was strongly involved in her Korean church and developed her social relationships with Korean church members, there was no doubt that she was Korean. Now in college, Judy does not say that she is Korean anymore because she realized that she was culturally different from native born Koreans when she interacted with them on campus, and consequently she perceived that she was not able to identify herself simply as Korean anymore. She said:

I see like Koreans directly from the country. I see how different I am from that. I also tutor English on the side to Korean people, so I get to talk to them a lot. I see how different we are. So that’s when I started realizing more and more there is a distinction between Koreans and Korean Americans.
Likewise, Emily often challenged her identity in her college classroom. She observed students in class from various cultural groups who had their own cultural identities. During class discussions, she had her own point of view, which was affected by her Korean culture, and that was not expected by other classmates. So she came to understand herself: “I'm Korean American because there is a difference. I'm not just American.”

Similarly, Mary’s bicultural identity was developed when she was able to be independent. Being able to make her own decisions and live on her own allowed her to discover her true self. Joining her campus community gave her more opportunities to enhance her bicultural identity. She noticed that many different cultural organizations performed well on campus and students were able to develop their own identities from there. Mary realized how distinctly different these groups of students were and how beautiful ethnic Asians were within their own cultures as well. Her diversity experiences allowed her to explore her own identity during her college years. She said:

You really see them [various Asians] when you get involved in the Asian-American students organizations. The Filipino Students Association, you really get to the culture, or you get to see the Vietnamese culture in their organization… that’s when I started to change my perception of not just Asian but really trying to understand what Asian American culture is and why do I identify myself as that. As I began to question those things, I became a lot more curious about it.

Cultural awareness allows these Korean American students to have a more open mindset, accept different values and different ways, and see how other people do things differently. As these women students developed positive attitudes toward multiculturalism, they perceived their two cultures as equally valuable, which means, that one culture is not better than the other; the American and Korean cultures each significantly influenced the development of their bicultural identities. Alex believes that
she is more open-minded because she understands her own bicultural life. She said, “It [having two cultures] helps me to see things in different ways. It helps me to understand people in different ways… because if you have just one mindset, it’s hard to understand differences…. Because I have both values, I am more understanding.”

**Lack of Social Integration Caused by Cultural Differences**

Korean American students in this study developed their own perspectives on identity by looking closely at their personal cultural circumstances. These students recognized differences between the two sets of cultural values because they were simultaneously exposed to traditional and mainstream cultures. Different cultural expectations provoked 1) facing gender expectations, 2) experiencing power relations, 3) facing stereotypical image of Asians, and 4) lack of cross cultural social relationships. Korean American women participants perceived distinctions between their home culture and mainstream culture, and they realized that their social lives were controlled by their traditional values. As a result, these students felt internal conflicts with their parents and ethnic community. Outside the home, these women were faced with socially stereotyped Asian images and struggled with racial alienation. Experiences of cultural difference and racial bias discouraged these women students from developing cross cultural relationships. These Korean American participants developed their social lives based on how culturally comfortable they felt with others and how they could share their own cultural struggles. All of these aspects hindered participants’ efforts to integrate into their campus community, as well as further American society.

The lack of social integration is a critical issue that these Korean American students faced in developing their own cultural identity. It discouraged these women students from learning where they stood as bicultural individuals between two cultures.
However understanding their own cultural circumstances also motivated these women students to overcome their challenges, and gave them an opportunity to develop many ways to negotiate their cultural circumstances. The following section describes how the participants perceived their Korean cultural values in their lives followed by cultural negotiation, which is also identified as another necessity for developing bicultural identity during college years.

**Facing Gender Expectations**

Korean American female students in this study perceived negative gender expectations, which are particularly related to Korean traditional values. Because their parents maintain transnational lifestyles, these women students were naturally affected by their ethnic cultural values and consequently they established cultural duality. Gender expectations may not be perceived negatively by people in Korea because these are commonly recognized in Korean society. However, these gender expectations originating from traditional values certainly were negatively perceived by these Korean Americans female students. Often times, these women students faced internal struggles between what Korean American society expects and expectations they felt as a member of American society. This study found that participants suffered from 1) preconceived gender role expectations, 2) restricted social relationships, and 3) concern about their personal appearance. These Korean American women struggled with not only significant cultural differences between their traditional values and American values, but also gender inequality deeply embedded in Korean culture. All of these aspects contributed to their emotional challenges and consequently to the denial of certain Korean cultural values in their lives.
Preconceived gender role expectations

The Korean American female students in this study experienced cultural gender role expectations. Because they were expected by their family to adopt traditional gender roles, they as daughters were expected to support their younger siblings. Alex wanted to support her younger sister not only financially but also by assisting her with obtaining educational opportunities. However, she realized that this desire was instilled by her mother, who expected her to help her sister with her studies. Likewise, Judy also experienced pressure to support her 5-year-old youngest sister until her sister graduates from college. She also experienced a further sense of obligation as a first daughter to take care of her elderly parents later in life. This sense of dual obligations as a daughter gave rise to the internal struggle of feeling pressure to find a financially lucrative job to fulfill her responsibilities. Judy explained her feelings:

That’s kind of stressful because they say even jokingly but it’s kind of obviously true because they don’t have saving plans or retirement so I know eventually I’ll have to take care of them. I want to take care of them but I don’t care myself about making a lot of money. I want to take care of my family when I get older so that’s what I’m kind of worried about. Because the things I am looking into doing doesn’t make a lot of money. We have my 5 year old sister who will be needing to go to college by the time I’m working, so I feel like I’ll be getting most of that burden when I get older.

These women had negative perceptions of the different gender role expectations between men and women during family meetings. The hierarchical relationships between men and women are commonly observed within immigrant families maintaining a transnational lifestyle. However, for the Korean American female students in this study, this hierarchical binary family structure contributed to cultural confusion between what they believed on gender roles and what Korean cultural values expected on gender roles. This conflict fostered negative feelings toward Korean cultural values.
When Mary was growing up, she observed how Korean families live their lives in relation to gender roles expectations. She perceived many times the masculine-feminine dichotomy as, “The men never helped in cooking, the women did all the cooking and took care of the children.” Mary struggled with the fact that Korean men have a larger role than Korean women, and that gender imbalance is pervasively nurtured even within families who live in the United States. She described her feelings:

After I saw that, I said I don’t want to ever marry or date Korean guys ever, that’s not what I want ever, I don’t like that. For me equality is very important. I just think that guys should be able to help around the house too. It’s not just a female role.

Similarly, Judy also perceived gender imbalances at her home. As an American she believed, “The guys are working at home and the girls can have equal status with guys.” However, it was frustrating for Judy when she returned home and witnessed her mother doing all the house work even though she worked all day just like her father, and her father did not help with the household chores. This gender imbalance fostered negative feelings toward Korean cultural values and eventually to the denial of embracing traditional Korean gender roles. Judy expressed her internal struggle by declaring, “I’m never gonna get married like that.” Emily also experienced negative perceptions of Korean cultural values related to gender expectations. Her father always expected her and her sister to make food for him and to bring beer to him from the kitchen when he returned home from work. She would cook or bring beer to her father because she loved him. However, she eventually refused to do these things, not because she did not respect her father, but because she disagreed with following what she believed were obsolete gender roles.
Restricted social relationships

These Korean American female students perceived strong parental expectations of their social relationships. Dating and marriage in particular were critical issues that these students had to negotiate with their parents. Korean parents view the marriage as an important family extension in their immigrant life and they require what they perceive as necessary for their family to succeed as a whole. In this case, the parents considered Korean culture as the most important value in a marriage. In addition, immigrant life is also a critical consideration when Korean parents expect particular dating or marriage partners of their daughters. In fact, transnational immigrant life may encourage lack of social integration of immigrant parents. Most first generation Korean parents are more likely to maintain their ethnic language rather than learn English, and consequently they may experience limited social relationships due to their lack of English language proficiency. For this reason, Korean American women students were expected by their parents to date and marry Korean Americans who could speak the Korean language and share their Korean cultural values in the United States. As a result, their parents’ expectations hindered these women students’ efforts to extend their social relationships during their college years.

Most students in this study were encouraged to get married early and their parents recommended specific people to date or marry. Before she started dating, Emily talked about dating or marriage with her parents. She realized that her parents had particular expectations on these topics. For example, she said, “He [My dad] said Korean American is best but no black,” or “She [My mom] discouraged me to marry late, probably like after 30s.” During college, Judy talked about marriage with her mother many times and was expected to marry a Korean American Christian person by the time...
she was 27 years old. Like other Korean immigrant parents, her mother wanted her
daughter to marry a Korean American particularly because she wanted to be able to
communicate with her future son-in-law. Because Judy’s parents were not able to speak
English well, ensuring that their daughter dated and married someone who speaks
Korean was critical for them. Judy felt pressure because she was dating a non-Korean
American, and was planning to attend a graduate program, so she was not meeting her
parents’ expectations.

Like Judy, Alex also had the same request from her parents. Her mother would
say, “You need to get married right away and you need to look around as soon as
possible.” However, this was different from what Alex thought about marriage. She
indicated:

In Korea, women are supposed to get married earlier and I don’t want to do
that. My mom really wants me to get married soon and she says if I don’t
get married by 25 it is going to be impossible. My view is that I want to work
on my own studies but she wants me to get married as soon as possible.
Korean women are pressured to do that, society makes it frowned upon to
get married late. As Korean American women, parents say stuff like that to
us. You need to hurry up and think about that. But we have so much time,
we are only in our twenties, and in America women get married later, in
their 30’s. For me that is more realistic, getting married later in the mid-20’s
or early 30’s but my mom doesn't agree with me on that.

Likewise, Alex was expected by her parents to date and marry a Korean or Korean
American, but most preferably Korean American. This was not only for the purpose of
achieving better communication with the new family member, but also in consideration
of her Korean American cultural status. Her mother understood that she had been
Americanized and it would be hard to understand someone who strongly identify as
Korean. Alex felt pressure to meet her mother’s expectations because she felt obligated
to follow what her mother suggested, yet she wanted the possibility of meeting other people, in addition to Korean or Korean Americans.

In contrast, Grace agreed with her parents’ dating and marriage expectations. Her parents encouraged her to date and marry a Korean American because they wanted a son-in-law who would be connected culturally to their family. In addition, her parents also considered the family background of a suitor. She said, “When you’re marrying, it’s not just a woman and a man marrying, the families are marrying too…. [My parents] always emphasizes pick someone with a good family background.” Her parents continually encouraged Grace to choose a Korean American who had a good family background, and judged her dating partners based on this standard. Grace struggled with inner challenges when she dated her former boyfriend because her parents did not accept him and his parents. Her parents were very traditionally and religiously conservative, and were not accepting of his “Twinkie” or “bad boy” image. They refused him, saying, “That’s not okay.” Grace talked a lot about a new dating partner with her parents before she started dating again because she said, “I made sure I had their permission because after my former boyfriend, I never want to go into a relationship if I don’t have my parents’ approval because it’s that important to them.”

Similarly, Mary has specific expectations from her parents on dating and marriage. She said, “They [my parents] want me to be educated, find a good husband, and they want the husband to be well off, Christian. They don’t want Black people. I can’t marry Black people. They are okay with White people but no Black people.” She perceived parental control of her social relationships during her early college years, which was uncomfortable to her to some extent. She said:
My parents do not want me to date until I finished undergraduate. They have the philosophy of dating one person and getting married to that one person. So they monitor who I hang out with especially with guys. If I’m hanging out with a guy friend, they’ll ask a lot questions to make sure there’s not anything going on between us.

During her college years, Mary was controlled in her dating partners by her parents’ specific expectations, and as a result, she had a less opportunity to develop intimate relationships, compared to her peers in the study.

**Personal appearance**

The looks of Korean American female students in this study were largely influenced by the Korean American community, which heavily sustains a transnational lifestyle. These students often felt pressured to maintain a good physical appearance like women of their native Korean counterparts and to maintain certain femininity. Their struggles become worse when they felt their appearance was being judged by their immigrant parents or the local Korean American community. For some their parents, who are aware of Korean cultural standards of beauty, are the stricter judges. Alex, for example, was always expected to be “more womanly.” Her mother encouraged her to wear makeup and dress well, even choosing all of her clothes up until high school. Alex felt that her mother was forcing Korean cultural norms on her. She said, “I don’t wear makeup, but she [mom] always tells me I need to put on makeup. In Korean society, I feel beauty and image are important. I don’t feel like I always have to put on makeup or wear pretty clothes to feel beautiful. That’s something my mom and I disagree on a lot.” However, because Alex perceived herself as American, she did not feel an obligation to follow these patterns, even though her mother strongly encouraged her to do so.

Mary suffered from emotional struggles in relation to her body image. Her parents frequently criticized her with comments like, “Why don’t you lose weight?” “Why don’t
you dress better?" “Why don’t you take care of yourself better?” Mary was confused about why she had to follow these standards and felt pressure to look better. It even caused emotional conflict with her parents. She described her feelings:

I started gaining weight, and they [parents] got really upset because they said I was getting really fat, and they said you’re not going to find a husband looking like that. You’re just not pretty when you’re fat. It really hurt especially when my dad says it, it hurts more because he can be, his words aren’t the nicest, we haven’t talked very much because of that, the relationship is strained because it hurts to think about things like that.

This struggle made her insecure growing up. She often thought that she wasn’t pretty enough, and she was pained by the realization that she didn’t fit the mold of what her parents wanted her to look like.

Korean American communities taught these students to be conservative. Therefore, their dress code was dictated within the Korean American community. Students switched their dress style when they went to school and when they went to Korean American church to meet the expectations of each community. When Grace wore clothes unacceptable by Korean cultural standards (e.g., short pants), Korean adults would say, “What’s she doing?” She perceived that the Korean American community did not accept younger generations if they were too Americanized in the way they look.

Judy usually dressed based on what the Korean American community expected, and thus she did not wear short pants at church. Sometimes she felt frustrated, but she always tried to “dress conservatively for the sake of parents” because she did not want her parents to be entangled in a gossip at the church. Similarly Grace was always careful about what she wore to church because she did not want people to gossip about her. She said, “I always wanted to avoid that. I never wanted to give people a reason to
talk about me. So I think it really influenced the way I dressed.” To avoid gossip, these Korean parents also encouraged their daughters to meet Korean American community expectations. Some parents spoke frankly and directly to their daughters. However, this often caused students’ negative feelings. Grace said, “I gained like 6 pounds. I went home and my mom kept telling me I was fat. And you don’t do that here in America. I told my Mom I was really hurt when you told me I was fat.” After working out, Grace got comments from her mother’s friends like, “Oh Grace, you lost so much weight! You’re so pretty.” Her mother then responded, “Yea, I know. My daughter’s pretty.” Through this conversation, Grace understood why Korean parents focus on the appearance of their kids. “[They keep criticizing] their daughters, not because they are saying it because their daughters ugly, but because they have the right to say that to their daughter because they don’t want any other person to say that.” In other words, parents do not want people to gossip about their daughters.

Judy also believes that the Korean American community places too much focus on the superficial image. Her parents discouraged her from going to the beach because they were concerned that her appearance would be ruined. Her skin color was always an issue in the local Korean American community. She said, “I’m really dark. People would always tell me, ‘You’re really dark.’ Some people were intrigued and were like, ‘Why are you darker?’ but other people were like, ‘Oh, you are too dark!’” Judy felt frustrated, not only at being judged, but also at being frequently and directly asked about her physical appearance by others. They often asked, “What’s wrong with you?” or “Why is your face breaking out?”
For Emily, the greatest pressure about her appearance came from her church during high school. She said, “Obviously dress code was very conservative. You had to hold yourself a certain way. You couldn’t act this way, think this way.” Because Emily was very religious and grew up within the boundaries of a strong religious conservative environment during her high school years, she became conditioned to keep a conservative mindset, even after she stopped going to Korean American church when she went to college. She said, “That conservative, I enjoy it when I pick clothes, when I see a style that I like.” However, in a sense, she struggled with keeping her conservative attitude during college years because she said, “It limits me from expressing every side of my personality. Because I’ve grown up with such a conservative mindset, it kind of suppresses a less conventional side of me that I may not know of, or may be suppressing subconsciously.” Now Emily tries to see herself positively and not be influenced by personal appearance. “I don’t put too much pressure on looking a certain way. If I do, I have to remind myself that it’s not very important.”

**Experiencing Power Relations**

Korean cultural belief systems in this study formed hierarchical relations between parents and their adult children because their children were expected to be obedient under traditional values. These young Korean Americans often times recognized differences between their home culture and mainstream culture, and as a result they faced intergenerational conflicts. Intergenerational tension was often heightened as these Korean American female students perceived cultural differences between what they expected and what their parents expected. During high school, Grace felt that it was hard to find a balance between what she wanted to do and what parents expected her to do. She struggled between “conservative” and “liberal” values. At home, her
parents’ authority was established over her and she had to always say “Yes, mother,”
instead of simply “yes” or “no” even if she disagreed with what her parents wanted her
to do. Grace said, “I submitted very bitterly. It wasn’t ‘Oh yes, I will obey you.’”

Intergenerational tension was also exacerbated as Korean American participants
perceived differences between their parents’ expectations and what they experienced.
Grace perceived that her American peers developed equal relationships with their
parents rather than hierarchical relationships. She observed that her friends developed
friendships with their parents and openly shared their thoughts with each other. Grace
felt oppressed by the ways in which her conservative parents restricted her, such as,
“No you can’t stay out late,” “You must come back home,” “[You can’t] start driving until
18 years old.” Grace faced inner challenges in trying to accept these restrictions, which
were not normally experienced by her American peers. These experiences made her
negatively perceive Korean cultural values during her high school years.

Like Grace, most participants in this study felt that their social lives were controlled
by their parents during high school. Because they were under their parents’ roof, the
authority that their parents had over their life was pervasive. As a result, they felt
internal struggles under their parents’ authority, yet they also felt cultural obligation to
obey. However, in some cases, these students appreciated their parents’ authority.
Like the other Korean American students, Alex was never allowed to sleep over at her
friends’ houses during high school because her parents believed that “It’s not proper for
girls to sleep over at other peoples’ places.” Alex did not try to get permission for
sleepovers during high school because she believed “what they [my parents] thought
was the right thing” and consequently it was important for Alex to accept her parents’
opinions. Judy also perceived her parents’ control during high school as “almost kind of healthy to a point” because she thought she needed “the structure” to succeed in her academic life and then go to college.

Whether these Korean American female students perceived their parents’ authority positively or negatively, they did not rebel against obedience at the time. For instance, Mary had no doubt about accepting her parents’ authority during her high school years. She said, “I think for the most part that I was very obedient. If my parents told me to do something, I would do it. I thought it was easier that way.” Likewise, Grace accepted her parents’ control during her high school years because she said, “I can’t really do anything about that.” When Grace applied to college, she argued with her parents because her parents did not allow her to choose her own college. “[My parents] said no. They said ‘you’re going to [this college]. You’re going to stay close to home. We know there’s a good church there because your father went there.’” Grace dropped the conversation, but she accepted her parents’ decision because she said, “they’re paying for it.” These students just adapted themselves to their surrounding cultural circumstances.

Intergenerational tension remained even when these women attended college. Although these students more often experienced conflict with their parents during high school, it was not recognized as a serious issue in their lives because they obeyed their parents while they were under their parents’ supervision. However, some of these Korean Americans had conflicted thoughts in college because they had more liberal views than their parents. Emily indicated that her father’s expectations on dating were, “No dating until you find your husband.” However, she had different ideas on dating than
her parents. She said, “They [my parents] had a very traditionalistic view that dating equals marriage,” while “I think I just perceive dating as a learning experience, and then as for marriage.” Although her parents did not force their ideas onto Emily, they instead tried to compromise with, “Let’s just let her do what she’s ready.” Clearly, Emily had different cultural ideas than her parents. Similarly, Grace disagreed with her parents’ dating expectations. She perceived that traditional cultural values were used by her parents as a frame of reference to guide her on dating. She had been aware of the differences between her views and her parents’ views on dating. Grace said:

    Dating, so if I would sum it up in one word, it would be boundaries, boundaries in dating. That was a big difference. Yea they [my parents] would definitely more than suggest, “Don’t do this,” They would try to do it in a way that wasn’t obvious, “Oh Grace, with a guy, a boyfriend is someone that you just are nice to, you like study with them, or you just like kind of spend time with them. But it’s productive, it’s a productive time.” No, that’s called a study buddy, that’s not a boyfriend.

    Similarly, Alex struggled with her mother after getting a tattoo. She realized that having a tattoo would be negatively perceived as “You are not a good person” in Korean society. Because Korean society cares deeply about what other people think and they act accordingly, getting a tattoo was unacceptable to her parents. Her mother was very upset about what she did and said, “You don’t look very Korean.” Alex was emotionally confused by this, and asked herself, “What does that mean? I can’t do this because I’m Korean?” She struggled that this outside judgment which is embedded within Korean cultural values that restricted her desire to express herself.

**Facing Stereotypical Image of Asians**

Young Korean American women in this study were aware of Asian stereotypes as they interacted with various people on campus. Asian stereotypes affected their academic and social lives positively to some extent, yet also affected them negatively.
for the most part. Like other Asians, Grace perceived Asian stereotypes positively during high school. She attended very academically oriented schools. In her schools, Asian stereotypes such as “Asians were very smart” made sense to teachers and peers because all Asians in her schools really did do well academically. The school's mission, individuals' academic goals, and Asians' high academic performance made Asian stereotypes positive. She said, “Teachers really loved Asians…because we fulfilled that stereotype. We got the highest grads in the class, we were the most attentive, so of course the teachers loved us so that created a culture of Asians being kind of awesome.”

In contrast, some students struggled with this stereotype because living up to this image made their true academic desires invisible. Mary criticizes the idea that Asians are “supposed to be good at math and science.” Although she really did well at math and science during her academic years, she refused to follow the stereotype because she “was interested in social studies and English.” Also “It really made me frustrated that I was boxed into a certain identity that society wanted me to be instead of appreciating who I was as a person.” After she was expected to join the math team by other Asians during high school, Mary grew frustrated with this stereotypical Asian image and questioned herself. She wondered, “Why can't they [people in general] appreciate that we’re not one dimensional people? We encompass more than what society wants us to be.”

Many young Korean American women in this study reported experiencing racial alienation during college years. Often times, they were not perceived as members of American society; they were perceived as just “Asian.” Being portrayed as “Asian”
contains dual aspects. First, Asians are still viewed as “foreign,” even if they grow up in the United States. Second, Asians are still aggregated as simply one group in American society. Their experiences discouraged these women students from developing social relationships with racially different people. Emily used to work at a frozen yogurt place, which is staffed predominately by White employees, and got the nickname “Asian.” It made her frustrated because her true identity vanished with her coworkers. In addition, she also faced emotional challenges when she was dating. As an interracial couple, Emily’s boyfriend was mocked by his White friends with comments like, “you have Asian fever now,” “you have yellow fever,” or “why do you like Asians now?” Emily felt frustrated that people considered differences between Asian and White, even though, in her words, they both “grow up in the same exact city, done this same exact things, interact with the same exact people.” Emily is still seen as an outsider by the dominant culture, even if she has the same background as other majority people.

**Lack of Cross Cultural Social Relationships**

Korean American students in this study gravitated toward cultural similarity. Through this, these students feel a deeper sense of connection with culturally connected people. They developed their social lives with Korean Americans or at least Asian Americans who could share their cultural struggles. Therefore, these participants tended to be very selective about their social relationships during their college years.

Korean American students in this study often developed relationships with other Korean Americans in college for their own comfort, while those with whom they were engaged in high school were from all backgrounds and chosen because of proximity. During high school, these students were more likely to develop their social relationships based on the demographics of their class units (e.g., AP class). As a result, they easily socialized
and established relationships with various people without awareness of cultural
differences. However, college life did not allow these students to automatically establish
their social relationships because their social networks were in flux and wider.
Therefore, they had to develop their relationships by dealing with cultural diversity.

These Korean American participants developed their social relationships based on how comfortable they felt with others. For these students, the level of comfort was based on their ability to share their cultural values. In this study, most students developed relationships with Asian Americans or Korean Americans to build up a “comfort zone” and enhance a sense of connection in a diverse campus environment.

Alex said she hangs out with Asian Americans or Korean Americans because “it’s more comfortable to be around people you are familiar with.”

Like Alex, Mary also felt more comfortable when she hangs out with Asian Americans or Korean Americans in college. She said, “I feel like my connection is a lot deeper with Korean Americans or Chinese Americans just because of the experiences that we can share, especially with parents or family, academic pressure, stuff like that.”

In fact, when Mary came in her freshmen year, she did not expect that she wanted to be with Asian Americans or Korean Americans during college because she negatively perceived Asians in general as too competitive during high school years. However, Mary indicated that she now feels more comfortable with Asian American and Korean American students. She overcame her struggles by sharing feelings with her friends who are culturally connected. Mary said:

We’re able to talk about personal stuff and I could relate to them, or talk about social pressures or stereotypes, those were struggles that I had been dealing with for so long. It wasn’t always about academics anymore or being competitive, just genuine friendship had been built over the years.
Judy also found herself more comfortable with Asian Americans or Korean Americans. She was able to talk with them about culturally-related things that she could not easily share with her White friends. Similarly, Grace developed social relationships with only Korean American students during college years. She argues that being tied to people of the same ethnicity, the same roots, is natural because they can deeply share their culture.

I found a group of Korean friends and we kind of like clicked right away. I’m sure it’s because we share the same culture and we think a lot and we kind of behave similarly and that’s probably why we clicked and that’s when I realized, “oh you can’t really escape your roots.” Even though I’m here in America, I’m just attracted to people who are like me.

Interestingly, Korean American female students in this study did not develop their social relationships with native Koreans, despite the fact that both Koreans and Korean Americans have the same cultural heritages. These women students perceived differences between Koreans and Korean Americans and did not attach themselves to native Koreans. Alex perceived herself to be more Americanized and found that she differed from Koreans. She explained this feeling:

When I came to [college], I didn’t feel that I’m Korean at all… so I didn’t know how to interact with them [Koreans from Korea]. Like I said, I am not very interested in Korean dramas or K-Pop music or movies so I didn’t have anything in common to talk about in terms of social views. I felt like a black sheep because we didn’t have the same interests. We have the same values, but you don’t make friends off the bat because of values. You talk about TV and movies, so it was hard to make friends with them at first because we have different interests.

Like Alex, Grace also had similar experiences with native Koreans. She remembered how hard it was to understand them:

Socially, when I hang out with Americans or any other groups, I have no any problem. But when I do hang out with just Korean Koreans, I can’t really get along with them. It’s not that I don’t like them; it’s just I have a harder time getting along with them.
In order to develop their own social relationships with culturally-similar people, some Korean American students joined in Asian American or Korean American undergraduate associations or ethnic church associations during their early college years, where their relationships were established with particular persons who could connect with their culture more deeply. Emily’s social relationships were developed through multiple social groups during this time. By joining Asian American undergraduate associations (e.g., Korean American union, Chinese American union) and a Korean American church group, she developed her social network with Asian American or Korean American undergraduate students most of time. However, she established her own group of a few friends as she entered her third year because she realized, “I just want to be with people I genuinely love and I want to be around.”

Grace also joined an Asian American undergraduate association and made some Asian American friends during freshmen year. Then she joined another Korean American church and developed closed relationships with Korean Americans. She was able to make friends easily by sharing similarities (e.g., cultural values, religious beliefs). Socially, nothing really changed through her senior year. She said, “The friends I made the freshmen years with my church friends are the friends I’m with now.” Like Emily, Grace also developed her social relationships with a small number of genuinely close friends during her college years and depended on them.

While understandable, this tendency may limit opportunities for Korean American participants to develop their social relationships with different groups of people during college. As a result, they may have less opportunity to explore cross-cultural experiences on campus. Grace described her feelings about this:
I didn’t really start thinking about until this year that all my friends are Korean American. I find myself being a little disappointed that I didn’t really branch out to other diverse friends; I’m a little scared that because I spent most of my undergraduate with Korean Americans that’s I’ll be a little uncomfortable with other cultural groups. I used to not be like that, because in high school everyone was something different, because I feel like in College you kinda start really molding into the person you’ll be for the rest of your life, so I’m kind of scared that the lack of me reaching out to other groups would hinder my adult life. That’s the only regret that I have.

This sense of fear touched her attitude toward different cultures. The recognition of this issue consequently allowed her to more actively look for culturally diverse relationships and better understand cultural diversity on campus.

**Cultural Negotiation**

The bicultural Identity of the Korean American students was strengthened by negotiating their own cultural circumstances. As I discussed earlier, Korean cultural values contributed to the lack of social integration to American society and most participants faced challenges embracing what they perceived as negative aspects of either side of their two cultures, the American and the Korean. However, these women did not ignore the challenges they faced. Instead, they actively negotiated these cultural struggles in their own ways, and each tried to integrate the differences into their developing bicultural identity. Consequently, their efforts encourage them to deeply understand “Who am I?” and to develop their bicultural identity during their college years.

Cultural negotiation provoked 1) managing cultural conflicts with parents; 2) overcoming struggles related to religious beliefs; 3) making up for negative cultural values; 4) switching cultural behaviors; and 5) maintaining ethnic language. Participant students developed their own voices rather than just obeying their parents’ opinions to overcome cultural conflicts, which helped these young Korean American women to
develop healthy relationships with others. Religious beliefs also contributed to overcoming their cultural struggles. They also selected cultural values based on what they really wanted to adopt from both American and Korean cultures. In addition, they switched their behaviors within different settings to minimize cultural conflict. Some students in this study maintained their ethnic language, while some of them spoke Konglish (i.e., the mixed use of Korean and English in the same dialogue) to better communicate with Koreans who were not able to speak English very well, thus creating another bridge.

Balancing Two Cultures to Minimize Cultural Conflicts

All of the students in this study perceived themselves as “Korean American” and viewed their two cultures as equally valuable. They viewed their bicultural identity as “a quilt” rather than “a melting pot.” This implies that the two cultures do not blend with each other; instead, one’s positive cultural values are enhanced to make up for the negative aspects of the other while both cultures keep their own characteristics.

Managing cultural conflicts with parents

Korean American female students in this study tried to balance their two cultural values, which became an inseparable part of their cultural identity. These students managed family conflicts caused by hierarchical relationships by refusing to live up to their immigrant parents’ expectations and tried to mutually communicate their own thoughts with their parents. By doing so, these participants overcame their cultural circumstances, generated by traditional values, and developed their own bicultural life. In fact, compromising with their Korean parents rarely happened during high school years. Emily never thought that she had to compromise during conflicts with her parents during high school because she did not really “challenge anything in [her] own morals
[her] stances." She accepted her parents’ opinions. Alex also listened to what her parents' said during high school. Even though she disagreed with some of their ideas, she obeyed whatever they said because she thought that there were not any options she had at this time. In college, however, even if parents still controlled certain things, Alex did not always agree with her parents’ opinions. She did whatever she thought was the best and most efficient rather than just obeying her parents’ ideas. Alex said:

In high school, I just did whatever they told me to. In college, it depends if she [my mom] wants me to do something and I think I can do something in a different better way, then I'm going to tell her that I'm going to do it… whether she likes it or not because to me that's the best way and she can't really control everything that I do.

To minimize conflict with her parents, Alex talks to her parents about her thoughts first, even if she disagrees with them. “I'm still going to ask her [my mom] opinions and I still let her know that I'm going to do it [what I think it right].” Alex compromises with her parents by maintaining and valuing their relationships as family, even when they don't see each other every day.

Mary normally perceived less conflict with her parents’ authority because, “I’m pretty on track for the most part.” During high school, Mary was very obedient. If her parents told her to do something, she usually accepted that. She said, "I was obedient to my parents. They said, 'You should be home by 10:00' and I'd say 'okay.' I didn’t really have an issue with that. I just did what they told me to do.” After going to college, she raised her own voice about what she wanted to do. When she had differing opinions from her parents, she argued about it or sometimes just let it go for a while. Once, a conflict arose over academic majors because her parents wanted her to take pre-med classes. Mary obeyed her parents’ opinion at first; however, she eventually stopped taking those classes because she said, "It's not what I want to do with my life." She
eventually changed her major after having a deep conversation with her parents. Mary’s big concern was how to persuade her parents in her career path. Her parents did not allow her to join the military. Mary had argued with them about it many times, yet she could not find positive resolution. She avoided talking about it with her parents, though she showed her parents her strong will. Recently, Mary realized circumstances have changed. She said, “He [my dad] said it’s your life now. You can make your own decisions and you’re old enough to face the consequences for these decisions, work as hard as you can and live your life as best as you can.” Likewise, her mom wants to talk more about the military with her and wants to have more information about it. Mary appreciates that her parents now support her decision.

**Overcoming struggles related to religious beliefs**

Korean American students in this study are Christians. These students are close to their local church community because of their parents’ religious influence and naturally believed in religion early on. For them, the church played a vital role as a second home, and many of the Korean American students spent their adolescence receiving assistance from their church. For example, Judy was supported by the Korean American church when she was young because her parents worked all day, and she needed someone to take care of her. Since she spent a lot of time at her church, her identity was significantly influenced by the Korean American church community, which further supported her Korean cultural values.

Religious life helped some Korean American students in this study overcome their cultural conflicts. Mary overcame negative perceptions that she had of herself through developing her religious beliefs. She criticizes how Korean society focuses too much on appearance and how this image-oriented culture affected her emotionally and later
contributed to her negative self-image. She believed that she “was very unattractive,” but was able to overcome these negative feeling by having strong belief in her religion. She described her feelings:

> When I got older, especially with my relationship with God growing, it’s really breaking down the perceptions I’ve had of myself. Because everyone is created differently and uniquely so how can you say that there’s only one mold of how someone is beautiful because your heart and how you treat people makes you beautiful too.

These Korean American female students believe that Korean cultural values match up with Korean American church values to a certain extent. Because these students became strongly involved in religious practice early on, religious values affected their attitudes toward their parents and Korean cultural values. As Judy argued, “Koreans are very conservative, like dating between guys and girls, and also again with the whole respect and authority thing… having those values is legitimized by having a religion because the Bible says so.” Therefore, these young Korean American women accepted some cultural values that Korean society holds by understanding Korean religious heritage. Grace admits negotiating her cultural conflicts through religious life. Her cultural struggles had a lot do with her parents’ authority. However, she was able to overcome her challenge by deeply understanding the Bible. She said:

> The Bible teaches that you obey your parents’ because they are your parents and they have authority over you. That really condemns children that blatantly disobey their parents or don’t care about their parents. So that’s one of them that taught me about authority… and the Bible speaks about how important family is. You see stories in the Bible that speak about if the family unit is really messed up it just affects every aspect of your life. I learned that having close ties with your family is very important. I learned to resolve my conflicts with families with religious values.
However, religious life was not always helpful in negotiating cultural differences, which means religious values also contributed to intergenerational conflicts between these Korean American female students and their parents. Judy said:

> Like the dating, Koreans are very conservative and they have the opinion that you shouldn’t be dating around too much, or like no fornication or something like that. It’s kind of how the older generation thinks and religious thinking contributes to that kind of thinking.

She further explained her thoughts:

> Even with gender expectations, in both Korean and religious values there’s the whole idea that the woman should be submissive…. I was taught, I heard in church and it’s like in the Bible it’s a known thing that the man is supposed to be the head, he’s the head of the body and the woman helps him or guides him. Usually I’m opposed to things like that. It was also seeing also a lot of times at my church, women who instead of going to college, instead of pursuing higher education, they stay home and take care of the kids. I don’t think it should be like that, while the men went to work and did stuff. I don’t agree with that.

Consequently, by deeply understanding their Korean religious heritage, these Korean American students overcame inner challenges caused by cultural conflict, and further negotiated and developed a dual cultural life with their own thoughts and perspectives.

**Making up for negative cultural values**

Korean American students in this study respected their two cultures and allowed both cultures to keep their own characteristics while they negotiate cultural conflicts. They often enhanced positively-perceived values of one culture to make up for negative aspects of the other in their lives. Alex is thankful that her parents taught her Korean cultural values, though she did not accept all of them in her life. Nonetheless, there are Korean values on which she places emphasis in her life. “Respect for people” is one of them. She described how she sees it:

> Respect each other, your elders, just have respect. That is one thing I am very thankful for, I feel that in America that is something we lack. I feel a lot
of people don’t have respect for each other, if they don’t know each other they don’t have respect for one another, but in Korea everyone respects one another. Because I am Korean-American, I feel I show more respect than my American friends.

Mary sees negative aspects of Korean cultural values. She believes that American cultures are more “genuinely open around other people,” while Korean cultures give other people “Nun-chee,” meaning “considering what other people think.” She recognizes that Korean cultural values have a lack of “openness” and “hospitality” because of this cultural idea. Mary could not avoid other Koreans’ feelings or attitudes toward her body appearance. However, she tried to have a more open mindset to overcome her struggle and was not bound to this negative cultural aspect by saying, “I only get to live my life once, and I’m only going to be young once as well. So to live just live my life the best I can and try to see the beauty in things when there is negativity that comes with each culture.”

Emily tried to be aware of positive cultural values of each culture, and she balanced Korean and American cultural values by integrating the two. Emily described her perspective:

It’s [American cultural value] definitely taught me to really think about myself first sometimes because I know that as a collective society like in the Asian community, they [Koreans] always say that you put others first or take care of others first. I don’t compromise that. I don’t sacrifice it. I definitely bring that into my Asian American heritage/being. I also remind myself that I need to be a better person for me to help others. So that’s what the American culture has taught me to be more of an individual person. So I can help people to my full potential not just 50% percent but I can give them 100%.

Similarly, Judy strives to avoid anything “too extreme” between the two cultures. She argues, “I think sometimes Americans go too far extreme and see their parents as friends. It’s too equal, they see like older people just as friends and they can do that,” or “Koreans sometimes fear authority too much, they don’t know how to approach people
that are older and stuff.” In order to avoid “too extreme,” Judy took the best aspects of
the two cultures. She said, “I’ll take the things I like from the Korean culture and I’ll take
the things I like from the American culture.”

Balancing Cultures to Integrate Dual Cultural Lives

Switching cultural behaviors

Korean American female students in this study switched their behaviors to
minimize potential cultural conflicts. This means that they had different persona
depending on where they were. Mary explained that she strives to fit the mold of who
she is around:

If I am around a lot of Korean elders, my body language reflects my Korean
culture. I bow in front of them and I am submissive in my manner. Also I
attempt to speak Korean and be a lot more polite. If I’m around my
professor around university, I have the same level of respect but I am be
more casual and open with them. My body language changes depending on
my cultural surrounding.

Although some Korean American female students like Alex chose not to change
themselves whether they were at home or outside, many others switched their
behaviors based on their cultural surrounding. Judy learned to perceive herself
differently in different contexts. At home, she felt herself more as Korean because of her
Korean parents and family culture. However, when she went back to her campus dorm,
she identified more as American because she said, “I’m surrounded by American values
and American norms, so I usually start acting more American in public.”

Similarly, Grace changed her behaviors based on different settings. At home, she
perceived herself as American because she had gaps between her and her parents
(e.g., language, personal values). Her parents said to her, “You’re so American!” and
she felt that too. However, she acted more Korean at home than on campus. Grace flexibly changed her behaviors to satisfy her cultural life. She explained:

When I am home, yes I do feel like I am American. But the funny thing is I try to behave more Korean. And then when I’m out with my White friends or Black friends, so non-Koreans I do feel more Korean. In that case I try to be more American.

**Maintaining ethnic language**

Speaking Korean gives some of these Korean American students more opportunity to understand their parents’ cultural values and beliefs, while the lack of Korean language ability can create more challenge. Grace speaks Korean very fluently. Her language ability allows her to communicate with her parents with Korean at home consistently. Consequently, she never faced issues on communication. Likewise, Alex always respected her parents by speaking Korean all the time when she was at home. Because her Korean is very good, she can communicate with her parents easily and develop a close relationship with them by understanding quite clearly what her parents try to tell her. For her, speaking Korean is one important way that she respects her parents. She said, “The most important thing to me was keeping the language, even if I don’t understand how she explained it, a Korean value or something, I least I respected it enough to see why she [mom] would tell me stuff like that.”

Judy, unlike Alex, has strong linguistic barriers in communicating with her parents. Her parents encouraged her to speak English. She said, “They [my parents] wanted me to learn English here so I could succeed.” However, because she barely speaks Korean and her parents never speak English, Judy struggles to communicate properly and share her feeling deeply with her parents.
Despite the difficulty, these Korean American students try to speak Korean with their parents. Speaking Korean for them means accepting their ethnic culture in their lives. It gives these students an opportunity to better communicate with their parents and helps them understand their Korean heritage. Consequently, speaking Korean at home promotes these young women's bicultural identities. Emily always speaks Korean with her parents. She believes that maintaining her fluency in the Korean language is the best way to understand Korean culture and closely develop the relationship with her parents. For her, speaking Korean is a key aspect to identify herself as a "Korean American."

However, it is sometimes difficult for her to speak and maintain Korean fluently due to the lack of opportunities to speak it. This sometimes complicates her communication with her parents because they expected her to speak Korean at home. Consequently, Emily speaks "Konglish (i.e., the mixed use of Korean and English in the same dialogue)" to better communicate with her parents without conflict rather than speaking only English. She said, "I do try to speak Korean because I don’t ever want to lose that in my life, even though it’s slowly deteriorating I don’t ever want to lose that part of my life. So when he [my dad] speaks Korean I try my best, but it comes out Konglish." Likewise, Mary also speaks Konglish at home. Because she barely speaks Korean, she cannot fully speak Korean with her parents whose primary language is Korean and speak Korean at home all the time. She said, "I speak both English and Korean at home. They [my parents] speak Korean and I respond in Korean English. It’s like Konglish both ways." Speaking and maintaining both Korean and American languages gives these Korean American students an opportunity to retain strong family
relationships, to minimize communication difficulty, and better understand their ethnic cultural heritages.

**Summary of Findings**

The interpretation of findings is guided by Phinney and Devich-Navarro's (1997) bicultural theory and transnational feminism. In this study, Korean American female students were identified as blended bicultural during their college years, in that they considered their two cultures as equally valuable and established their cultural identity with these two cultures. In order to become blended bicultural, these Korean American students develop their own cultural identity by negotiating their cultural environments and their own cultural challenges. More specifically, these Korean American students' cultural identity was affected by their cultural environments. Their cultural identity is also affected by their own personal challenges. Addressing their own challenges allowed these women students to learn where they stood as a bicultural individual between two cultures and how they were able to negotiate their dual cultural lifestyle. Therefore, the bicultural identities of these Korean American students were strengthened by negotiating their personal cultural circumstances. Consequently, their efforts encouraged them to deeply understand, “Who am I?” and to develop their bicultural identity during their college years.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses the research findings that emerged from the study. In order to better understand this study as a whole, this chapter reviews and summarizes each chapter including the research problem, existing literature, methodology, and findings. A discussion of the contribution to knowledge of the findings follows focusing on what we know about female Korean American students’ cultural circumstances and how they develop their own cultural identity for their successful academic and social lives. Finally, this chapter offers some implications for future research and recommendations for practice.

Overview of the Study

Asian American students have been perceived as an academically successful racial group in American higher education. Because of their relatively high academic performance, this group is often times viewed as “problem–free high achievers” (Suzuki, 2002, p.29), and their challenges are ignored. However, Asian American students, as distinctive from the model minority image (i.e., problem-free high achievers), face multiple challenges that must be negotiated in their academic and social lives. Korean American female students internally struggle with significant cultural differences between their two cultures. Compounding this issue is the reality that American society pays little attention to this group (Hune, 1998). Their challenges must be recognized and negotiated in order for them to establish their own cultural identity for themselves.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand how Korean American female students negotiate conflicts between Korean and American cultures and develop their own cultural identity. The following research questions guided this study: How do
Korean American female undergraduate students negotiate bicultural lives? How do Korean American female undergraduate students develop their bicultural identity?

Connecting previous research concerning the aspects of Asian Americans’ cultural experiences to this study is crucial in developing a theory on Asian American cultural identity. Asian American students are strongly influenced by their ethnic cultural values from their parents. Because their parents are likely to maintain their ethnic tradition, students subsequently develop their ethnic identity as a blend of an American and Asian culture. Elements from the ethnic and American identities help many Asian Americans overcome their own struggles and have positive attitudes toward their unique challenges (Abe & Zane, 1990; Bracey et al., 2004; Chung, 2001; Greene et al., 2006; Kim & Omizo, 2006; Martinez & Dukes, 1997). As such, most second generation Asian Americans integrate their two cultures and establish their own bicultural identities.

Integrating these two cultures is not easy because of the different cultural belief systems between ethnic and American cultures, and consequently cultural conflicts may occur while Asian American students negotiate these two cultures. For example, outside home, Asian Americans may struggle with racial bias or ethnic discrimination in ways that White students may not be face during their academic life (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Sue & others, 2007). Often times, Asian Americans are portrayed as “no longer Asian, not yet ‘American’” (Chou & Feagin, 2008, p. 131), which means even if Asian American students acculturate to American cultural values, they are frequently still viewed as foreigners (Min, 2002).

Inside the home, Asian Americans may challenge cultural conflicts with their parents. In particular, Asian American women are faced with different gender role
expectations and may experience conflicts with their parents when challenging their gender roles (Tang & Dion, 1999). In fact, gender inequality persists in most Asian cultures. For instance, Korean culture is based on Confucianism, which shapes a patriarchal family structure. Under this philosophy, Korean American women are expected to be subordinate to their parents and their male counterparts, and are forced to maintain filial piety. These experiences may make Asian American women suffer from psychological challenges (Chung, 2001; Museus & Chang, 2009), though some of them are optimistically seeking outside help (Gloria et al., 2008; Shim & Schwartz, 2007).

This study utilized qualitative data collection and analysis methods to understand the unique world of Korean American female college students in their own voices. As a theoretical perspective, I chose Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s (1997) bicultural identity theory and transnational feminism to capture their experiences in developing a bicultural identity, assuming that these women students were normally heavily influenced by the Korean culture on the one hand and the new identity as immigrants in the U.S. on the other. Five Korean American female undergraduate students attending a large public university participated in this study. Primary data collection consisted of two in-depth semi-structured interviews with each participant of 60-90 minutes long per interview. Data analysis was based on Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist grounded theory. In particular, two steps were used in generating emerging themes: Initial coding and focused coding. During initial coding, attention was placed on identifying units of meaning (Glaser, 1978, p.56). Focused coding consisted of the selection of the most
significant categories and the development of emerging themes by using constant comparison methods (Charmaz, 2006).

Findings presented in the conceptual model indicate that the cultural Identity of the Korean American college students was affected by their cultural environments. During high school, they were more likely to develop an identity in order to assimilate to the primary culture that they belonged to. As a result, participants identified themselves as either Asian (Korean) or American, depending on how much they were exposed to their ethnic culture or to the American culture. However, participants identified themselves biculturally as Korean American during their college years. College allowed these students to become mentally and intellectually independent, which formed the groundwork for developing their bi-cultural identity. In addition, it gave them more opportunities to experience culturally diverse environments resulting in a deeper understanding of their own cultural identities.

The cultural Identity of the Korean American students was also affected by their own personal challenges. Korean American women participants perceived distinctions between their home culture and mainstream culture, and they realized that they were controlled by their traditional values. These students also felt internal conflicts with their parents when they were expected to be obedient. Outside home, they faced racial alienation and a lack of cross cultural relationships. All of these aspects hindered these women’s efforts to integrate into their campus community, and further into American society.

However, addressing their own challenges allowed these students to learn where they stood as a bicultural individual between two cultures and how they were able to
negotiate their dual cultural lifestyle. Therefore, the bicultural Identity of the Korean American students was strengthened by negotiating their personal cultural circumstances. These women did not ignore the challenges they faced. Instead, they actively negotiated these cultural struggles in their own ways, and each tried to integrate the differences into their developing bicultural identity. Consequently, their efforts encouraged them to deeply understand, “Who am I?” and to develop their bicultural identity during their college years.

**Discussion**

This qualitative study aims to draw attention to emerging issues related to cultural identity in Korean American female undergraduate students. Many Asian Americans identify themselves as bicultural (Devos, 2006; Lee et al., 2001; Rumbaut, 1994; Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006). This study also supports this argument that participant students viewed themselves as “Korean American” biculturally. However, findings from this study further suggest that these Korean Americans became bicultural, in that they actively negotiated two distinct cultural belief systems and continually developed their own bicultural identity.

For example, this study found that Korean American participants were not automatically bicural on the basis of their cultural duality during high school. They perceived neither the American nor the Asian (Korean) culture more salient and did not integrate their two cultures to develop their own cultural identity. Instead, these students simply developed their cultural identity by assimilating the culture that they belonged to. As a result, they identified themselves as either American or Asian (Korean), depending on how they gravitated toward certain groups and in which group they spent most of their time. This result supports previous research on ethnic/identity development.
indicating that minority students normally do not engage deeply in identity exploration during the pre-college years (Ortiz & Santos, 2009).

However, participant students gradually found themselves identifying as Korean Americans as they were exposed to more ethnically diverse environments, and they found people who could share their cultural uniqueness by participating in a variety of campus events (e.g., class discussion, multicultural festival). These students were encouraged in making their own decisions, which allowed them to critically explore who they were. In addition, they developed their bicultural identity as they gained a sense of independence. As this study found, most Korean American female students not only obtained physically independent status as they moved out from their parents’ house for college attendance, but also were expected to grow as independent women. Being independent was a turning point of their lives because they had been strictly controlled by their parents for a long time. Accordingly, these students had more opportunity to see themselves as independent and grow fully as Korean Americans during their college years. This allowed the benefits of independence for these female Korean American students because they were able to look closely at their cultural challenges with their own perspectives by separating themselves from their parents’ authority. These experiences gave these women opportunities to understand who they are and to develop their own bicultural identity.

From this study, it is also clear that these Korean American students suffered internal struggles because of different sets of Korean and American values. In fact, internal struggles caused by cultural conflicts have appeared since adolescence, which is consistent with many previous studies (e.g., Choi & Dancy 2009; Ngo & Le, 2007;
Qin, Chang, Han, & Chee, 2012; Weaver & Kim, 2008). However, in this study the female Korean American students had different attitudes toward cultural conflicts between high school and college years. More specifically, these female Korean American students experienced cultural conflicts without critically utilizing their own perspectives during high school, and as a result they accepted or rejected their ethnic cultures. They did not try to negotiate their cultural conflicts and instead just ignored their issues. However during college, these students overcame cultural conflicts using their own critical perspectives. They recognized their dual cultural life, understood cultural differences, and accordingly accepted cultural conflicts. Their open attitudes toward dual cultural life encouraged them to equally develop their two cultural identities and consequently to negotiate cultural conflicts in their own unique ways.

In this study, it was clearly identified that Korean American students experienced different acculturation status during their high school and college years. Berry (1980; 1990; 2003) addresses four types of acculturation: separation, marginalization, assimilation, and integration. According to Berry (1980; 1990; 2003), separation occurs when individuals reject the mainstream culture and accept their ethnic culture, while assimilation occurs when individuals reject their ethnic cultures and adopt their new host culture. In this study, Korean American participants during high school identified themselves mono-culturally as Korean (Asian) or American. At this time, students negatively perceived or rejected their Korean culture regardless of how they identified themselves. Therefore, the assimilation status occurred during their high school years. However, their acculturation status shifted when they went to college and developed their bicultural identity. According to Berry (1980; 1990; 2003), integration occurs when
individuals equally adopt their ethnic culture and new host culture, while marginalization occurs when individuals reject both their ethnic culture and new culture. In this study, Korean American participants identified themselves biculturally as Korean American during college. At this time, students accepted a dual cultural life by integrating their two cultures. Therefore the integration status, which is also known as biculturalism, occurred during their college years.

In sum, this finding suggests that acculturation status can be shifted as these students internally and intellectually grow. Korean American students experienced assimilation status as a one-dimensional process (Trimble, 2003) during high school, yet their assimilation status in college allowed for biculturalism as a bi-dimensional process (Abe-Kim et al., 2001; Berry, 1980; Nguyen & von Eye, 2002; Ryder et al., 2000) as they integrated their Korean and American cultures during their college years. Therefore, it should be considered that individuals’ acculturation status needs to be examined over their lifetime and how different acculturation levels impact their life experiences.

Contemporary studies on biculturalism address different types of bicultural individuals (e.g., Birman, 1994; LaFrambois et al., 1993; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). For example, integration assumes that cultures are “blended and merged into one coherent identity” (Hong, Wan, No & Chiu, 2007, p. 330). Therefore, this type of bicultural individual integrates their two cultures without conflicts and identifies themselves, such as “I am Mexican American” (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). In this study, students viewed themselves as “Korean American” by equally identifying with and integrating both their Korean and American cultures. Their cultural conflicts were
not neglected, but actively negotiated for their dual cultural life. As a result, their two distinct cultures were integrated and positively influenced in developing their own cultural identities. From this study, it was found that their cultural negotiation can be characterized as “a quilt” rather than “a melting pot,” which implies that two cultures do not blend with each other. Rather, their positive cultural values are strengthened to make up for negative aspects of the other culture, while both cultures maintain their own characteristics. Specifically, students did not abandon negatively perceived cultural values; instead they selectively enhanced positive aspects from two cultures in their life. From this study, findings suggest that bicultural individuals maintain two cultures equally with their distinct characteristics, yet they enhance more positively perceived cultural aspects from two cultures to integrate conflicts and cope with struggles. Consequently they are able to possess a dual cultural identity.

Alternation, on the other hand, assumes “switching back and forth among cultural identities depending on the fit of the identity with the immediate context” (Hong et al., 2007, p. 330). This type of bicultural individual switches their identity to fit different cultural contexts (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000) and identifies themselves, such as either “Mexicans” or “Americans” (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). In this study, Korean American female students also switched their identities or behaviors in different social contexts such as their school and Korean community (e.g., speaking Korean at Korean church).

However, there is an issue that I have to address regarding alternating bicultural identities as Phinney and Devich-Navarro conceptualized it. Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) suggested different types of individuals to understand bicultural
identities. In particular, they labeled individuals who identified with two cultures without conflicts as “blended” and those who switched their cultural identities between two cultures, depending on contexts, as “alternating.” However, some researchers have argued that “blended” and “alternating” cannot be considered as the same category when discussing bicultural identity, because “alternating” is an individual’s behavior, to strategically switch their cultural frame to fit various situations, while “blended” refers to identity (e.g., Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007). This study supports this argument that Korean American students are characterized as “blended” biculturally. However, at the same time they showed “alternating” characteristics in that they strategically switched their behaviors to negotiate their cultural circumstances. Consequently, it suggests that individuals who integrate their two cultures more flexibly may behave by shifting their cultural identity or behaviors, depending on how they are situated in different contexts, in order to negotiate their cultural conflicts. Therefore, both “blended” and “alternating” are important components for individuals who develop their own bicultural identity.

This study argues that achievement of an ethnic identity significantly affects the establishment of a bicultural identity. For example, Phinney (1989, 1993) conceptualized three stages of identity development: unexamined ethnic identity (diffusion-foreclosure), ethnic identity search (moratorium), and ethnic identity achievement (achievement). Phinney (1989, 1993) suggested that individuals establish a bicultural identity in the stage of ethnic identity achievement, and they accept their ethnic membership without conflict while obtaining a secure sense of ethnic identity (Evans et al., 1998). As findings in this study indicated, most Korean American female students did not positively perceive their ethnic cultures and identity during
adolescence. However, they learned to regard their two cultures as equally valuable as they understood and negotiated their ethnic cultures, and established their own identities with both Korean and American cultures. Ethnic identity development was important for these female Korean American undergraduate students in moving them toward bicultural awareness. Therefore, to establish a successful bicultural identity, achievement of ethnic identity is necessary.

Korean American female students in this study developed a sense of belonging by selectively choosing their peer groups. Student participants mostly developed their social relationships with Asian (particularly Korean) Americans who could share their cultures and their unique circumstances. Thus, cultural comfort was a main reason for these female students to choose Korean Americans as their peer group. Having relationships with people who shared their cultural challenges was emotionally beneficial for these students, but at the same time, issues regarding social relationships occurred. Previous literature stated that Asian Americans are confronted with “more social isolation, self-segregation, and exclusion” (Suyemoto et al., 2009, p. 42). This study found that some students were concerned with their limited social relationships. Because they established their own social groups within Asian student associations or Korean church associations, it limited opportunities for these women to interact with different racial groups of students. As a result, it provoked their sense of social isolation and lack of cross cultural experiences. Some research indicates that college students strengthen their academic and social life and subsequently enhance their self-esteem by engaging with diverse peer groups on campus (Chang et al., 2004; Gloria & Ho,
Korean American female students’ lack of social interaction with diverse peer groups emerged as an issue in their academic life during college.

Interestingly, however, cultural comfort was not established with native Koreans, despite that fact that they were able to share their traditional cultural values. In this study, most students found themselves different from native Koreans and thus separated themselves from them. Presumably, this perception discouraged them from identifying themselves as simply “Korean,” because their meaning of “Korean” is likely to be different from how native Koreans identified themselves. This finding contributes to the idea that these second generation students have established themselves within their own lives in American society and therefore the differences cannot be overlooked when discussing their ethnicity.

The field of higher education research has given relatively little attention to how Korean American women negotiate their cultural conflicts. Literature has found that Asian Americans avoid professional psychological help (Abe-Kim et al., 2007), although some Asian Americans are more open to having outside support (Gloria et al., 2008; Shim & Schwartz, 2007). Previous research states that some acculturated Korean American women openly welcome counseling support to overcome their challenges (Gloria et al., 2008; Yi & Tidwell, 2005). However, this study found that these Korean American participants did not seek professional and psychological support to overcome their challenges. Instead, they internalized their cultural conflicts and tried to cope by themselves.

This tendency may contribute to misunderstandings about these women students, assuming that they are “problem-free high achievers” (Suzuki, 2002, p. 29). These
students typically are academically high achieving (Aud et al., 2010), and thus they are usually positively perceived as a model minority (see e.g., The New Whiz Kids, 1987). However, they may be ignored when college administrators design support programs for cultural minority students, because their challenges often times have not surfaced. Since Korean American female students avoid outside help, college administrators may have difficulty understanding their struggles and overlook these students when developing appropriate support services.

From this study, it is clear that these Korean American female students suffered cultural struggles related to preconceived gender expectations. Judith Butler (1990) conceptualizes gender as performative. She argued that performativity “encompasses the process of making gendered selves that reproduce social norms of femaleness and maleness, femininity and masculinity, heterosexuality and homosexuality” (Lorber, 2005). Therefore, gender performativity can be understood as the manner that certain socially constructed gender norms or gender expectations are constantly produced and reproduced by society. These socially constructed gender norms guide individuals’ behaviors depending on their gender.

In this study, Korean American female students felt specific gender expectations from their immigrant families and ethnic community. Masculine and feminine dichotomy originating from ethnic cultural values are reproduced through their home culture by their immigrant family and impacted these women students’ daily lives. From the traditional Korean cultural values, this binary opposition reinforces hierarchical relationships. Therefore, the Korean American female students in this study experienced patriarchal and hierarchical family structures and felt expected to
subordinate to their parents or male counterparts. These Korean American female students struggled with adopting socially constructed gender expectations enforced by their immigrant parents and ethnic community, because these gender expectations strictly controlled their lives, such as how these women were supposed to behave as Korean American women. These women students also felt judged by gender norms on certain criteria heavily influenced by traditional values.

For example, socially, dating and marriage are critical issues regarding gender expectations and have caused intergenerational conflict among participants. Extant research literature indicates that Asian American women suffer internal conflicts over issues of dating and marriage (Chung, 2001; Ngo, 2002). Likewise, Korean American women in this study perceived strong parental expectations of social relationships, which were often times represented as a means of controlling dating and marriage. Most Korean parents, strongly influenced by traditional values, discourage their daughters from dating during college years, yet encourage their daughters to be married at a young age and from within certain groups. They particularly want their daughters to meet Korean Americans, because Korean parents seemed to consider dating partners of their daughters to be a potential future son-in-law. Thus, in order to keep their family extension in their immigrant life, they have to ensure that their daughters date and married someone who speaks Korean.

In a sense, having relationships with someone who can share their cultures may be beneficial for these women students; however they risk losing an opportunity to understand culturally diverse environments in society. In addition, students who did not meet parents’ expectations continually felt guilty for dating non-Korean Americans.
Having relationships with non-Koreans may be unavoidable to Korean Americans who live in the American society. Previous research has stated that interracial dating of Asian American women is relatively high (Mok, 1999). This study also found that many students were interested in dating non-Koreans and actually dated interracially. In certain cases, interracial dating and/or marriage may also cause racial discrimination in social relationships. From this study, it was found that Korean American women who interratically dated may have struggled, in that people still have prejudice against race. Evidently, these multiple challenges related to dating hindered the development of their social lives during their college years.

Another critical issue that female Korean American undergraduate students faced is related to their personal appearance. This study found that Korean American society exerted an influence on these students' body images and subsequently negatively contributed to their emotional struggles. These Korean American female undergraduate students were more emotionally challenged when their physical appearance was controlled and judged by their parents or their local Korean community (e.g., Korean church, Korean local store). In particular, being “directly” criticized about their physical appearance made these women students culturally confused. In a sense, the Korean Americans were community-oriented, and so, in their closed-knit community, Korean people felt comfortable offering advice to these young Korean Americans regarding their personal image. However, it caused these young women students emotional conflict with their American values. In addition, being criticized frequently by others regarding their body (e.g., parents, store owners, church members) contributed to their poor psychological health and body image. From this study, it is clear that being repeatedly
judged regarding their personal appearance undermined their self-esteem and negatively affected the social lives of student participants.

Most Korean American students in this study made an effort to meet the expectations of both their Korean and American communities. In particular, they were careful with their dress code (i.e., avoiding short pants) when they visited their local Korean community, because they did not want their parents and themselves to be the subject of gossip within the Korean community. These experiences negatively affected their perceptions of ethnic cultural values and subsequently hindered development of their own bicultural identity. Therefore, this study suggests that the necessity of negotiating negative gender expectations may have caused cultural conflicts.

Exceptionally, however, Korean American women did not perceive negative gender expectations academically in this study. Rather, they received great academic support from their parents. For instance, previous research has indicated that higher educational opportunities for Asian American women are somehow limited due to the influence of certain traditional values (Lee, 1997). However, Korean American women in this study have had equal educational opportunity to their siblings and were encouraged in their academic achievements by their parents in the United States. It seems likely that educational opportunity for these women students was not affected by traditional cultural values. This result supports the tendency among Korean American families immigrating to the United States to pursue opportunities in higher education since 1990s (Min, 2006c).

One of the various ways to live a transnational life style for Korean Americans is by having dual language proficiency. Bilingualism was a strategically appropriate
behavior for these women students to negotiate their cultural conflicts. They switched their language depending on how each language was primarily used in different settings. Shi & Lu (2007) demonstrated that Chinese American young adults have a positive perception toward maintaining bilingual competency, saying they are able to better communicate with their family and better understand their ethnic culture. This study found that most students experienced linguistic barriers in communication with their parents. Speaking and maintaining a second language are difficult for both parents and their children, though children tend to be slightly better than their parents regarding second language proficiency. Students usually are expected by their parents to speak their native language at home. It can be challenging for some Korean Americans who are not able to speak Korean fluently. In order to negotiate this challenge, Korean American students usually speak English mixed with Korean words (i.e., Konglish) in their conversation, in particular when they talk with their parents. This effort helps students reduce cultural conflicts resulting from miscommunication. Speaking Konglish means accepting their two cultures in their life, and it eventually helps to promote their bicultural identity (Lee, 2002). For Korean Americans, maintaining their native language is the best way to comprehend their ethnic culture and heritages, and eventually contributes to both cultures being equally important in their life. Therefore, in order to establish bicultural identity, dual language ability is necessary.

Implications and Recommendations

From this study, findings suggest that female Korean American undergraduate students achieved bicultural identity by negotiating their cultural conflicts. Conflicts between their two cultures are unavoidable because the two cultures have distinctly different belief systems but function concurrently. The following section discusses
implications and recommendations for college administrators to better understand Korean Americans students and serve appropriate support programs to them. Additionally, it offers implications for future research so that academic researchers may gain deeper knowledge related to Asian American college women and their cultural life experiences.

**Implications for Practice**

Korean American female undergraduate students face academic, social, and cultural challenges during their college years, and thus they need support programs to help them successfully deal with their challenges and achieve their own bicultural identities. As findings from this study indicate, their social lives can be very limited. For example, Korean American students established social relationships with other Korean Americans in college for their own comfort and familiarity. Simultaneously they are discouraged from developing social relationships with other racial groups by their parents and ethnic community. It certainly is beneficial for them to share their cultures and their own cultural conflicts with Korean Americans. However, in the long run, it may be harmful for these women students to adjust to American life after they graduate, because society is very diverse and they may feel an unfamiliar burden in dealing with cultural diversity in the work place.

College administrators should encourage and promote these students to have more cross-cultural experiences. Therefore, administration should develop appropriate support programs for these students that could improve their social relationships. First, colleges and universities should hire more diverse faculty members from different cultural backgrounds and encourage them to nurture a classroom for sharing their values and experiences with students. In turn, faculty members can also offer various
diversity classes and bring cultural and racial issues to class discussion so that students are aware of diversity during their college years and can develop open attitudes toward cultural diversity in their lives.

Also, student affair professionals should recognize the importance of cross cultural diversity. This study found that Korean American undergraduate students had great support from Asian (Korean) American student organizations offered by multicultural affairs programs. These organizations help students develop their ethnic identity and closely attach with people who are ethnically and culturally connected. As findings from this study indicate, most students developed their social relationships through Asian (Korean) American student associations at the beginning of their college years, and then nothing really changed regarding social relationships through their collegiate experience. It is clear that student associations can play a critical role for these students in helping them to develop and establish their social relationships. However, in a sense, because they greatly depend on Asian (Korean) American student associations, they may lose an opportunity to develop their social relationships with culturally different groups of people during their college years. Therefore, this study suggests that multicultural affairs professionals should provide various programs for students to explore cross-cultural experiences on campus so that students are able to be both racially and ethnically connected and extend their relationships on campus.

From this study, it is evident that Korean American students negotiate cultural conflicts with their own ways. To avoid cultural misunderstanding with native Koreans, these students strategically used both languages. Some students were perfectly bilingual, yet most students had difficulty speaking their native language. Speaking and
maintaining their heritage language is salient to understanding their ethnic cultures, thereby achieving their own bicultural identity (Lee, 2002). Unfortunately, many Korean American students need to learn more about the Korean language and cultures. If they are able to learn Korean on campus, that would be academically beneficial. First, students can have more pride of themselves as being Korean and can be motivated in learning the Korean language. This attitude also promotes a positive perception toward their ethnic culture and propels them in developing their own bicultural identities. In turn, having the Korean language taught on campus is also beneficial to other college students. They have an opportunity to learn and understand different cultures and consequently decrease cultural stereotypes and discrimination. Therefore, administrators should consider these benefits when they design academic curricula and offer appropriate language classes for students. Administrators should also encourage instructors to offer cultural sharing as well as language lessons.

This study also suggests for administrators to enhance support programs to assist students with successful college life. Korean American students may experience confusion during their college years due to lack of outside advice. Most students gain knowledge from peer groups informally. However, it could be limited for these students to obtain information. For example, some students in this study indicated that they wanted to know about non-premed academic areas. However because there were not many Asian Americans in non-math and science academic fields, students found it difficult to obtain information about other academic fields from their close Asian peer groups. Although some students received advice from academic professionals, they still relied on their peer groups. Presumably they were reluctant to seek educational
assistance when they struggled with academic challenges. In fact, Korean American students in this study did not seek professional help, despite the fact that they were faced with both academic and social challenges. Most of them seemed to internalize and take care of their issues themselves. Therefore, administrators should offer tailored counseling programs (e.g., academic advice, carrier resources, psychological support, multicultural counseling) that Korean American female students are encouraged to utilize. These counseling programs should be connected to multicultural affairs departments for greater effectiveness so that students may more comfortably use these programs and have appropriate assistance conveniently.

**Implications for Research**

This study offers several recommendations for future research. Frequently, Asian Americans have been described as a homogeneous group and easily categorized into one single racial category to be compared with other racial groups (Teranishi, 2007). As a result, individual experiences are ignored by academic researchers. Korean American undergraduate students’ academic lives are quite researched, yet their social and cultural lives still need to be explored. This study focused on female Korean American undergraduate students’ cultural lives. Through this study, their unique cultural circumstances were deeply explored and various ways for negotiating their challenges were identified. Therefore, findings from this study support educators and student services professionals in their efforts to understand ethnic groups of women.

However, findings should not be considered generalizable due to individuals’ uniqueness and to the small number of students studied. Individuals have different circumstances resulting from their cultural backgrounds and thereby have their own cultural experiences. Consequently these findings cannot be directly applicable to other
individuals to understand their cultural lives, despite seemingly similar circumstances (e.g., cultural duality). However, this study provides an important glimpse that will hopefully motivate academic researchers interested in multiculturalism to better understand immigrant women’s cultural lives, and guide these researchers methodologically when they design similar studies for different groups of immigrant women students. In order to more deeply comprehend immigrant students’ cultural lives, further research should be designed for individuals from different cultures and different contexts.

This qualitative study was conducted utilizing individual in-depth interviews. By listening to and comprehending this group of students’ individual voices, this research obtains insight into Korean American college women’s unique world. From the interviews, it is evident that these women students struggled with cultural conflicts concerning intergenerational expectations while developing their own bicultural identities. However, this study explored only these students’ perceptions of their bicultural lives. Their parents’ perceptions toward their adult children were overlooked, though understanding parents’ values and beliefs are important aspects in negotiating intergenerational cultural conflicts. Therefore, this study suggests using a technique of triangulation by extending to other types of participants. Specifically, it encourages researchers interested in multicultural identity development to extend their interview participants not only to students, but also to their parents or community to gain more information so that researchers can obtain a more comprehensive view of cultural conflicts and negotiations in developing Korean American undergraduate students’ bicultural identities.
Findings of this study suggest that these female Korean American students struggled with internal challenges through negatively experienced ethnic cultures. Their inner challenges seemed to be internalized and were not externalized for academic researchers and service providers to provide assistance. Therefore, this study encourages psychological researchers to pay more attention to ethnically minority women students and focus on their invisible challenges resulting from negative ethnic cultural experiences so that service providers can effectively use this information when designing programs.

This study observed that students’ cultural identity development is strongly influenced by their parents. In this study, these Korean American students’ sense of values was affected by their parents’ cultural values, because evidently their parents strongly engage with Korean culture and maintain its heritages. Yet, this study did not consider how multi-racial Korean Americans perceive their more than two cultural values from interracial parents and how they negotiate their complex cultural life. Findings from this study indicate that bicultural development is closely associated with ethnic identity development. Then, it offers further questions into how multi-racial Korean Americans negotiate their mainstream culture and their multiple ethic cultures. This idea would be on the assumption that these students may face different challenges that mono-racial Korean American experiences in developing their own cultural identity. Therefore, further research should be conducted to explore how biracial Korean American students understand their cultural circumstances and negotiate conflicts while developing their own cultural identity.
This study also suggests further questions into how recent Korean immigrant students negotiate their ethnic culture and their new host culture. These students may struggle with their cultural duality while they assimilate to the American mainstream culture. As this study found, Korean American students during high school struggled with different cultural expectations between their two cultures. In that case, Korean culture plays a negative role for these participants in developing their own cultural identity. However, for recent immigrant students, strongly affected by their ethnic culture, American culture may give rise to confusion in developing their own cultural identity. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how recent immigrant students negotiate their given American mainstream culture and their ethnic culture, and how they integrate their dual cultural lifestyle so that they successfully develop their own bicultural identity.

Findings in this study indicated that immigrant students are influenced by their ethnic cultural values due to their parents' transnational life styles. Therefore, different cultural expectations, including gender expectations, originating from their ethnic culture were maintained by their family and local ethnic communities in the American society. In fact, keeping transnational life style for immigrant families is now common because of the globalization phenomenon. Therefore, this study suggests future research that explores how other Asian immigrant groups such as Chinese Americans, or other racial groups including Latino Americans, who maintain transnational life style, negotiate their cultural conflicts and integrate their dual cultural life style in the American society.

Lastly, this study acknowledged that Korean Americans change and develop their cultural identity by continually reflecting on their experiences and their own perceptions
as they grow. It can be assumed that bicultural identity development is a life-long process, just like other identity development theories (e.g., ethnic identity development). Therefore, longitudinal research is needed to obtain a better understanding into how Korean American students continually re-examine their own cultural experiences and perceptions to integrate their dual cultural lives and achieve their own bicultural identity.

Concluding Thoughts

The number of Asian American women enrolled in American higher education has increased over the years (KewalRamani et al., 2007), yet this group of students has been relatively unexplored (Hune, 1998). Steadily rising enrollment of Asian American women in higher education and the lack of attention from academia often times make their unique challenges invisible. This study contributes to American higher education research by indicating that college administration should focus on Korean American students and their cultural challenges and provide tailored support and assistance for these women students to establish their identity: “Who am I?”

Findings of the study suggest that women students undergo certain processes to develop their bicultural identity, and they continually negotiate conflicts caused by cultural differences. This study acknowledges that students have their own perspective toward their dual cultural life experiences as they intellectually grow and more actively negotiate their cultural circumstances. In the process of bicultural identity development, internal conflicts between two cultures continually occur as they confront two distinct cultural belief systems. Although most students in this study tried to overcome their challenges without professional help, they faced difficulty in doing so. They needed institutional support and educational programs, which are of easy access to students, so that they could feel a sense of belonging on their campus and emotionally safe when
developing their values. Attention to Asian American college women’s cultural lives moves the field of diversity forward and encourages academic scholars to conduct studies to better understand these groups of students, and mitigate misunderstanding of Asian American college women. As this study states, Korean Americans typically become bicultural. This study ultimately suggests that these students must have support in their efforts to negotiate their cultural lives in order to safely develop their own bicultural identity.
**Title of Protocol:** The Negotiation of Korean American Female Undergraduate Students’ Bicultural Identities

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**Date of Proposed Research:** 01/23/2012-01/23/2013

**Source of Funding (A copy of the grant proposal must be submitted with this protocol if funding is involved):**

**Scientific Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this study is to understand how Korean American undergraduate students negotiate conflict between Korean and American cultures and establish their bicultural identity.

**Describe the Research Methodology in Non-Technical Language:** (Explain what will be done with or to the
In-depth semi structure interviews will be utilized as the primary tool to conduct this study. Ten Korean American female undergraduate students who are currently enrolled at the University of Florida will be asked to participate in interviews that will be conducted on the UF campus (e.g., library study room) by researchers. Each participant will be interviewed three times. The first interview will last 60-90 minutes and ten questions will be asked (see interview attached guide). The second, less structured interview, will be used to develop the properties of categories of analysis and to check the accuracy of preliminary findings (please see the second interview attached sample guide). More specifically, the second interview will be based on emerging themes that the researcher found from the first interview to enhance precision of emerging ideas. The second interview will last 30-60 minutes. The final interview will be used to develop the properties of categories of analysis and to check the accuracy of findings (please see the third interview attached sample guide). The third interview will last 30-60 minutes. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

### Describe Potential Benefits:
In general, this study will provide an opportunity to understand how female Korean American undergraduate students archive bicultural identity. This may also give university administrators and student affairs professionals an opportunity to comprehend ethnic minority students as they develop support programs. Finally, this study may afford readers further understanding of female Korean American students and the educational experiences in American colleges and universities.

### Describe Potential Risks: (If risk of physical, psychological or economic harm may be involved, describe the steps taken to protect participant.)
No more than minimum risks are anticipated.

### Describe How Participant(s) Will Be Recruited:
I will contact the Multicultural & Diversity Affairs (e.g., Asian Pacific Islander American Affairs) and ask administrative assistants to forward the recruitment email to Korean female students (please see the recruitment email attached sample guide). In addition, participants will be recruited through referrals from people that I (primary researcher) know and referrals from interview participants. All participants are asked to contact the researcher (PI) via email if they are interested in participating in this study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maximum Number of Participants (to be approached with consent)</th>
<th>10 female Korean American undergraduate students.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Range of Participants:</td>
<td>Participants have to be over 19 years old. (Participants’ class should be sophomore and higher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Compensation/course credit:</td>
<td>Each participant will be compensated with a $20 gift card to coffee/food company.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe the Informed Consent Process. (Attach a Copy of the Informed Consent Document. See http://irb.ufl.edu/irb02/samples.html for examples of consent.)

An informed consent form will be provided to participants prior the interviews. Participation is completely voluntary.

(SIGNATURE SECTION)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Investigator(s) Signature:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-Investigator(s) Signature(s):</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor's Signature (if PI is a student):</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Chair Signature:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Protocol Title: The Negotiation of Korean American Female Undergraduate Students’ Bicultural Identities

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to understand how Korean American undergraduate students negotiate conflict between Korean and American cultures and establish their bicultural identity.

The Research Methodology: Each participant will be interviewed three times. The first interview will last 60-90 minutes and 12 questions will be asked. The second interview will be conducted to develop the properties of categories of analysis. More specifically, the second interview will be based on emerging themes that the researcher found from the first interview to enhance precision of emerging ideas. The second interview will last 30-60 minutes. The final interview will be conducted to check the accuracy of findings. The third interview will last 30-60 minutes.

What you will be asked to do in the study: To answer and discuss 12 interview questions.

Time required: 60-90 minutes

Risks and Benefits: No more than minimal risk. This study will provide an opportunity to understand how female Korean American undergraduate students archive their bicultural identities. This may also give university administrators and student affairs professionals an opportunity to comprehend ethnic minority students as they develop support programs. Finally, this study may afford readers further understanding of female Korean American students and the educational experiences in American colleges and universities.

Compensation: Each participant will be compensated with a $20 gift card to coffee/food Company.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. The interviews will be audio-recorded, that any identifying information will be removed at transcription, and the recordings will be destroyed after transcription, which will be done within 10 weeks after the interview. Also, the names of the participants will not
be used in any research reports or presentations. The final results will be presented in a paper and be sent to education journals and magazines for possible publication.

**Voluntary participation:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

**Right to withdraw from the study:** You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

**Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:**

Sun-Young Kim

Email:

**Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:**

UFIRB Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; ph 392-0433.

I have read the procedure outlined above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and have received a copy of this description.

Participant’s signature and date

____________________________________

Principle investigator’s signature and date

____________________________________
Interview Protocol- First Interview

I would like to share your cultural and educational experiences and I want to ask few questions.

1. Could you give me some background information about yourself?
2. How would you identify yourself?
3. What were some things that were challenging in developing your identity?
4. What does being a Korean American woman mean to you?
5. What specific challenges do you face in your life as a Korean American woman at home/community/schools?
6. Describe family/community expectations (based on gender, birth order, relationships, ethnic language, and education).
7. How would you describe Korean cultural values/American cultural values in your life?
8. How important are your Korean cultural values and American cultural values to you in developing your social life?
9. What events were challenging during your college years because of your Korean cultural values?
10. How do you find balance between Korean cultural values and American cultural values?
11. Describe the events/circumstances that you faced in your academic and social life during your college years.
12. How do you overcome challenges in your academic and social life during your college years?
APPENDIX D
FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol- Second Interview

The second interview will consist of follow up questions on preliminary findings that the researcher found from the first interview. Here is sample of general questions for second interview. However, the other questions will be determined by preliminary findings to clarify and add further detail.

1. Last time we discussed dual cultural lives and you were saying you struggled because of your parents’ control during high school. But you experienced less control and more independence after leaving your parents’ house to attend college. I would like to know more detail about what happen to you and how did you feel. So, how do you feel about this finding?

2. Could you give me some examples of your experiences during high school and college?

3. How did you deal with your challenges?

4. What did you learn from those experiences?
APPENDIX E
FINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol- Final Interview

The final interview focused more on member checking to validate the accuracy of interview statements. Here is sample of general questions for final interview. However, the other questions will be based on issues discussed by each participant during the interview.

1. I want to present a brief summary of findings emerging in my study and explained the theoretical model. I also would like to ask you about your thoughts on the findings.

2. How do you feel about this theory?

3. What do you think of my interpretations?

4. Is there any finding or interpretation that made you uncomfortable?

5. Please check all personal background information and quotations that I would be using in this study. Then tell me if you have any question.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focused coding</th>
<th>Selective coding</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having the school environment affecting KA cultural identity</td>
<td>Cultural environments affecting the Identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilating to the primary culture that KA belong to</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing cultural diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more sophisticated views of race</td>
<td>Being exposed to cultural diversity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having sense of independence</td>
<td>Experiencing independence</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>confusion associated with independence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeking outside help</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gravitating toward cultural comfort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detaching themselves from native Koreans</td>
<td>Lack of cross cultural social relationships</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Depending on ethnic groups</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Concerning limited social relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of social integration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facing racial stereotypes</td>
<td>Facing racial stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Experiencing intergenerational conflicts</td>
<td>Experiencing power relations</td>
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<td>Obeying</td>
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<td>Preconceived gender role expectations</td>
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<td>Restricted social relationships</td>
<td>Facing gender expectations</td>
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<td>Personal appearance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making up for negative cultural values</td>
<td>Balancing two cultures to minimize cultural conflicts</td>
<td>Cultural negotiation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Hello,

My name is Sun Young Kim and I am a doctoral student in higher education administration. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study. In particular, I am seeking to interview Korean American female undergraduate students who are currently sophomore and higher. The purpose of this study is to understand how Korean American undergraduate students negotiate conflict between Korean and American cultures and establish their bicultural identity. I would like to know about your cultural experiences through this study. Each participant will be asked to participate in an interview that will last about 60-90 minutes and a follow up interview and member checking that will last about 30-60 minutes. Each participant will be compensated with a $20 gift card to coffee/food Company. I believe that this qualitative inquiry will give you an opportunity to share your valuable experience and enhance your awareness as a Korean American in American society. If you are interested in participating in an interview, please contact me at:

Thank you for your consideration.

Sun Young Kim
LIST OF REFERENCES


the politics of feminism (pp. 51-80). Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.


Museus, S. D., & Kiang, P. N. (2009). Deconstructing the model minority myth and how it contributes to the invisible minority reality in higher education research. New Directions for Institutional Research, 142, 5-15.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sun-Young Kim was born in Suwon, Korea. She came to the United States after she got married and pursued her master’s degree in educational leadership, in the Department of Educational Administration and Policy at the University of Florida. In 2008, Sun-Young began her PhD in the same department at the University of Florida and changed her major to higher education administration. Her academic interest is in diversity in secondary and post secondary education. In particular, she is interested in developing support programs for underrepresented groups including women, minorities, and LGBT students. She lives in Gainesville with her husband and daughter.