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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

THE ETHNIC IDENTITY JOURNEY OF 1.5 GENERATION  
ASIAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Nadia Anisa Benyamin

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences  
School of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education  
School Psychology

August 2018

This Dissertation by: Nadia Anisa Benyamin

Entitled: *The Ethnic Identity Journey of 1.5 Generation Asian American College Students*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in School of Applied Psychology and  
Counselor Education, Program of School Psychology.

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Accepted by the Graduate School

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## ABSTRACT

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2018.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study is to explore the ethnic identity journey of 1.5 generation Asian American college students. The study seeks to answer how the ethnic identity perception of the 1.5 generation Asian American college students has transformed from arrival in the United States to present and how native and English language engagement as well as acculturation experiences have impacted the 1.5 generation Asian American college students' perceptions of ethnic identity.

The data for this study were collected via in-depth semi-structured interviews with five Asian American college students who self-identify as 1.5 generation individuals or having moved to the United States between the ages of 6 to 13. Data were interpreted using the Moustakas (1994) guidelines for conducting and analyzing phenomenological research. The essence of the 1.5 generation Asian American experience in their path toward ethnic identity discovery included five main themes: relearning school, language and acceptance, acculturation experiences, finding the self, and connecting with origin. This research provides human service professionals and others that work directly with immigrant youth with a better understanding of the ethnic identity journey and possible short- and long-term psychosocial impacts of immigration for the 1.5 generation youth.

This research is my contribution to today's literature on the Asian American youth and their often invisible but always present struggles.

*Keywords:* phenomenology, qualitative study, 1.5 generation, Asian Americans, Acculturation, Asian students, Identity, Ethnic Identity

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, Aliya, who was the sole motivation to finish the race I started in 2011. To my husband, Armand, thank you for always being the constant source of quiet strength and patience in my life. I thank my parents, Ben and Eliza, who made the tough decision to leave everything behind and move with two young girls to the other side of the world in order to show us the *world*.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER

I.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
	Purpose of the Study.....	6
	Context of the Study.....	7
	Rationale .....	8
	Research Questions .....	12
	Definition of Terms .....	12
	Summary.....	17
II.	LITERATURE REVIEW .....	18
	Who is the 1.5 Generation Individual?.....	18
	Growing up as a 1.5 Generation Child .....	20
	The Model Minority Struggle .....	23
	Language and Cultural Loss among 1.5 Generation .....	25
	Educational Implications of Being a 1.5 Generation .....	28
	Defining Identity and Ethnic Identity.....	30
	Link between Language and Ethnic Identity .....	32
	Personal Identity Development for the 1.5 Generation .....	34
	Personal Identity Development in College .....	35
	Ethnic Identity Development .....	38
	Asian American Ethnic Identity Development .....	40
	Ethnic Identity Development in College .....	42
	Summary.....	44
III.	METHODOLOGY .....	46
	Researcher as Instrument.....	47
	Research Paradigm .....	50
	Trustworthiness .....	68
	Summary.....	69
IV.	PRESENTATION OF DATA.....	71
	Collection of Data .....	71
	Participants.....	72
	Preparation for Interviews .....	77
	Interviews.....	78
	Documentation .....	82
	Data Analysis .....	84
	Composite Textural-Structural Descriptions. ....	115



Summary .....	138
V. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	139
Interpretations of Findings in Comparison with .....	140
Literature Review and Theory .....	140
Implications for Practice and Research .....	157
Recommendations for Future Studies .....	161
Limitations of the Study .....	163
Summary .....	164
REFERENCES .....	165
APPENDICES	
A. Sample Interview Guide .....	192
B. Background Questionnaire.....	198
C. Recruitment Letter .....	200
D. Institutional Review Board Approval.....	203
E. Consent Forms .....	206

## LIST OF FIGURES

### FIGURE

1. Kodoma et al.'s psychosocial development model for Asian American students .....38
2. Four basic elements of the qualitative research process .....51
3. Moustakas' data analysis as adapted from Yuksel and Yildirim .....64

## LIST OF TABLES

### TABLE

1. Data Analysis Steps Illustrated within the Dissertation .....	84
2. Invariant Constituents or Meaning Units from Lauren's Interview Data .....	92
3. Themes and Subthemes of Lauren's Experience .....	95
4. Shared Themes and Supporting Subthemes.....	116

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 1965, Asian Americans comprised less than 1% of the population of the United States (Pew Research Center, 2013). Such a small number reflects this country's long history of restrictive race-based policies that limited the immigration of individuals from certain parts of the world. After World War II, the U.S. government began to welcome immigration from all parts of the world, including Asia. This decision has since transformed the United States and its ethnic makeup (Yang, 2011).

Today, the United States is a multicultural, multiethnic nation. The number of immigrants in this country continues to rise. Between 2000 and 2009, the number of foreign-born individuals increased from 28 million to 39 million (Martin & Midgley, 2010). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Asian population has grown at a much faster rate than any other race group in the country. As a whole, the total U.S. population increased by 9.7% from 2000 to 2010; by contrast, the Asian population increased by 45.6% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). It is the only population to increase as an immediate result of immigration (Pew Research Center, 2013). This increase has resulted in a unique group of Asian immigrants: the 1.5 generation.

Adults who come to the United States from another country are considered immigrants, and their children who are born here are considered citizens. However, the 1.5 generation is a unique group that falls in between. Immigrants from the 1.5 generation relocated to the United States between the ages of 6 and 13 and came of age in

their host country (Rumbaut & Rumbaut, 1976; Zhou, 1997). The U.S. Census Bureau does not specify a percentage of immigrant adolescents, the age group that makes up the 1.5 generation, among the total number of immigrants who enter the country. To calculate precisely how many 1.5 generation immigrants live in the United States in any specific year is challenging. However, estimates place the number at about 1.8 million children, between the ages of 6 and 17 and born outside the United States, who were living here in 2013 alone (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). One in five students between kindergarten and 12th grade found in U.S. public institutions are children of immigrants, with one-quarter having been foreign-born (Fix & Passel, 2003). Not all of these students belong to the 1.5 generation, nor did they all emigrate from Asia. However, we can be sure there are increasing numbers of 1.5 generation students, especially Asian students, at every level of education today.

As with all children, there are many factors that influence the development of immigrant children. One particular area of emphasis has been on identity development as it relates to cognitive development, academic achievement, career decisions, social interactions, and self-esteem (Davis, 1994; Hernandez, 1995; Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Tatum, 1992). Part of the process of developing one's identity is seeking an answer to the question, "Who am I?" as a person. Identity development is a complicated process for all individuals and is especially important for college students who are faced every day with life-changing questions, such as "How do I fit here in this environment?" or "Who am I going to be in the future?" The development of identity is especially challenging when many variables, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class,

language, country of origin, cultural background, and gender intersect in an individual's life, as is the case for 1.5 generation Asian American students.

The early literature on identity development seems to suggest that identity development follows a similar path for all students regardless of their ethnicity, race, gender, language, or socioeconomic status (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Research has since shown that these above factors do indeed play an integral role in identity development (Phinney, 1990, 1992). Identity develops through the gathering of experiences and the integration and interpretation of such experiences (Baker, 2009). These experiences start early in infancy when children begin to recognize themselves.

For example, Bullock and Lutkenhaus (1990) discovered that 2-year-olds do self-recognize; they observed that children with a dot placed on their noses recognized themselves in a mirror, evidenced by the fact that they touched their noses when they saw themselves in the mirror after the dot had been put in place. Researchers saw this as early evidence of the understanding of the self (Bullock & Lutkenhaus, 1990). In later childhood, this sense of identity further develops and starts to be described in terms of personal qualities and characteristics (Baker, 2009). This pattern continues into adulthood, where identity includes a focus on social roles and becoming more abstract (Marcia, 1980). Identity development thus begins at childhood, heightens as individuals enter adolescence, and continues into adulthood.

Adolescence marks a period where many individuals enter into postsecondary settings where they will live independently for the first time and will encounter a diverse range of individuals. Postsecondary settings thus become a daunting time for many individuals. Students are expected to adapt quickly to their new environment and

surroundings in order to succeed both personally and academically (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Although adjustment issues apply to many students in postsecondary settings, the concerns and struggles of Asian American 1.5 generation college students are even more complex. In addition to having to confront typical adjustment problems, such as figuring out how to live independently, often away from their parents, these students may also grapple with issues pertaining to identity, ethnic identity, acculturation, social acceptance, socioeconomic status, and language.

Research has shown the importance of having a well-developed identity. First, a positive sense of identity in children is crucial to the development of self-esteem and confidence (Pulido-Tobiassen & Gonzalez-Mena, 1999). Children who feel able and worthy are generally more optimistic and do better in school. A positive sense of identity helps children be more accepting of others from different backgrounds, because they are less likely to fear diversity and differences in others (Pulido-Tobiassen & Gonzalez-Mena, 1999). Having a healthy identity helps children feel safe and confident about themselves and their roots. Erikson (1968) noted that before a sense of identity has adequately been established, adolescents are:

intolerant, and cruel in their exclusion of others who are “different,” in skin color or cultural background, in tastes and gifts, and often in entirely petty aspects of dress and gesture arbitrarily selected as the signs of an in-grouper or out-grouper. (p. 97)

Marcia (1980), who believed identity to be a structure of beliefs, abilities, and past experiences regarding the self, stated:

The better developed this structure is, the more individuals appear to be of their own and the less developed this structure is, the more confused individuals seem to be about their own distinctiveness from others and the more they have to rely on external sources to evaluate themselves. (p. 159)

A well-developed identity, according to Marcia (1980), provides one with an understanding of one's strengths and weaknesses as well as personal uniqueness. People with a less developed identity are not able to recognize their personal strengths and weaknesses, nor do they have a well-understood sense of the self. Additionally, research has shown that a less developed identity leads to other challenges in adolescence and adulthood, such as low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, and life without a purpose, which could lead to greater psychological distress such as depression and anxiety (Dombeck, 2006; Kroger, 2007).

As the Asian American population grows in the United States, a record 45.6% increase since 2000, research in the area of ethnic identity for this particular group becomes increasingly important. Torres (2004) indicated a pressing need to understand the phenomenon of ethnic identity for Latino students. When Torres wrote his paper in 2004, the Latin American population was the one population that was growing exponentially as a result of immigration. In 2015, this population was Asian Americans, and today Asia has the second largest number of U.S. future-immigrant births. As immigration from Latin America has begun to decline in recent years, Asian immigrants, particularly from China and India, are predicted to become the largest foreign-born group by the year 2055 (Pew Research Center, 2013). In the 2010 U.S. Census, the top six Asian groups with the biggest population numbers in the United States were the Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Though these numbers include all generations of Asian American immigrants, some of whom have been in this country for generations, there is a continued need today to



understand the Asian American experience, specifically focusing on those born outside of the US and their children.

Through this study, I was interested specifically in the 1.5 generation college students' journey toward finding their identity, specifically their ethnic identity, through the exploration of English and native language engagement as well as acculturative experiences. The 1.5 generation represents a heterogeneous group of individuals with varied experiences who have long been overlooked in the fields of education and psychology. Because the 1.5 generation plays a significant role in contributing to U.S. culture and the global economy, there should be added pressure to help them successfully achieve their full potential by learning more about their journey and identifying their unique needs. This study has received approval from The University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board (IRB# 884261-2).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The intent of this qualitative research study was to explore the ethnic identity formation of 1.5 generation Asian American college students through exploring English language and native language engagement and acculturation experiences. It is my hope that by further confirming the unique experiences of this group, we may begin to consider the 1.5 generation as a category of their own with unique experiences and needs.

I decided to use a phenomenological research approach because of its potential to maximize what can be discovered about a particular phenomenon. Moreover, the phenomenological approach allowed for the identification of general themes shared by participants without neglecting their unique experiences. Because of the expectation that each of the study participants would have a unique story to tell, interviews were the

primary method employed in this study. It is important to note that participants did not include refugees; rather, participants included only those with parents who made an informed and voluntary decision to emigrate to the United States and were not forced to move as a result of unrest (i.e., war, persecution, or natural disaster) in their home countries. The reason for the exclusion of refugees was due to the differing experiences in overall immigration and acculturative experiences for refugees who emigrate to the United States. Though similar in their stories of having to leave behind their native countries and adapt to a brand new culture in the United States, refugee immigration experiences, including the stress of emigrating without the possibility of returning to their homelands, are very different.

Five 1.5 generation Asian Americans were interviewed for this particular study with the purpose of examining their process of ethnic identity formation. The interview format was semi-structured to allow for follow-up and more in-depth questioning. The information yielded from this study can significantly enhance our understanding of the 1.5 generation experience within and outside of our school systems, especially in postsecondary settings, and will assist human service professionals (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, and teachers) in better recognizing how to meet the differing needs of this group.

### **Context of the Study**

Participants were from cities across the state of Colorado. Nearly one in 10 Coloradans is a foreign-born immigrant (American Immigration Council, 2017). The foreign-born population of Colorado increased from 4.3% in 1990 to 9.8% in 2015. In 2015, there were approximately 500,000 foreign-born individuals in Colorado alone

(American Immigration Council, 2017). Within those numbers, 22.1% came from Asia, making it the second largest foreign-born population after those from Latin America. In 2017, out of the 64,140 public high school graduates in the state of Colorado, only 0.03% or approximately 1,973 students were classified to be of Asian American ethnicity (Colorado Department of Education, 2017). However, these small numbers begin to look somewhat different once we examine college enrollment rates. Approximately 72% of Asian American high school graduates enroll in college, making Asian Americans the group with the highest college-going rates every year in Colorado (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2017). In 2013, there were approximately 362,935 students enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in Colorado, 4% of whom consider themselves to be Asian American (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2017). It is a challenge to determine how many of these enrolled students truly belong to the 1.5 generation based on current data.

### **Rationale**

There has been a significant amount of past research conducted on identity and ethnic identity development (Block, 2007; Byrd Clark, 2009; Norton, 1995), the 1.5 generation (Benesch, 2008; McKay & Wong, 1996;), and the Asian American college experience (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010; Suyemoto, Kim, Tanabe, Tawal, & Day, 2009; Tran, 2014). However, the concepts are rarely connected or explored together. Specifically, there is a gap in the research regarding the connection between ethnic identity development and 1.5 generation student experiences while in college. Additionally, both current and past research often homogenize or categorize the 1.5 generation as second-

generation immigrants, first-generation immigrants, ESL students, or international students (Fix & Passel, 2003; Kim, 2000).

Research on the 1.5 generation lacks much mention of identity or ethnic identity development. According to Rumbaut and Rumbaut (1976), this generation often has few memories of their home country, yet, at the same time, possess little pride in being American because they have not been born here. It is difficult to locate research studies on the identity of 1.5 generation individuals other than the perception of “in-betweenness” (Asher & Case, 2008), or being caught between two cultures (Goldschmidt & Miller, 2005).

Additionally, during the process of navigating and adapting to a brand new culture, immigrants experience encounters, both positive and negative, that influence the level of acculturative stress immigrants have on a daily basis. A growing body of literature suggests that positive and negative acculturative experiences lead to both positive changes (e.g., development of personal strength, strengthening meaningful relationships with others, enhancing spiritual growth) and negative changes (e.g., depression, anxiety, and other poor mental health outcomes, perceptions of marginality, and isolation) (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006; Crockett et al., 2007; Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998; Wei et al., 2007). The impact of these positive and negative acculturative experiences on the 1.5 generation has yet to be explored.

Despite past researchers having established links between language and identity (Liang, 2006; Norton, 1995, 1997) and acculturative experiences and identity, the research examining the relationship between identity perceptions, English language use, and positive and negative acculturative experiences of the 1.5 generation students in

college has not yet been done. Taking these research gaps into account, the intent of this study is to clarify the identity perceptions of the 1.5 generation college students through the exploration of language engagement and acculturative processes.

Past research that deals with the 1.5 generation has focused on academic writing and linguistic shortcomings (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999; Moore & Christiansen, 2005; Singhal, 2004). Many 1.5 generation students within U.S. education settings are not required to take language proficiency tests or courses because of the assumption that studying in an English-speaking environment and being able to speak English without an accent guarantees academic English proficiency. However, these conditions do not guarantee academic success without additional language or academic supports.

The 1.5 generation children arrive in the United States at a young age and become fluent in English in a short period. Nevertheless, Harklau et al. (1999) asserted that, although 1.5 generation students are English-dominant bilinguals, they are often considered English language learners because they speak a language other than English at home. However, the 1.5 generation cannot necessarily be referred to as English language learners due to their oral fluency in English without an accent, but neither can they be considered native speakers due to their continued struggles with academic English. Ortmeier-Hooper (2008) points out that few 1.5 generation students self-identify with an ESL label, despite English being their second language. 1.5 generation students could easily mislead their teachers due to sounding like native speakers and familiarity with the contemporary American culture, yet continue to struggle with academic expectations (Harklau, 2000; Harklau, et al., 1999).

In addition to the lack of language and academic support, 1.5 generation students are expected to navigate the social aspects of education on their own, without any issue. Because of their unique status, being neither recent immigrants nor fully American, 1.5 generation students often fall through the cracks and have to fend for themselves within education and other settings.

Asian Americans are often referred to as the “Model Minority.” This term, which gained its popularity in the 1960s, identified Asian Americans as a model minority in this country due to their hard work and cultural values which have allowed them to assimilate into mainstream America and attain high educational achievement and rapid upward mobility in spite of racial discrimination (Chun, 1995; Li & Wang, 2008; Teranishi, 2010). This stereotype is unique in a way, as it involves relatively positive traits in contrast to some of the negative characterizations faced by other ethnic minorities in this country. Such recognition of the model minority stereotype as being mostly positive generalizations are assumed even by teachers, peers, and Asian Americans themselves (Chang & Demyan, 2007; Ho & Jackson, 2001). It is important to understand that the model minority stereotype, even with all of its favorable aspects, does not warrant favorable outcomes and, despite its recognition, does not reflect the entire truth.

In July of 2015, the Washington Post published an article titled, “Tragedy of ‘Golden’ Daughter’s Fall Resonates with Asian Immigrant Children” describing the violent killings of two Asian parents at the hands of their daughter who fell apart under unrealistic pressures placed on her (Wang, 2015). This article launched a much-needed conversation about Asian Americans and the weight that the model minority status may place on the individual level. In October of the same year, an article on CNN Money,

entitled “The Asian Disadvantage (That’s Being Ignored),” spoke of the struggles behind the Asian American model minority status that paints an image of perfection for all Asian Americans. Another article in the New Yorker, entitled “The Two Asian Americas,” spoke about the perpetual alien status of Asian Americans and their silence in the face of the microracism that they encounter daily in this country. Numerous articles have been published as of late about the Asian American experience and struggle, showing that people are finally taking more interest in this growing group. This research is my attempted contribution to understanding better our fellow Americans.

### **Research Questions**

This study has one primary purpose: to understand the ethnic identity journey of the 1.5 generation Asian American college students through exploration of their preferred language engagement and overall acculturation experiences. My study seeks to answer the following questions specifically:

- Q1     How has the ethnic identity perception of the 1.5 generation Asian American college students transformed since arrival in the United States to present?
- Q2     How do native language and English language engagement impact the 1.5 generation Asian American college students’ perceptions of ethnic identity?
- Q3     How do positive and negative acculturation experiences impact the 1.5 generation Asian American college students’ perceptions of ethnic identity?

### **Definition of Terms**

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the dissertation. The researcher developed all definitions that are not accompanied by a citation.

*1.5 Generation.* Immigrants who relocated to the United States between the ages of 6 and 18 and came of age in their host country (Rumbaut & Rumbaut, 1976; Zhou, 1997).

*Acculturative Experience.* Acculturation is “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (Berry, 2005, p. 698). Acculturative experiences are experiences an individual gets from being in a new culture. These experiences can be both positive, experiences of learning and acceptance from members of the new group, or negative, experiences of rejection from the new group (e.g., racism, discrimination) and overall struggles.

*Acculturative Stress.* Acculturative stress has been associated with poor mental health outcomes such as depression and anxiety (Crockett et al., 2007; Wei et al., 2007), perceptions of marginality and isolation, increased psychosomatic symptoms, identity confusion, and poor physical health outcomes (Williams & Berry, 1991).

*Adolescence.* The transitional period that follows the onset of puberty when an individual develops from a child into an adult. According to Erikson, this period is usually between the ages of 12 and 18, but differs from culture to culture (Erikson, 1968).

*Asian American.* Americans of Asian descent and the fastest-growing racial group in the US. Asian Americans in this country consist of foreign-born immigrants or their descendants from numerous countries in the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent (Pew Research Center, 2013). The Asian American participants selected for this dissertation come only from China, India, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, and



Vietnam, as they are the top six Asian countries with the biggest population numbers in the United States.

*Co-researchers.* Moustakas (1994) defined all research participants as co-researchers. This is due to the essence of the phenomenon being derived from participants' perceptions and experiences. It is the participants' stories of their experience that provide the meaning of the phenomenon of interest. While the primary researcher is still the one conducting the study, the primary researcher informs the co-researchers about their positions in the research that explores the research questions based on the co-researchers' experience and their stories. In this dissertation, I, as the primary researcher, will refer to participants as "participants" in the beginning, but will refer to participants only as "co-researchers" starting in chapter three.

*Constructivist Perspective.* The constructivist researcher believes that knowledge consists of multiple understandings and interpretations. In the constructivist perspective, knowledge and meaning belong to the individual and interpretations can change or be revised continuously.

*Epistemology.* "The study of a theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge especially with reference to its limits and validity" (Epistemology, n.d.). Epistemology tries to understand what it means to know (Gray, 2013).

*Epoché.* The act of refraining from presupposition or judgments about a particular phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché allows the researcher to be bias-free in order to describe the reality from a somewhat objective perspective.

*Essence.* A shared meaning of an experience that may exist for many individuals who have had a similar experience (Patton, 2002).

*Ethnic Identity.* Ethnic identity is the “sense of self in terms of membership in a particular ethnic group” (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001, p. 496). Ethnic identity refers to a “subjective sense of attachment to the various cultural values, assumptions, roles, and heritage shared by members of an ethnic group” (Sodowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995, p. 133). Ethnic identity can be inclusive of both internal and external aspects. Internal aspects include attitudes and feelings toward one's ethnic group, whereas external aspects include ethnic involvement, such as language, friendship, religion, cultural traditions, and politics (Phinney, 1990, 1996; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001).

*Identity.* How we understand our relationship to our world and how that relationship is constructed (Norton, 1997). Identity is ever-changing and emerges from the cultures to which we belong. Burke (2006) believes that “identity change involves changes in the meaning of the self: changes in what it means to be who one is as a member of a group, who one is in a role, or who one is as a person” (p. 92).

*Identity Development.* The process of seeking an answer to the question, “Who am I?” as a person. Identity develops through the gathering of experiences and the integration and interpretation of such experiences (Baker, 2009). These experiences start early on in infancy when children begin to recognize themselves and continue into adulthood, where identity includes a focus on social roles and becoming more abstract.

*Interpretivism.* The interpretive researcher assumes that “access to reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments” (Myers, 2008, p.38). Interpretivism searches for “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-

world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). According to interpretivism, a direct, one-to-one relationship between ourselves (i.e., subject) and the world (i.e., object) does not exist (Crotty, 1998). Reality is socially constructed and fluid.

*Methodology.* The principles and ideas on which researchers base their procedures and strategies (i.e., method).

*Methods.* Actual techniques and procedures used to enable a strategy to take place; the tools used to gather and analyze research data.

*Model Minority Stereotype.* A term that gained its popularity in the 1960s that identified Asian Americans as a model minority in this country due to their hard work and cultural values, which have allowed them to assimilate into mainstream America and attain high educational achievement and rapid upward mobility in spite of racial discrimination (Chun, 1995; Li & Wang, 2008; Teranishi, 2010).

*Phenomenological Research.* Research that seeks reality in individuals' narratives of their lived experiences of phenomena (Cilesiz, 2009; Husserl, 1970; Moustakas, 1994). According to Gray (2013), phenomenological research: (a) focuses on inductive logic; (b) seeks the opinions and subjective accounts and interpretations of participants; (c) relies on qualitative analysis of data; (d) does not focus on generalizations to larger populations, but rather on contextual description and analysis.

*Postsecondary Settings.* A reference to any education beyond high school. Postsecondary settings can include vocational and career schools, community and technical colleges, and four-year colleges or universities.

*Qualitative Research.* Research that is primarily explorative and used to gain better understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It describes relationships in more depth and allows for the emergence of unexpected findings.

*Refugees.* Individuals who have been forced to leave their country of origin as a result of war, persecution, or natural disaster.

*Theoretical Perspective.* The philosophical stance informing the methodology and providing context for the process of research (Crotty, 1998).

### **Summary**

The intent of my qualitative research study is to explore the ethnic identity formation of 1.5 generation Asian American college students through the exploration of their English language and native language engagement and acculturation experiences. In this chapter, I sought to provide the main reasons for conducting this study. As such, I have cited gaps within our research literature, the context within which this unique group exists, research questions, and a comprehensive list of terms. The following chapter will focus on a review of existing literature that pertains to the 1.5 generation experience.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Who is the 1.5 Generation Individual?**

Among the thousands of immigrants and refugees arriving annually in the United States, there are children and adolescents brought each year to this country by their parents. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in 2001, about 17% or 310,000 immigrants arriving in the United States were between the ages of 5 and 16 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). These young individuals are referred to as the 1.5 generation because their status is “in-between,” in that they are not entirely American, but more than a newcomer (Asher & Case, 2008). According to Benesch (2008), they are neither first- nor second-generation immigrants, and neither newcomer nor American. A first-generation immigrant is an individual who was born in his or her native country and migrated to a new host country as an adult. A second-generation immigrant is an individual who either was born in the new country to at least one immigrant parent or moved to the new country before the age of 6 (Van Ours & Veenman, 2003). Past research has shown that there exist significant differences between first- and second-generation immigrants concerning physical and psychological developmental stages, their socialization processes in the family, their experiences in school and society, and their orientation toward their homeland (Zhou, 1997).

Goldschmidt and Miller (2005) explained that 1.5 generation individuals live between two cultures: they typically immerse in their native culture at home but

participate in the majority culture at school, and speak their native language at home but speak only in English at school. Rumbaut and Rumbaut (1976) invented the term *one-and-a-half generation* to refer to children of Cuban exiles who were born in Cuba but raised in the United States. Later Rumbaut and Ima (1988) used the term *1.5 Generation* to refer to Southeast Asian refugee children who had to adapt to new life in the U.S.

They defined the 1.5 generation term as follows:

Neither part of the “first” generation of their parents, the responsible adults who were formed in the homeland, who made the fateful decision to leave it and to flee as refugees to an uncertain exile in the United States, and who are thus defined by the consequences of that decision and the need to justify it; nor are these youths part of the “second” generation of children who are born in the U.S., and for whom the “homeland” mainly exists as a representation consisting of parental memories and memorabilia. (p.22)

Rumbaut and Ima (1988) further stated that these youths make up a unique cohort who are separate from both the first and second immigrant generations and, in essence, do not belong to either of them. The 1.5 generation consists of young people who were born in their countries of origin and completed their education in the U.S. and, thus, experience the most important aspects of young adulthood in the United States. Benesch (2008) stated that the term *1.5 generation* often connotes negative characteristics, due to its members not truly holding either first- or second-generation identities and, consequently, are seen negatively as being different and having unique needs that create problems within educational institutions (p.298). Roberge (2003) explains the 1.5 generation individuals best in the following description:

They are partially foreign-educated, partially US-educated, that they may develop a strange pattern of language use, that they may be English-dominant, they may be home language-dominant, they may identify with one language but actually be better in the other. (p.2)

Researchers seem to have differing ideas about who exactly constitutes the 1.5 generation. Chiang-Hom (2004) defined the 1.5 generation as those who migrated to the country during their primary school years. Zhou (2004) defined the 1.5 generation as those who migrated to the new country before adolescence, after the age of 6 and before the age of 12, during which most individuals begin their education. Gans (2000), on the other hand, was very specific with immigrant generations and divided immigrant youth into three distinct categories: Generation 1.25, Generation 1.5, and Generation 1.75. Though Gans did not break down the categories into specific age groups, he did mention that the 1.5 generation refers to those individuals who receive some or most of their education in the US.

Though definitions of the 1.5 generation do vary, most researchers agree that the 1.5 generation is a unique group that does not really fit into either the first- or second-generation categories (Roberge, 2003; Rumbaut & Ima, 1988) and, as a result, is an immigrant generation category in its own right that deserves more notice than it has so far received. For this study, I consider 1.5 generation individuals to be those children of immigrants-by-choice who moved to the US between the ages of 6 and 13 (Finkelpearl, 2009; Smith, 2009; Zhou, 2004).

### **Growing up as a 1.5 Generation Child**

Kasinitz (2009) argued that every adolescent is in some sense an immigrant who is exploring a “dangerous land of adulthood” (p.163). For the 1.5 generation immigrant adolescent, the process of adapting to the new customs of the majority culture often involves significant changes in values, behaviors, identity, and knowledge (Kasinitz, 2009). Phinney and Rotheram (1987) also pointed out the various developmental

changes (i.e., physical, cognitive, emotional, and experiential changes) that are taking place during this period. Additionally, the very adults who should be the most important role models and guides for the 1.5 generation, their parents, are at a loss concerning how to help because they, too, are unfamiliar with how things work in the new country.

Furthermore, it is often the child who must help the parents with simple things such as discussing issues in English with a landlord (Norton, 1997), explaining the new society to their bewildered parents (Kasinitz, 2009), and even translating entire manuals to help install appliances at home (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, & Holdaway, 2008). As these examples show, the 1.5 generation immigrant youth, in addition to dealing with expected developmental changes, having to master the English language, and learning about the new culture, may also have responsibility aiding their parents in adjusting to their new life in a foreign land.

Furthermore, some children of immigrants may be faced with parents' indifference to making this new land their home. For example, Yang (2010) revealed his experience of living with his parents who did not show much interest in integrating into the culture of the new country:

They are in their own little world, thinking they will eventually go back to China even though my father has lived here for about ten years. From the way they talk, I know that they never put themselves into the society. He always uses the term 'the Americans,' which demonstrates his role as a visitor. (p.53)

Rosenthal (1987) argued that conflicts often arise in families when immigrant parents continue to cling to their old culture while their children strive to assimilate into the majority culture. Additionally, immigrant parents may place added pressure on their children to excel academically to ensure a better life for the entire family, which likely



leads to frustrations and resentment from their children who are having difficulty with academics, all while still struggling to adjust to the new world (Rosenthal, 1987).

Berry (1997) remarked that immigrant adolescents have to face the issues of adaptation to the new culture while still immersed in their native culture at home.

Phinney, Romero, Nava, and Huang (2001) suggested that immigrant parents constantly implore their children to maintain their cultural values, their traditions, and their native tongue. McCoy (1992) indicated that, even though immigrant adolescents receive most of their education and live most of their lives in the US, they are likely to retain their ethnic characteristics throughout their lives because their parents carry with them their native language, values, and the dream to return to their native country one day. Phinney, Romero, Nava, and Huang (2001) argued that “the differences between two cultures present these adolescents with many choices in areas such as cultural practices, language use, and friendship” (p.136). Phinney et al added that these cultural values from the home and the varying attitudes among peers from the majority culture can influence the ethnic identity perceptions of young immigrants.

Often these experiences introduce significant levels of acculturative stress for the children. Past research has shown that 1.5 generation adolescents experience more acculturative stress than do their second- and third-generation counterparts (Yeh et al., 2003). Acculturative stress has been linked to poor mental health outcomes such as depression and anxiety (Crockett et al., 2007; Wei et al., 2007), feelings of marginality and isolation, increased psychosomatic symptoms, identity confusion, and poor health outcomes (Williams & Berry, 1991).

### **The Model Minority Struggle**

As previously mentioned, the model minority stereotype suggests that Asian Americans as a group are achieving a higher level of academic, economic, and social success than the overall American population in spite of having to adapt to a brand new country (Hartlep, 2013; Tran & Birman, 2010). The model minority stereotype remains a stereotype despite its mostly positive characterizations of Asian Americans in this country. All of the stereotype's favorable aspects do not always warrant favorable outcomes, nor do they reflect the entire truth of the Asian American experience.

Throughout United States history, Asian American stereotypes have always changed according to the sociopolitical climate of the times (Thompson & Kiang, 2010). In the 1800s, Asian immigrants were seen negatively as low-class citizens who migrated out of Asia in pursuit of employment in the United States. Negativity toward Asian workers remained until the 1950s and 1960s when positive stereotypes of Asians began to emerge. This change stemmed from the need to identify a successful minority group in order to indirectly shame other minority groups for their own struggles (Kobayashi, 1999; Thompson & Kiang, 2010).

In the 1960s, numerous articles were published that started the Asian Americans' contemporary image as model minorities. In 1966, a *New York Times* article by William Peterson entitled "Success Story, Japanese-American Style" claimed that Japanese Americans were making giant strides to success after World War II, especially when compared to other less successful immigrant groups (Hartlep, 2013; Tran & Birman, 2010). In that same year, another article in *U.S. News and World Report* was published on Chinese Americans' ability to achieve success in spite of the adversities they faced

(U.S. News and World Report, 1966). Today, the coverage of Asian American success continues and has further enhanced this model minority image, that Asians face little discrimination and are successful on their own without any need for government support or legislation. The model minority stereotype continues to distort and minimize the very real experiences of discrimination and racism faced by Asian Americans today. Asian Americans continue to face discrimination and racism on a daily basis on an individual, institutional, and cultural level (Yoo, Burrola, & Steger, 2010).

While the model minority image may, unfortunately, generate pride for some Asian Americans as well as non-Asian Americans, it also invites competition, envy, and prejudice from members of other racial groups. There exists an extensive list of violent crimes against Asian Americans in our history. An early case is the 1982 cold-blooded murder of Vincent Chin, a Chinese graduate student. Chin was mistakenly thought to be Japanese at a time of much resentment toward Japanese immigrants as a result of the booming Japanese automobile industry in the US (Mahalingam, 2012; Wu, 2012). In 2012, more than 30 years after Vincent Chin's death, the violent attack and tragic killings of Sikh immigrants at the Milwaukee Gurdwara served as another shocking reminder to Asian Americans of their perpetual foreigner status in this country (Rowlands, 2012). These two stories are exceptionally violent accounts that received much coverage from the American media. Other stories of more indirect forms of discrimination against Asian Americans abound, though mostly unheard. Within higher education, affirmative action policies usually exclude Asian Americans, despite certain groups of Asian Americans having faced many of the same struggles as other minorities (Trytten, Lowe, & Walden, 2012).

Additionally, the internalization of the model minority stereotype by Asian Americans themselves has been shown to have adverse effects on the lives of Asian Americans (Chun, 1995; Wong & Halgin, 2006). Researchers have suggested that the model minority stereotype, when internalized by those who cannot live up to society's expectation and their own expectations, can have a lasting psychological impact on these individuals (Lee, 1996). While Asian Americans are constantly under pressure to fit the mold of the model minority, they too simultaneously face negative experiences as a result of belonging to a minority group in this country.

### **Language and Cultural Loss among 1.5 Generation Individuals**

Research has long shown that younger children quickly achieve high levels of second language proficiency and native-like accent while it is harder for adults (Marinova-Todd, Marshall, & Snow, 2000). However, with adolescent language learners, this process is more complicated, as adolescents do not necessarily fit neatly into the age-related thresholds (Carhill, Suárez-Orozco, & Pérez, 2008). Even though 1.5 generation students continue to improve their language skills throughout their education, compared to their native-speaking peers, English proficiency of immigrant students has been shown to worsen as grade level increases (Carhill et al., 2008). It is a phenomenon referred to as the *long-term L2 attainment decline* or *arrival age effect* (Jia & Aaronson, 2003). Past research has shown that after the sensitive period of language acquisition at around age 12, native-like English language proficiency is hard to attain, though not impossible. Taking into account the vast amount of past research on the sensitive period of language acquisition (Bialystok & Miller, 1999; Singleton, 2005), we can assume that adolescent immigrant students may never acquire native-like English language

proficiency. Nevertheless, it is clear that the 1.5 generation is caught in between the almost native-like English proficiency of young immigrant children and the poorer English proficiency of adult immigrants.

Carhill et al., (2008) argued that “adolescent immigrants negotiate among home, school, and peer contexts in ways that are distinct from adults and children” (p. 1160). Even though Carhill’s claim may not apply to all parts of adolescent immigrants’ lives, it can definitely apply to their exposure to and use of the English language. Students whose immigrant parents do not speak English receive most of their language learning through instruction and socialization with English-speaking peers and adults (Carhill et al., 2008; Roberge, 2003). Halpern (2001) studied immigrant academic behaviors in schools in Canada. According to Halpern, teachers often report that second language speakers rarely voluntarily raise their hand in class. Halpern also asserts that students who arrive in Canada as adolescents speak very little during a typical school day. In another study, Norton (2000) explained that immigrants are afraid of making errors in front of English speakers as well as in front of speakers of their native language.

Roberge (2003) stated that 1.5 generation students learn much of their English through interactions with friends, classmates, and siblings. This indirect learning of English through informal social interactions implies that students often miss certain grammatical rules that may never become part of their “syntactic or morphological repertoire” (Roberge, 2003). Benesch (2008) provided additional support for the negative effect of acquiring English outside of school on both spoken and written English within the academic domain. Accordingly, these students easily become comfortable using conversational English with all of its learned errors (Blumenthal, 2002). Benesch

claimed that 1.5 generation individuals find themselves in a linguistic limbo, where they did not speak English at all upon their first arrival in the US; then over time, at the expense of their native language skills, become proficient in the English language with its learned errors (Benesch, 2008). The sad reality is that many individuals belonging to the 1.5 generation never actually acquire native-like proficiency in English and simultaneously lose fluency in their native language (Benesch, 2008). Chiang and Schmida (1999) discussed this unfortunate phenomenon:

Although at ease with their ethnic culture, these students do not possess the full linguistic facility to participate fully as members of a cultural group, particularly so if we view language as a transmitter of culture. (Chiang & Schmida, 1999, p. 86)

Rosenthal (1987) argued that adolescent immigrants often have a limited command of their native language skills, whereas their parents may have an equally limited command of the English language. Therefore, as Rosenthal (1987) explained, communication between parents and their children about more complex issues becomes difficult and can result in frustrations and misunderstandings.

Kasinitz (2009) pointed out that immigrants come to the United States to improve their lives and the lives of their children, which often involves having to overcome enormous obstacles. Immigrant parents hope to give their children the chance to become Americans yet, confusingly, also fear what the future holds for their now American children. Additionally, Kasinitz explained that immigrant parents attempt to instill traditional values in their children who have begun to lose parts of their native culture once continuously immersed in the majority American culture. Likewise, first-generation immigrant parents insist that their children maintain their native language, yet support their children's use of English (Kasinitz et al., 2008). As can be seen, parents want their

children to become proficient English speakers, but when their children begin to abandon their native language and culture, they feel a need to pressure their children to retain a strong connection to their cultural roots (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). With language, as with many other aspects of the 1.5 generation life, there exists a constant pushing and pulling between the majority American culture and the native culture at home.

### **Educational Implications of Being a 1.5 Generation Student**

In recent years, various researchers have reported that the number of adolescent immigrant students in the US in grades 6 to 12 has been increasing (Asher & Case, 2008; Goldschmidt & Miller, 2005). Despite this increase, Ruiz-de-Velasco and Fix (2000) indicated that academic research and school programs often overlook the adolescent immigrant population. In support, Faltis (1999) argued that much of the research on immigrant students focuses on younger children and rarely addresses immigrant adolescents. Carhill et al. (2008) concluded that older immigrant students receive considerably less support for language learning in school, despite having more challenging academic content and less time to catch up to their native-speaking peers.

Carhill et al. (2008) emphasized the need, in middle or high school, for interventions for 1.5 generation students to improve academic English language proficiency. Singhal (2004) described 1.5 generation students to be American-educated English language learners with inadequate proficiency in both their native language and in the academic English necessary to succeed academically. The 1.5 generation students can be considered “dual non-native speakers” as they are not proficient in either their native language or in English (Carhill et al., 2008). Furthermore, Singhal (2004) suggested that 1.5 generation students perceive themselves as native-like English

speakers because of their social skills; still, they continue to struggle in academic classes that require high-level thinking and linguistic demands.

Asher and Case (2008) supported the same idea that 1.5 generation students are those who seem to be fully conversant in English as well as in American culture but remain in the process of learning English when they enter postsecondary settings. Asher and Case elaborated on the fact that 1.5 generation college students often have reading and writing difficulties, which become evident and problematic in college-level reading- and writing-intensive courses. With the increasing numbers of 1.5 generation students in colleges and universities in the US, it is imperative that academic institutions begin to identify and assist these students in their academic studies.

Goldschmidt and Miller (2005) studied the academic successes and failures of immigrant students at Penn State University. They found that many of the 1.5 generation students at Penn State encounter academic difficulties, and by the middle of the first semester, these students start dropping reading- and writing-intensive courses such as psychology and history because they are unable to meet the courses' high linguistic demands. Supporting Asher and Case's (2008) argument, Goldschmidt and Miller (2005) claimed that the work required in classes that involve essay or report writing are indeed overwhelming for 1.5 generation college students. Moreover, these students may be reluctant to participate in class or ask for clarifications due to various cultural and linguistic barriers as well as the misunderstood belief that they should not be struggling academically as an Asian American (i.e., model minority stereotype). Nevertheless, according to Goldschmidt and Miller (2005), in providing 1.5 generation students with opportunities to discuss their misunderstood identities and confused feeling about



themselves and their studies, these students begin to go through the continuous process of readjusting their identity formation. Through their study, Goldschmidt and Miller emphasized that group and individual discussions allow 1.5 generation students to get a better sense of who they are as individuals and as students. Most importantly, Goldschmidt and Miller claimed that by the end of the semester, the 1.5 generation student participants involved in their study believed that they could “cross over the gate,” disconnecting themselves from the sense of in-betweenness.

### **Defining Identity and Ethnic Identity**

The term *identity* refers to how we understand our relationship to our world and how that relationship is constructed (Norton, 1997). According to Erikson (1968), identity is related to both the individual self and the sharing of that self with others of shared group identity and beliefs. Identity is ever-changing and emerges from the cultures to which we belong. Burke (2006) believes that “identity change involves changes in the meaning of the self: changes in what it means to be who one is as a member of a group, who one is in a role, or who one is as a person” (p. 92). Hall (2006) asserted that everyone takes on different identities at different times and that “identities are not unified around a coherent self” (p. 250).

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) examined identity negotiations in multilingual contexts. According to Pavlenko and Blackledge, there are three types of identities: (a) imposed identities, which are non-negotiable in a particular time and place; (b) assumed identities, which are accepted and non-negotiated; and (c) negotiable identities, which can be contested by individuals and groups. Japanese immigrants living in the US during World War II were forced to relocate to internment camps; this is an example of imposed

identity as, despite their opposition, there was not much the Japanese Americans could do at the time. A monolingual, English-speaking, middle-class heterosexual male in the US is an example of an assumed identity, which is usually valued and not typically contested. For the 1.5 generation individuals, the negotiable identities are most relevant. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) claimed that negotiable identities refer to all identity options that individuals and groups can contest, including such areas as nationality, social status, and linguistic ability. The 1.5 generation individual can usually claim English-language competence and fluency in any setting that requires it (e.g., college).

One type of identity that this study is particularly interested in is ethnic identity. Although the definition of ethnic identity varies in the research literature, ethnic identity can be understood as the “sense of self in terms of membership in a particular ethnic group” (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001, p. 496). To be a part of an ethnic group entails sharing a common ancestry or place of origin and sharing other elements of culture (Phinney, 2003). Though one is born into an ethnic group, ethnic identity refers to a “subjective sense of attachment to the various cultural values, assumptions, roles, and heritage shared by members of an ethnic group” (Sodowsky et al., 1995, p. 133). It is also the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership (Phinney, 1996). Ethnic identity can be inclusive of both internal and external aspects. Internal aspects include attitudes and feelings toward one's ethnic group, whereas external aspects include ethnic involvement, such as language, friendship, religion, cultural traditions, and politics (Phinney, 1990, 1996; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). The internal and external components of ethnic identity have been found to vary independently (Sodowsky et al., 1995). The

application of these external (e.g., social and cultural behaviors) and internal (e.g., values and beliefs) aspects of ethnic identity can vary across groups and contexts (Phinney, 1990). For example, a self-identified ethnic group membership does not guarantee the same applications of behaviors and attitudes (Phinney, 1996). One self-identified Chinese American individual may speak only in Chinese to her children, yet another self-identified Chinese American individual may refuse to communicate at all in her native tongue.

### **Link between Language and Ethnic Identity**

According to Heller (1987), it is through language that a person makes sense of the self within and across situations at different points in time. This supposition has relevance not only for the ways in which the person makes sense of himself or herself but also in how others see the individual. Kiang, Perreira, and Fuligni (2011) stated that language proficiency can influence youths' ethnic identity. For example, Kiang (2008) reported that among Chinese adults, greater English proficiency decreased the likelihood of self-identifying as Chinese. Similarly, Fuligni, Witkow, Kiang, and Baldelomar (2008) pointed out that for Asian and Latin American youth, greater native language proficiency decreased the likelihood of self-identifying as American. Furthermore, Kiang et al. (2011) asserted that the greater one's ability with one's native language, the stronger one's identification is with one's native ethnic group. With adolescents who are new to this country, English proficiency may motivate them to strengthen ties and identify more strongly with mainstream America and to loosen ties with their native culture (Kiang et al., 2011). Regarding 1.5 generation individuals, we should examine their ability and comfort level with their native language and English.

Kasinitz et al. (2008) inquired about the degree to which the participants spoke another language growing up, the participant's ability to understand, speak, and read the parents' language, the language they currently use most frequently, and the language they prefer to use currently. Unsurprisingly, Kasinitz et al. (2008) found differences in language proficiency between children born in the US and those who learned to speak in another country and then came to the US, as well as differences between ethnic groups. Concerning language preference, Kasinitz et al. reported a high preference for English and lowest preference for native language among the Chinese and the Russian participants. Native language preference was highest among the Dominican participants. In the larger context, Kasinitz's 2008 study found that, although all the participating groups preferred to speak in English currently, the Chinese group experienced native language loss more rapidly than other groups (Kasinitz et al., 2008). Based on this research, Kiang et al. (2011) argued that Chinese immigrant adolescents are more likely to claim an "American-only" identity, due to their language proficiency influencing their ethnic identity.

Past research has shown that a link indeed exists between language and ethnic identity. It is through this research that I would like to paint the link between language and identity among Asian American 1.5 generation college students in more depth and color. In a setting where children are becoming more independent and able to decide their personal language preferences with lessened parental influences, how does proficiency and engagement in English and native language impact the ethnic identity perception of 1.5 generation college students?

### **Personal Identity Development for the 1.5 Generation Individual**

The transition between childhood and adulthood, adolescence, is a critical developmental period shaped by individual, familial, social, and historical circumstances (Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert, Luyckx, & Zamboanga, 2013). The primary task of the adolescent is almost universal: to prepare oneself to assume the roles played by adult members and to contribute to society (Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg, & Verma, 2002). In some cultural groups and communities around the world, such transition from childhood to adulthood is fixed and follows a predictable course. In other societies, such transition can be lengthy, ambiguous and uncertain.

It is important to see how the development of identity is guided by the cultural values and contexts in which one finds oneself. According to Larson et al. (2002), identity development can follow an individualist perspective (e.g., “I am”) or a collectivist perspective (e.g., “We are”). For some 1.5 generation individuals in the United States, this process can be complicated by the possible clashing between the guiding perspectives of the American culture and their culture of origin. As an example, someone with a highly individualistic value system may create personal goals without seeking much input from family members, whereas someone with a highly collectivistic value system may internalize goals from significant family members or may follow the opinions of family members before deciding on life goals (Triandis, 1995).

The specific cultural system in which one resides and the extent to which one identifies with this cultural system will direct the ways in which one goes about developing a sense of personal identity (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001). For the 1.5 generation Asian American individuals, whose development is most often guided by a collectivist

Asian perspective yet placed in contexts where the individualist's perspective of identity is most sought after, this process can be even more challenging.

### **Personal Identity Development in College**

Postsecondary education is a time when many individuals have to answer challenging questions that pertain to many aspects of one's identity. After high school, some adolescents begin to differentiate themselves from their families and discover new identities. According to Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), the following seven vectors explain the process of identity development: (a) developing competence, in which one develops intellectual, physical and manual skills, and interpersonal competencies; (b) managing emotions, in which one becomes competent in his or her ability to recognize, manage, and accept emotions; (c) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, in which one develops an understanding that successful relationships are interdependent, not entirely independent; (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships, in which one develops and engages in intercultural relations, displaying appreciation and tolerance for those around them; (e) establishing identity, in which one processes through his or her identity to emerge with a healthy self-concept in all aspects of identity (f) developing purpose, in which one obtains a strong and positive outlook on career choice, makes meaning within his or her interests, and establishes positive relationships with others; and lastly, (g) developing integrity, in which one can articulate and live by his or her own values through three stages: humanizing values, personalizing values, and developing congruence. Although it may appear that Chickering's theory suggests a sequential order of each vector, Chickering stressed that the vectors do not necessarily have to follow a strict sequential

order (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Individuals can progress through the vectors at different rates and, at different times of their lives, can reevaluate issues that were previously worked through in a different vector. Though initially developed to explain the process of identity development of all students in higher education, Chickering's theory has since been used and often modified to work with populations in other areas of identity as well.

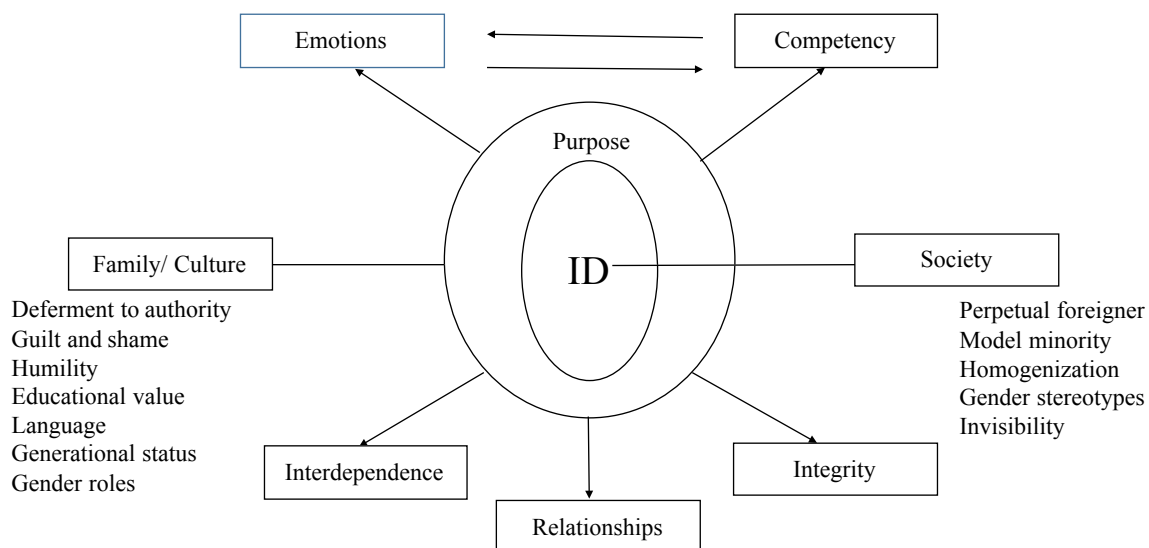
Traditional psychosocial student development models based on mainly White students simply do not fit Asian American students. More recent identity development models specifically for Asian Americans place a greater emphasis on racial identity and external influences, such as traditional Asian family and cultural values that likely impact how Asian American students create their understanding of themselves as individuals, which all influence how these students navigate through higher education.

Kodama, McEwen, Liang, and Lee (2002) proposed a model of psychosocial development for Asian American students that is based on Chickering's model of identity development. Kodama et al.'s model emphasizes the relationship between two external factors: Western values and racism from majority culture and Asian values that are passed down from community and family. They argued that these two external factors often impose opposing pressures on students, which may influence their identity and ethnic identity development. The degree of tension between these two factors will vary based on an individual's level of acculturation, generational factors, and interaction with peers, among other factors. Similar to other non-White groups, Asian American students experience psychosocial dominance, which is the process by which racially underrepresented groups internalize the racism and prejudice directed at them by the

majority culture and accept the values and norms of the majority group (Kodama et al., 2002, p. 46).

According to Kodama et al. (2002), Asian American students most likely approach and navigate through Chickering's vectors differently. For example, in Chickering's model, an individual is expected to move from autonomy to interdependence in that direction. For Asian American students, Kodoma et al. believe that this movement is sometimes reversed, where they begin by being interdependent and learn to be more individualistic in college. Loyalty to family is of high priority for those belonging to the Asian culture in general; Asian American college students may view this pursuit of higher education as a pragmatic, goal-oriented endeavor where success is motivated by personal responsibility to one's family. Throughout college, these students may begin to see themselves as individuals outside their family groups. Figure 1 represents Kodoma et al.'s adaptation of Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development applied to Asian American students.





*Figure 1.* Kodoma et al.'s psychosocial development model for Asian American students.

Traditional identity development models, such as Chickering's model, often highlight one's individual values and favor openly expressing one's emotions. Models that are specifically adapted for Asian American college students should ensure the greater impact of external influences on Asian American students when compared to those coming from non-collectivistic cultures are considered.

### **Ethnic Identity Development**

One integral aspect of identity is ethnic identity. Currently, the most widely accepted definition of the ethnic identity construct in psychology is one developed by the psychologist Jean Phinney (2003), who states that "ethnic identity is a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one's identity, or sense of self as a member of an ethnic group" (p. 63). According to Phinney, an individual's ethnic identity is found

within the context of a group of individuals that share common ancestry and similar culture, religion, beliefs, language, or place of origin. Ethnic identity is always fluid and dynamic and changes as individuals' feelings toward their ethnicity evolve.

Phinney's (1990) three-stage model is the most widely used model of ethnic identity development for all racial or ethnic groups. Jean Phinney proposed a model of ethnic identity development that combines the concept of ego identity and ethnic identity formation (1990). Ego identity refers to "the sense of identity that provides individuals with the ability to experience their sense of who they are, and also act on that sense, in a way that has continuity and sameness" (Levesque, 2014, p. 813). Phinney's model is a three-stage model consisting of the following: (a) unexamined ethnic identity, (b) ethnic identity search, and (c) achieved ethnic identity. According to Phinney, individuals from racial and ethnic groups approach adolescence with either a poorly defined ethnic identity or one that is simply passed on to them by their parents (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001). Within the first stage of unexamined ethnic identity, an individual is either described as diffused, where one is not interested in one's ethnic identity, or foreclosed, where one's understanding of one's ethnicity is based solely on the perception of others such as family and community members. During the second stage of ethnic identity search, one becomes immersed in his or her ethnic identity. Typically, a particular experience or event such as a negative acculturative experience or discrimination would initiate this greater ethnic awareness. Within this stage, an individual may engage and seek out cultural activities and relationships with ethnically similar peers. Finally, in the third phase of achieved ethnic identity, individuals have internalized their ethnicity and reached a more integrated and accepted understanding of their ethnic identity. Within

this stage, the individual is proud of his or her ethnic identity, which makes up a significant part of the sense of self. Once achieved, this acceptance replaces one's negative ethnic self-image (Phinney, 1990). Although achieved ethnic identity is considered the highest level of ethnic identity development, Phinney warned that re-exploration could happen over time based on the various experiences one encounters (1990).

### **Asian American Ethnic Identity Development**

Theories of ethnic identity development have been useful in studying the process of development for individuals from diverse backgrounds, including Asian Americans. While new models are emerging and existing models have been modified to describe the experiences specific to Asian Americans, it is important to acknowledge that due to the heterogeneity of groups within Asian Americans, not all models will apply to all groups. Therefore, some of the models of Asian American identity development may be limited in their usefulness for our 1.5 generation Asian American participants who come from various countries in Asia. With this limitation in mind, I will present some models of Asian American ethnic identity development.

The earlier models of Asian American ethnic identity development emphasized cultural and ethnic factors that influence racial and ethnic identity development process (Sue & Sue, 2003). These models compared and contrasted Asian and Western cultural values such as collectivism and individualism, interdependence with family, and independence and autonomy (Chen, LePhuoc, Guzman, Rude, & Dodd, 2006). Newer models of identity development also examine the impact of discrimination and racism on Asian Americans and their racial and ethnic identity development.

Kim (2001) proposed a five-stage model of Asian American Identity Development (AAID) that attempts to explain how Asian Americans resolve racial identity conflicts as Americans of Asian ancestry in a predominantly White society. Kim stated that to understand truly the Asian American identity development, it is integral that we first explore some underlying assumptions regarding racial identity development. The first assumption is that identity development is related to White racism and the concept of power and privilege (Kim, 2001). Second, Asian Americans, like other underrepresented groups, carry negative messages about their race that become internalized, and it is through active and conscious decision-making that they can “unlearn what [they] have learned about themselves” (Kim, 2001, p. 71). Third, to acquire a positive racial identity, an individual must “transform the negative racial identity they hold as a result of identity conflict” (p. 71).

The five stages proposed in Kim (2001)’s Asian American Identity development (AAID) model are (1) ethnic awareness; (2) White identification; (3) awakening to social political consciousness; (4) redirection to an Asian American consciousness; and (5) incorporation. Though these stages are sequential, they are not necessarily linear, and progression to the next stage is not automatic. Various social factors and contexts determine how one may progress through the stages.

During Kim’s (2001) first stage, the ethnic awareness stage, one begins to learn about ethnicity and heritage through family and community. The second stage, the White identification stage, usually occurs as a result of a negative experience when one is confronted with negative messages about one’s culture. Often, it is a period in which one might engage actively with the White culture and distance oneself from the Asian culture.

For many Asian Americans, this period happens at the start of school. During the third stage of awakening to social political consciousness, one becomes aware of the fact that White racism exists and that Asian Americans, like other communities of color, are the targets of this racism. Individuals in this stage begin to distance themselves from the dominant group and begin forming relationships and connections with people from their racial and ethnic group. The fourth stage of redirection to an Asian American consciousness happens when one immerses himself or herself in Asian American culture and issues. As one becomes more familiar with the experiences of Asian Americans, one is confronted with a broad range of emotions from anger and outrage toward the dominant group to empathy and connectedness with other Asian Americans. During the final stage, incorporation, one is confident in one's racial identity as an Asian American. This confidence facilitates connections and meaningful relationships with people of the Asian American community as well as with people from other racial and ethnic groups. In this stage, although individuals acknowledge that racism exists, they can distinguish between racist structures and institutions and individual people. They can connect with the dominant group without losing their positive sense of racial identity. During this stage, individuals can blend their Asian American racial identity with other parts of their identity, and race becomes just one part of their entire social identity.

### **Ethnic Identity Development in College**

In college, late adolescents and young adults boost their intellectual development and begin to internalize a personal set of beliefs and values (Blimling, 2010). College marks a point in the late adolescents' journeys where they are starting to differentiate themselves from their families and discover new identities (Arnett, 2000). College offers

students the opportunity to socialize with a variety of people and seek out various lifestyles on their own.

According to Phinney (1992), ethnic identity development peaks during late adolescence and young adulthood, a period where most individuals find themselves at the end of high school and starting college. This developmental period represents a significant turning point when parental cultural socialization influences begin to lessen, and children obtain more independence and autonomy from their parents (Uba, 1994). Ethnic minority children are also increasingly exposed to ethnically similar classmates and ethnic-specific organizations and academic coursework that stimulate ethnic identity engagement during college. As a result, college begins to represent a time when ethnic minority students can establish ethnic identities on their own terms.

Yeh and Huang (1996) found that external forces such as geographic location, the presence of other Asians, and the presence of relatives, parents, and friends were found to impact ethnic identification for Asian American high school and college students more than internal forces such as pride, anger, frustration, and shame. This interesting study relates to my interest in the ethnic identity journey for the 1.5 generation Asian American college students in Colorado, who may find themselves in a setting that does not yet have a large population of Asian peers while they are also possibly away from family and relatives. In 2013, only 4% of those enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in Colorado identified themselves to be of Asian American descent (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2017).

In another study by Kodama and Abreo (2009), which looked at student perceptions of the campus climate and how self-identified ethnic labels impact student

involvement in campus activities, it was discovered that “Ethnicity-American” identified students were more likely to participate in cultural events on campus, while “American-only” identified students, who did not identify with an ethnic label, were least likely to engage in cultural events. The “Ethnicity-American” identified students also spent more time learning about their ethnic group and felt a stronger attachment to their ethnic group.

In a recent study that used Phinney’s (1992) Multi-Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), a scale that assesses the maintenance of Asian values and beliefs, Iwamoto and Liu (2010) found that Asian American college students with strong ethnic pride and attachment to their ethnic group endorsed more positive aspects of psychological well-being, such as feelings of acceptance and positive relationships with others. This study is in alignment with previously discussed ethnic identity development models that emphasize a direction toward a healthier self-concept in various aspects of identity (Kim, 2001; Kodama et al., 2002). Few studies have examined Asian American students’ ethnic identity development through college (Kodama & Abreo, 2009; Sears, Fu, Henry, & Bui, 2003; Thai, 1999; Yeh & Huang, 1996). Though most of these past studies utilized only first-generation or only second-generation Asian American students (Thai, 1999), the studies helped shed light on the various socialization factors that impact Asian American identity and the various ways first- and second-generation Asian American students rethink and navigate their ethnic identity in college.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I sought to provide literature related to the 1.5 generation experience. As such, I have cited literature that defines the 1.5 generation term as well as literature that explores the experiences of growing up as a 1.5 generation youth.

Additionally, I have provided an overview on defining identity and ethnic identity, the link between language and identity, the ethnic identity development process, the Asian American ethnic identity development process, and lastly, the ethnic identity development in college. The next chapter will cover the methods that I used in the study.



### **CHAPTER III**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

As stated in Chapter I, the intent of this qualitative study is to explore the ethnic identity formation of 1.5 generation Asian immigrants through examining their language use and overall acculturation experiences. My study seeks to illustrate the essence of being a 1.5 generation individual in their ethnic identity journey. My research questions, as previously stated, are these:

- Q1     How has the ethnic identity perception of the 1.5 generation Asian American college students transformed since arrival in the United States to present?
- Q2     How do native language and English language engagement impact the 1.5 generation Asian American college students' perceptions of ethnic identity?
- Q3     How do positive and negative acculturation experiences impact the 1.5 generation Asian American college students' perceptions of ethnic identity?

My research questions embed in them stories of how the 1.5 generation college students see themselves currently and their past and present experiences within and outside of academia that have shaped their ethnic identity perceptions and attitudes toward social integration into society.

This study has received approval from The University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board (IRB# 884261-2). In the following sections, I provide details for my chosen research design, research context, methodological framework, and data collection procedure, as well as the data analysis procedure that I used for my study.

### **Researcher as Instrument**

In qualitative research, the researcher is considered to be the main instrument of research (Merriam, 1998). As the primary researcher, my role is to gather, dissect, interpret, and share the stories of participants or “co-researchers”. The participants are considered co-researchers because they were “informed not only of the true nature of the study but [were] encouraged to become a research participant on equal footing...each participant was encouraged to join with [the researcher] as a truthful seeker of knowledge and understanding with regard to the phenomenon of presence. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 108). As the primary researcher, I brought into my research a worldview that has been shaped by my upbringing, my past, and my present, both positive and negative experiences. One of the reasons I chose to explore the ethnic identity perceptions of 1.5 generation Asian American students grows from my desire and need to understand myself and my fellow 1.5 generation Asian Americans.

It has been 18 years since my family moved to the United States. Presently, at 29, I have lived in this country longer than I lived in my home country of Indonesia. Being an immigrant and coming from an immigrant family, I have always been interested in topics related to immigration and the immigrant experience. In particular, I became passionate about the experiences of immigrant children in forming friendships, connecting with their families, their mental health, academic achievement, and aspects that relate to their daily adjustment. As I delved deeper into the literature, I found that much of today’s literature is devoted to first- or second-generation immigrant experiences that do not particularly pertain to those who arrived in this country as adolescents.

I honestly believe that my experiences of coming to this country during that critical period of adolescence still impact my perception of who I am. Negative identity terms such as: “FOB” (fresh off the boat) and “whitewashed” are terms that are sometimes used casually by members of both majority and minority groups to categorize and identify individuals of Asian ethnic minority, who are on quite different acculturative trajectories (Goffman, 1963; Pyke & Dang, 2003). The FOB slur connotes a less acculturated individual who not only holds very traditional Asian values but who also sounds and appears to be very “Asian.” On the other hand, being whitewashed is when individuals find themselves on the other end of that acculturative trajectory, where they have identified so much with the majority culture that they seem to have taken on a mainly White identity. Since moving to this country, I realize that I have both self-identified and been identified as FOB and whitewashed, often at similar points in time. This realization, as trivial as it may be, and the numerous studies on Asian American identity and acculturative developments that do not always fit my personal experiences, have led me to my current research. I find passion in the possibility of bringing to light the unique experiences of the 1.5 generation individuals and moving toward discovering their ethnic identities.

Every step of the research process, from designing the research instrument to sharing the findings, is influenced by the researcher’s personal and professional experiences that have accumulated over the course of the researcher’s lifetime. I have provided some of my personal and methodological assumptions that guided this study.

### **Personal Assumptions**

Going into any research, a researcher must be aware of personal assumptions that relate to the topic of study. I believe that the 1.5 generation individuals have acculturative experiences that are distinct from their first- and second-generation counterparts. I also believe in the importance of the adolescence period in overall physical, cognitive, and emotional development. The adolescence period plays a greater role in the development of a 1.5 generation individual who, while undergoing these changes, must simultaneously acquire and master a new language and adjust to an entirely new culture with new ways of thinking, living, and behaving. The move that the 1.5 generation individuals experience from their native country to the United States during this time will play a significant role in a 1.5 generation individual's identity journey for years to come.

Additionally, previous English-language learning impacts initial adjustment in the US as an adolescent. I believe those that come with some ability to speak English will have an easier transition in the new country. Though native language loss starts early, I believe that most 1.5 generation individuals can continue to understand their native language in casual conversations as an adult. I do not agree with the concept of complete language loss in which one's ability to speak in one's native language would disappear entirely. The unfortunate reality is that many 1.5 generation individuals are unable to acquire native-like proficiency in both English and their native language.

### **Methodological Assumptions**

In this particular study, participants were presumed to be able understand the questions asked and to be able to verbalize their responses in an effective manner. Co-

researchers could provide truthful and honest responses to questions. I ensured that adequate rapport was present to allow co-researchers to feel comfortable and be willing to share their experiences freely. I was able to identify and control for areas of personal bias before and during data collection and analysis. I took steps to avoid leading interview questions that might suggest a particular answer. I employed strategies to lessen the uneven power relationship between researcher and co-researcher by (a) ensuring co-researcher control of the interview, (b) using proper verbal and non-verbal language during the interview, (c) allowing for breaks, and (d) allowing co-researchers to have conversations off the record (DeRoche & Lahman, 2008). The study's method of data collection through a semi-structured interview format elicited comprehensive responses concerning the co-researchers' experiences as 1.5 generation individuals. Lastly, the phenomenological approach to this research allowed me to identify general themes without neglecting individual unique experiences.

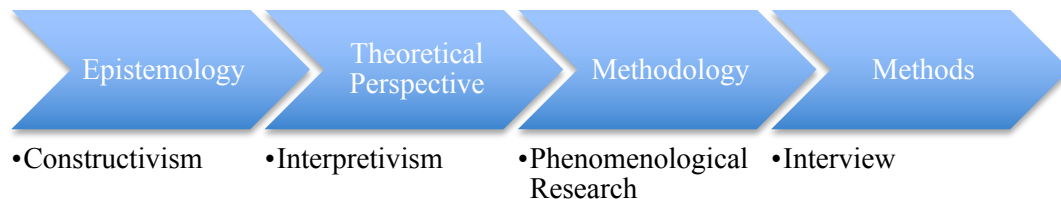
### **Research Paradigm**

According to Crotty (1998), an interrelationship exists between the researcher's epistemology, theoretical perspective, and the methodology and methods used. Essentially, the researcher's epistemological stance will influence the researcher's theoretical perspectives, which will then impact the research methodology selected, which will influence the data collection and analysis methods chosen. In a sense, epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods make up four of the basic elements of any research process.

The term *epistemology* refers to “the study or a theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge especially with reference to its limits and validity” (Epistemology, n.d.).

Epistemology explores what it means to know (Gray, 2013). Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Lowe (2002) pointed out the importance of having an epistemological stance in research. First, it helps to clarify issues of research design, which includes the kind of data collected, the source of that data, and how to interpret that data. Second, an epistemological stance is what will help the researcher to determine which designs will work and not work for what the research is trying to accomplish. On the other hand, a researcher's theoretical perspective should align with the researcher's epistemology. The researcher's theoretical perspective is the philosophical stance informing the methodology and providing context for the process (Crotty, 1998).

Methodology refers to the principles and ideas in which researchers base their procedures and strategies (i.e., method). While the methodology is the strategy or plan of action, methods are the actual techniques and procedures used to enable the strategy to take place; they are the tools used to gather and analyze the research data. Figure 2 represents the four basic elements of the qualitative research process applied to this study adapted from Crotty (1998).



*Figure 2.* Four basic elements of the qualitative research process.

### **Epistemology: The Constructivist Perspective**

The epistemological stance that guides this study is constructivism. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1994), the constructivist researcher believes that knowledge

consists of multiple understandings and interpretations. In the constructivist perspective, knowledge and meaning belong to the individual and interpretations can change or be revised continuously. Lincoln and Guba (1994) stated that

[knowledge in constructivism] consists of those constructions about which there is relative consensus to interpret the substance of the construction. Multiple ‘knowledges’ can coexist when equally competent (or trusted) interpreters disagree, and/or depending on social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors that differentiate the interpreters. These constructions are subject to continuous revisions, with changes most likely to occur when relatively different constructions are brought into juxtaposition in a dialectical context. (p. 113)

The constructivist perspective lends itself to this study because of its underlying philosophical belief that gives individuals the chance to create their personal voices and meaning. The experience of belonging to the 1.5 generation carries different meanings for different individuals. The journey toward ethnic identity will look very different from one co-researcher to the next. As a constructivist, I believe this journey is constructed by the individual’s mind, as are other experiences in life. This study will share the constructive journeys as told by the co-researchers and interpreted by me, the researcher, with my own understanding of their realities.

### **Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism**

Interpretivism searches for “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). According to interpretivism, a direct, one-to-one relationship between ourselves (i.e., subject) and the world (i.e., object) does not exist (Crotty, 1998). Reality is socially constructed and fluid. Consequently, “interpretive researchers assume that access to reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments” (Myers, 2008, p.38). I believe that the experiences of the 1.5

generation individuals are socially constructed, fluid, and ever-changing. Individual truths in this journey to finding their ethnic identity is the product of social aspects of their world.

Interpretivism argues that natural reality, which includes the laws of science, differs significantly from social reality; therefore, each reality requires different methods of research (Gray, 2013). From the interpretivist perspective, truth cannot be entirely objective. What is assumed to be valid or true can always be negotiated (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). In contrast to natural sciences that look for consistencies in the quantifiable to form theories and laws, the social sciences focus more on the unique and qualitative aspects of the individual and their world (Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2013). The interpretivist researcher believes that understanding human experiences is just as important as focusing on explanation, prediction, and control (Crotty, 1998). Through this research, I would like to share the unique stories of 1.5 generation college students in their journey to finding their ethnic identity without placing too much emphasis on explaining these experiences or predicting their outcomes, as I believe that the simple sharing of the human experience can be just as impactful and illuminating.

### **Phenomenological Research**

In support of qualitative research, Becker (1996) stated that in contrast to quantitative research, which attempts to prove the existence of particular relationships, qualitative research describes those relationships in more depth and allow for the emergence of unexpected findings. My study was a qualitative research study that specifically utilized a phenomenological approach.



Phenomenological research seeks reality in individuals' narratives of their lived experiences of phenomena (Cilesiz, 2009; Husserl, 1970; Moustakas, 1994). According to Gray (2013), phenomenological research: (a) focuses on inductive logic, (b) seeks the opinions and subjective accounts and interpretations of co-researchers, (c) relies on qualitative analysis of data, and (d) does not focus on generalizations to larger populations, but rather on contextual description and analysis. One unique aspect of the phenomenological approach is that a shared meaning or *essence* of the experience may exist for many individuals who have shared a similar experience (Patton, 2002). The phenomenological approach will allow us to identify general patterns, themes, and relations of the meaning of a particular phenomenon shared by co-researchers without neglecting their unique experiences (Spiegelberg, 1975). To discover new meanings in the data, the researcher must keep an open mind to allow for unexpected meanings to emerge. Through keeping an open mind, unexpected meanings can emerge (Giorgi, 2011; Lopez & Willis, 2004).

As an individual belonging to the 1.5 generation myself, with all of my presuppositions and biases, one would expect it to be a challenge to separate myself entirely and to share a bias-free *essence* of the 1.5 generation experience in discovering their ethnic identity. As a constructivist and interpretivist, I believe that complete bracketing is highly improbable. Instead, my worldview and preexisting ideas should be recognized and brought fully into awareness to allow myself to perceive information and see with fresh eyes what stands before me.

## **General Phenomenological Research Procedures**

In order to understand phenomenological research, it is important to examine the fundamental concepts of phenomenology. In this section, I present some of the central tenets of phenomenological research, including intentionality, epoché, lived experience, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and co-researchers.

**Intentionality.** Husserl (1970) argued that a positive relationship exists between perception and objects. The object of our experiences needs to be perceived and made sense of by the human mind (Husserl, 1970). Intentionality is a fundamental characteristic of phenomenological research and refers to a deliberate and conscious effort to act. For example, in this study, the phenomenon was 1.5 generation college students' experiences in discovering their ethnic identities. Discovering one's ethnic identity was an intentional and conscious experience for the co-researchers. Therefore, the essence of the phenomenon is derived from the act of the 1.5 generation individuals intentionally undergoing their ethnic identity journey.

**Epoché.** Epoché is a Greek word used by Husserl to refer to refraining from presupposition or judgments about the particular phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché necessitates a new point of view in order to avoid preexisting ideas and judgments when facing a familiar object. Epoché is one reason phenomenological research does not make assumptions or hypotheses prior to conducting research, as is the case in quantitative research:

The phenomenological epoché does not eliminate everything, does not deny the reality of everything, does not doubt everything- only the natural attitude, the biases of everyday knowledge, as a basis for truth and reality. What is doubted are the scientific 'facts,' the knowing of things in advance, from an external base rather than internal reflection and meaning. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85)

Essentially, epoché allows the researcher to be *bias-free* in order to describe the reality from a somewhat objective perspective. In phenomenological research, researchers are encouraged to engage in the epoché process throughout the entire research process (Moustakas, 1994). For example, researchers are expected to bracket their personal experience and knowledge concerning a particular phenomenon in order to understand the co-researchers' experiences accurately by abstaining from preconceived judgments and ideas.

For this particular study, I worked to bracket my personal views about 1.5 generation ethnic identity experience and relied solely on the statements supplied to me by co-researchers. Bracketing was accomplished by writing a reflective journal throughout the entire research process. The reflective journal included detailed notes on the research process, challenges, and reactions after interviews, for the purpose of identifying and omitting bias from my data analysis.

**Lived experience.** Phenomenological research investigates the lived experience of co-researchers who have undergone a particular phenomenon. In an attempt to clarify the term *lived experience*, Van Manen (1990) offered this analogy: a novice teacher and an experienced teacher will experience the phenomenon of the first day of school very differently. According to Van Manen's analogy, while the expert teacher can forget and minimize the presence of the students, the novice teacher may feel every glance and stare of her students. Van Manen's analogy presents a lived experience that shows the differences between two individuals experiencing the same event. Phenomenological studies begin and end with lived experience (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). In my study, co-researchers should have shared meaningful and

significant experiences in discovering their ethnic identity in college as a 1.5 generation individual, though their accounts may have differed in their perceptions of these experiences.

**Co-researchers.** Moustakas (1994) refers to all research participants as “co-researchers” due to the fact that it is the co-researchers’ perceptions and experiences that contribute to the essence of the phenomena, regardless of the interpretation of the primary researcher. In this research, it is the co-researchers’ stories of their experiences that provide meaning to the ethnic identity journey. My role as the primary researcher was to write and share these narratives while making a conscious effort to minimize my subjectivity. Though the co-researchers did not conduct the study, they provided the basis for the study by answering the research questions based on their experience and narratives. Additionally, co-researchers also provide the validation and accuracy of the data in multiple points throughout the research process. The term “participant” was used early on, but “co-researcher” will be used starting in chapter three to ensure the readers’ awareness of the greater contribution of the co-researchers within this phenomenological study.

**Phenomenological reduction.** Phenomenological reduction refers to the process in which the researcher “continually returns to the essence of the experience in order to derive the inner structure or meaning in and of itself” (Merriam, 2009, p. 73). It involves the act of eliminating all elements that do not directly relate to the conscious experience (Moustakas, 1994). The process involves reducing the data of experiences to the invariant constituents, also called horizons or meaning units. During the phenomenological reduction process, the researcher removes overlapping, repetitive, and

irrelevant expressions (Moustakas, 1994). Concerning this research, I removed any statements from co-researchers' interviews that did not relate to their personal ethnic identity development journey in college. For example, if the co-researcher spoke of a sibling's experience in language engagement as related to the sibling's ethnic identity journey, I eliminated these statements in this step of phenomenological reduction.

**Imaginative variation.** According to Moustakas (1994):

The task of imaginative variation is to seek possible meaning through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals' and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. The aim is to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced; in other words, the "how" that speaks to conditions that illuminate the "what" of experience. (p. 97)

Imaginative variation is the process by which the researcher inspects the data from all possible angles (Merriam, 2009). Imaginative variation is done by finding all possible meanings of the phenomenon and asking questions about the phenomenon (Beech, 1999). Through the use of imaginative variation, I ensured that all possible meanings were explored to arrive at a comprehensive and valid experience of how the ethnic identity journey was explored. The process of imaginative variation continued until finding the shared meaning of the phenomenon of interest (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995).

### **Phenomenological Methodology: The Moustakas Approach**

Once the researcher is familiar with the fundamental concepts of phenomenology, the Moustakas (1994) research process begins with conducting in-depth interviews with co-researchers. In the following sections, I will provide an overview of phenomenological research methods I used in data collection and analysis.

**Sampling procedures.** A phenomenological framework requires a somewhat homogenous group of co-researchers (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, in a phenomenological research study, co-researchers should have experience with the same phenomenon, which in this case is 1.5 generation Asian American college students' phenomena of their ethnic identity journey.

Because the primary purpose of phenomenological research is to understand and describe a particular phenomenon in depth and reach the essence of co-researchers' lived experience of the phenomenon, individuals selected to participate must have considerable and meaningful experiences of the specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative studies do not require the random selection of co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994). Instead, purposeful sampling is often used, where the researcher selects the co-researchers purposely as they have been determined by the researcher to have an adequate understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2013). In a way, the researcher is given the authority to decide whether co-researchers share significant and meaningful experiences related to the specific phenomenon. Additionally, a criterion-based selection is often used as a sampling method. Criterion-based sampling allows the researcher to specify a set of common criteria for all co-researchers to be selected. Another strategy often used is snowball sampling, which is a method of increasing the sample size by asking one co-researcher to suggest another individual to participate in the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Phenomenological researchers commonly conduct pre-interviews to ensure that co-researchers are willing and open to partaking in the study (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015).

For this particular study, co-researchers were recruited using all of these sampling procedures. Convenience and purposeful sampling utilized individuals that were readily accessible. I connected with available Asian American student groups on campus (i.e., Asian/Pacific American Student Services, International Ambassador Program, Japanese Culture and Anime Club, Japanese Language Club, Korean Student Association, etc.) to recruit interested members. I performed snowball sampling by asking related individuals and co-researchers to direct me to other potential co-researchers. The final co-researcher list met all the following criteria: (a) was born in any one of the following Asian countries making up the top largest Asian subgroups in the United States: China, India, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam; (b) migrated to the United States between the ages of 6 and 13 (c) at least 18 years of age; (d) is or was a traditional student enrolled in a 2- or 4-year college within the state of Colorado within the last five years; (e) lives independently on his/her own; (f) is able and willing to participate in an in-depth interview and follow-up interview in English to discuss his or her ethnic identity journey; (g) does not identify as a refugee; hence, self or parents made an informed, voluntary decision to emigrate to the United States, not as a result of war, persecution, or natural disaster in their country of origin; and lastly (h) attended school in the native country for at least one year prior to his or her move to the United States. While one of the criteria above required the co-researchers to have been enrolled in a 2- or 4-year college within the state of Colorado within the last five years, all co-researchers were enrolled in school within the last year.

**Saturation.** Many qualitative researchers avoid suggesting what constitutes a sufficient sample size, which is in stark contrast to quantitative researchers who have

detailed guidelines to ensure a sample's representativeness and generalizability. In their study to determine how many interviews are adequate in qualitative research, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) found only two sources that provided guidelines for actual phenomenological research sample sizes. Creswell (2013) suggested between 5 and 25; Morse, Bottorff, and Hutchinson (1994) suggested at least 6. However, while these numbers offer some guidance, neither Creswell nor Morse et al. presented empirical arguments as to why these particular numbers were adequate and not others. Therefore, precise guidelines do not exist at this time for determining whether a sample size is adequate.

Phenomenological researchers typically rely on their professional judgment to determine when saturation occurs (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Corbin and Strauss (2007) stated that qualitative research rarely achieves total saturation; however, saturation can be assumed when each theme has considerable depth and breadth that contributes to the understanding of a particular phenomenon. Corbin and Strauss suggested the importance of qualitative researchers to engage in ongoing data analysis and to remain focused on the research questions at hand to determine when saturation is achieved. In this particular study, I engaged in ongoing data analysis, which involved asking myself constantly throughout the research process, "Would additional interviews and answers add depth and breadth to the existing themes?" Saturation was considered met when the answer to above question is that co-researchers are no longer providing data that have not been already heard (Creswell, 2013). By the time, I conducted my 5<sup>th</sup> interview and analyzed the co-researcher's data, I had a very good idea of the specific themes that each meaning units related to.



**Interviews.** Phenomenology uses relatively unstructured methods of data collection. One way to gather data in phenomenology is through the use of interviews that range from highly structured to entirely unstructured (Merriam, 1998). Collecting data through interviews allows us a chance to listen to co-researchers' individual narratives in their own expressive and meaningful voices (Becker, 1996). Additionally, interviews enable us to gather large amounts of data that could pick up factors that were not originally part of the research focus.

For my research, I conducted semi-structured interviews as my primary means of data collection. I believed that interviews would be the best approach to exploring the 1.5 generation Asian American students' journey. The interview process provided me with data, but also acknowledged to the co-researchers that their voices and stories were meaningful (Patton, 2002). Co-researchers were asked to participate in a 60- to 90-minute interview session. Interviews were individual and in-person. All interviews were audio recorded. The interview contained broad, open-ended questions that encouraged the co-researchers to express their perceptions as 1.5 generation students in U.S. educational institutions (Creswell, 2013).

The questions covered a broad range of topics such as family and home, institutional, socio-cultural, language, and individual factors that play a role in an individual's ethnic identity development. Refer to Appendix A for a list of interview questions with possible follow-up questions. Questions were divided into five areas (family and home communities, socio-cultural factors, institutional factors, language factors, and individual factors) that were deemed necessary to ensure coverage of the research phenomenon in the most comprehensive way. I initially created a pool of

questions within each area, which was then narrowed down to the current research questions with professional input from two colleagues who discussed and agreed upon which questions to remove and which to keep.

Interview statements were transcribed verbatim after each interview. Qualitative analysis computer programs, such as QDA Miner, ATLAS.ti, NVivo, and many others exist to help qualitative researchers with transcription, coding, organizing, and analyzing qualitative data. The use of these programs has been criticized (Merriam, 1998), though it is hard to challenge their usefulness in making sense of vast, unstructured information. In this research, I did not use an analysis programs, but rather manually transcribed, coded, organized, and analyzed my data using Microsoft Excel.

**Reflective journal and field notes.** A reflective approach to the research process is becoming a widely accepted norm in much of qualitative research today. Researchers are encouraged to talk about themselves, “their presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process” (Mruck & Breuer, 2003, p. 3). The purpose of this reflective process is to ensure that the readers realize the constructive nature of a research outcome that “originates in the various choices and decisions researchers undertake during the process of researching” (Mruck & Breuer, 2003, p. 3). The idea is that rather than attempt to control researcher presuppositions and biases by entirely removing them, which is highly improbable, it makes sense to bring these values to conscious awareness. The writing of a reflective journal encourages the researcher to reflect on personal assumptions and biases as well as challenges, goals, and reactions throughout the research process. The journal can also include fears, mistakes, any thought processes related to the research process. In my research, I, as the main researcher, kept a reflective

journal throughout the entire research process from data collection to analysis. Field notes are different from the reflective journal, as it included detailed descriptions of the setting, the co-researchers' appearances, statements that stood out during the interviews, and my reactions before and after the interviews (Merriam, 1998). I took field notes throughout the data collection process and utilized them during analysis.

### Phenomenological Data Analysis

The phenomenological research process begins with identifying the phenomenon under investigation (Moustakas, 1994). After data collection through interviews with co-researchers (i.e., co-researchers), I analyzed the data by following Moustakas' data analysis procedure (1994). This section describes the procedure for data preparation and analysis. The general procedures include preparing data for the analysis, reducing the data, engaging in imaginative variation, and discovering the essence of the experience. Figure 3 shows the steps of Moustakas' data analysis as adapted by Yuksel and Yildirim (2015).

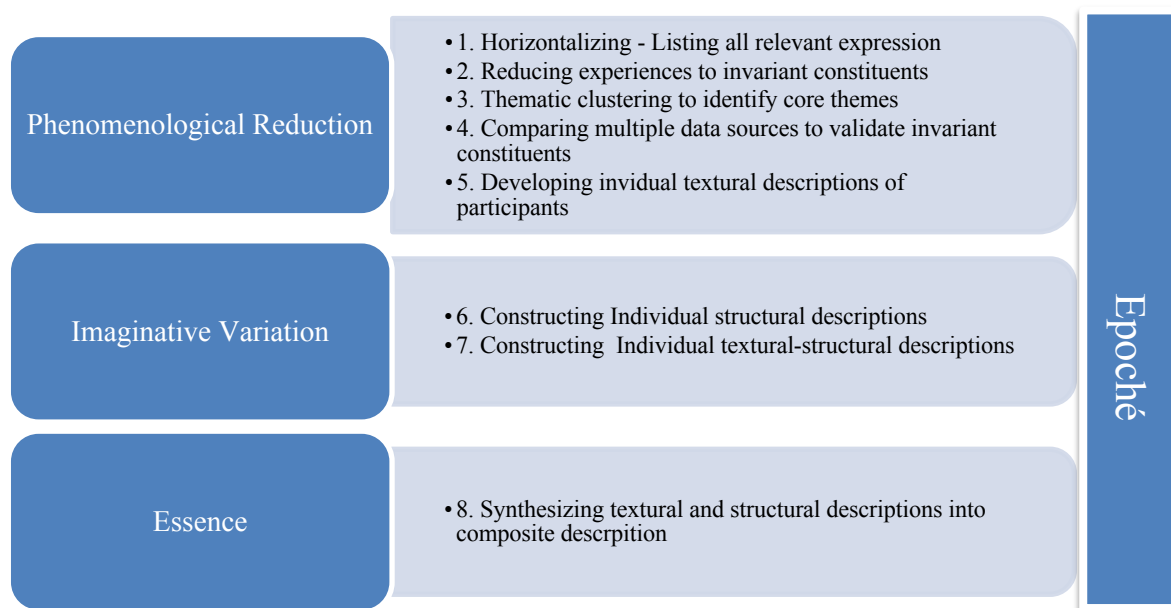


Figure 3. Moustakas' data analysis as adapted from Yuksel and Yildirim (2015).

The phenomenological data analysis starts with engaging in epoché. Essentially, epoché refers to bringing the researcher's subjectivity into awareness and putting aside preconceived judgments and biases toward a particular phenomenon. Epoché takes place throughout the duration of the study. Each step of Moustakas' (1994) data analysis procedure is covered briefly in the following:

**Horizontalizing.** During this step, the researcher lists all relevant expressions within the data. The researcher first looks at every statement as having importance and value. Next, statements that are irrelevant, repetitive, or overlapping are removed. Essentially, the researcher creates a list of verbatim co-researcher statements and removes irrelevant statements. *Horizons* are the remaining data once irrelevant data have been removed.

**Reduction of experiences to invariant constituents.** During this step, the researcher considers each horizon and determines whether it contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon. Statements that do not add to the understanding of the phenomenon are removed. The remaining statements are referred to as *meaning units* or the invariant constituents of the phenomenon.

**Thematic clustering to identify core themes.** In this step, the researcher groups the invariant constituents into *meaning clusters* or core themes. This step involves analyzing the data to identify and categorize emerging patterns. The main goal of this step is to identify the most important structures that relate to the individual experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas (1994), the core themes are the "how" that speaks to the conditions that illuminate the 'what' of experience. How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is?" (p. 98). Themes are

typically related to initial research questions; however, because of the inductive nature of phenomenological research, the researcher must be accepting of new themes that may emerge. This step should not be the first time in which the researcher starts to think of themes; rather, a researcher should begin to formulate possible themes throughout the entire research process (e.g., while transcribing data, while writing the reflective journal and field notes, and at other times).

**Comparing multiple data sources to validate invariant constituents.** The themes derived from individual co-researchers' experiences are compared to other data sources, such as the entire transcript of a given co-researcher, researcher observation, field notes, and literature to confirm the accuracy and consistent representation from various data sources. Typically, this step involves reading and rereading individual transcripts, evaluating whether the co-researchers' statements have relevance to the themes and whether the themes reflect the original intent of the co-researchers.

**Developing individual textural descriptions of co-researchers.** The textural description is a thick, detailed narrative that explains individual co-researchers' perceptions of the phenomenon. In this step, the researcher describes the co-researcher's experiences using verbatim expressions that relate to the co-researcher's thoughts, feelings, ideas, and situations regarding the phenomenon from their interview. The primary goal of this step is to get a clear overview of the phenomenon for individual co-researchers.

**Constructing individual structural descriptions.** After the researcher writes the textural description for each co-researcher, the researcher creates a structure that explains how the experience occurred or the essence of the experience based on individual textural

descriptions. As textural descriptions address the “what,” structural descriptions address the “how” (Moustakas, 1994). This step is a result of detailed analysis of the textural descriptions and the researcher’s continuous engagement in imaginative variation, discussed earlier. The main goal of this step is to ensure that the researcher understands the co-researchers’ experiences with the phenomenon.

**Constructing individual textural-structural descriptions.** In this step, the researcher considers both the structural description and the textural description in developing a textural-structural description. This step ultimately merges the description of the phenomenon (i.e., textural description) with the meaning interpreted by the researcher (i.e., structural description). Individual co-researchers should review the resulting textural-structural description during member checks to ensure accuracy and representation.

**Synthesizing textural and structural descriptions into a composite description.** In this step, the researcher identifies the meaning units that are common to all co-researchers and creates a composite textural and structural description based on the shared meaning units. In the composite textural and structural description, the researcher eliminates individual meaning units to form the essence of the phenomenon. The researcher instead writes composite narratives from the third person perspective to represent the group as a whole (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015). The primary goal of this step is to synthesize all narratives for the group as a whole to create a comprehensive description of the phenomenon.

### **Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of qualitative research refers to how the researcher ensures the validity of the data interpretation. Trustworthy research ensures that findings are accurate and the result of the proper implementation of the research method (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015). In phenomenological research, components of trustworthy and valid research can include bracketing or *epoché*, conducting member checks, collaborating in peer review, maintaining a subjectivity statement, triangulating data, and providing a rich and detailed description of the study (Merriam, 1998). In the following section, I describe the steps that were taken to ensure credible and trustworthy research.

#### **Epoché**

As described in the previous sections, bracketing or *epoché* can be utilized to avoid the researcher's personal judgments impacting the study. Though it is a challenge to ensure complete bracketing, I took steps to minimize making personal judgments throughout the study. I kept a reflective journal throughout the entire research process. In this journal, I included detailed notes on the research process, the challenges, the reactions after interviews, and others. This note-taking took place continuously throughout the entire research process.

#### **Member Checks**

Regular member checks were used as a measure of validity (Merriam, 1995). Throughout the research process, I asked the co-researchers to review their verbatim statements and confirm my understanding, to share extracted horizons once irrelevant data were removed, and to share textural and structural descriptions as well as the composite description of the phenomenon to allow them to confirm or reject findings

(Merriam, 1995). These steps were done at the completion of transcription, once horizontalizing was completed, and both textural, structural, and composite descriptions were created.

### **Providing Rich and Detailed Description**

Researchers should present the co-researchers' background information and description of the study in as much detail as possible to enable readers to understand how the data was interpreted and to allow readers to determine whether they can transfer these experiences to their own experiences (Merriam, 1998; Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015). In this dissertation, I described information regarding co-researchers, the data gathering process, the data, and the analysis of the data in as much detail as possible to ensure trustworthiness.

### **Triangulation**

Cilesiz (2009) stated that "collecting data from two sources from the same co-researchers enables the researcher to compare the information from both data sources and to eliminate any inconsistencies, which would indicate untruthful data" (p. 60).

Triangulation is the use of additional data collection methods to ensure validity. In this research, I ensured that data gathered from the field notes and the reflective journal collected throughout the data gathering process supported the actual interview data; such triangulation was used to verify the data from individual interviews.

### **Summary**

Moustakas' steps to conducting qualitative phenomenological research were utilized for this study of the experiences of 1.5 generation Asian American college students in their ethnic identity development. In the previous sections, I have provided



my research paradigm, steps and explanations for data collection, data analysis, and ways to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of my study.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **PRESENTATION OF DATA**

In the following section, I present relevant findings from this phenomenological research. First, I will provide detailed information regarding my co-researchers, the interview and documentation processes, and data as a result of Moustakas (1994) phenomenological research process.

#### **Collection of Data**

I gathered information for my study through in-depth interviews with five 1.5 generation Asian American college students. These interviews allowed me to collect first-hand accounts of ethnic identity journeys of my co-researchers to reveal shared meanings and experiences. This chapter serves as a summary of data as gathered through the Moustakas (1994) phenomenological research process. Through this process, I attempted to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the shared experiences of five 1.5 generation Asian American college students.

The epoché process was conducted throughout the entire phenomenological research process. As described previously, epoché allows the researcher to be as bias-free and objective as possible. Such process required myself, the researcher, to reflect on prejudices and biases that I have regarding the 1.5 generation experience

As recommended by Moustakas (1994), I journaled about my biases and prejudices as they entered my mind. These journal entries allowed for a more unbiased perspective of the co-researchers' stories. Journaling enabled me to understand where

some of my biases and prejudices come from so that I was better prepared to examine the interview data with a clear mind. Additionally, bracketing of my experiences also occurred through this act of writing and reflecting. Such bracketing of my personal views and experiences allowed me to rely solely on the co-researchers' statements. Through the epoché process, data presented in this chapter should only reflect the co-researchers' experiences, as they were presented with minimal influence from the researcher's prejudices and biases.

## **Participants**

### **Sampling and Recruitment**

Recruitment utilized purposeful sampling strategies: convenience sampling, snowball sampling, and criterion sampling. I identified five 1.5 generation Asian American co-researchers from a pool of possible co-researchers deemed to have adequate experience of the phenomenon of interest. I obtained my first co-researchers by contacting via email multicultural student groups from three different Colorado campuses: University of Northern Colorado, University of Colorado-Boulder, and Colorado State University. Through this method, I was informed by two different groups' contact persons to connect instead with multicultural Greek organizations (e.g., sororities and fraternities) due to members of the multicultural student groups tending to be international students who would not be considered 1.5 generation. I began emailing multicultural, especially Asian-interest, sororities and fraternities at the mentioned campuses after receiving this information. One University of Colorado-Boulder student group volunteered to print and disseminate my recruitment letter during their International Fair. I obtained one co-researcher in this way, who emailed me expressing

her interest in participating. I also was referred to another co-researcher from an acquaintance who works with student athletes on the University of Northern Colorado campus. The rest of my co-researchers were obtained through snowball sampling, in which an existing co-researcher directed me to other potential co-researchers.

In the course of this study, I connected with nine 1.5 generation Asian Americans. Four were excluded: one individual did not meet the study's criteria, two personally decided not to follow through, and one individual's interview was scheduled and cancelled after my ongoing analysis determined that saturation had been met. The final five co-researchers met the following criteria: (a) were born in any one of the following Asian countries: China, India, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam; (b) migrated to the United States between the ages of 6 and 13; (c) were at least 18 years of age at the time of the interview; (d) are or were a traditional student enrolled in a 2- or 4-year college within the state of Colorado within the last 5 years; (e) lived independently; (f) were able and willing to participate in an in-depth interview and follow-up interview in English; (g) did not identify as a refugee; and lastly (h) attended school in the native country for at least one year prior to moving to the United States. While one of the criteria above required the co-researchers to have been enrolled in a 2- or 4-year college within the state of Colorado within the last five years, all co-researchers were enrolled in school within the last year.

### **Saturation**

Saturation was obtained when I made the professional decision that no additional information would add value to the existing themes. In determining that saturation was indeed reached, I engaged in ongoing analysis of the data as I collected them. After each

interview, I had interviews immediately transcribed and analyzed the data while keeping in mind previous co-researchers' data. I compared the extracted essences of the newest co-researcher's data to essences from previous interviews. After the fifth interview, I determined that saturation was reached and data collection was complete.

### **Co-Researcher Descriptions**

The following co-researcher descriptions were informed by interview data and the background questionnaire that was completed before each interview (see Appendix B). I read co-researchers' individual descriptions to them during follow-up member checks. I have replaced each name with a pseudonym to protect the co-researcher's identity and thus maintain confidentiality. Only one co-researcher (i.e., Adam) changed his name upon moving to the United States; the remaining co-researchers maintained their birth names after their move.

**Adam.** At the time of his interview, Adam was a junior in college. Adam and his parents moved to the United States from China in 2010 when Adam was 13 years old and in the 8th grade. Adam is fluent in both Chinese and English. Adam is a student athlete and has played in his chosen sport since he was six years old in China. Adam and his family moved first to Boulder, then to Denver, due to his father's job. Currently, Adam lives on campus in a city just one hour away from his parents. However, Adam does not get to see his parents often due to traveling for tournaments on weekends. During his interview and the follow-up member check, Adam was both reflective and very willing to discuss his life experiences as 1.5 generation.

**Lauren.** Lauren is an outgoing and outspoken recent graduate from college. Lauren is mature and is remarkably reflective of her experiences as a 1.5 generation

Asian American. Lauren keeps up with current events involving Asians in the country and is passionate about the Asian American cause. Lauren and her family moved to Texas from the Philippines in 2007 when she was 12 years old. Lauren's father made the decision to relocate to the United States to pursue higher education. Lauren studied education and will become a full-time elementary school teacher this coming school year. Her family continues to live in Texas, where she visits every few months. Lauren is fluent in both English and Tagalog, but prefers to communicate, even with her family, in English. Lauren and her family have visited the Philippines twice since their move.

**Jennifer.** Jennifer is a recent college graduate from a small university in Denver. She moved from Vietnam to Colorado to join her older brother in 2008. At the time of her move, Jennifer was a freshman in high school. Jennifer's story is unique because unlike the other co-researchers who moved with their parents, Jennifer's parents did not relocate to the United States to join her and her brother until 2016. Jennifer's brother is significantly older than Jennifer and upon getting his permanent residency was able to sponsor his immediate family to relocate to the United States. Jennifer was the first to make the move to the United States to join her brother. Jennifer studied nursing and is currently seeking a full-time nursing job in the greater Denver area. Jennifer is the only co-researcher that attended private institutions for both high school and college. In college, Jennifer co-founded a multicultural organization with the purpose of increasing cultural awareness and issues to all students. She was also involved in other non-ethnic organizations on campus. Additionally, Jennifer was not yet an American citizen at the time of the interview. Jennifer was warm and very eloquent in her discussion of her experiences.

**Devan.** Devan is also a recent college graduate. Devan moved to California from India in 2002 with his parents and younger brother. At the time of his move, Devan was in the 7th grade. Currently, Devan is in pharmacy school and working at a pharmacy in Denver. As Devan's family continues to live out of state, he sees them twice yearly during holidays. Devan is funny and outgoing; he was detail-oriented and very elaborate in his responses during his interview. Out of the five co-researchers, Devan had the most exposure to English prior to his move to the United States, as his schooling, even in India, was done entirely in English.

**Hana.** At the time of her interview, Hana was a senior in college studying nursing. She and her family moved to the United States from South Korea in 2004 when Hana was nine years old in the 3rd grade. Hana's father relocated his family to begin working at a family friends' business but has since started his own business. Hana is the older of two siblings; her younger brother was born in the United States. Hana is actively involved in an Asian interest sorority at a large university in Colorado. She is sweet and outgoing and has strong opinions about her experiences as a 1.5 generation Asian American.

### **Summary of Co-Researcher Descriptions**

Five co-researchers ranging from 21 to 23 years of age participated in this study. Three co-researchers are recent college graduates that attended universities across Colorado. The remaining two are seniors in college. Of the two currently in college, one is a student athlete. Two co-researchers are in the field of nursing, one in pharmacy, one in education, and one in sociology. Of the five co-researchers, two are males and three are females. All three female co-researchers were or are currently involved in

multicultural organizations (i.e., Asian-interest clubs and sororities) while in college. All co-researchers are fluent in English and were able to participate fully in an in-depth discussion of their 1.5 generation experience.

Two of the five co-researchers' families moved from their country of origin to a state outside of Colorado; hence, both continued school in their respective states and moved to Colorado for college on their own. Two co-researchers, Devan and Lauren, learned and spoke English before their move to the United States; the remaining co-researchers were exposed to English though did not speak it. All co-researchers, except for one, Jennifer, relocated due to parental jobs or academic pursuits. All co-researchers received some schooling in their native country before continuing school in the United States. All co-researchers, except for one, have returned for a visit to their countries of origin at least once since moving to the United States. All five co-researchers are not married, though one, Lauren, has become engaged since her interview.

### **Preparation for Interviews**

It is crucial that I am a competent interviewer, as data for this phenomenological research study relied solely on interviews. The following steps were taken to ensure my competence in the interview process.

I conducted a qualitative pilot study under the supervision of an expert qualitative researcher looking at the general experience of 1.5 generation individuals. This study won first place at University of Northern Colorado's Fall 2014 Hutchinson-Lahman Research Evening. It was through this pilot study that I became comfortable with the abstractness of the qualitative research process. This pilot study gave me the opportunity to conduct my first qualitative interviews with actual co-researchers. Through this pilot



study, I learned to let go of the very structured interviewing steps I was accustomed to doing with quantitative research. I allowed my interviews to evolve from structured to more unstructured. This experience in conducting a qualitative study from beginning to end proved to be a valuable first step in interview preparations for this study.

After each interview, I spent a considerable amount of time evaluating and revising the interview questions for interviews with future co-researchers. This constant process of evaluating and revising allowed me to improve my interview process with each co-researcher to gather information in the best way.

Finally, a significant part of my interview preparation involved the extensive reading of the literature on qualitative interviewing techniques. I specifically focused my reading on the Moustakas (1994) qualitative research approach as it has been widely used throughout the psychology literature. Copious amounts of information, in books, journals, and the internet, are available on the Moustakas (1994) method that describes each step, including the interviewing step, in great detail.

### **Interviews**

I interviewed five co-researchers individually face-to-face over the course of one year. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed. Interviews mostly lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, except one interview that lasted close to 120 minutes. Interview questions used in each interview can be found in Appendix A. Though this guide is available and utilized in each interview, deviation from the question listed was allowed when the co-researchers brought up relevant discussions that I had overlooked. Often I would skip some questions when co-researchers provided a response earlier in the

interview. This open-ended and fluid interview process is an aspect of qualitative research that I thoroughly enjoyed.

The questions listed in Appendix A were finalized following an extensive review of the literature and refined per consultation with colleagues and other professionals and throughout the data gathering process. Following is a discussion of how I developed the final list of questions.

I initially created a pool of questions within these areas: family and home communities, socio-cultural factors, institutional factors, language factors, and individual factors. I then engaged three colleagues who are familiar with my research in a group discussion of my current research and I provided each person with a copy of my possible questions. After an independent review of the questions and making a professional decision to keep and remove questions, we compared our individual lists and finalized the questions for the interview guide. The interview guide listed in Appendix A is also the product of revisions following interviews with co-researchers who may have felt that some of the questions were too narrow, and others repetitive.

All co-researchers were given the opportunity to clarify or add to their answers in the initial interview via telephone or email. Follow-up interviews took place with only three out of the five co-researchers via email and telephone; two co-researchers believed that the data they provided in the initial interviews were sufficient. Two follow-up interviews were conducted by email and one by phone. The exchanges done via email were printed and then analyzed according to the Moustakas (1994) method. My notes from the single telephone exchange were also coded and included in the final data.

## Protocols

I shared information regarding the research process before each interview; this took place over the phone or immediately before the start of the interview. At this time, I discussed with each co-researcher plans for maintenance of confidentiality, provision of consent, the purpose of audio recording, and a discussion of the study's goals and the co-researcher's role in the study. I also shared with the co-researchers that the research study had been granted approval by the University of Northern Colorado's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix D).

I had met two of the five co-researchers once before their interview through an acquaintance familiar with my research; however, I did not establish a friendship or maintain communication with the two co-researchers until after their interviews. I had never met the remaining co-researchers before their interviews. For all five co-researchers, rapport was built initially through engagement in small talk before the start of the interview. For some, at this time I also shared the research process as mentioned earlier. Establishing rapport is necessary to allow co-researchers to have an open and comfortable discussion with the researcher. It was during these initial rapport building moments when I was first introduced to each co-researcher's personality and communication style. The interview started at a natural point in the conversation with the completion of the Background Questionnaire (Appendix B) and Consent Form (Appendix E). Subsequently, the interview began with the reading of an adapted introduction script as written on the Interview Guide (Appendix A).

Before meeting with the co-researchers for the interview, I sent an email that included the Recruitment Letter (Appendix C) and the Consent Form (Appendix E). The

purpose of this email was to give the co-researchers a more formal introduction to the study and to provide them with written information on the study. Additionally, it was to ensure that co-researchers had a similar level of awareness and knowledge of the study. I reminded each co-researcher to review this email the day before their interview. Several of the co-researchers shared that having this information in advance helped them prepare themselves mentally and emotionally for the interview.

I utilized the Interview Guide (Appendix A) in all of the interviews. As the interviews were done in a semi-structured format, not all questions listed were asked of all of the co-researchers in order. I allowed the co-researchers to lead the discussion. Often answers to certain questions would be provided early on in our conversation; these questions were not repeated unless the topic resurfaced naturally later on. All of the interviews ended with Concluding Remarks as written in the Interview Guide (Appendix A) to ensure some uniformity between interviews.

### **Sites**

Though I was prepared to conduct interviews mediated by technology if necessary, all five interviews were done face-to-face in a setting chosen by individual co-researchers. Two of the interviews were held in a library study room at the co-researcher's respective schools, one was conducted in a café inside a university student center, and the remaining two took place at my home. All five interview settings were relatively quiet and distraction-free. We were forced to move to a quieter setting for the one interview in the café due to background noise that may have impacted the quality of the audio recording.

## **Documentation**

### **Researcher Field Journal and Notes**

I kept a reflective journal at all stages of the research process that served as a means to identify and eliminate as much bias as possible from my research. The process of journaling allowed me to bring to conscious awareness personal thoughts that may have had an impact on how I viewed and analyzed my data. This journal was informal in nature and included personal assumptions, biases, challenges, goals, and reactions to co-researchers, interviews, and data. Additionally, I wrote about my fears, deadlines, and mistakes made throughout the research process. At times, I engaged in freewriting, where I would focus on listing as many biases I had on a particular topic; some of these topics included: ethnic pride, intergenerational gap, English fluency, and cultural assimilation and accommodation. After one particular interview in which the co-researcher stated that I had asked very similar questions early on, I wrote in my journal ways that I could improve the interview process to avoid repetition. Additionally, the research journal aided in my analysis in ensuring that my biases did not interfere with how I conducted my interviews and analyzed my data. In a particular example, I connected deeply with one co-researcher's struggles in maintaining friendships; as much as I was tempted to bring up this specific struggle with the other co-researchers in their interviews, my reflection in the journal made me aware of this specific bias and allowed for the topic naturally surface.

Additionally, I made field notes before, during, and after interviews. Field notes were different from my reflective journal as they focused specifically on details of the interview, including notes on the setting, my reactions to the co-researchers, co-

researchers' appearance and reactions, and statements that stood out. For example, on one of the interviews that was conducted initially in a café inside a university student center, I wrote in the margins of my Interview Guide the word "restless" to indicate that I sensed the co-researcher's restlessness, possibly due to distractions taking place in that setting. As mentioned, for this particular interview, we stopped the interview halfway and moved to a quieter setting on a different floor. Additionally, I noted in my field notes not just what my co-researcher is saying, but also what they are not saying. For example, a lengthy pause may indicate that my co-researcher is finding the subject difficult or surprising.

After each interview, I typed these keywords and notes and kept them together in the same document as each interview transcription. The field notes were integral, as they frequently provided possible categories and themes going into the data analysis process. I took reflective journal and field notes throughout the data collection process and regularly reviewed them during analysis.

### **Transcription of Interviews**

All interviews were audio recorded using the software eXtra Voice Recorder for Mac. I saved these audio files in an encrypted folder on my laptop that was only accessible to me. Immediately after each interview, the audio recordings were transcribed. I personally transcribed three of the interviews, while I sought the help of an individual unrelated to the research in transcribing the remaining two interviews. I reviewed both of the transcripts that I did not personally transcribe and all audio files and documents on the transcriber's computer were deleted immediately after they were shared with me. We used Microsoft Word and Express Scribe programs in the

transcription process. Each co-researcher's transcript was saved as its own Word document under a pseudonym to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Though I considered the use of professional transcriptionists, I decided against it as I felt the process of personally transcribing the interviews to be instrumental in allowing me to relive each interview, often giving new insight into the co-researchers' stories.

### **Data Analysis**

A multistep process of analyzing qualitative data using the Moustakas (1994) method of data analysis is provided here. To illustrate this multistep analysis process effectively, the data analysis will follow the data transformation for two particular co-researchers, Lauren and Devan as they evolve through each steps:

Table 1

#### *Data Analysis Steps Illustrated within the Dissertation*

Data Analysis Steps	Illustrated by
Horizontalization	Lauren
Reduction of experiences to invariant constituents/ meaning units	Lauren
Thematic clustering to identify core themes	Lauren
Data Analysis Steps	Illustrated by
Developing individual textural descriptions of each co-researcher.	Devan
Constructing individual structural descriptions of each co-researcher.	Devan
Constructing individual textural-structural descriptions of each co-researcher.	Devan
Synthesizing textural and structural descriptions into a composite description of all co-researchers.	All co-researchers

## Horizontalization

**Horizons: Lauren.** Following the transcription of each interview, I read the transcript multiple times before proceeding with the first step of the Moustakas (1994) method, which is horizontalizing. During this step, I essentially pulled from each transcript all relevant statements that were said and I removed irrelevant, repetitive, and overlapping statements. Horizons are listed chronologically and verbatim to retain the co-researchers' voice. Following is a sample of horizons for Lauren's experience:

1. We didn't really have close family in the US, but it has always been a dream to live in the US.
2. Since then, our families are closer. I guess because they are the only family living in the same country.
3. Almost immediately my family connected with the Asian community there.
4. We felt discriminated against because we were financially struggling.
5. It was a huge shock to us having been quite stable back home; it was a huge loss of status.
6. I felt that the Asian community that I lived in really judged people by how financially established they are.
7. Being a part of the community brought both happiness as well as sadness.
8. I also performed at Asian festivals growing up, dancing.
9. ...I don't think [my parents] will ever see themselves as American.
10. We celebrate Christmas, but always with our food. We don't have American Christmas food.



11. We don't really celebrate Thanksgiving. We always believe the idea of Thanksgiving to be a great one, but we feel a disconnect to this part of American history.
12. We were more involved in religious practice than cultural practices.
13. Issues of race are discussed only in these ways: when we or someone we know experiences discrimination personally and when we hear about others experiencing racism and discrimination in the news.
14. I was always very aware of my race/ethnicity.
15. At a young age, I learned very quickly to resist and stand up in the face of racism.
16. I was only 15, but I remember being so upset at this person's treatment of my mom.  
At 15, I stood up against this person and even asked for her manager's name. We experienced many incidents like these.
17. Discrimination was rarely ever targeted at me, the more fluent and without an accent my communication became.
18. My first year of college, I remember having a conversation with my mom to always keep her head up when she first enters any kind of establishment and to be rude back when anyone has the nerve to be rude to her.
19. ...I sat in a table with the other Asian students, mostly ESL students...one of the boys in the class is a jock, football player type and kept throwing pieces of clay at our table as we minded our own business. After ignoring this for the first couple of days, I stood up in the middle of the classroom and yelled for him to stop. I remember feeling so hot and so angry at this kid. He left us alone for the rest of the year after that.

20. Being an American means being independent, successful, self-sufficient. Largely, being independent and not caring what others think.
21. I don't see much of a difference between being American and Asian American.
22. ... [Asian Americans] also carry with them Asian external features and internal Asian values.
23. Fitting in means this internal feeling of belongingness.
24. [Fitting in] is something that even today I feel like I still struggle with.
25. ...I think this sense of not belonging comes from being a minority in this country.
26. ...Asian Americans didn't really accept me either.
27. I never really fit in with the "real" Americans. I don't think I have ever had real friends throughout school that were White or Black.
28. ...in college, my best friend is White, but she is the type of White person that really values "Asianness" ...I don't think she is a typical American, at least not the ones I came across while growing up in Texas.
29. ...Asians are accepted more than other minorities in this country.
30. But at times, I do feel a sense of jealousy or dislike by other ethnic minorities or those who are part of the majority for the Asian's success.
31. Asians are mostly very successful and educated. There are blue collared Asians, too... but most of all, you never ever see Asians begging on the streets.
32. Do I feel that the Asian Americans need to be covered more in media? For sure.
33. I guess I have adopted the more American dating customs, to the disapproval of my parents.

34. I felt that I had to maintain this image of the perfect Asian daughter who made A's, dated, but dated the Asian way (no sex, etc.) in front of parents and family friends.
35. ... around newly moved Filipinos, I find myself changing my accent to be less American. Perhaps that is my way of making myself more... Filipino, so that they feel more comfortable around me. It is my way of fitting in.
36. ...this need to respect elders. I always feel that I have to speak a certain way, behave a certain way in front of those who are older...I still get weird about calling my friends' parents by their names, I feel like I should call them Mr. or Mrs. I guess those things you cannot really let go of.
37. How does [my college] compare to my high school? Very different. [In high school] we had a lot of Black and Hispanic students. Definitely more Asians than CU Boulder. In high school, Whites were the minority, believe it or not!
38. ... I have this sense of not really ever belonging or fitting in anywhere.
39. I am very involved in ethnic organizations on campus.
40. I rushed to join an Asian sorority. I could have joined any sorority, but I chose the Asian one.
41. I wanted to be around people like me.
42. I also felt like joining a sorority would be an opportunity to redefine myself.
43. This year I also helped out with the International Festival. I like being involved here.
44. Having not been born here, I find myself connecting with international students just fine. I also feel like I can connect with my Asian American [sorority] sisters as well.
45. We volunteered to tutor ESL students. This is one experience that helped me realize how much I wanted to be a teacher.

46. In high school, I found myself trying to fit in so much, often to the point of concealing to others where I was born, that I wasn't even American yet at that time.
47. It is constant need to change who you are based on the people you are around. It is frustrating because often I get scared about losing myself completely.
48. I find myself missing my culture.
49. When I first returned to the Philippines...that visit was a very emotional visit for me. I felt different, like I did not belong there, but at the same time, it still felt familiar, like home.
50. Stereotyped? Plenty of times! In high school, it was the assumption that I wouldn't be into dancing or cheerleading, and that I would rather join National Honor Society. Or people here assuming that I am studying to be an engineer or premed, and yet I am here trying to be a teacher.
51. I felt very lonely at school...I sometimes wondered, though, if I wasn't a new immigrant student, would someone have asked me to come sit with them? If I didn't look like a foreigner would it have been easier to adjust as the new student?
52. I remember another non-Asian student saying to me: but you're not really Asian...she said it almost jokingly.
53. I also have taken a diversity class where, when we were discussing Asian cultures, everyone would look to me, as if I would have an input.
54. I have this anxiety about speaking in public. I think this goes back to me having an accent when I first moved here, so I am very careful about speaking in front of people even today.

55. ... [The professor] had a heavy accent and everyone complained that they couldn't understand anything she explained.
56. I don't know if this is true, but I feel like Americans sometimes associate one's language ability with intelligence.
57. I have never had any issues with non-Asian professors.
58. ...I feel all the time that just because I don't have an accent, there is this assumption of fluency and that I would not struggle with writing.
59. I don't think there are any more resources that need to be offered specifically for 1.5 generation. It really goes down to one's willingness to seek out such resources.
60. I do feel like I need to continue to improve on my vocabulary and language, like grammar.
61. I don't have the ability to speak perfectly in either Tagalog or English, which is sad.
62. I find myself so proud of the fact that I am able to speak a different language now.
63. I also am interested in the going-ons back in my country...I really do make sure I am familiar with what all is happening over there.
64. ...that I am lucky that I can kind of mold myself to be more American or less American depending on where I am.
65. I am proud to be [Filipina] but this has not always been the case.
66. ...as teenagers you try so hard to mix in with everyone that you are willing to give up certain aspects of yourself.
67. I am not going to lie that I don't feel embarrassed sometimes when others notice my parents' heavy accent in public or when a group of us is super loud and speaking in Tagalog.

68. ...but at the end of the day, I will always be proud of my ethnicity.
69. When you don't have an accent, when you dress and behave as an American, people don't really think much else of your identity other than you being an Asian American.
70. Over time, I have become comfortable with not feeling comfortable.
71. I always feel like I have to act super American with my American friends or super Filipino with my Filipino friends.
72. I have a feeling that I am probably going to feel more Filipino or Asian in the future.
73. The times I have gone back home to the Philippines, I felt immediately at home again.
74. ...She also mentioned that as you get older there is this longing for the home or culture that you were born into. I feel that is probably what will happen to me.

### **Meaning Units**

**Description.** Following the process of horizontalizing, I eliminated horizons that did not contribute to the understanding my phenomenon. I made this determination by removing statements that I felt were irrelevant, repetitive, unclear, or abstract. These remaining statements are referred to as *meaning units*. Before removing vague and unclear statements, I gave co-researchers the opportunity to clarify their meanings during a follow-up member check. I reached out to two co-researchers through email to elucidate certain statements by reminding them of the question, listing their statements verbatim and asking them to tell me more about the specific statements. Two of the co-researchers provided me with additional details that helped in determining whether to keep or remove their statements.

At this time, I worked on each transcript individually in order to focus solely on the co-researcher's voice without being influenced by the others' voices. I ensured that there was a gap of at least one to two days between the completion of one transcript and the start of the next transcript. I read each co-researcher's list of horizons multiple times to ensure a thorough understanding of the meanings. I constantly reflected back on the transcript to make sure that each horizon was reflective of the co-researcher's original intent. I coded each horizon and followed this by grouping statements that were coded similarly and recording how they contributed to a particular meaning unit.

### **Invariant Constituents or Meaning Units: Lauren**

Table 2 lists the invariant constituents that emerged from the list of Lauren's horizons listed above.

Table 2

#### *Invariant Constituents or Meaning Units from Lauren's Interview Data*

Invariant Constituents
Life in America has always been desired
Seeking out connection with others of similar background
First years were the hardest
Initial loss of status
Community provided both support and sadness
Family disconnect with American culture
Adopting adapted versions of American traditions
Discrimination by others decreased over time
Discrimination experienced by parents and older generations
Stereotypes are part of life
Awareness of difference in language, ethnicity, and identity

Table 2, continued

Invariant Constituents
Speaking out against discrimination and racism
Asian Americans seen as non-American
Difficulty fitting in
Challenge in adoption of American social norms
Hiding aspects of American identity from family/parents
Losing parts of my self
Imperfect ability to speak in native language and English
Comfort in discomfort
Involvement in ethnic organizations and events
Volunteering to help ESL students
Ethnic pride grows
Missing culture
Emotional first visit to the Philippines
Anxiety in speaking
Awareness of accent
Desire to improve in language
Lack of accent means competence
Seeking ways to connect with country of origin
Preference for English in communication
Identity changes
Ability to adjust identity is positive
Seeing opportunity to move back

### Core Themes

**Description.** Clusters of themes were identified by grouping invariant constituents (i.e., meaning units) together (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). At this stage, it becomes increasingly important to go back and forth continually between the



recorded interview and the list of meaning units in order to derive clusters of appropriate meaning. Given the nature of human phenomena, I was not surprised to find overlap in the clusters between my co-researchers. By carefully examining the meaning of the various clusters, core themes were then found that expressed the essence of the clusters.

In this step, I again reread each of the transcripts and took notes of emerging subthemes and themes. I also referred back to notes taken during transcription and journaling of possible themes. Once I had this list of themes and subthemes organized on Microsoft Excel, I continually referred back to the transcript and asked myself whether all themes and subthemes were explicitly expressed and supported by the co-researcher's other data. Any theme in which I felt was not expressed explicitly or supported was removed. I was able to clarify any conflicting statements with individual co-researchers during the follow up member check process.

I found this step to be the most difficult as it called for more artistic judgement and skill on my part as the researcher (Hycner, 1999, p. 150). As stated by Colaizzi (1978): "Particularly in this step is the phenomenological researcher engaged in something which cannot be precisely delineated, for here he is involved in that ineffable thing known as creative insight" (as cited in Hycner, 1999, p. 150–151).

**Core Themes of the Experience: Lauren.** The core themes and subthemes for Lauren are presented in Table 3:

Table 3

*Themes and Subthemes of Lauren's Experience*

Core Themes	Subthemes
Navigating culture in school	Difficulty fitting in Comfort in discomfort Ethnic organizations involvement Missing culture in college Questioning academic competence
Evolution of ethnic identity	Awareness of difference Asian Americans = non-American Adoption of American social norms Ethnic pride growth Ability to adjust identity per setting Hiding aspects of Asian-ness and American-ness Who am I?
Language	Imperfect ability to speak Anxiety in public speaking Awareness of accent Desire to improve Assumption: lack of accent = competence Preference for English
Acculturation experiences	Challenging first years Initial loss of status Decrease of discrimination Discrimination experienced by older generations Stereotypes Stance against discrimination and racism
Connection to family and country of origin	Family disconnect with American culture Cultural community provided support and lack of. Seeking ways to connect with country of origin (e.g., reading news, seeking out friends of similar culture, campus organizations) Feeling home upon visits back to the Philippines

### **Individual Textural Descriptions**

**Description.** In this step, I developed a narrative that describes and explains each co-researcher's story. Such narrative was written to obtain a broad sense of individual experiences. Verbatim statements from interviews were used to ensure that these experiences were told from the eyes of each co-researcher, rather than the researcher's. Meaning units as explained previously are also addressed in a narrative format to enhance the understanding of co-researcher's experiences. While I provided horizons, meaning units, themes and subthemes of Lauren's experience above, descriptions below are of Devan's experience. This focus on Devan's experience is to illustrate the evolution of one co-researcher's data from a textural description to a structural description to finally, a textural-structural description.

**Textural description: Devan.** Devan moved from a large city in India to a suburb in Northern California with his parents and a younger brother when he was 12 years old. Living in the United States had been a goal that Devan's parents had always worked toward. Devan's parents believed the United States to be the land of opportunity, a country where their sons can get the best education and success. Moving to a suburb was an adjustment to Devan and his family: "[In India] it was really busy. The streets were everywhere. You step out of the house, and all of a sudden...cars are everywhere. Busy streets!" In Northern California, Devan and his family moved in with an uncle who had immigrated to the United States years earlier. Devan described this initial period of living with his uncle to be the most challenging for his family. For the first six months, Devan's uncle helped to support the family; both of Devan's parents worked for his uncle

at his store. For Devan's mother and father, who were a pharmacist and engineer respectively, back in India, this transition to working at a store was difficult. Devan's father seemed unhappy and often felt ashamed of his new job. After six months of living with his uncle, the family moved to Southern California. They once again had to adjust to a new place and this time, on their own. Devan's father started to work at a gas station to support his family while his mother worked numerous small jobs at different stores while going back to school to recertify as a pharmacist. Devan repeatedly mentioned how difficult these first few years were because his parents were always working while he and his brother stayed at home. Devan stated, "In the first years when I needed them the most, they could not be there for me due to having to support us financially." Devan's father never went back to the engineering field; "he never went back. He said it was too hard to get an engineering job in this country." Devan attributed his father's challenge in securing an engineering job to his limited English. Devan's demeanor changed to that of sadness when speaking about his father and his choice of career after their move. When asked about this, Devan stated that his father struggled considerably with the move and his loss of status and was never the same person since; this had been a source of sadness for his family.

The city in Southern California that Devan and his family moved to was diverse, though the Indian community was small. The only place Devan would come across other Indian immigrants was at the temple, which he and his family frequented weekly. Despite most of the individuals there being Indian, Devan had a hard time connecting with peers at the temple. According to Devan, because the other kids were Indian Americans and he was not, he had a difficult time making friends. "I always felt like an outsider. They were

Indian too; but they were different from the people I grew up with in India. It felt like they did not want to be friends with me, or maybe I did not make enough of an attempt to be friends with them.” At school, making friends and maintaining friendships was also difficult for Devan, especially in the first years of middle school: “My toughest period was in middle school when I did not get joke references and things like that.” The cultural and social gap made it tough for Devan to connect with others his age. Devan recalled that he sometimes would pretend to get their jokes, even though he did not understand the American humor. Devan also remembers being surprised when other boys at school would openly talk about watching porn: “[Others] talked about porn and things like that. I did not watch that. I did not care for any of that! They were just very different from me.” Though Devan thought he would connect better with the kids at the temple due to their shared culture of origin, he found this not to be the case as he struggled similarly to connect with both his Indian American and American peers.

Devan’s parents were, according to Devan, “involved in my education” before college. “They would try to make me join clubs. They think I have to be more involved to get into a good university. Too bad for them I was too lazy, so I didn’t.” However, Devan clarified that parental involvement looked very different for him. His parents did not sit down next to him as he did his homework; rather, they had and still continue to have very high expectation for his academics. According to Devan, his parents stopped pressuring him to be more involved in extracurricular activities once Devan proved to them that his grades were more than adequate to get into a public university in Southern California. Devan’s parents’ involvement in his education stopped once he entered college and subsequently, pharmacy school. “They are pretty hands off because now they are so far

away and they finally realized, ‘Hey, maybe he is doing just fine!’ I think a huge reason for me going out of state for college is so that I can be away from them.” In high school, band was the only extracurricular activity that Devan was actively involved in. According to Devan, joining band was life-changing, as he believes it was his first time “finding like-minded people. People that shared the same interests as me. It was the first time when I felt like I actually belonged.” Similarly, in college and pharmacy school, Devan stated that he did not join too many organizations. In college, Devan never thought to join any ethnic-based organizations because he made friends in his classes. “I made friends in my classes. I studied pre-pharmacy. If the circumstances were different and there was no one I could connect with in my classes, I think I would look into joining ethnic organizations more.” Now in pharmacy school, he is involved in a professional pharmacy organization.

To Devan, being a 1.5 generation student had some impact on his college experience. “I don’t think it affected me academically, like why I chose my major, or how I did academically. But I can see now that maybe being a 1.5 generation person has impacted me socially.” Asked to talk about this social consequence in college further, Devan stated, “For me, I did not seek out opportunities to go out because I would be uncomfortable. But I can also see how for others, who may have had a hard time in the past, that they would want to redefine themselves socially in college and have a true American college experience.” Devan added, “Having this experience of living in cultures that are so different from one another influences the type of people I connect with best.” Additionally, Devan believes that throughout college, others did not see him differently as a result of his 1.5 generation status, “Everyone from professors and

students treated me fairly. I don't think I can complain about not having Asian professors or anything like that because I had a pretty good educational experience. Would it be better if I had Asian professors? I don't know for sure because I didn't have any, but I don't think to have them would have made my experience so much better or different.”

Devan did bring up an experience during one of his clinical rotations in a pharmacy when he felt that having a supervisor who was more culturally aware would have been helpful. “I really felt like a customer looked down on me for being Asian or looking young. He asked for my supervisor only and refused to talk to me, even though I let him know I worked with him closely.” Upon discussion of the event, the topic of race did not surface, despite it being on Devan's mind.

Devan feels that being a 1.5 generation Asian American impacted him the most in his middle and high school years as he was still learning about life in America. Devan shared that when he first moved to the United States in the 7th grade, he was far from fitting in. To Devan, “fitting in means being comfortable in the setting you are in. Being emotionally relaxed and having a good time. You're not trying to be somebody else.” He shared that he was constantly made fun of because of the way he talked and dressed. “7th grade was brutal. 8th grade was when I made my first clique of friends, when I became a little more comfortable, and when I started feeling like maybe I can fit in. It was not until high school after we moved a city over when I finally felt like I fit in after joining band and being around others that had similar interests as me.” He added, “By now I understood the American culture better. I am familiar with the jokes. I have watched the TV shows. I have listened to the music. I almost sound like them, too.”

In discussing his friendships, Devan stated: “I find that I have always had different groups of friends.” Devan clarified, “I mostly have different Asian groups of friends. I don’t think I am friends with them only because they are Asian. I am friends with them just because we share more things in common. I have my pharmacy friends. I have a couple of high school friends. I had my college friends. Despite them being in different groups, I feel like I am the same guy now.” Devan believes that whether or not his friends were born outside or in the United States does not matter. “I find myself getting along with everyone. Some are born here; some are not. I just connect with them based on what we share in common, like being in pharmacy, or being into video games.”

Devan also does not feel that he acts more “Indian” around his Indian friends and less so with his non-Indian friends. According to Devan, “I am pretty much my real self wherever I am. If anything, the only thing I change is the language, especially if I am speaking to Indian people who are new to the country.” However, this consistency in the perception of the self in different groups did not come immediately. Devan felt that in the beginning, his “self” changed based on what group he was trying to fit in with at the moment. “As I was trying to find myself, I changed a lot of who I am based on the people I was with.” Devan admitted that making friends with other Indians has always been harder than with non-Indians. Devan explained why he feels this way. “I was never really that close to other Indians here from the beginning. It has never been a good experience. Starting with my uncle, who was not there for us, then the people at the temple. They just seemed different to me. I guess those initial problems have prevented me from reaching out more.”



In further discussing his friendships, Devan stated, “I feel like I have had chapters of friends. I never really have any steady friends that continue all the way through. I do have some friends I met right when I came here, and I’ve been friends with them, but they are all in the background. They are not people I talk to every day, or monthly, or even yearly. I don’t think any less of them. That’s why I said ‘chapter’ because...I can say that we were good friends, now they’re onto something else, and I am too.” Devan believes that having “chapters” of friends is a possible product of being a 1.5 generation individual and having moved to a different country before lifelong friendships had enough time to be solidly established, Devan stated, “I’m always jealous of my American cousin because he has friends who he will be close with forever. They get to be involved in each other’s life from being on the playground to getting married and seeing each other’s kids on the playground. It’s different for me as I just don’t have that. If I had stayed in India, I think I would have those types of friends. But when my chapter in India ended, I moved on and had to make new friends. There is never continuity. This is why I have chapters of friends, rather than just friends.”

When asked to list the things that come to mind when he hears the word “American,” Devan said: “superficial,” “lacking depth,” and “ingenuine.” Before continuing to explain why these words were what came to mind, Devan apologized if it sounded negative. “I have met people at the temple and elsewhere who I thought were polite, but they were not polite behind your back. Honesty is very different in India. Here, they pretend to like you. I just appreciate genuine honesty.” Devan’s first thought when describing the average American is to describe the Indian Americans he met first in the temple, which shows Devan’s belief that one can be American and hold American values

regardless of one's ethnicity. Adding on to this discussion of the meaning of the word "American," Devan added that to him America means "Unity and equality. We're all the same. We're all on a level playing field."

According to Devan, this sense of equality is what makes the United States a great place to live. Devan added, "I think this is a huge reason why Asian Americans are for the most part so successful here. They are on an even playing field as everyone else. And on top of that, they are much more driven because their parents push them even more to do more and to be better." Devan also added that he feels that Asian Americans are becoming more and more recognized in the United States: "[Asian Americans] are starting to get recognized more in front of the TV. With all these comedians and actors on TV. Asian Americans are not only limited to behind-the-scene jobs. We are more recognized in popular culture." Even as a minority group, Devan added that Asian Americans are mostly seen in a positive light, "compared to other minorities in this country. We are quite lucky. Especially given all that we see in the news these days."

In discussing experiences of discrimination, Devan mentioned that he no longer suffers as much discrimination today: "Mostly it's just jest from my friends. Mostly they come from a good place. Things like I pronounced a word wrong. I would be embarrassed for a short time, but it is never a source of arguments." Devan added, "From others outside of my circle of friends, I had received weird looks in the past, especially around the time we moved here because it was after September 11th. I was always just aware of the looks." However, Devan noted that his parents continue to experience discrimination today. "I feel that the older generation stands out more because they look a

certain way and sound a certain way. With me, the longer I have lived here, the less stereotyped or discriminated by others I feel.”

When asked if he feels more American or Indian today, there was uncertainty in Devan’s response: “My brother and me, we are Americans. I know I was born in India, but it is not home anymore.” Devan added, “The thing is...I feel like I will never truly be 100% American. Today, I still think I will always be less American than real Americans, whether Indian or not.” When followed up with a question of why he feels that way, Devan stated: “My values will always be different having been brought up for part of my life in India. For example, [My brother and I] did not live frivolously; we still don’t today. I feel that Americans, no matter their background, are so frivolous with their money and many things that they just throw away.” However, Devan believes that over the years he has indeed changed. “When I came here I would say I only associated myself with being Indian, but over time I have come to accept that I am American, too. I will always hold my Indian values close, I will never forget them, but I also have picked up different values that I find to be valuable, too.”

A few aspects of the American values and culture that Devan feels he has adopted are “...my openness. I am more willing to be more open. Also, my courage to pursue things that I like.” Devan compared this to the more traditional Indian value of being born with a life path that is dictated mostly by one’s larger family. “Today, I am more of an individual. Had I stayed back in India, I would not be able to make my own choices in life as much. I would not be as independent.” When asked what aspects of the Indian culture he has maintained throughout the years, “I think mainly the language, even though that too I am starting to lose, the food, which I probably need to learn how to

make, and the respect for the elders.” Devan added, “Americans just do not have the same respect for elders that I am used to. This need to act differently, speak differently around the older generation is something that I don’t think I will ever lose.”

When speaking about the religion, Hinduism, that he practiced throughout his younger life even after his move to the United States, Devan stated, “I am not a practicing Hindu when I am out here [in Colorado]. Back home I will go with my mom. When I do go back it's mostly to appease her, please her. Because my mom finds it valuable enough, then, of course, I will spend some time with her at the temple.” Despite not practicing, Devan stated that he loves his religion. “It is a religion that I think teaches people to be good people. But it does not mean that I believe in every single tenet and story that Hinduism taught me.” Asked if this belief has evolved since being here in America and being able to think more independently, Devan stated, “I have always been rational-minded, so I have always had my doubts, but never verbalized it. Today, as an adult, I still do not verbalize it to my parents, but I allow myself to think this way.”

Today, though Devan mostly speaks in English, he remains conversationally fluent in Malayalam, his native language, “I cannot read it anymore, but I can speak it well, and I can understand it well. I do not want to forget the language. I want to stay bilingual, if possible.” Devan explained why he mainly speaks in English now: “I think it is just a process of adaptation, not a preference. You read, write, watch TV, speak to others in English. It is America, after all. It is impossible to speak Malayalam all the time.” Devan finds a desire to speak in Malayalam to family members more and more as he gets older. He mentioned, “I do not remember that always being the case...these days,

as much as I can, I talk to them in Malayalam. I think this started in college after being away from my family.”

In the future, Devan feels that this movement toward becoming more and more “American” will most likely stop, “I am sure I will get to a stopping point.” When asked to explain further, Devan stated, “I used to say I'm not going to marry an Indian girl at all. I was very against marrying an Indian girl. Even after moving to Colorado, I was still set on this. But lately, I started shifting my attitude about this. I began to think: maybe I should marry an Indian girl because I want my kids to grow up with the same values I had while growing up. I don't think I'm going to be moving the opposite direction where I find myself becoming more Indian, but I do want to keep those values close to me.” Asked if he would ever consider living in India, Devan stated, “I will not say no. I am open to it, but with my career path, it seems unlikely that I will end up moving back.”

### **Individual Structural Descriptions**

**Description.** The next step in the Moustakas (1994) phenomenological research process is to develop structural descriptions for each co-researcher’s experience. These structural descriptions explain how the experience occurred based on the individual’s textural data. Whereas the textural descriptions addressed the *what* of each of my co-researcher’s experiences, the structural descriptions addressed the *how* (Moustakas, 1994). Within this step, I continuously engaged in imaginative variation. The process of imaginative variation, as discussed earlier, attempts to seek meaning through the use of imagination and differing frames of reference and perspectives (Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). I read each of my co-researcher’s individual textural descriptions multiple times and imagined possible meanings for their story.

Additionally, I sought out even more varying perspectives from peers and individuals not connected to the research by presenting them with certain verbatim statements from interviews that I felt were difficult to interpret, as well as from various sections of the co-researchers' textural descriptions. During this peer review, anonymity was maintained by using individual's pseudonyms and removing any identifying data. My main goal in this step was to ensure that I understood the co-researcher's experiences of being a 1.5 generation individual in college. In the following section, I present the structural description of Devan's experience. As can be seen, the following structural description varies only subtly from the previous textural description, but it enabled me to view Devan's experience with a fuller, more complete understanding.

**Individual structural: Devan.** Devan presented as an outgoing and outspoken individual, who was eager to participate as a co-researcher in this study. Initially, Devan was somewhat closed in his responses, though over the course of his interview, he was able to discuss his experiences more openly. Devan apologized in the beginning because he thought his answers sounded bitter or cynical. According to Devan, his early relationships with his family and friends were challenging, and reliving these relationships through the interview at times led him to respond negatively.

Devan believes that his first few years in the United States were the most difficult. He attributed these struggles to being a teenager who wanted so much to belong, yet no matter what he did he felt "different." Initially, Devan attempted to connect with peers of Indian background as he identified strongly as "Indian only." However, Devan found that the Indian Americans were different than the Indians he grew up with back home. In a way, Devan felt that the Indian Americans discriminated against him for his recent

immigrant status. In the beginning, in trying to connect with American peers, Devan was often puzzled by societal norms that guided relationships and friendships in his new home (e.g., it was acceptable for friends to talk openly about topics considered taboo back in India). Devan also struggled to connect with peers, as he was not familiar with contemporary pop culture and humor. Devan felt that he focused so much on differences between him and others initially that he missed out on discovering similarities.

Devan was able to broaden his circle of friends once he started to place his focus on shared interests rather than solely on the shared culture of origin, such as when he decided to join band in high school and felt a newfound connection with his peers through music. However, Devan also believes the ease in making friends stemmed from the gradual adoption of the American culture and having more context to connect with others on a deeper level. Such adoption of the American values and culture is what differentiates his experience of living in the United States from that of his parents'. Specifically talking about his father, Devan believes that many of his father's challenges resulted from an inability to be seen by others as American and to be allowed to feel American. Devan feels that sounding and looking more American, as in the way of dressing, has shaped how others perceive him in this country, which has helped him feel more American and less of an outsider. Devan feels that younger generation immigrants, like himself and other 1.5 generation immigrants, can transition better to their new lives as Americans and experience less discrimination than older generations, and this easier transition opens up greater opportunities for success.

In explaining his reason for not joining any ethnic-based organizations in high school or college, Devan stated that he was able to meet friends through his classes and

professional organizations. He feels that if he had not made friends as quickly through those avenues in college, he would have sought out more opportunities to be involved in ethnic-based organizations. Devan feels that individuals who desire a greater sense of belonging would always fall on what is most familiar, which often is to seek out others of similar ethnicities and backgrounds. He also said those earlier experiences with Indian Americans that were not very accepting of him instilled a fear of rejection by them again, even today. In further discussing friendship, Devan wonders about whether having moved away at a critical period where lifelong friendships are just starting to grow has led to him having “chapters of friends” today. He often feels that when one chapter of his life ended (e.g., high school), the friends that he made there did not continue to the next chapter. He wonders if other 1.5 generation individuals share such a feeling or whether that is a personal struggle applicable only to him.

In addition to sharing his journey to becoming more “American,” Devan also spoke about how he is afraid to lose his “Indian-ness.” Devan talked in great detail about his desire to always keep his culture close. As he grows older, Devan predicts that his acculturation journey to becoming more American will one day come to an end. As a teenager who just moved to the United States, Devan’s desire to fit in preceded his desire to be seen as a unique individual coming from a unique culture. As a result, at times, Devan felt a need to hide that Indian identity. Today, as an adult who has lived over half of his life in the United States, Devan appreciates his language, religion, and culture so much more and remains his unique self wherever he is. As Devan’s story continues, he is becoming more comfortable with his identity that is partially Indian and partially



American and has been shaped over the course of years by his colorful journey in his homes, both India and the United States.

### **Individual Textural-Structural Descriptions**

**Description.** In the final step of the data analysis of the individual co-researcher data, I merged the description of the phenomenon (i.e., textural description) with the meaning interpreted by the researcher (i.e., structural description). These textural-structural descriptions were emailed to individual co-researchers to ensure their accuracy. Co-researchers were given one week to review their textural-structural descriptions and an opportunity to provide additional information as they saw fit. Due to the possible perception of the researcher being an expert and hence the creation of a power differential between researcher and subject, I made an additional effort during this step to ensure that co-researchers understood the importance of their individual stories and the accurate interpretation of these stories by the main researcher. I emphasized in our emails their roles as “co-researchers” rather than solely “co-researchers” in this research study.

All five co-researchers responded to member check emails. There were minimal disagreements and inaccuracies in textural details. Two co-researchers disagreed on a few structural interpretations. In one example, in the initial version of Devan’s textural-structural description, I had mentioned that as a teenager who had just moved to the United States, Devan at times felt embarrassed about his Indian identity and wanted to hide it. Devan disagreed about this emotion of “embarrassment.” In the final description, Devan agreed with the revised statement of “[Devan’s] desire to fit in preceded his desire to be seen as a unique individual... as a result, at times, Devan felt a need to hide that

Indian identity.” After revisions and final member checks via email, all co-researchers expressed their approval of their descriptions and confirmed their accuracy.

In the following section, I provide the textural-structural description of Devan’s 1.5-generation ethnic identity experience.

**Textural-structural: Devan.** Devan shared his experience of being a 1.5 generation Asian American and his evolving ethnic identity. Devan was excited to participate in the research study from the beginning when he learned of the study. During the interview, Devan presented as an outgoing and outspoken individual, who was completely open about his experiences. Devan was willing to share all sides of his story, including the sad and more painful experiences. Devan apologized when he felt that his responses seemed negative and attributed such reaction to reliving the stressful experiences and relationships he had undergone as a 1.5 generation individual.

Devan stated that the first years of moving to the United States as a teenager were most difficult. Today, he is proud of how far he has come and how he survived those first years in the United States. Devan recalled how much he wanted the guidance of his parents during those early transition times, but today questioned how much real guidance they could have provided for him as they too were navigating their new lives and identity. When comparing himself now as an adult to his parents, he feels that he was able to adjust and assimilate better than his parents ever did. For Devan’s parents, especially his father, Devan felt that his father was never able to spring back to the man he was in India. Devan attributed his greater American identity today to this ability to adjust to the American way as a teenager and as a result becoming more accepted by others. This

feeling of acceptance helped minimize for Devan the “us versus them” mentality, which over the years, has been replaced by “me equals them.”

To Devan, being a 1.5 generation student had minimal impact on his academics throughout high school and college. Even in India, Devan received his schooling entirely in English. He did not struggle academically, which may be different for those who did not receive their education in English in their native countries. Devan views his big move to the United States at a sensitive period to have an impact on his self-esteem and social life the most. In the beginning, being different and struggling to make friends instilled doubts in Devan's overall appearance and personality. Socially, he needed to relearn how to connect with others, which was confusing to him as a teenager. Devan needed to relearn how to navigate friendships all over again. Today, Devan feels lucky that despite his initial struggles in connecting with peers, he always had friends. He felt that once he had a better grasp of the cultural nuances that impacted friendships, there was a natural ease to making friends.

Devan initially targeted second-generation Indian Americans with the assumption that it would be easier to connect with those of a similar ethnic background; however, he found this not to be the case. The Indian Americans he first met at his temple discriminated against him for being a new immigrant. In those first years, Devan constantly felt like an outsider. In high school, it was in band where Devan finally felt a sense of belonging that he had yearned to feel. After making friends with other students in band over their shared interest in music and performance, Devan realized that he needed to place less emphasis on what made him different from others. Since that time in

band, Devan has continued to seek out others based on shared interests, rather than simply on common origin.

In college, instead of being involved in ethnic-based organizations, Devan joined a pre-pharmacy organization that allowed him to meet others who had an interest in pharmacy. Devan stated that if he had not made friends through these avenues, he might have tried being more involved in ethnic-based organizations. Devan believes that his negative experience with Indian Americans as a new immigrant undoubtedly influenced why he did not immediately seek them out through ethnic-based organizations once in college. In describing his current friendships, Devan thinks that he has “chapters of friends.” Devan feels that his bonds with friends lack the continuity that he often sees in others who may have lived and grown up in one place or country. Additionally, in discussing intimate relationships, Devan stated that he is always so fearful of rejection from both ends, from the individuals he may be interested in as well as from his parents, who may not agree with his choice of partner. Devan wondered if such fear and a lack of continuity in friendships could be a byproduct of having moved during that critical period of friendship development before lifelong friendships had enough time to be solidly established.

Devan experienced less discrimination as he became more “American” in the way he spoke, dressed, and behaved. Devan compared his experience with his parents who continue to face discrimination today despite having lived in the United States all these years. Devan attributed this to the older generation “standing out more” due to an inability to pick up the language or culture as easily as the younger generations. Devan does not feel forced to behave a certain way to be more accepted. Rather, he feels that it

is a natural process of adapting to one's environment. According to Devan, the older one is at the time of one's move, the more developed one's identity is and the more resistant that identity is to change.

Today, Devan feels that he is a unique individual due to his 1.5 generation status. He hesitated in claiming to be American due to some of his differing values. Until this day, Devan finds himself continuing to be surprised by certain aspects of the American life. On the other hand, Devan does not see himself as truly Indian either. Devan no longer sees India as "home." Devan feels that he is truly his unique self no matter where he is. Devan admitted that he did not always feel this way. As a teenager, Devan's desire to fit in preceded his desire to be seen as a unique individual and at times had made efforts to hide his Indian identity. Today, Devan is comfortable being himself, regardless of the label; he is both Indian and American.

Currently, Devan feels that he is still in this process of evolving and finding his identity. He continues to adapt to the American culture and picking up more of that American identity. As part of this process, Devan thinks that he will lose certain aspects of his Indian identity; he shared that he does not know how to make Indian food, or how to write Malayalam. In the future, Devan feels this process of becoming more Americanized coming to an end as he decides what parts of his Indian identity he will not give up. Today, Devan makes an effort to speak in Malayalam when the opportunity presents itself. Devan also claims that despite his earlier resistance, he is now open to dating and marrying an Indian partner and even living in India with the thought that doing so may help him preserve parts of his Indian identity that he can pass on to his future children.

### **Composite Textural-Structural Descriptions: Essences of the Experience**

In the final step of the Moustakas (1994) data analysis process, the researcher synthesizes the textural and structural descriptions of all co-researchers into a composite description. In this step, individual meaning units are removed, while meaning units shared by all co-researchers are identified and transformed into a composite textural and structural description. The primary goal of this final step is to synthesize the narratives for the group as a whole to reveal a comprehensive and universal description of the experience.

**Process.** I started this process by rereading all individual textural-structural descriptions multiple times to gain an in-depth understanding of each co-researcher's experience. I printed out all meaning units (invariant constituents), themes, subthemes, textural descriptions, structural descriptions, and textural structural descriptions for all co-researchers. Manually, I searched for similarities in meaning units, themes, and subthemes shared between all co-researchers. I developed an Excel document that helped me organize my themes and subthemes.

By consistently writing in my journal, I reflected on how each co-researcher's explanations of similar experiences differed. Each of the five co-researchers found meaning in their experiences in different ways. In writing my composite description, I made sure not to neglect the uniqueness of their experiences while still maintaining the fundamental and shared components of their experiences.

**Essences.** After engaging in the phenomenological reduction process set forth by Moustakas (1994), the following core themes or essences emerged for all co-researchers: Relearning school, language and acceptance, acculturation experiences, finding myself,

and connecting with origin. In the following table, some themes and supporting subthemes shared by co-researchers are listed.

Table 4.

*Shared Themes and Supporting Subthemes between Co-researchers*

Core Themes	Subthemes
Relearning school	Difficulty fitting in Questioning academic competence Learning pop culture Finding common interests
Language and Acceptance	Imperfect ability to speak Awareness of accent Anxiety in public speaking Opportunity to practice mother tongue Desire to improve language Loss of accent = competence and acceptance Ease in speaking English
Acculturation Experiences	Challenging first years Initial loss of status Learning culture Decrease of discrimination over time Discrimination experienced by older generations Stance against discrimination and racism Experiences of Discrimination, Stereotype, and Prejudice Transformation of type of discrimination and racism

Table 4, continued

Core Themes	Subthemes
Finding the Self	Hiding aspects of one's identity Awareness of difference Changing one's appearance Ability to adjust identity per setting Adoption of American social norms Friendships and dating Ethnic pride growth Ability to adjust identity per setting Perception of unique identity Anxious tendencies Comfort in discomfort
Connecting with Origin	Joining ethnic based organizations Interest in country of origin Desire to return to native country

### Summary Co-researcher Descriptions

To ensure readers have adequate connection with all of the co-researchers' stories, I have developed summaries of the textural-structural narratives of the remaining co-researchers (i.e., Adam, Jennifer, Hana).

**Adam.** Compared to the other co-researchers, Adam had the least amount of English language knowledge before his move to the United States. He was also one of the oldest at the time of his move; he was 13 years old. In his initial years of school in the United States, Adam struggled the most academically and socially. This struggle is due to not only having to learn to speak English but also read and write in English. Today, Adam continues to feel "limited" in his language ability, despite his Chinese accent going



unnoticed by most. Adam's perception of his "imperfect" ability to speak English is made worse by his daily struggles in college-level reading and writing. Classroom presentations and group assignments are sources of anxiety for Adam daily; "I do not say much when working in a group."

Adam's father was transferred to the United States by his work. While Adam's family did not struggle financially, Adam shared similar struggles with the other co-researchers in finding acceptance and belongingness among his new American peers. In China, Adam had been an avid golfer since he was young. At his new school, despite sharing the love of golf with some of his peers, Adam felt that his foreign status and communication ability truly limited his early friendships. Adam described his early transition challenges to living in the United States as a significant loss of status; "In China, I was my father's son. At my new school, no one knew me. I was nobody." Adam shared that it was not until college that he made real friends with whom he shared a genuine connection. Adam's first friend in college was his roommate and teammate, who had the opportunity to see Adam as "more than just the foreign student."

During his interview, Adam shared with me that before participating in the study and agreeing to be interviewed about his 1.5 generation ethnic identity journey, he had never allowed himself to reflect back on his early challenges; "I did not want to admit how hard it actually was."

**Jennifer.** Jennifer was a freshman in high school at the time of her move to the United States from Vietnam. Jennifer joined her significantly older brother in the United States, while her parents stayed in Vietnam until they reunited with their children in early 2016. Jennifer initially started at a large public high school in Denver, though moved to

an all-girls private high school in the second semester of the same year. Jennifer spoke about how significantly more overwhelming it was to attend a large public high school over the smaller private high school. Due to her brother's work schedule, Jennifer felt entirely unsupported throughout her initial years of schooling in the United States, but also questioned how much support her brother could have even provided for her as he never attended high school in the United States. After high school, Jennifer applied to a small private Catholic university in Denver; she stated that her decision to apply to a small university has much to do with the tough first few months she had in the public high school.

In discussing her friendships, Jennifer shared that she initially sought out the friendship of the only other Asian girl in her grade level at her private high school, but was met with coldness. It did not take long for Jennifer to realize that this other student had no interest in being friends with her, despite their shared ethnic background. Like Devan, Jennifer commented on having unstable and non-lasting friendships, even today. Throughout high school, Jennifer had "friends"; however, Jennifer shared that it feels like she needed to make new friends and develop new friendships with every new stage of her life.

In her college, Jennifer co-founded a multicultural organization that aimed to bring cultural awareness to students. She shared that they held seminars and workshops to raise awareness of cultural issues that impacted the students, regardless of their race. Jennifer was determined in her goal to create a safe avenue for all students to talk about issues of race, which did not exist for Jennifer at the time, but something that she truly desired. Jennifer attributed her ethnic pride today and her comfort in talking about these

sensitive issues to her years being involved in the multicultural organization she co-founded as a college student; this organization continues to exist at her alma mater today.

**Hana.** Out of the five co-researchers, Hana was the youngest at the time of her family's immigration to the United States. She was nine years old and in the third grade. Considering how young she was at the time of her move, Hana shared that one would assume a smooth transition; however, Hana's adjustment to the United States was far from easy. Hana struggled significantly with the language, academics, and social-emotional aspects after her move. Hana shared that she was considerably taller than her peers in the third grade, which made her stand out more when all she wanted at the time was to be "invisible." In the beginning, Hana was hopeful about school in the United States as she was social and a gifted student back in South Korea. Though Hana did not struggle academically, Hana very quickly realized that she had no idea how to connect with her new peers at school. Hana shared in her interview that in those initial years, she was so "desperate for friends." Hana stated, "I wanted friends. I wanted to impress them, but I did not know how". According to Hana, she started to make friends around the time she began to feel better about her ability to communicate in English. Hana attributed her current struggles with her self-image to the difficulty she faced throughout her schooling in connecting with peers and feeling poorly about herself.

Hana is currently studying to become a nurse. She chose this profession to help others, but also to prepare her to care for her parents when they grow older. While Hana is very close with her parents, she admitted that she could never be fully open about herself with them, especially regarding her relationships. Hana shared that her parents are very religious and condemn intimate relations of any kind before marriage. Hana

attributes this to her parents' religious beliefs in combination with their traditional Asian values; Hana joked in her interview, "[my parents] would be happy if I never married." Hana also shared that her parents are not aware of her involvement in an Asian interest sorority. Hana shared that her parents are not familiar with sororities or fraternities and informing them would only lead to an unresolvable conflict. From her involvement in the sorority, Hana most cherishes the sense of belongingness and acceptance she found almost immediately. According to Hana, it was not until she joined her Asian-interest sorority that she felt like she belonged for the first time since moving to the United States.

### **Composite Description**

**Relearning school.** Each of the co-researchers discussed a sense of having to "relearn" school. Though all five co-researchers had been in school in their native countries, going to middle and high school in the United States necessitated that they relearn many aspects of school. All co-researchers agreed that these first few years of school were hardest and continue to impact their identity today. 1.5 generation co-researchers experienced much confusion about fundamental aspects of school despite having been in school for years, from connecting with peers to struggling with self-doubts surrounding academics, identity, and friendships.

***Early struggles in finding belongingness in school.*** Co-researchers perceived the early years of school in the United States to have the most impact on their identity today. For all the co-researchers, those early years as a pre-adolescent coming to a new school environment were challenging. Hana had high hopes for school initially as she was well-liked by peers and academically successful in South Korea. However, it did not take long

for Hana to realize that it was not going to be as easy at her new school. Hana remarked that this difficulty connecting with peers affected her self-image and made her doubt herself greatly. She questioned whether she will ever have friends as she did back in South Korea. Even today, Hana feels anxiety around making new friends as an adult.

Similarly, Devan attributed his difficulty connecting with peers to his unfamiliarity with the American culture and topics of interest that may have made connecting with peers easier. Devan shared that he did not struggle too much academically but his struggles fitting in particularly impacted his academic experience. As a specific example, both Devan and Hana shared that they felt uncomfortable participating in classroom discussions.

Lauren shared that she was very outgoing back in the Philippines; however, found herself isolating herself more at school in the United States. Lauren shared that teenagers place a lot of emphasis on popularity and personal attributes that make certain individuals more popular than others. Lauren felt a huge loss of status when she started school in the United States. Despite being in the popular crowd in the Philippines, Lauren felt that students at her new school made immediate assumptions of her character based on her recent immigrant status and no matter what she did, initially she was never seen as cool or popular.

***Questioning academic competence.*** All co-researchers shared that they were academically strong students back in their native countries. However, upon their move to the United States, all went through a period of doubting their academic competence. Much of the doubt stemmed from real challenges in language, but co-researchers, as teenagers, initially attributed these challenges to faults within themselves. It did not take

long for these 1.5 generation individuals to improve their grades; most were making good grades by their second year in the United States. However, despite sufficient grades, co-researchers continued to question their academic competence due to the lack of ease in speaking and discomfort with peers. Lauren shared her confusion in literally navigating the school building. At her old school in the Philippines, middle school students stayed in one class and had one teacher that taught most of the core subjects. Lauren shared that she was given detention for being late to class because she kept getting lost between class periods. These challenges navigating their new school system instilled doubts about their academic competence as students.

*Focusing on finding common interests.* Co-researchers shared that they tended to approach those with a shared cultural background initially. Devan attempted to connect with Indian Americans at his temple. Jennifer sought out the friendship of the only other Asian girl in her all-girl Catholic high school. Hana initially gravitated toward the Korean students in her middle school. However, all co-researchers shared that these initial attempts at friendship were met with resistance by the very people they approached. Devan realized that the second-generation Indian Americans at his temple were not like the friends he had back home. Jennifer shared that when the only other Asian girl in the school began to avoid her, she realized that this student found her to be burdensome. Some co-researchers, like Lauren and Adam, found willing friends in others who were also new to the country whom they befriended in their English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. However, for the rest of the co-researchers, who did not have ESL classes, it was tough to make friends, even with those who did share their cultural background. Devan and Lauren found that those who had been born in the United States or lived in the

United States for longer were not interested in befriending them initially due to their recent immigrant status.

In the beginning, all co-researchers admitted a sense of loneliness at school. They shared that making their first friends was difficult. Devan stated that he could not name even one real friend that first year of school. After sitting with the same group of second generation Korean students and feeling ignored for most of her first year, Hana finally made friends with an American student who shared her love of anime. Devan found his first feeling of belongingness when he joined the high school band and realized that he shared with others in band a love for music and performance. Adam joined golf in high school, and it was then that he made his first friends. As for Lauren, she joined dance. All co-researchers felt that initially, they placed so much emphasis on finding friends of similar cultural background that they lost opportunities to befriend others.

**Language and acceptance.** All co-researchers felt that others began to accept them more when their fluency of the English language improved. Once they grasped the language, co-researchers felt that everything became significantly easier, from making friends to feeling a greater sense of belongingness.

***Loss of accent signifies competence and acceptance.*** Co-researchers believed it was not just their English fluency that led to a greater sense of acceptance from others. Rather, it was the greater language fluency combined with the loss of their foreign accent and the adoption of the American accent that led to such acceptance. Devan and Lauren, who spoke English even before their move, felt that it was the diminishing of their foreign accent that helped others be more accepting of them. To Hana, it was the loss of accent that boosted her confidence enough to approach others and make new friends.

Adam, who to this day still feels limited in his academic English, feels that his lack of accent made him feel less foreign, even when he spoke in basic English. The co-researchers believe that peers also began to see them as more competent when they started to lose their accents. To Lauren, it was not until her second or third year when her accent had become less apparent that others began to ask her for academic help, even though Lauren had made straight A's from the beginning. Lauren said it best, when she claimed that others saw the lack of accent as an indication of ability or competence.

***Constant desire to improve language ability.*** Co-researchers ranged in age from 21 to 23 years old at the time of their interviews. The length of time they had lived in the United States ranged from 7 to 10 years. Two of the co-researchers, Devan and Jennifer, had been exposed to English before moving. However, all five co-researchers shared that despite having a good understanding of the English language almost immediately (i.e., co-researchers shared that they were able to understand most exchanges in English after the first year), they felt very conscious of their accent. In their first years, co-researchers shared having to repeat certain statements and words often when others were unable to understand them. Some felt at times unwilling to share experiences or join in conversations for fear of standing out as a foreigner.

Even today, co-researchers are conscious of certain words that they struggled with in the beginning. Devan shared that he continues to be careful when pronouncing words with the letter "W" as others have jokingly pointed out the different way he would make /W/ sounds to sound more like /V/. For Lauren, she continues to struggle with words that contain the letter R followed by L, like such as *world* and *squirrel*. While co-researchers differed in their feelings around such experiences (e.g., female co-researchers tended to



see these experiences as embarrassing), all shared the similar experience of having others pointing out mispronunciations of words. These earlier experiences continue to impact these 1.5 generation co-researchers today as they are still acutely aware of those words even today as they speak.

Surprisingly, only one co-researcher specifically brought up challenges in academic writing. Adam, who was still in college at the time of his interview, shared that he does not do well on papers due to grammatical errors in his writing. While it is hard to pick up Adam's hardly noticeable Chinese accent when speaking, Adam feels a considerable lack of confidence in writing. Adam feels that average Americans do not use grammatically correct English while speaking; however, using correct grammar is undoubtedly an expectation in college writing. Lauren, who is now a teacher, shared a similar sentiment and related this challenge more to public speaking, such as during presentations or in the classroom. Lauren gave the example of overthinking how to pronounce certain words in the text when reading aloud or during presentations. Lauren looks forward to the day when she feels fully confident of her speaking ability in front of her students and colleagues.

Similarly, today, co-researchers lack confidence in their ability to speak fluently in their native language. While Devan feels that he can communicate casually with others in informal Malayalam, he doubts being able to do so in situations that would require him to speak in the formal, softer version of the language, which is typically reserved for use with the elders, in writing, and in speeches. Hana, who grew up often translating for her parents, is studying to be a nurse and feels that she will never be able to translate at her work setting for Korean-speaking patients, but attributes this struggle to her unfamiliarity

with medical terms in the Korean language. Lauren, who is now a teacher, shared an experience of attempting to hold a parent-teacher conference with a Filipino family in Tagalog; however, she failed “miserably” and was lucky that the parents were able to understand English. Despite a shared discomfort in speaking in their native tongues fluently in more formal settings, all co-researchers share a desire to pass on their language to future generations while still fully recognizing how difficult this task may be, given their already diminishing language competence. When speaking about their language ability both in English and their native tongues, each co-researcher feels the need to continue to improve their language ability even today.

**Acculturation experiences.** The process of acculturation happens when an individual from one culture finds himself in another culture, which leads to cultural and psychological changes in the individuals from both of the cultures. Such experiences are sometimes positive, other times negative; all co-researchers have these acculturation experiences both initially and currently.

***First years were most stressful.*** Acculturative stress is the psychosocial strain undergone by immigrants in response to challenges encountered while adjusting to cultural differences in a new country (Arbona et al., 2010). Immigrant families move with glistening goals in mind in search of a better life in the United States; however, all co-researchers shared that upon their move, life was different, and most of the time, not better than what it was in their country of origin. Additionally, that journey to their desired safe and comfortable life was arduous and created instances of disappointment and discouragement.

Devan spoke about this elaborately when discussing his father, who lost a good career in engineering after deciding to come to the United States. The mix of both acculturative and financial struggles made life “hell” for Devan's family in the beginning. Both he and his brother questioned their parents often about why they needed to move to the United States in the first place. Devan shared that his parents worked so much in the beginning that he and his brother were often left alone at home without supervision. Today, those difficult beginning experiences are motivation for Devan to work hard and provide for his family. While parents tend to be children's initial source of guidance when faced with day-to-day stressors, 1.5 generation co-researchers felt that their parents were at times unable to provide them with such guidance.

*Experiences of discrimination, stereotypes, and prejudice.* Immigrants experience discrimination, stereotypes, and prejudice as a result of racism, anti-immigrant sentiments, or a combination of both. While Asian immigrants also struggle with stereotypes and discrimination, “saving face”—a cultural concept that signifies a need to preserve one's reputation and avoid humiliation or embarrassment—along with the model minority myth that assumes the ease with which Asians are accepted into mainstream culture, often conceal the actual challenges of the Asian immigrant population (Singh, 2009; Sue & Sue, 2003). The reality for our co-researchers is that they continue to face discriminations today that often are rendered invisible.

All co-researchers acknowledge that in this country, different immigrant groups encounter different forms and degrees of discrimination due to the stereotypes others hold about racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, they all also acknowledge that different groups of Asians experience discrimination differently. Hana, who is on her way to

becoming a nurse, shared an experience when an older patient asked for a different nurse during one of her field rotations. While the patient attributed her request to wanting an “older, more experienced” nurse, she did not refuse the replacement nurse, who was of the same age with the same amount of clinical training as Hana.

Devan, who is in pharmacy school, shared a similar experience of a customer refusing to talk to him about a particular medication, asking instead for his supervisor despite Devan informing the customer that he works closely with his supervisor. In these instances, Devan and Hana both felt that neither of their supervisors, with whom they worked closely, addressed their race at all when discussing what happened. While Hana’s supervisor feels that the patient’s refusal was due to the patient feeling uncomfortable about Hana’s young appearance and associated it with a lack of experience, Hana feels that the impact of race in how the situation unfolded was not acknowledged. When asked if she brought up this concern at a later time with the supervisor, Hana shared that she did not, as she wanted to avoid having that difficult conversation.

Co-researchers shared that the type of discrimination, stereotype, and prejudices they experience today are very different from when they first arrived in the United States, when other students would poke fun of their accents, or the type of food they would bring to lunch, but are present in a different way. I noted that there existed almost a quiet discomfort when co-researchers spoke about experiences of discrimination, stereotype, and prejudices that are still present today.

***Intergenerational conflicts increased with age.*** Intergenerational conflict occurs as a result of the differing degrees of acculturation between parents and children. As children acculturate and gain fluency in the English language faster than their parents,

children often become the cultural experts asked to translate and even represent the family to the outside world. While intergenerational conflicts occurred throughout all of their growing years, co-researchers found that instances of such conflicts increased as they entered early adulthood, while they were in high school and college. For example, looking back at her early days in college, Hana admitted that she was never fully open about her relationships or socialization. In her second year of college, Hana started to date and party; as much as she wanted to share these new experiences with her parents, she knew that it would be a source of disagreement.

Lauren similarly discussed how her parents discovered pictures of her partying while in college, which her father saw as her bringing shame to the family and resulted in him refusing to speak with Lauren for months. Devan, who is now in pharmacy school, continues to hide the fact that he drinks beer or that he does not practice Hinduism when away from his parents. Lauren reflected back on numerous arguments with her father when he would refer to any disagreed-upon behaviors as Lauren “acting American” or “becoming too American.” Lauren recalled feelings of frustration and confusion as she was never sure what would be considered too American to her parents; Lauren stated, “We came here to pursue the American dream, but I was never allowed to be American.” Adam feels that as he gets older, he understands that his parents fear that future generations will lose their cultural root; however, he pointed out how this was interesting as that cultural root is what causes his parents not to feel belongingness or acceptance in their new country. Co-researchers shared the sentiment that as they became more acculturated, they understood their parents less and experienced a significant disconnect with their parents.

**Finding the self.** Co-researchers believe that as 1.5 generation individuals, the path to discovering one's identity is longer and more complicated. Jennifer described this path beautifully when she stated, "You start on a path to finding yourself back home in your native country, then once the big move happens, that path is no longer paved and overgrown with weeds. You now have to find your way through a different set of paths, making mistakes and getting lost often along the way."

***Hiding aspects of one's identity.*** A common thread in our co-researchers' narratives is a phase of hiding oneself in many settings. Co-researchers shared experiences of having to act "less American" at home, while doing the complete opposite, act "more American" outside of the home. Lauren shared that it was a constant balancing act of attempting to hide certain aspects of the self to make oneself appear a certain way to a certain audience. When asked how confusing that must have been for her, Lauren stated, "It was very confusing, as you get to the point of not knowing who you are." Reasons for this tendency to hide aspects of their identity varied among co-researchers. For Lauren, she attributes it to her people-pleasing nature. Lauren felt that if she acted too American in front of her parents, they would be disappointed in the person she has become.

Hana stated, "[in high school], the reason I hid my Korean identity is to fit in. Sometimes I felt ashamed that I was different and not American enough." Hana provided the example of being embarrassed about bringing packed lunch consisting of Korean food to school, choosing instead to buy her lunch in high school. The difference in reason for hiding aspects of their ethnic identity is stark between male and female co-researchers. For instance, male co-researchers, Adam and Devan, attributed such tendency to act more

American outside of the home to a lack of desire to explain their story. In Adam's words, "I just wanted to be American, like everyone else." While their stories and reasons differed, all co-researchers sought a sense of belongingness in different settings by acting a certain way and at times, by hiding their stories and identities.

*Self-doubts and anxiety.* A surprising revelation in my interviews with the 1.5 generation co-researchers is a shared sense that their moves to the United States as adolescents continue to impact their emotionality today. Female co-researchers spoke about this impact much more than male co-researchers. Emotionality is comprised of the subjective feeling states that profoundly influence observable behavior and physiological responses to situations (Decker & Cadenhead, 2011). Specifically, co-researchers share in common a type of self-doubt and anxiety to differing degrees when finding themselves in unfamiliar, new situations.

For example, Lauren admitted that when she started her student teaching year, she felt a hyper-awareness of how her colleagues and students would perceive her. Both in her schooling and career, Lauren finds herself questioning others' evaluation of herself, often assuming a negative evaluation from others without any support for that assumption. Conversely, Hana approaches new relationships with a significant amount of self-doubt and anxiety. Hana goes so far to say that her unstable friendships and relationships that she had in the beginning as a teen immigrant have in a way defined her relationship expectations today. At the beginning of every new relationship, both romantic and friendly, there seems to be a fear of rejection or an abrupt ending due to not "impressing the other enough." With Devan, these feelings of self-doubt and anxiety manifest themselves in a different way. Devan attributes his lack of relationships both

current and past to a fear of rejection from both ends, from the individuals he may be interested in as well as from his parents, who may not agree with his choice of partner.

In interviews with the co-researchers, this discussion of self-doubt and anxiety appears in different forms and stories. In a way, the co-researchers' challenges in multiple domains (e.g., academic, social, familial, language, financial, cultural) that occurred early in their immigration journey continue to be impactful today.

***Ethnic pride continues to grow today.*** In all interviews conducted, there was a sense of uncertainty at times among co-researchers when first speaking about their ethnic identities. All co-researchers have always from the beginning been aware of differences in how they sounded, how they looked, and how they acted and behaved. As stated previously, at school and home, there are times when co-researchers feel the need to hide certain aspects of their Asian-ness or American-ness depending on the contexts in which they found themselves. One co-researcher, Lauren, even shared her fear of lacking a real identity as a result of this continuous shift in identities. However, at the end of their interviews, all co-researchers shared an appreciation for their biculturalism today, seeing themselves as unique individuals with unique stories.

Devan stated, "Throughout the years from finishing high school to attending college and now professional school, I find myself more comfortable explaining myself through my culture. I have realized how important it is to embrace one's culture. I am realizing that my unique story should not be invisible and hidden." Today, Devan believes that he is true to his identity regardless of the setting or individuals around him. Hana joined an Asian interest sorority in college. She stated, "Joining multicultural organizations in college has provided me with a place to love and appreciate my culture



and people.” For most of the co-researchers interviewed, it was not until college that they begin to develop this pride for their individual stories. Jennifer attributed this sense of ethnic pride to actually having a choice. Explaining further, Jennifer stated, “In the beginning, as new immigrants, we did not have a choice on how others perceived us. No matter what we did, we were different, we spoke different, we looked different. Today, I have the advantage of somewhat looking and sounding very much American and now have a choice in how others perceive me.” To Jennifer, having this choice in a way has given her a sort of privilege—the privilege to be proud of her ethnicity. While co-researchers differed in their narratives and are at differing points of their ethnic identity journeys, all co-researchers express a sense of ethnic pride today.

**Connection with origin.** All co-researchers continue to have close family living in their native counties. Furthermore, all co-researchers, except for Devan, have gone back to visit their native countries at least once throughout the years. Much research today discusses immigrant assimilation and acculturation to the host country. Less discussion is focused on the immigrants’ connections with their cultures and countries of origin. It is often reasonable to assume that connections with one’s country of origin would decline as immigrants became more settled and adapted to American society (Alba & Nee, 1997). Do 1.5 generation co-researchers remain connected to their culture and countries of origin despite increased levels of assimilation to the American society?

***Joining ethnic-based organizations.*** A common theme that keeps appearing in conversations with the co-researchers is related to joining ethnic-based organizations on campus. Neither Devan nor Adam was involved in ethnic-based organizations in their respective campuses. However, they both were involved in one way or another in other

campus organizations. Devan has been in professional pharmacy organizations since high school; Adam was a member of a leadership organization specifically designed for student-athletes. Devan stated, “I made friends in my classes. If the circumstances were different and there was no one I could connect with in my classes, I think I would look into joining ethnic organizations more.” For Devan, joining an ethnic-based organization would have been a last resort if he had not found friends through other means. Adam did not want to join ethnic-based organizations. Adam stated, “I did not want to hang out with only people of the same background.”

On the other hand, the remaining co-researchers, Lauren, Jennifer, and Hana were or still are involved in ethnic-based organizations. As mentioned earlier, Hana was in an Asian-interest sorority through all of her college years. Jennifer even co-founded a multicultural organization whose primary goal is to bring cultural awareness to college students. Through her organization, Jennifer along with members of her club hosted culturally enriching events such as workshops and seminars to raise awareness of cultural issues that impact them daily. Lauren was actively involved in an Asian interest sorority as well as the primary international student organization on campus that hosted campus-wide international festivals every year. Both of the sororities that Lauren and Hana were involved in raised money for charities based in Asian countries. Lauren’s interest in becoming a teacher began when her sorority started to do community service tutoring for ESL students in a local middle school; it was through this community service opportunity that Lauren realized she could have an impact on other immigrant students like herself in a tough period in their lives.

All co-researchers, including those who ended up being very involved in ethnic-based organizations, were apprehensive about joining these organizations in the first place. Hana stated, “As an incoming freshman, I was unsure about joining any cultural organizations. What activities do they even do? What is the point of just being with only people of the same background? What will others think? Will there be any negative stereotypes?” While not all co-researchers ended up participating in ethnic-based activities and organizations, those who did became vocal advocates for all college students, not only those of ethnic minority background, to participate. Jennifer spoke about this at length. “Not only are we increasing cultural awareness to others, but we are also increasing our ethnic pride, which is something that not all of us always had. Our organization did community service that helps others, often directly affecting those living back home. Also, it gave me the opportunity to hold leadership positions, which helped build my confidence tremendously!”

***Interest in country of origin.*** Past research has posited that continued involvement with the country of origin is quite common among adult immigrants, especially for those of Latin and Asian backgrounds (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1995). Such participation often involves various activities including travels to home, remittances, and religious gatherings (Tamaki, 2011). For co-researchers who were not yet adults at the time of their move, but are currently adults, it is interesting to learn about their perceived involvement with their native countries. All co-researchers but one, Devan, have gone back to visit their native countries at least once since their move. Lauren described the first time she returned to the Philippines for a visit. “It was emotional. Seeing family members that I had not seen in years. Seeing my grandpa, who

had aged so much since I last saw him. Seeing the poor struggle and children begging on the streets. That visit was a very emotional visit for me. I felt different, like I did not belong there, but at the same time, it still felt familiar, like home.” Others described similar experiences of their first return to their native countries. Hana felt immediately at home. “We went back to Korea for the first time after five years of being the United States. It felt like I never left. I connected with old friends immediately and had such a great time. I cried when I went back to America.” Jennifer, who first started to live in the United States with only her older brother, went back to Vietnam yearly to visit her parents. To Jennifer, Vietnam will never stop feeling like home. Some co-researchers, like Lauren and Jennifer, also admit to ensuring that they remain connected to their native countries by educating themselves on current events and news.

One of the questions that came up in interviews is whether or not co-researchers desired to live in their native countries in the future. Surprisingly, despite their secure connection with the United States, all co-researchers were open to moving home to their native countries. Devan, who has never returned to India since his move to the United States, admitted that while relocation is highly unlikely, he is open to the possibility. Lauren dreams of volunteering and teaching English in the Philippines. Adam stated that if his future job ever brings him back to China, he will not think twice about relocating. All co-researchers have such positive memories and continued identification with their respective countries that they find high appeal in living temporarily or permanently in their native countries someday.

### **Summary**

The results of this study were representative of the experiences of five 1.5 generation Asian American individuals regarding their ethnic identity journey, from the perspective of the principal researcher. Along with ongoing reflection, data gathered from the co-researchers were consolidated into a description of the essences of their individual experiences and narratives. Core essences of their experiences included relearning school, language and acceptance, acculturation experiences, finding the self, and connecting with origin.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The goal of this phenomenological research study was to address a gap in research literature by analyzing direct accounts of five 1.5 generation Asian American college students. The focus of this study was on the 1.5 generation Asian American college students' journeys to discovering their ethnic identity from early experiences as a young immigrant new to the United States to their current experiences today as college students and college graduates.

The phenomenological research utilized the Moustakas (1994) method for analyzing qualitative research, which involved bracketing, data reduction and imaginative variation. In-depth interviews with the co-researchers were transcribed and served as the primary data for this study. Following the transcription, each of the co-researchers' transcripts was analyzed independently. Three descriptions were developed for each data set: the individual textural, structural, and textural structural descriptions. Finally, a composite description was written to summarize the universal essences of the experiences of the five co-researchers. Five essential themes were revealed: relearning school, language and acceptance, acculturation experiences, finding the self, and connecting with origin.

## **Interpretations of Findings in Comparison with Literature Review and Theory**

### **Essences**

While the 1.5 generation experience has not been explored thoroughly in present literature (e.g., Benesch, 2008; McKay & Wong, 1996), identity and ethnic identity development of immigrants have been reasonably well documented in the literature (e.g., Block, 2007; Byrd Clark, 2009; Norton, 1995). Additionally, the Asian American college experience has also been studied (e.g., Iwamoto & Liu, 2010; Suyemoto et al., 2009; Tran, 2014). However, the 1.5 generation experience and the ethnic identity development of Asian American college students are rarely connected or explored together. Today, there is a gap in the literature regarding the connection between ethnic identity development and 1.5 generation Asian American students in college. Furthermore, research often categorizes the 1.5 generation as second-generation immigrants, first-generation immigrants, ESL students, or international students, instead of its own group (Fix & Passel, 2003; Kim, 2000). Taking these research gaps into account, this study intended to clarify the identity perceptions of the 1.5 generation college students through the exploration of their language engagement and acculturative processes.

In answering the study's main research question of how the ethnic identity perception of the 1.5 generation Asian American college students has transformed since their arrival in the United States to the present day, the study discovered that the identity perceptions of these individuals have most definitely changed in a number of ways. The study discovered the following essences of the 1.5 generation Asian American college students' experiences: relearning school, language and acceptance, acculturation experiences, finding the self, and connecting with origin. In a way, these essences reflect

the shared transformation experiences of the 1.5 generation Asian American ethnic identity journey. In the following sections, the findings of this investigation in comparison with other relevant studies and theories are presented.

**Relearning school.** One essence of the co-researchers' experiences was the challenge surrounding relearning school during a sensitive adolescent period, where one's focus is often on finding belongingness (Crosnoe, 2011; Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Schools are a vital learning environment for social conduct, social skills development, and social understanding (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). For the 1.5 generation co-researchers, at the time of their move, they had to relearn aspects of school that most other students have begun to learn in early childhood and continue to improve upon by the time they are in middle and high school. The effect of having to relearn school is lifelong and has repercussions on the 1.5 generation co-researchers' social lives, relationships, and mental well-being as adults.

For all adolescents, the relationships they develop with peers in school offer them information on how they are likely to be perceived by society (Schall, LeBaron, & Chhuon, 2016). Peers provide young people with information about who they appear to be and hold power to assign other youth into social categories based on perceived social characteristics (Stone, Barber, & Eccles, 2008) – both of which significantly influence identity formation (Crosnoe, 2011). One difference between the 1.5 generation Asian adolescents and other youth who do not belong to the 1.5 generation is the need to relearn entirely how to connect with peers through the differing language and unique social norms and behaviors of the new place. Devan, for example, expressed that he needed to learn the “American humor” and “topics of interest” that would make connecting with



peers easier. When other students did not acknowledge the co-researchers' attempts at connecting, co-researchers felt a sense of worthlessness or even invisibility that, for some, persisted for years.

Perceptions of belongingness have important impacts on adolescent development, influencing both social and academic outcomes (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Walton & Cohen, 2007). Co-researchers, who had minimal academic challenges back in their native countries, spoke at length about questioning their academic competence as soon as they arrived. Despite beginning to make sufficient grades by their second year, in support of previous research on the impact of belongingness on academic perceptions and performance, co-researchers continued to question their academic competence due to continued challenges in speaking and connecting with peers.

American culture considers active family or parental involvement to be a necessary contributor to students' school success. Parental involvement has been defined as parents' work with schools and their children to improve educational outcomes for their children's success (Hill & Taylor, 2004) and a commitment of family resources to aid in academic development (Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). In the United States, involvement reflects activities at home and at school to support children's achievement (Hill, Tyson, & Bromell, 2009). Home-based involvement includes activities such as supporting children and setting standards or expectations, socializing children in school behaviors, and cognitive activities such as training children to read and solve mathematics problems (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Toren, 2013).

On the other hand, school-based involvement often includes volunteering at school, involvement in school governance, helping with afterschool and extracurricular

activities, and communication (e.g., parent-teacher conferences, newsletters) (Epstein & Sanders, 2002; Pomerantz et al., 2007; Toren, 2013). Research has linked greater family involvement to better student academic achievement (Lee & Bowen, 2006), emotional regulation and academic behavior skills (Hill & Craft, 2003), and school engagement (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). While most co-researchers felt that parents were involved in their academics, such involvement looked different for each 1.5 generation co-researcher. As much as parents wanted to be involved in the more traditional way of parental involvement described above, this type of involvement is often not possible as a result of their prolonged work hours and an unfamiliarity with subjects and overall American education system.

Devan, for example, shared that while his parents held high academic expectations for him and his brother, he could not recall an instance when his parents helped directly with homework or a project or attended parent-teacher conferences. Devan shared that he needed to rely on himself to ensure satisfactory academic performance. Likewise, the other co-researchers also shared very similar experiences of limited parental involvement or parental involvement that appeared different than what is expected by their schools. A study on examining what parental involvement in education looked like for the 1.5 generation individuals or the possible long-term impact of this special type of parental involvement for 1.5 generation children would be a compelling future research study.

**Language and acceptance.** A significant amount of past research has examined the relationship between age and second language acquisition. Research posits that

children are more successful in acquiring a second language than adults (e.g., Bialystok, 1997; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995).

Regarding native or near native-speaker likeness, Ehrman and Oxford (1995) stated that younger learners are more likely than older learners to attain fluency and native-like pronunciation without an accent. According to Lenneberg (1967, p. 176), “automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear after puberty, and foreign languages have to be learned through a conscious and labored effort.” Additionally, Klein (1996) stated that puberty is the period after which second language acquisition becomes more difficult or different concerning proficiency without an accent.

Various linguists and past researchers are in favor of the existence of a language-critical period, which is the belief that the first years of life are the best time to learn language and after which, between 5 years old and puberty, language acquisition becomes significantly more difficult and less effective (Siegler, Eisenberg, DeLoache, & Saffran, 2006). The later that learners are exposed and immersed in the second language, the weaker their second language proficiency will be. For 1.5 generation children who move to the United States between the ages of 6 and 13 and immerse immediately in the mainstream culture and English language, how effective are they in acquiring their second language? While all co-researchers in this study spoke English fluently with no or minimal accents during their interviews, it would be interesting to learn of the factors that contributed to their English proficiency and their personal perception of that proficiency.

Previous research has shown that language proficiency does indeed influence a youth's ethnic identity (Kasinitz et al., 2008; Kiang, 2008; Kiang et al., 2011). It is

believed that higher English proficiency decreases one's identification with one's native ethnic group (Kasinitz et al., 2008; Kiang, 2008). A missing part in the language and ethnic identity research is the immigrant's perception of their own language ability. A theme that many of the co-researchers in this study shared is a lack of confidence in their ability to speak English, despite their perceived fluency by others, even today. All co-researchers shared a constant desire to improve their language ability in both their native language and their second language, but especially in English. A possible explanation for such a long-term impact on their own perception of their language ability is the timing of when these individuals found themselves in a brand new culture. The 1.5 generation co-researchers all moved to the United States during their sensitive adolescent period. The adolescent period is often seen as a period when one is developing their own self-concept and beginning to be acutely aware of differences and other's perceptions of the self (Baumeister, 1990; Garber, Weiss, & Shanley, 1993; Hansell & Mechanic, 1985). Research has shown that there is a notable increase in negative affect and self-awareness during adolescence (Hansell & Mechanic, 1985). During the adolescent period, one's focus is often on finding ways to fit in and belong. When attempts at fitting in and belonging fail due to language and cultural barriers, this failure significantly impacts the 1.5 generation's self-concept and perception during adolescence, and continues to impact the 1.5 generation individuals' self-concept after they become adults.

Another research question that this study sought to answer from the beginning is how native and English language engagement possibly impacts the 1.5 generation Asian American college students' perception of their ethnic identity. This study found that language engagement contributes significantly to the 1.5 generation individuals' ethnic

identity journey. The study confirmed previous research findings on the existence of the language critical period. Specifically, the 1.5 generation individuals struggled considerably with communication after their move to the United States, but even today, feel some level of uncertainty about their English and native language fluency. Additionally, for the 1.5 generation individuals, higher English proficiency does not necessarily translate to a decrease in their identification with their native ethnic group, as suggested by previous research (Kasinitz et al., 2008; Kiang, 2008). While the 1.5 generation individuals did go through a period of hiding their native cultures in order to fit in, all 1.5 generation co-researchers shared the eventual desire to improve not just their English language, but also their native language.

**Acculturation experiences.** Acculturation happens when an individual experiences a process of cultural adaptation as a result of relocating from one culture to a new host culture (Cheung, Chudek, & Heine, 2011). Immigrants to the United States undoubtedly experience acculturation upon their move and throughout their time in the new country due to being faced with different sets of values, attitudes, and beliefs that shape America's culture. The stress that arises during the acculturation process due to the conflict between the individual's native culture and the dominant mainstream culture is known as acculturative stress. While many researchers have looked at levels of acculturation in adult immigrant populations, research is still developing in understanding what the process of acculturation looks like for children and adolescents. The interviews with the 1.5 generation co-researchers as they reflect on their acculturation experiences immediately after their move and currently help paint a better picture of how the

acculturation process may look for immigrant children who move here during their adolescent years.

In alignment with research on acculturation and ethnic identity development, our co-researchers indicated that the first years were the most challenging. Upon their move, co-researchers and their families were quick to realize that life was different from the safe, comfortable, and happy life that was hoped for before their move. Current research supports that acculturation starts for children only when they are first able to recognize the cultural or ethnic differences between people (Chavez, Moran, Reid, & Lopez, 1997). Present research indicates that the recognition of differences relies on the child having a certain level of cognitive ability. The child has to have some basic understanding of ethnic identity, in which he or she can use the appropriate ethnic label to identify himself or herself; the child has to recognize that he or she participates in certain traditions and customs specific to an ethnic group; and additionally, the child has to be able to categorize others into appropriate groups (Chavez et al., 1997).

According to Festinger (1954), it is such categorization of others that allows children to make social comparisons between their own group's values and another's. For the child who belongs to an ethnic minority group, conflicts may arise when he or she does not identify with the perceivably different and "better" majority group. For the 1.5 generation immigrant youth, at an age where adolescents seek out belongingness by desiring to be like everyone else, differences are even more highlighted. As a result, it is not surprising for 1.5 generation adolescents to experience a high level of acculturative stress upon their move to the United States. Exploring the degree of acculturative stress that these 1.5 generation children experience in comparison to their first-generation

immigrant parents and future generation children may be an exciting direction in future research.

The model minority stereotype refers to a popular misconception that Asian Americans are significantly better at assimilating into the mainstream culture due to their hard work and values. As a result of this misconception, Asian immigrants are assumed to face minimal discrimination and have lower levels of acculturative stress (Singh, 2009). In instances when the model minority stereotype is internalized by the Asian immigrants themselves, when faced with experiences of racism and discrimination, Asian immigrants may have difficulty identifying the ways that racism and discrimination have affected them (Singh, 2009; Sue & Sue, 2003). Furthermore, the cultural notion of “saving face” may cause Asian immigrants to not speak out against these experiences of discrimination.

In alignment with past research on the impact of the internalization of the model minority stereotype, I noted in my field journals the tendency for 1.5 generation co-researchers to minimize the role of race in their interpretation of discriminatory, stereotyped, and prejudiced experiences. I noted a sense of fear in attributing race as a primary factor in their negative acculturation experiences. Further exploration into other possible reasons for these discomforts may shed light on the immigrant’s responses to positive and negative experiences of acculturation.

Within this theme of acculturation experiences, co-researchers noted an increase in intergenerational conflicts as they become more assimilated into the mainstream American culture. In the 1990s, Portes and Zhou developed their Segmented Assimilation Theory, which speculated different ways that immigrant children relate to

their cultures of origin and their mainstream community—dissonant, consonant, and selective acculturation (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Dissonant acculturation occurs when children master the language and mainstream cultural norms and disconnect from their culture of origin at a faster rate than their parents (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Dissonant acculturation is thought to lead to higher degree of conflicts between children and parents, with children having to confront racial discrimination and challenging work and school situations on their own without strong parental support (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Waters, Tran, Kasinitz, & Mollenkopf, 2010).

Consonant acculturation occurs when parents and children acculturate to the American culture and disconnect from ethnic origin culture at the same rate (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Consonant acculturation often leads to better parental support in facing discrimination experiences at school and work and fewer conflicts with parents (Waters et al., 2010).

Selective acculturation occurs when parents and children maintain healthy connections to both cultures (Waters et al., 2010), which often leads to biculturalism and the “preservation of parental authority, little or no intergenerational conflict, and fluent bilingualism among children” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 52). For the most part, the 1.5 generation co-researchers in this study experienced all the types of acculturation—dissonant, consonant, and selective—in various stages of their lives. The co-researchers agreed that dissonant acculturation is experienced at the beginning of their initial years of living in the United States. However, regardless of the type of acculturation they experienced with their parents, the 1.5 generation co-researchers did not discuss instances of more serious intergenerational confrontations with their parents until later on when



they entered high school and college. These confrontations typically are related to matters of peer socialization, with parents disagreeing with how their children are socializing with others. Hana, for example, shared the experience of being a teenager and having to translate for her parents constantly at parent-teacher conferences and other situations when she was still living at home. However, Hana shared that these minor annoyances did not escalate to full arguments and disagreements between herself and her parents. It was not until high school and college when Hana started to desire the more typical American young adult life, such as being able to date or attend parties or live with roommates, when the intergenerational conflict became more apparent. Similarly, another co-researcher, Lauren, maintained selective acculturation with parents while she lived at home with her family, experiencing minimal intergenerational conflicts with her parents; however, instances of disagreements, especially on the topics of socialization, increased upon entering college. The co-researchers' narratives of the escalation of instances of intergenerational conflict as soon as they entered young adulthood are not thoroughly explained by theories of acculturation that are present today.

The final research question this study sought to answer, the impact of positive and negative acculturation experiences on the 1.5 generation Asian American college students' perceptions of ethnic identity, was addressed in this section. The co-researchers shared positive and negative acculturation stories over the course of their years in the United States that are complicated by the adolescent need to fit in, escalating intergenerational conflicts with parents and family members on issues of socialization, and the internalization of the model minority stereotype and the notion of "saving face".

All of these above factors impacted the 1.5 generation Asian Americans' perception of their ethnic identity.

**Finding the self.** In becoming their present selves, 1.5 generation Asian American co-researchers go through periods of feeling the need to conceal certain aspects of themselves, having self-doubts and anxiety surrounding past and present relationships, and eventually recognizing the beauty of their culture and having pride in their ethnicity.

Recent sociological research on youth cultures, ethnicity, and immigration have questioned the traditional and static notions of ethnic identity. The newer models of ethnic identity emphasize “the fluid, situational, volitional and dynamic character of ethnic identification” (Nagel, 1994, p. 101). In the field of Asian American studies, researchers have also focused on a more fluid and dynamic framework of ethnic identity, demonstrating how individuals would negotiate identity through interactions within and outside of their communities (Kibria, 2000; Maira, 2002). It is now thought that Asian Americans can choose from “an array of pan-ethnic and nationality-based identities” (Nagel, 1994, p. 104). The 1.5 generation co-researchers explained the fluidity of ethnic identity as they spoke about their need to hide aspects of themselves even today, depending on whom they find themselves around. Such a chameleon effect should not be perceived as these individuals lacking a solid identity, but rather as an aspect of their true identity. Such fluidity in the perception of the self is in contrast to older cultural assimilation models that stress the notion of core and unchanging Asian values, cultural continuity, and the gradual linear change in the individual's adaptation to their new home (Thai, 1999; Zia, 2000). Furthermore, the need to hide certain aspects of the self in company of specific individuals may be related to identity development in general.

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development with its eight distinct stages, theorizes that one's identity is a result of one successfully resolving various social crises (Erikson, 1968). The 1.5 generation individual's needs to hide certain aspects of themselves may be a part of Erikson's fifth stage of Identity versus Role confusion, which emphasizes the individual's journey for a sense of self and personal identity, through the exploration of personal values, beliefs, and goals. (Erikson, 1968).

Acculturative stress has been associated with poor mental health outcomes such as depression and anxiety (Crockett et al., 2007; Wei et al., 2007), perceptions of marginality and isolation, increased psychosomatic symptoms, identity confusion, and poor health outcomes (Williams & Berry, 1991). Anxiety and depression are the most prevalent conditions affecting the emotional well-being of children today (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). In the United States, approximately 13% of children aged 9 to 17 experience symptoms of anxiety and 10–15% experience symptoms of depression (Perreira & Ornelas, 2011). Current research suggests that exposure to culture-related stressors and acculturation to the U.S. mainstream culture increases the risk of anxiety and depression among children of immigrants (Perreira & Ornelas, 2011). Research also suggests that adherence to one's ethnic culture, a sense of belonging to ethnic groups, and family relationship factors serve as protective factors against anxiety and depression among immigrant children (Perreira & Ornelas, 2011; Potochnick & Perreira, 2010). Based on these past research, assimilation to the mainstream culture increases the likelihood of depression and anxiety when it is not coupled with the retention of one's native culture, the healthy perception of ethnic

identity, and a strong sense of family support (Perreira & Ornelas, 2011; Potochnick & Perreira, 2010).

In regard to the 1.5 generation individuals who moved to the United States as adolescents with often limited family and parental support and an initial negative perception of their ethnic identities, there is a high chance that depression and anxiety may be even higher, though such studies do not exist to either confirm or disprove this hypothesis for the 1.5 generation Asian Americans. A study by Grunbaum and colleagues using the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data from 1991 to 1997 found that Asian and Pacific Islander youth were less likely than Hispanics and more likely than either non-Hispanic White or Black students to have suicidal ideations (Grunbaum, Lowry, Kann, & Pateman, 2000). However, the YRBS data does not include information on immigrant generations or their levels of acculturation. Other studies with specific data on the immigrant generation or acculturation have found that acculturative stress is positively associated with suicidal ideation; however, these studies again focus on Hispanic youth (Hovey, 1998; Hovey & King, 1996). Given the high level of acculturative stress that is present among the 1.5 generation individuals, at least in the beginning of their lives in the United States, it would be interesting to examine further what difference, if any, should exist between the generation groups.

While this present research does not explore enough the experiences of anxiety and depression among the 1.5 generation co-researchers, they did discuss their present experiences with anxiety and self-doubts currently as adults. Some co-researchers attributed their present challenges with self-doubt and anxiety to the early socialization traumas and the high amount of acculturative stress they experienced in their initial years

of being in the United States. A future research direction may be to examine further the correlation between early stressors and current mental well beings of the now adult 1.5 generation youth.

Kim's (2001) Asian American Identity Development (AAID) model identified five stages of the Asian American identity development: (1) ethnic awareness, (2) White identification, (3) awakening to social-political consciousness, (4) redirection to Asian American consciousness, and (5) incorporation. In all of the co-researchers interviewed, there is a present appreciation for their biculturalism and all co-researchers have in some way journeyed through Kim's (2001) stages in some way. In Kim's last stage of incorporation, individuals can differentiate between racist structures and institutions and individual people, and as a result, can connect with the dominant culture without losing their positive sense of racial identity. Within this stage of incorporation, one can blend one's Asian American identity with other parts of their identity, and race becomes only one part of their entire social identity. While not all co-researchers are at the same stage of their Asian American identity development, Kim's (2001) model of identity development does seem to apply to the 1.5 generation Asian American co-researchers I interviewed.

**Connecting with origin.** A Pew Research survey that examines immigration from Asia found that adult Asian immigrants, for the most part, do not regret their decision to move to the United States. A vast majority, 76% of those surveyed, agreed that they would choose to move to the United States again if given a chance to move anywhere else in the world (Pew Research Center, 2013). While the 1.5 generation Asian American co-researchers were children when they moved, they all expressed appreciation

for their parents' decision to bring their families to the United States. Until 2015, Jennifer's parents were still living in Vietnam. While Lauren has family members in the United States, the majority of her family continues to reside in the Philippines. Adam does not have any family members in the United States other than a distant aunt. Devan only has one uncle with whom the family resided at the beginning of their move to the United States. Similarly, Hana shared that she does not have family members in the United States other than her parents and brother.

All 1.5 generation co-researchers continue to have close family members living in their countries of origin. Traditional assimilation research would suggest that, for immigrants, exposure and adaptation to American society are expected to decrease the level of engagement and attachment to their native countries, because the greater level of engagement and attachment to the United States would decrease motivations to remain involved in their native countries. However, this traditional view of assimilation has been challenged by research on transnationalism, which suggests that continued involvement with one's country of origin is quite common among immigrants. This newer transnational perspective posits that immigrants can retain their attachment to their native countries, independent of their levels of attachment to the United States (Glick Schiller et al., 1995).

The transnational perspective seems to adequately capture the 1.5 generation Asian American co-researchers' continued connection with their countries of origin. Despite having moved here as children and adolescents, now that they are adults, all co-researchers admit a powerful connection to their native countries despite the years they have lived the United States and their continued assimilation into the United States

mainstream culture. To examine further the degree of continued attachment to their native country and what that attachment looks like for the 1.5 generation individuals as compared to the mostly first-generation immigrants that the transnational perspective is based upon would be fascinating future research.

Tatum (1999) found that ethnic-based organizations are crucial for minority students' psychosocial growth, as connecting with similar others is a significant step in the process of identity development. Furthermore, a lack of participation in on-campus organizations causes minority students to feel social-cultural alienation, which can negatively impact their social-emotional well-being and retention (Loo & Rolison, 1986). Carr and Chittum (1979) found in their study that all students, regardless of racial or ethnic backgrounds, feel isolated when they do not have ties to an organization of their own and when there is little encouragement to be involved in campus life.

The 1.5 generation Asian American co-researchers had somewhat mixed feelings about joining ethnic-based organizations in college. While all co-researchers were involved in some on-campus organizations, only the female co-researchers that were interviewed shared the importance of joining ethnic-based organizations. Jennifer saw her involvement in ethnic-based organizations as an opportunity to bring cultural awareness to her White majority campus as well as to provide an avenue for ethnic-minority students to build their ethnic pride. Lauren saw her involvement as a way to give back to her community through volunteering in tutoring ESL students and raising money for disadvantaged children in Asian countries. According to Hana, it was not until she joined her Asian-interest sorority that she felt like she belonged, for the first time since moving to the United States. In support of these co-researchers' feelings on the positive

advantages of joining ethnic-based organizations, proponents of ethnic-based group involvement have asserted that ethnic minority students need a safe space for social comfort, identity development, and community advocacy (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Trevino, 1992).

During our interviews, two male co-researchers, Adam and Devan, shared that they were not involved in any ethnic-based groups. For Devan, he feels that he was able to network through other avenues, such as his classes and professional organizations. Adam, on the other hand, feels uneasy about surrounding himself with members of exclusively one ethnic group. Wang, Sedlacek, & Westbrook (1992) conducted a study in one large public university in Maryland examining Asian American college students' participation and attitudes toward campus organizations. While they did not find a significant difference between the participation rates of male and female college students in ethnic-based organizations, the study found that male college students were more likely to agree that the university was more supportive of minority students than were the women college students. While there is a difference in the sentiments regarding involvement in the ethnic-based organization between the male and female co-researchers interviewed for this study, our phenomenological study was unable to explain the reason for the difference between our male and female co-researchers in this regard.

### **Implications for Practice and Research**

#### **Implications for Practice**

In general, the experiences of the 1.5 generation youth remain largely unknown in secondary and postsecondary institutions. It is vital to educate our communities that these students exist among us. Professionals that work directly with children need to create a



greater awareness of the issues that 1.5 generation students face while in school. This research provides human service professionals such as teachers, counselors, social workers, psychologists, and others that work directly with immigrant youth with a better understanding of the ethnic identity journey of 1.5 generation Asian American students. Additionally, the study also aimed to enhance these professionals' knowledge of the possible short- and long-term psychosocial impacts of immigration for all 1.5 generation youth.

Effective programming at school and college campuses should assist 1.5 generation students from feeling alienated or rejected and help develop a sense of community and belongingness with their school community. Additionally, in working with 1.5 generation students, it is essential to explore the need to work with family members as well. As can be seen in the study, family members play a vital role in the immigration and assimilation of 1.5 generation Asian American students into our schools and communities. Educating the 1.5 generation individuals' parents and families about the American education system, if they are not knowledgeable about their resources, supports, options, and opportunities will empower parents with the knowledge and confidence to help or seek help for themselves and their children.

The findings of this study could assist secondary and postsecondary administrators to examine the policies, procedures, and practices that cater to the needs of all 1.5 generation immigrant children, not just the Asian American population. New programs can be designed and developed to support not only the academic success but also the social and emotional success of this student population. The 1.5 generation co-researchers interviewed discussed the minimal supervision received at home initially,

financial struggles, parents who are unable to guide them through psychosocial challenges, challenges with self-doubt and confidence that last into adulthood, and language and writing difficulties, to mention only a few of those shared. With this new awareness, schools can create programs that consider the needs of these 1.5 generation students. With this new knowledge, schools can be more aware and sensitive to the real needs of all immigrant children, including the 1.5 generation Asian students.

The 1.5 generation Asian Americans represent a bicultural ethnic group that may present human service professionals with a unique challenge. Immigration is a life-changing cultural transition for those who undergo it. The 1.5 generation individuals go through the immigration process at a difficult identity-finding period in their life, as adolescents. The desire for families to emigrate to the United States in pursuit of the American Dream comes with it a variety of challenges that have long-term mental health implications for parents and children. Pre-immigration circumstances, pre-immigration hopes and dreams, and post-immigration reality will affect how immigrant families experience this process, as well as unique individual, family, and cultural factors.

Without taking into consideration these special factors, human service professionals who work directly with immigrants and their families may fail to understand the unique needs of the clients they are working with, or even worse, they may pathologize their experiences, perpetuating stereotypes and discrimination, or contribute to feelings of inadequacy and alienation. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to helping those who work directly with immigrant youth, including the 1.5 generation Asian Americans, realize that to understand the needs of immigrant youth, one

must understand the complexity of the contexts within which they learn, socialize, play, seek help, and discover their identity.

Additionally, the 1.5 generation Asian American individuals' desire to fit in and not stand out as foreigners, in combination with the possible internalization of the model minority stereotype and the cultural importance of saving face, may mean that these individuals are downplaying some of their real acculturative challenges. They may also have greater difficulty openly discussing their stressors. Based on the co-researchers' narratives, it is possible for Asian American 1.5 generation clients to be hesitant to talk about their emotional distress and other adjustment challenges because they fear being embarrassed, being perceived by others as weak, or being seen as different and foreign.

Furthermore, many 1.5 generation Asian Americans are likely to experience an internal values conflict. Such inner conflict may cause significant emotional turmoil that may not be readily accessed by conscious awareness. Additionally, the 1.5 generation clients may have very different internal values than those that they outwardly display. Human service professionals need to be aware of the similarities among individuals' experiences, but always mindful of the significant within-group differences regarding individual identity journeys. Human service professionals have the responsibility to set aside preconceived notions, be open to understanding the individual's unique experience, and facilitate the individual's process of making meaning out of their bicultural and transnational identity.

### **Implications for Research**

The present study was intentional about using a phenomenological qualitative research approach to study the 1.5 generation ethnic identity journey. Qualitative research

can showcase the richness and depth of the data that it yields. Qualitative research is better at uncovering individuals' internal processes and implicit understandings of their cultural experiences. Interviews, which are the primary data gathering tool used in qualitative research, allow more room for responses that contain essential pieces of information that would otherwise be lost. Moreover, the human experiences, such as immigration, assimilation, and identity discovery, are dynamic and multifaceted processes.

Today, there is a growing body of qualitative research addressing the 1.5 generation as well as the Asian American experience, though there remains a continued need for even more qualitative study of this area. However, as great as qualitative studies are at capturing the human experiences, this study also demonstrates that there is room in the literature for using the quantitative methodology for future studies. One cannot neglect the critical power that quantitative studies have in allowing for generalizability across larger populations and more diverse groups of individuals. Quantitative studies also allow for greater objectivity and accuracy of the findings. Quantitative studies employ more stringent procedures to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Kruger (2003) stated that quantitative studies allow us to summarize vast sources of information and promote comparisons across categories and over time. Recommendations for future research are provided in the following section.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

While the information gathered from the 1.5 generation Asian American college students for this study offered insight into the experiences of the 1.5 generation Asian

American ethnic identity journey, it also highlighted areas that require further examination for future studies.

### **Expanding the Study**

Continuing with the phenomenological research design, this study could be expanded by interviewing different 1.5 generation co-researchers. A sample of 1.5 generation college students from a variety of backgrounds, not only those from Asian countries, could be interviewed to discover whether their experiences of identity finding are similar or different from what we know about the 1.5 generation Asian American stories in this study. Additionally, this study interviewed college students and recent college graduates in the state of Colorado only. Interviewing college students on different campuses and in different locations in the United States with varying degrees of ethnic makeup may reveal similar or different pathways to discovering their ethnic identities. In the present research, there are unique differences in the experiences between the male and female co-researchers. In expanding this study, one may seek to interview more male co-researchers to determine whether the difference in this study's findings between the male and female co-researchers merely is happenstance or may be attributed to a genuine difference in how men and women experience their identity-seeking journey.

### **Redirecting the Research Questions**

Ideas for future research may include: exploring the perception of language ability of the 1.5 generation Asian Americans; examining parental involvement in education for the 1.5 generation students and the possible academic and psychosocial impact of this different type of parental educational involvement; breaking down the adolescent period and the timing of immigration on long-term mental health outcomes for 1.5 generation

immigrant youth; exploring possible initial post-immigration trauma for 1.5 generation individuals; examining the degree of acculturative stress among first-generation, 1.5 generation, and second-generation immigrants; and exploring whether gender differences exist in the way male 1.5 generation immigrants view their acculturative experiences versus how female 1.5 generation immigrants view their acculturative experiences.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This research study utilized a phenomenological qualitative research approach for its ability to provide vibrant and colorful narratives of the co-researchers' lived experiences. As a result, this study relies on the co-researchers' retrospective accounts of their experiences. Memory is always subject to error and bias and profoundly influenced by new experiences. Additionally, the co-researchers' perspectives and stories are likely impacted by many factors, such as their relationships with their family members and friends, their level of comfort with the interviewer, their state of mind at the time of the interview, and many other factors. Furthermore, co-researchers must be able to articulate their thoughts and feelings about the experiences being studied; this requirement may be burdensome due to many factors, such as language, cognitive ability, embarrassment or shame, and other factors.

The analysis of this phenomenological qualitative research study relied on the diligence and the primary researcher's familiarity with the Moustakas (1994) qualitative data analysis procedure. The nature of phenomenological research required me to be able to interpret and engage in phenomenological reduction to reduce biases, assumptions, and preconceived notions about the phenomenon. Additionally, the data gathering and analysis were time-consuming and laborious.

This study was also limited by the group of 1.5 generation Asian American individuals interviewed; findings may not necessarily apply to another group of 1.5 generation Asian Americans. This research study employed convenience sampling, which relies on selecting co-researchers based on who is most easily accessible and readily available. Due to the use of convenience sampling, there were fewer male than female co-researchers. Given that the male perspective represented a somewhat minority voice among the co-researchers, the limited number of co-researchers, and the qualitative nature of this study, we were not able to compare and contrast the experiences of the women with those of the men. Additionally, this present study was limited in its range of co-researchers from different Asian countries. Co-researchers represented five countries only: The Philippines, China, South Korea, India, and Vietnam. The Asian continent consists of so many countries with very diverse cultures, religions, and values; such heterogeneity may have an impact on the ethnic identity journeys of individuals from the different Asian ethnic groups.

### **Summary**

Despite a growing number of studies on Asian American youth, research into the experiences of young Asian Americans remain limited in most studies of youth cultures within psychology, sociology, and cultural studies. One reason for this overall shortcoming is rooted in social science research that is historically focused predominantly on deviant, problem, or troubled youths. The misguided model minority stereotype myth has indirectly contributed to the invisibility of Asian American youth in today's literature. Furthermore, past studies on Asian American youth too often would treat this category as homogenous, while the reality is that Asian Americans comprise a diverse,

multifaceted group. In response to this gap in the research literature, I focused on the experiences of one particular group of Asian American youth, the 1.5 generation Asian American journey to discovering their ethnic identity.



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**APPENDIX A**  
**SAMPLE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

This interview guide is intended as a list of possible questions and follow up questions to ask during the interview. Questions have been grouped according to the topic.

**Introduction script:** Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. We will be talking about your experiences as a 1.5 Generation Asian American while in college. As you indicated, you moved here in the (grade) at the age of (age) from (country of origin). During this interview, I would like you to reflect on your experiences while living with your family and now (or before) as you are living on your own in college. We will talk about the communities that you grew up in, the communities that you are/were a part of in college, and the communities that you are a part of now, your experiences with English and your native language, the positive and negative experiences you have had as an Asian American, and other factors that make you truly you.

**Family and Home Communities:**

- Tell me about when your family came to the U.S.
  - *Possible follow up questions:*
  - What is your parents' educational background? What do they do for work in the US?
  - Do you have extended family in the U.S.?
- Describe the city/town in which you grew up?
  - What was the Asian community like where you grew up? What feelings did you have about living in your community?
  - How were you connected to any Asian or AAPA community?

- How do your parents identify themselves racially or ethnically?
  - What were your family's cultural practices and traditions?
- How did you discuss issues of race or racism with your family?
- How were your parents/family involved in your academic preparation before coming to college? In what ways are your parents/family currently involved in or a part of your education?

**Socio-cultural factors:**

- What does being an “American” mean to you?
- What does being an “Asian American” mean to you?
- What does fitting in mean to you?
  - What are your experiences with fitting in with peers?
- How do you act around different groups of friends (e.g., other Asians?)
- Describe the relationships you have with others in your community
  - With others of the same ethnicity.
- What are your feelings around your ethnic group's recognition in this country?
- What values and customs have you incorporated from the American culture?
- What values and customs have you maintained from your native culture?

**Institutional factors:**

- Describe the cultural climate at your current/past college institution
  - How does the culture and climate at your institution compare to your high school or previous schools?
- Tell me about your friends in college
  - Who are/were the people you feel most comfortable with?

- Talk about the activities you are/were involved in
  - Describe any involvement in with non-ethnic-based activities, such as participation in extracurricular activities, fraternities/sororities, informal peer groups?
  - Describe any experiences or activities, if any, on campus you feel are related to your race or ethnicity?
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your social experiences, both ethnic and non-ethnic, on campus?
- How has your racial/ethnic identity changed? When starting college? During college? After college (if applicable)?
- How has your racial/ethnic identity influenced your college experience?
  - Before college, in what ways did your cultural values and beliefs affect your high school experiences?
- How have you been stereotyped?
  - Describe a situation in detail in which you were stereotyped.
- How have you experienced discrimination because of your race or ethnicity?
  - Describe a situation in detail in which you were discriminated against.
- What are your experiences with professors?
  - What are your experiences with classmates?
  - How do your experiences differ between non-Asian and Asian professors?
- What types of resources would like to see offered to 1.5 Generation students in college?

### **Language factors**

- How do you feel about your spoken English?
  - How have you tried to improve your English?
- How do you feel about your native language?
  - How have you tried to maintain your native language?
  - How do you feel about your fluency in your native language?
- How do you feel about your academic English?
- In what way has your ability to speak in your native language shaped your ethnic identity?
- Tell me about the language you feel most comfortable communicating?
  - Describe the contexts that you feel most comfortable communicating in English or your native language?

### **Individual factors:**

- How do you self-identify? How does this change depending on context?
  - In what other ways have you racially/ethnically identified yourself while in college and high school?
- How do you identify with your ethnic group?
- How do you feel about your ethnic cultural background?
- How do you think others perceive of your identity? (Other Asians? White Americans? People of color?)
- How do you perceive your sense of belongingness?
- In what ways have you experienced personal stress from feeling different from dominant American culture?

- How do perceive your identification with your ethnic group to be in the future?

**Concluding Remarks:** Thank you for taking the time to talk to me. I know that this topic may not be the easiest to discuss at length. If you feel that our conversation has given you severe discomfort, please let me know so that I can direct you to appropriate resources and individuals. I will be contacting you in one week to allow you the opportunity to clarify certain parts of this conversation.



**APPENDIX B**

**BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE**

**BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is/was your school major(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do/ Did you live on- or off-campus? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your mother's highest level of education? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your father's highest level of education? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Where were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What year did you come to the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Grade and age at the time of move to the U.S. \_\_\_\_\_
9. In what languages do you consider yourself fluent? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How often do you travel back to your native country? \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C**  
**RECRUITMENT LETTER**

<<Date>>

<<Name of potential co-researcher or student group>>

<<Address>>

<<City, State, Zip>>

Re: **The Ethnic Identity Journey of 1.5 Generation Asian American College Students –**

**Nadia Benyamin**

Dear <<insert name of co-researcher or student group>>:

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study about the ethnic identity journey of 1.5 Generation Asian American college students. This study is conducted by myself, Nadia Benyamin, at the University of Northern Colorado. A 1.5 Generation individual is an individual currently living in the United States who migrated to the country between the ages of 6 to 13 and started formal education in their native country before their move. I am specifically seeking individuals belonging to one of the following Asian subgroups: Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese. The study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How do 1.5 generation Asian American college students currently navigate their native and American cultures in college? (2) How has ethnic identity perception changed since starting college? (3) In what possible ways does native language and English language engagement impact perceptions of ethnic identity, and, lastly, (4) in what possible ways do positive and negative acculturation experiences in college impact perceptions of ethnic identity?

Asian Americans who are at least 18 years old and currently enrolled or have completed a 2- or 4-year college within the state of Colorado, currently living on their own away from parents and families, attended school in their native country for at least 1 year prior to their move to the U.S.,

identify as 1.5 Generation from one of the following countries: China, India, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam, and are able and willing to participate in an in-depth interview conducted in English to discuss their ethnic identity journey are encouraged to take part in this study. Interviews will be between 60 to 90 minutes at a mutually agreed upon location that can guarantee privacy and security. In some instances, where co-researchers are outside of driving distance from Denver, Colorado, interviews can also be mediated by technology (i.e., via Skype and FaceTime video calls). All interviews will be audio recorded. Information will be kept in a secure location. The risks inherent in this study are no greater than those normally encountered in everyday life. However, the revelation and sharing of sensitive information about past personal experience during these interviews may pose some emotional discomfort among co-researchers. Although there will be no direct benefits, co-researchers' responses will promote further understanding in this area. Agreement to be contacted or a request for more information does not obligate you to participate in this study. Participation is always voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

If you have questions or wish to participate, please contact Nadia Benyamin at [Nadia.Benyamin@gmail.com](mailto:Nadia.Benyamin@gmail.com) or 832-878-8484. This study has received approval from The University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board (IRB# 884261-2).

Thank you for considering this research opportunity. Please feel free to pass this **letter/email** to individuals who may be interested in participating.

Sincerely,

Nadia Benyamin

**APPENDIX D**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**



*Institutional Review Board*

DATE: May 17, 2017  
 TO: Nadia Benyamin, B.S., M.Ed  
 FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [884261-3] The Ethnic Identity Journey of 1.5 Generation Asian American College Students  
 SUBMISSION TYPE: Continuing Review/Progress Report

ACTION: APPROVED  
 APPROVAL DATE: May 17, 2017  
 EXPIRATION DATE: May 17, 2018  
 REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Continuing Review/Progress Report materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB has APPROVED your submission. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations. Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of May 17, 2018.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or [Sherry.May@unco.edu](mailto:Sherry.May@unco.edu). Please

include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

**Hello Nadia,**

**Thank you for your application for Continuation. Your application is approved and good luck with your research.**

**Sincerely,**

**Nancy White, PhD, IRB Co-Chair**

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.



**APPENDIX E**  
**CONSENT FORMS**



## CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN CO-RESEARCHERS IN RESEARCH FOR FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW

University of Northern Colorado

<b>Study:</b> The Ethnic Identity Journey Of 1.5 Generation Asian American College Students
<b>Researcher:</b> Nadia Benyamin, Student in School Psychology Ph.D. Program <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:Nadia.Benyamin@unco.edu">Nadia.Benyamin@unco.edu</a> <b>Phone:</b> (832) 878-8484
<b>Research Advisor:</b> Dr. Michelle Athanasiou <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:Michelle.Athanasiou@unco.edu">Michelle.Athanasiou@unco.edu</a> <b>Phone:</b> (970) 351-2356

### **To Qualify for the Study:**

If all of the following apply to you, I would be interested in hearing about your experience:

1. You were born in any one of the following Asian countries: China, India, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam and migrated to the US between the ages of 6 to 12.
2. You are at least 18 years of age
3. You are/were a traditional student enrolled in a 2- or 4-year college within the state of Colorado
4. You attended school in your native country for at least 1 year prior to your move to the U.S.
5. You are currently living independently from parents
6. You are able and willing to participate in an in-depth interview and follow-up interview to discuss your ethnic identity journey
7. You do not identify as a refugee. Yourself or parents/guardians made an informed, voluntary decision to immigrate to the U.S.

### **Purpose and Study:**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study is to explore the ethnic identity journey of the 1.5 generation Asian American college students.

You will be asked to participate in an interview, the main interview and a possible follow-up interview. The main interview will last between 60 – 90 minutes. During this

(initial here) \_\_\_\_\_ Page 1 of 2

time, you will be asked a variety of questions related to your experiences as a 1.5 generation college student in the United States. The questions will cover a broad range of topics from your family, home, and college communities, past and present school experiences, friendship/relationship development and preferences, language, your sense of belongingness, and other topics. The possible follow-up interview may last approximately 30 minutes, and its purpose is to allow you to clarify, omit, expand upon topics that were previously discussed during the main interview.

The researcher will store audio recordings on an encrypted laptop and digital voice recorder, which will be securely kept in a locked file cabinet. All recordings will be deleted following the completion of this study. Both face-to-face and Skype interviews will take place in a confidential and mutually agreed upon location to facilitate trust, privacy, and security. Co-researchers will be given a pseudonym to avoid any linking to identifying information. By signing this consent form, you also agree to have the interview audio-recorded. For interviews conducted via Skype, interviews will also be video recorded.

Risks related to participation are minimal. It is possible that this process may evoke feelings or thoughts of distress and anxiety while co-researchers share past personal experiences. If the interview process results in any emotional discomfort, you will be directed to appropriate mental health services as necessary. Given that I am a mental health professional; I am legally required to report all incidences of suspected or confirmed child abuse or neglect to the applicable authorities. If I suspect child abuse, I will inform you that we will be reporting before making the report.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research co-researcher, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910

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 Co-researcher's Signature

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 Date

---

 Researcher's Signature

---

 Date



## CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN CO-RESEARCHERS IN RESEARCH FOR INTERVIEW MEDIATED BY TECHNOLOGY

University of Northern Colorado

<b>Study:</b> The Ethnic Identity Journey Of 1.5 Generation Asian American College Students
<b>Researcher:</b> Nadia Benyamin, Student in School Psychology Ph.D. Program <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:Nadia.Benyamin@unco.edu">Nadia.Benyamin@unco.edu</a> <b>Phone:</b> (832) 878-8484
<b>Research Advisor:</b> Dr. Michelle Athanasiou <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:Michelle.Athanasiou@unco.edu">Michelle.Athanasiou@unco.edu</a> <b>Phone:</b> (970) 351-2356

### **To Qualify for the Study:**

If all of the following apply to you, I would be interested in hearing about your experience:

8. You were born in any one of the following Asian countries: China, India, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam and migrated to the US between the ages of 6 to 12.
9. You are at least 18 years of age
10. You are/were a traditional student enrolled in a 2- or 4-year college within the state of Colorado
11. You attended school in your native country for at least 1 year prior to your move to the U.S.
12. You are currently living independently from parents
13. You are able and willing to participate in an in-depth interview and follow-up interview to discuss your ethnic identity journey
14. You do not identify as a refugee. Yourself or parents/guardians made an informed, voluntary decision to immigrate to the U.S.

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The researcher will store audio recordings on an encrypted laptop and digital voice recorder, which will be securely kept in a locked file cabinet. All recordings will be deleted following the completion of this study. Both face-to-face and Skype interviews will take place in a confidential and mutually agreed upon location to facilitate trust, privacy, and security. Co-researchers will be given a pseudonym to avoid any linking to identifying information. By signing this consent form, you also agree to have the interview audio recorded. For interviews conducted via Skype, interviews will be video recorded.

Risks related to participation are minimal. It is possible that this process may evoke feelings or thoughts of distress and anxiety while co-researchers share past personal experiences. If the interview process results in any emotional discomfort, you will be directed to appropriate mental health services as necessary. Given that I am a mental health professional; I am legally required to report all incidences of suspected or confirmed child abuse or neglect to the applicable authorities. If I suspect child abuse, I will inform you that we will be reporting before making the report.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please accept my scheduled Skype or FaceTime call if you would like to participate in this research. Accepting my call indicates consent to participate in the study. You may keep this form for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research co-researcher, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910