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Multicultural Parenting in South Korea

한국의 다문화 가정육아

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ABSTRACT

Multiculturalism accelerated through globalization and international marriages are a current on-going phenomenon. South Korea, which is traditionally regarded as an ethnically homogeneous nation through out the history, also cannot escape from the rapid progress of globalization and gradually becoming a multicultural society. Since the growing number of “mixed children” of Koreans and other nationalities increased substantially in the past few years, and it is believed that the way of parenting create direct impacts on the children; this empirical study is going to explore and describe about how the intercultural couples practice parenting on their “mixed children” in the Korean context. A qualitative approach was used while utilizing semi-structured interviews with 10 intercultural parents to obtain an overview picture of how do they bring up their mixed children along with challenges and issues faced by the intercultural families. Content analysis was carried out to spot out the major themes of childrearing experiences included culture, education and language. And the key challenges that they are facing while carrying out childrearing practices in Korea involved language, cultural differences and discrimination issues. Further insights and recommendations were provided for future intercultural parents and practitioners who work with “mixed children” in Korea to lead to more culturally sensitive place to live in.

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Key words: parenting, intercultural parenting, multiculturalism, mixed children

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Multiculturalism in South Korea

In the rapid process of globalization, one of the salient aspects is mobility of people, that migration of people to various countries to work or live. South Korea (henceforth Korea), which is a country traditionally regarded as a racially and ethnically homogeneous nation with one language though out history, has begun to transform over the last two decades. Multiculturalism has accelerated through globalization that Korea is rapidly transforming itself from a “pure-blood”, ethnocentric society into a “mixed-blood”, multicultural society, as the number of foreign nationals residing in Korea has reached over two percent of the total population through international marriage migration and labor migration. According to the Korea Immigration Service, the number of foreigners in Korea has increased from 49,506 to 1,489,632 in 1990 to 2013.

Initially, Korea was long being characterized as a country of emigration instead of immigration as we could easily found different research about Korean immigrants. However, actually since the late 1980s-early 1990s, foreign workers have been systematically imported to Korea, especially unskilled foreign labors and undocumented labors. As Koreans began to discharge away from the 3-D jobs, which are difficult, dirty and dangerous manual jobs, the Government began to promote labor-importing schemes in the early 1990s to regulate the influx of foreign workers. (Kim, 2009) Then immigrants through marriage that began to arrive in the early 1990s and increasing become a visible

population in Korea. The number of foreigners in Korea will probably increase as the anticipated bride shortage will draw in more foreigners to Korea and foster a multicultural society.

Most of the permanent settlers are immigrants by marriage with Korean citizens since there is a growing number of a woman from Asia and other countries migrated to South Korea through arranged marriages by broker marriage agencies since the late 1990s as foreign brides for Korean men. Even though the increase of international marriages may be seen to be a globalized strategy to deal with the problem of social reproduction of Korea, the dramatic increase in international marriage migration and labor migration has challenged the long-held image of the homogeneity of Korea. This further creates a huge challenge for adaptation and integration of not only the foreign brides but also their bi-ethnic children into the local Korean society that have homogeneous national identity before.

1.2 International marriages in South Korea

Despite the large amount of foreign workers, foreign brides who have come from different countries through international marriage are the largest group of foreign immigrants that contribute to the growing multicultural society in Korea. (Yoon & Yim, 2004, Kim, 2006) As the number of foreign migrant workers increases in Korea, it naturally led to an increase in international marriages. Before the 1990s international

marriages among Koreans with foreigners were not prevalent. However, since the late 1980s, international marriage appeared as a solution to the so-called “rural bachelor’s marriage problem” and the prevalence of international marriages continue to increase since then, especially after 1999, which commercial matchmaking businesses were deregulated by the government. In 1990, the amount of international marriages in Korea only consisted of 619; while in 2009, Kim, Yang and Lee (2009) recognized that there were about 167,090 international families that is approximately 75% of these families consisted of a Korean husband and a foreign bride and 10% of the total number of marriages in Korea were international marriages in 2010. In the latest statistics from Statistics Korea, in 2012, there were 28325 international marriages in Korea, which 20673 couples consisted of foreign brides.

The National statistical data shows a few properties of the international marriages in Korea; for instance, marriage registration data shows that a larger proportion among the marriages is remarriages. And international marriage is particularly popular between two types of Korean men, never-married Korean men in rural areas and divorced men of low socio-economic status in urban areas. (Lee, Seol & Cho, 2006) Furthermore, the ethnicity of foreign brides were initially predominant by Korean Chinese, who are Chinese of Korean descent, however, as the commercial matchmaking industry flourished, the diversity of ethnicity of foreign brides increased to China, Vietnam, Mongolia, and other countries in Asia.

As there are a vast majority of foreign brides come from developing countries, mainly from different countries among Asia, it seems that there are different push and pull factors that lead to the increasing cross-border marriages in Korea. The rapid economic advancement and expansion of Korea in the 1990s was likely to be one of the pull factor that women from the developing countries would like to migrate to Korea as they could pursue better economic opportunities (Seol, 2006; Choi, 2008). The report of the Survey of Foreign Wives conducted in 2005 further supported that economic reason is one of the primary motives for international marriages for foreign brides in Korea. (Seol et al., 2005)

On the other hand, the demand for foreign brides appears to be greater in certain segments of the population as there is a disproportionate sex ratio in the rural areas that lead to a shortage of available brides that Korean rural men could get married with (Seol, 2006). Since the rapid industrialization and urbanization, there were a huge amount of young women migrated from the rural areas to urban cities for better education and job opportunities, and the migration continue through the 1980s where the service sector expanded further in Korea. However, the majority of the men who remained in the rural areas to continue their family-owned farming or agricultural related work. This led to the sex imbalance in the rural area that rural men have difficulty in finding their brides for marriage in Korea. Therefore they began to look for a foreign bride outside Korea, thus raised international marriages. Furthermore, the totally fertility rate in Korea also dropped dramatically from 6.1 in 1960 to about 1.24 in 2013; with the uneven sex ratio with more

men to women in their suitable marrying age due to the preference for boys and late marriages among the younger generations etc. (Chung et al., 2007), led Korea to face a shortage of brides and suggested an increase in international marriage too.

In addition, one of the direct factors that promotes the mounting international marriages is the institutionalization of marriage brokers agencies who do the matching of the foreign brides with the Korean men (Han and Seol, 2006). These marriage broker agencies grew rapidly as they require little initial investment and they often specialized in certain countries or regions in a country to do the matching. Therefore, as these marriage broker agencies rapidly expand, international marriages escalate. But certainly there are also increasing international marriages that are not arranged marriages through the marriage broker agencies too.

All of the international marriages bring upon numerous multicultural families in Korea. While defining multicultural families in Korea, it is usually refer to families including two or more different cultures that are bring together through international marriages between Korean and non-Korean. Multicultural children are generally including both immigrant children with both parents are non-Korean and those with one Korean parent and one non-Korean parent who live within two or more different cultures. As the multicultural families are becoming one of the fast growing segments of the Korean population, the multicultural children, which are also called “mixed children” population is escalating vigorously reported by the Korean Ministry of Education, Science and

Technology (2012) that there are 46954 multicultural students in 2012. With the growing number of multicultural families, it generates concerns on the way of parenting and education of the children of these multicultural families.

1.3 The aim and objectives of the study

As international relationships and marriages are a current and contemporary phenomenon in Korea supported by statistics, there is a growing number of “mixed” children among Koreans and other nationalities too. Since the portion of these “mixed children” is going to increase substantially in the near future among the Korean population, and it is believed that the way of parenting create direct impacts on the well-being of the children, this empirical study is going to explore and describe about how the intercultural couples practice parenting on their “mixed children” in the Korean context, which is long believed to be ethnically homogeneous. Especially, it is believed that if understanding more about the overview picture and perspectives of parenting, along with parenting challenges and issues faced by them, will provide future intercultural parents and practitioners that work with “mixed children” with insights or guidance to lead to more culturally sensitive care and services.

Since the history of the growing numbers of international marriages in Korea is not long, there are limited existing literatures on intercultural parenting in Korea. Most of the past researches on parenting models related to Koreans are mostly consider Koreans as

immigrants of the Western countries. Therefore, the main construct of this research is going to investigate and explore the perspectives of the intercultural parents who parent their “mixed children” in the South Korea context. Moreover, in this study, intercultural parents are defined as international couples (at least one is Korean) that have different sociocultural heritages with a different culture of origin as they were born and raised in a different country from their spouse. As culture is strongly affecting the approach of parenting, the study aims to add to the existing literature not only on the socio-contextual impacts of Korea that might interact and affect the parenting orientation of the parents and lead to modifications, also the parenting approaches of intercultural parents from their first person experiences too.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Parenting

Parents always play a significant and critical role of the development of children, especially in the development of children's skills, values and relationship building. As psychologist John Bowlby (1951) first proposed the theory of attachment suggested that the initial attachment or bond of the caregiver, which should be the parents of the children, will create tremendous impact that continues through out the life of the child, especially if maternal deprivation happens, there will have long term impact to the child. Mary Ainsworth (1970) further developed Bowlby's attachment theory and did the well-known "Strange Situation" study, which extend the understanding on the profound effects of attachment on later behaviors. The study suggested that attachment to the primary caregivers not only serve to improve the child's chances of survival, but it was revealed that the caregivers who are responsive to the child's needs would help the child to develop a sense of security base for the child to explore the world and is predictably having successful social relationships in the later life.

Since the attachment and relationship with parents could create significant impact to children's lives, there are different theories of parenting proposed. Researchers investigated the relationship of parenting and the development of children and grouped

the consistent patterns of how parents interact with their children as different parenting styles (Baumrind, 1991; Becker, 1964; Schaefer, 1965). For instance, Schaefer (1956) proposed four parenting styles that derived from two dimensions including love versus hostility and autonomy versus control. But the majority of past parenting researches used the parenting model introduced by Baumrind (1971). Baumrind's parenting model considers mainly two-dimensional parenting factors, which are warmth and control, and categorized the parenting styles as authoritarian, permissive and authoritative.

Authoritarian parents are considered as high in control and low in warmth toward their children. They impose strict and excessive rules to their children and demand obedience from their children. And they usually enforce discipline through punishment. On the other hand, permissive parents are considered high in warmth and low in control. They provide autonomy granting to the children with limit supervision, while providing the child with a lot of freedom to make their own decisions. Authoritative parenting style lies between the authoritarian and the permissive parenting style. Authoritative parents tend to be high in both control and warmth. They take a firm but warm approach to educate their children based on power over the child by using reasonable explanations and understandable rewards or punishments. And children of authoritative parenting are positively associated with better psychological adjustments, more secure and independent among the three parenting styles.

2.2 Parenting and culture

Culture is not in-born, it is learned and inter-generationally transmitted values, beliefs, norms and way of living from family, school, and other social environment such as the media provides powerful influences. Parents, in particular, play a significant role in the transfer of cultural values to their children. And certainly, on the other way round, culture guides the construction of parenting too (Harkness & Super, 2002). Approaches to child rearing are influenced by culture and heritage as culture provides a significant frame of references that define meanings, values and actions that should be practiced (Kim, 2001). Wise and da Silva (2007) agreed that each family has their own set of cultural norms and practices that associated with how to raise their children referring to the values, practices and interactions regarding their cultural group. Therefore, as Harkness and Super (2002) suggested, each culture holds collective beliefs about the development and behaviors including expected social and emotional development of children. Therefore, since the child rearing practices are thought to be derived from parents' cultural experiences or their cultural reference group that constructed by culturally embedded beliefs and expectations, parents who were brought up from different cultures are expected to carry out diverse parenting practices that fit the norms of the cultural context. Furthermore, researches suggested that there is great differences in parenting practices between Asian and Western countries due to the differences in social values, as Asian mainly practices authoritarian parenting method and authoritative parenting is practicing in the West.

In particular, researchers suggested that it is expected to have distinct parenting approaches between collectivists and individualist societies. Collectivist societies are normally defined as societies that consist of closely interacting individuals who develop a strong in-group identity and have a sense of community (Triandis, 1994). For instance, Koreans tend to develop a strong collective community and view the in-group as an extension of the self (Triandis, 1994). And this collectivistic society reflected the fundamental philosophy of Confucianism. In most of the Asian countries, their cultural heritage follows the philosophy of Confucianism, such as the hierarchical relationships; stress the importance of family and obedience to authority. For example, the Confucianism philosophy is deeply embedded into the family values, customs, and communication styles in Korea (Oak & Martin, 2000). And parents further socialize their children to be passive and obedient (Kim, Kim & Rue, 1997). Another culture that deeply influenced by the Confucianism philosophy is the Chinese culture, which emphasize filial piety that obedience to one's elders, the hierarchy of authority within the family is strictly adhered (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Chao (1994) further proposed that the culture-specific parenting practice of chiao shun among Chinese families' parental practices.

On the other hand, individualistic societies, which are usually Westernized societies, are defined as a society that consist of individuals who value autonomy, emotional independence and view themselves as loosely associated with the community (Triandis, 1994; Hofstede, 1980). Therefore, the parenting approaches of the individualistic parents encourage their children to be autonomous, independent and self-reliant from an early age.

For instance, a study by comparing Chinese-American and Anglo-American parents found that over 60% of Anglo-American parents mentioned about building up their children's sense of self as their childrearing goal, but only 8% of Chinese-American parents mentioned about this goal (Chao, 1995). From this study, it is clearly shown the cultural differences in parenting goals and approaches among parents from different cultural backgrounds.

2.3 Korean family culture

In most of the East Asian countries, Confucianism has been extremely influential in shaping the values and behaviors of people and the community. And certainly, Korea is one of the countries with profound impact. Confucianism heavily emphasis on family as the fundamental unit of the society and it directly shaped the traditional Korean family values and structure. Among the core concepts and values of Confucianism, filial piety and gender segregation are two significant principles of Confucianism. (Park & Cho, 1995) It is believed that there are clear hierarchical roles among family members and between men and women. While following the principles of Confucianism, there is a male-dominated authority structure in the traditional Korean families due to the traditional concept of male superiority. Hence, the ideal images of traditional Korean parents are strict fathers and benevolent mothers, while typically mothers are responsible for housework and fathers work outside home. Despite the Korean society is becoming

more industrialized and westernized, with increasing women in the working force with a higher social position, the traditional concept of male superiority is still prevalent.

2.4 Intercultural parents and immigrant parenting

There are numerous terminologies used to describe people from multicultural backgrounds, such as bi-ethnic, biracial, interracial, mixed ethnicity, transcultural etc. But in this study, the focus is on the parenting on intercultural couples, which Crippen (2007) proposed that intercultural parenting is viewed as parenting based on couples from different race, ethnic or religion and they are parenting based on racial or ethnic or religions differences. And the children born from intercultural or international marriages or relationships are considered as “mixed children”. Since the intercultural parents are two racially or cultural different individuals, the term “culture clash” is frequently used to explain the expected problematic barrier of cultural difference regarding their relationship and related to parenting approaches regarding this study (Crippen, 2007).

Parenting is a difficult task for anyone. And immigrant parenting is similar to intercultural parenting, in a sense that immigrant women experienced similar challenges that not only adapt to a new living environment and social structure, but also encounter the different cultural values and strategies of parenting. Recently, Shin, Doh, Hong and Kim, (2012) found that the integration of the foreign mothers in Korea had certain effect on the children’s school adjustment through marital conflict and parenting practices.

Since intercultural parenting methods are often culturally biased and mostly learned from childhood experiences, but the role of the new host country, which is Korea, also help in shaping the parenting orientation too. Ochocka and Janzen (2008) proposed a new framework for understanding immigrant parenting, which includes several inter-connected areas to explore and I reckon that it is quite useful in exploring about intercultural parenting in this study in order to gain an overview picture of the puzzle. First, the framework included the understanding of parenting orientations, then the parenting styles of implementing their parenting orientations, which build up from their childhood experiences or cultural heritage. Subsequently, looking into the larger context about the host country that potentially affects the parenting orientations or parenting approaches, which in this study, it is going to be the Korean local context. Consequently consider about modifying the parenting orientations or parenting approaches while interacting with the host country. It seems like the framework could help to provide some guidance while exploring how intercultural parents carrying out childrearing practice in the Korean context for this study.

2.5 Parenting challenges in South Korea

Despite the fact that parenting is an uneasy job, intercultural parents face even more challenges as they have to navigate among two cultures, including choosing or balancing the two cultures etc. (Cheah et al., 2013). Parenting a “mixed children” in a traditionally

regarded as ethnically homogeneous nation is believed to be even worse. There are a lot of studies report difficulties and challenges regarding parenting of multicultural families in Korea. For instance, many researches reported that foreigner parents of the multicultural families showed difficulties in childrearing in Korea due to the limited proficiency of Korean language. (Hor & Kwak, 2011) Therefore, I reckon that there should have more parenting challenges except the language barriers and would like to explore more through this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

As this research aim at gaining deeper understanding of the intercultural parents through exploring their perceptions, experiences and challenges faced while parenting their “mixed children” in the Korean context, a qualitative approach is chosen to explore rich insights and descriptive knowledge from them. Making good use of semi-structured interviews with intercultural parents to gain in depth perspectives and firsthand experiences to gain an overview picture of their way of parenting in the Korean context. A conversational style of interview was used to enable participants’ descriptions to have minimal interference.

3.2 Participants

This research limited the target sample as parents of Korean mixed children who live in Korea as to control one of the culture of the intercultural couple. Since the population of the target sample is not easily accessible, snowball sampling was used where collecting data from a few people in the target sample and asks those participants to suggest other participants. While recruiting participants, research notices and consent notices were spread online and offline through friends to try to reach the target sample. Participants were also recruited through Seoul National University Zelkova Center for Child Educare

Services and Research through distributing notices and consents form to the target sample. Please refer the participant recruitment consent form in Appendix 1.

10 parents from intercultural relationships participated in the semi-structured interviews. All of the participants are parents who are intercultural couples of one being Korean and the other with another ethnicity or culture. They are all parents with at least a child, and they are settling down their family in Korea. Participants' families all live in Seoul and have a certain level of educational background. Most of the participants are female, in their ages of late 30s and 40s, with 1 or 2 kids. General backgrounds of each parent are show in Table 1.

<Table 1> General Backgrounds of Interview Participants

Participant	Gender	Nationality	Spouse's Nationality	Occupation	Length of stay in Korea	Children (age)
Parent A	Female	Korea	U.S.	Part-time job	4-5 years	1 girl (6) 1 boy (2)
Parent B	Female	Hong Kong	Korea	Travel Agency	7 years	1 boy (1)
Parent C	Female	Hong Kong	Korea	Housewife	10 years	1 girl (6) 1 boy (7)
Parent D	Female	Japan	Korea	Student	3 years	1 girl (1)
Parent E	Female	Vietnam	Korea	Student	7 years	1 boy (7)
Parent F	Female	Malaysian Chinese	Korea	Administrati on work	4 years	1 boy (3)
Parent G	Male	U.S.	Korea	English Teacher	8 years	1 girl (5) 1 boy (6 months)
Parent H	Female	Korea	U.S.	Part-time job	8 months	1 boy (4) 1 girl (1.5)
Parent I	Female	Korea	England	Housewife	7 years	2 girls (4, 6)
Parent J	Female	China	Korea	Housewife	3 years	1 girl (2)

3.3 Data collection and data analysis strategy

This study selected in-depth semi-structured interview method to obtain concrete personal experiences as qualitative data to explore about how do intercultural couples bring up their mixed children in the Korean context and what practical challenges they are facing, which is not possible to be understood through statistical analysis. Semi-structured interview allows the interviewees to easily describe and share their experiences with a higher possibility to discover new themes and practical challenges of parenting for further investigation.

The semi-structured interview consisted of basic biographical information and several predetermined yet open-ended questions which functioned as a guide for the interviewees to describe their experiences and perspectives were conducted. Interviewees were encouraged to share any experiences, episodes or perspectives regarding parenting through out the interview. Please refer Appendix 2 for the semi-structured interview questions. The interview was conducted in English, Korean or Cantonese, according to the preference of the interviewees, and conducted through telephone or at locations convenient to the interviewees. The interviews were an one-off event and it took about 30 minutes to 1 hour for each interview. The interviews were recorded under the consent of the interviewees and field notes were taken through out the interview, which all data were transcribed and analyzed after the interview.

After conducting the interviews, content analysis were carried out to analyze the qualitative data systematically and objectively. Through open coding, distinct ideas or perspectives were identified and conceptual codes were created. Generating themes, categories and patterns were the most important process of analyzing the qualitative data. Interviews were continued until recurring themes were identified, which indicated saturation. Since the interview data was too large to describe completely, regarding the ways do the participants bring up their mixed child in Korea, I will focus on the recurring themes including education, language and culture. On the other hand, I have classified their parenting challenges of the participants as three major categories, including cultural differences in parenting, language barriers and discrimination issues. Hence, I will discuss these results in the following section.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Ways to bring up their mixed children

Most of the interviewed intercultural couples decided to settle down in Korea due to the work of their husbands and financial reasons. And during the interviews, regarding how do they bring up their children, two big themes were mainly discussed, including the education and cultural aspects of their children.

4.1.1 Culture

As the intercultural couples are from different cultural backgrounds, and the way of parenting is always following their own cultural background or personal experiences, intercultural parents may choose parent their children in mainly one or both cultures. Among the interviews, there were parents expressed their thoughts of preferring to bring up their child in both cultures. Parents mentioned that they normally do not decide or discuss which culture they use a primary culture to teach their kids, but allowing their kids to encounter or celebrate different cultural events or festivals. Many of the families celebrate both Eastern and Western festivals at home including Christmas, Halloween and Korean Thanksgiving day (Chuseok). And they tried to provide opportunities to their child to experience both parents' culture to allow the child to understand and appreciate both cultures. Educating the children in both cultures is believed to broaden the cultural knowledge of their children and provide a better base for the children before facing the globalized world in the future.

“Our family goes back to Malaysia twice a year and my son also went there for three times too. We normally go back during the time while we celebrate Lunar New Year, so my son knows how Malaysians celebrate New Year with lion dance.” (Parent F)

“We do not discuss specifically which culture should we bring up our child. As we are living here in Korea, when the kids meet their Korean relatives or grandparents, they just live normally as themselves. We do not recognize and teach them certain culture.” (Parent A)

On the other hand, the majority of the interviewed parents revealed that they mainly educate their child in Korean culture. There were a few reasons that they made this decision, which include the following. Firstly, many of the parents interviewed had their first children born in Korea, they do not have experience of how to bring up their children, so they followed the way their Korean local mother-in-law taught them or how the other parents around were doing locally. Some of the parents considered that as they are living with their local Korean spouse's family, therefore naturally, the primary culture that the child learned is the Korean culture. There were also concerns over the confusion of the child over teaching both cultures at the same time; hence, some parents considered that focusing at one culture to be the primary culture of the child would be better for the child. Besides, the most important reason is that the parents concerned about the societal aspects of the child in the future. Parents revealed that as the child are going to grow up

in the Korean society, there is a need for them to learn about the Korean culture in order to engage well into the Korean society and not being differentiated by other local Korean people such as the underlying societal acceptable norms and manners. Parents believed that their children's knowledge of Korean culture is essential and significant to their social life in the future.

"We planned to use the Korean style to teach the child since young as I think that teaching the child two cultures together might create confusion. But actually I would like to teach the child Japanese culture as well, but it will probably be later when he can differentiate and understand about different cultures." (Parent D)

"If you really have to differentiate the culture that my son learn, he basically follows the Korean culture. At home, we normally use Korean to communicate and trying to use the Korean cultural way to teach the child because I prefer him to be like a normal Korean kid as he has to live in Korea." (Parent B)

Taken as a whole, even though the intercultural couples would like their children to learn about both cultures of their homeland, but most of them have chosen to follow the Korean culture. As the interviewed intercultural parents consider the necessity of the Korean cultural norms of their children while living in Korea.

4.1.2 Education

Education of the children is always one of the main concerns of parents. Especially choosing the right school for their children is one of the major tasks for parents. All of the children of the interviewees are studying in Korean local daycare centers or kindergarten now. Even though some parents did consider sending their children to international school or English schools before, and consider that the Korean education system is very harsh that made their kids very stressful, but they also revealed several reasons for sending them in local daycare centers. Primarily, all parents mentioned that as their child have to stay in Korea, it is necessary for them to engage into the Korean society, therefore they considered that sending their children to a local school is more appropriate.

“While searching for schools for my son, I found that there are schools that use English as the teaching language for all subjects and teaches Korean too. At first I thought that was a good choice, but when I think further with my husband, as the child have to stay here, we decided to send him to local Korean school.” (Parent E)

Despite the main reason of the concern of social engagement of their children, financial concerns were also mentioned by most of the parents. A few parents revealed that sending their kids to international school or English school was too expensive.

Apparently, parents disclosed that the daycare services for multicultural families are 99% free of charge as the local Korean Government funds it. One of the parents did mentioned that daycare and schooling is very expensive in his own country while it is free of charge

in Korea, while he only needs to pay for the extra-curricular activities. Therefore, the low cost of attending the local Korean daycare or schools contribute to one of the major reasons for sending their children to the local Korean daycare or schools.

“Attending international schools are expensive and I would like my child to engage into the local community.” (Parent D)

“Personally to me it is very expensive to study English in Korea. For me, English is my native language and I don't feel like somebody spending a lot of money just to learn English. My wife would like our daughter to go international school.[...] For me, to study abroad or go to English school just for English is not in a high priority.[...] And I don't want to struggle financially just because my wife wants her to learn English.” (Parent G)

Despite the financial concerns, the parents seemed to be quite delighted with education system in Korea that focus on extra-curricular activities. Perhaps the children are still in a young age and learning in daycare and kindergarten, many of the parents revealed that they like the way of how their child learn in the local schools. They disclosed that their child enjoy going school and normally their kids finish school at noon and participate in different sorts of extra-curricular activities or classes in the afternoon. Moreover, the activities or classes that their children take are in an affordable cost and provide their children opportunity to learn a variety of skills. In addition, a few parents also revealed that they reckon that the education system in Korea was not as stressful comparing to

their home country. Therefore, they have chosen the mainstream local Korean education for their children.

“There is a big difference in the way of educating children in Korea and Hong Kong. In Hong Kong it focuses on academic subjects more even from a young age, while in Korea they use a more active learning approach to teach the children. For example, in primary school, they only learn Korean and Mathematics as main subjects, but in Hong Kong, they have to learn all Chinese, English, Mathematics and other subjects. They do not have a lot of homework or do not require students to bring their textbooks back home too. So my kids are not stressful for schoolwork and they emphasis on extra-curricular activities too.” (Parent C)

“My son finishes school around 12 noon to 1pm and he goes for extra-curricular activities. There are a lot of choices and you can choose them at the beginning of the school term, which you have to pay for the activities. But it is quite cheap in price, around 20000~30000won per month.” (Parent E)

Despite the parents have chosen local schools for their children now, among the interviewed parents, parent A revealed considering sending their children to study abroad when they reach middle school because of the concern of the tough and studious high school education system in Korea. But for now, their kids are still young, which further education will be considered in the future.

“Until high school will be our choice as parents, well, specific plans are not out yet, but we think that high school in Korea is too tough for them. For primary school, it is quite relaxing and doesn't matter where do they study. When our daughter reaches the age of middle school, we might consider sending them to the U.S. or Europe. But there still have about 6 years, so nothing is decided yet.” (Parent A)

4.1.3 Language

Intercultural couples used to have different mother tongue language and might be able to speak more than two languages, but what languages will they choose to educate their children? Most of the interviewed intercultural parents would like their children to be bilingual, so they speak both languages, including Korean and the first language of one of their parents at home. Even though sometimes their kids might be a bit confusing while making sentences, but they considered that being bilingual not only allows their children to communicate well with both of their parents, but it could be a resource of the children too.

“At home, mom uses 100% Korean and dad uses 100% English as he cannot fluently speak in Korean. As we use both languages with them since the beginning, so the kids are fluent in both languages now. [...] She is quite good in Korean, but sometimes while choosing the vocabularies or making sentences, she mixed up the two languages as both

languages come to mind together. She may use Korean in an English way. For instance, when she want some spaces, which in Korean she should say “여기 자리 좀 만들어줘” but she said “여기 방 좀 만들어줘” because the English way of saying is “make some room for me”, she choose the word “room” instead of “space” in Korean.” (Parent A)

On the other hand, there were parents who mainly only speak Korean to their children at home and would like their children to have Korean as their first language. It is because parents reckoned that the kids are growing up in Korea and the main communication language in Korea is Korean. And some of the intercultural couples are living with their Korean parents, which in that case they could only use Korean to communicate at home; otherwise it will be impolite to the elderly who only understands Korean. In addition, one of the parents of the intercultural couple might not speak another language other than Korean, so taking Korean as the main language with the children will prevent any language barrier with any of the parents and Korean family members or relatives.

“Korean is the main communication we use at home. As I am living with my husband’s family, we can only use Korean to communicate, as my husband cannot speak Japanese well too. If I use Japanese with the child his father or other family members cannot understand what we are saying which seems to be impolite to them.” (Parent D)

4.1.4 Government support

Even though there were no specific questions regarding the governmental support for multicultural families mentioned during the interview, many parents mentioned about receiving education or joining activities from the Multicultural Family Support Centers. The Multicultural Family Support Centers are under the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family division of the Government. Some of the interviewed parents had joined free Korean language classes, field trips to tour around Korea and seminars to educate multicultural families with necessary knowledge such as legal matters. Most of the interviewed parents who took classes or joined activities organized by the Centers appreciated what the Government had done for multicultural families and reckoned that the Government is performing quite well in helping multicultural families.

“When I first came to Korea and have my first child, I do not know how to take care of the child. I got help from the Multicultural Family Support Centers and there was a woman taught me how to take care of the baby or came over to help me taking care of my baby for a few hours per day. And it is all for free. They have these centers in every area.”
(Parent J)

“I joined their field trips such as visiting museums, president houses etc., which shows us foreign wives more about the country of Korea. There also have different kinds of gatherings and let people from different countries to sell food from other own countries

too. Sometimes they held really good seminars such as those regarding legal issues of multicultural families, which was a two-day workshop.” (Parent F)

4.2 Challenges of parents

The interviewed parents had revealed numerous challenges that they had come over while bringing up their mixed children in Korea. While looking for the recurring themes of the challenges they mentioned during the interviews, language barriers, cultural differences between the intercultural couple and discrimination issues were the three major challenges that they are in concern.

4.2.1 Language Barriers

Language is the major tool for communication. And it is revealed by the intercultural parents that Korean language is the main challenges while they are raising their children in Korea. Since the main language used in Korea is Korean, the parents strongly felt the restrictions and inconvenience with the limited Korean language skills among the non-Korean spouses. The parents revealed that due to their lack of Korean language skills, it limited their access to parenting information such as schooling information. Also, they sometimes felt guilty to their spouse, as they were unable to help out to take care of the children when communicating with other people, such as kindergarten teachers, hospital doctors etc., were needed. Moreover, when their kids are growing older, they began to worry about whether they could help out with the kids' homework as their kids are in

local Korean schools. But the most significant challenge that the parents faced with their limited Korean language skills is the communication barrier with their children.

Certainly, for the children who are brought up bilingually would be fine; but those whose first language is Korean will have limited communication or interaction with the non-Korean parent due to the language barrier. There were a few parents mentioned that they were upset about not understanding what their children were doing and they were concerned with this problem that they hope to tackle it by teaching their children to be bilingual.

“My daughter speaks Korean when she was 2 or 3 years old. When she cries for something, I didn't know what it was as I don't speak Korean. When my wife wasn't at home, I don't know what she is crying for and I cannot communicate with her. And I am like...what do you want? So I got really frustrated because of the language barrier. And when my wife came back, she said “oh, she just want a blanket.[...] When she comes home after going to the daycare, she tells my wife everything that happened at the daycare and it is always in Korean. And one thing that's hard is that my daughter cannot explain what happened at the daycare to me in English.[...] If my kids are sick, my wife pretty much have to take them to eh hospital and explain to the doctor, or if the daycare calls, I cant talk to them because I don't speak Korean and they don't speak English.[...] And when I go to their school and watch their school performances, I don't know what they are singing and saying. It feels like you are missing what they are doing and singing. It is hard for me.” (Parent G)

“I often use Korean with my son and my husband doesn't speak Korean so there is actually a problem of the child communicating with his dad. He can understand what his dad says but even he didn't mentioned about this, I think he is having difficulty in expressing himself in English as he only speaks Korean to me and at school.[...]There are cases when the kids didn't meet their father for a few days, English doesn't come out from them. And also if they can't speak English, they cannot communicate with their dad, so it is the biggest problem now.” (Parent H)

4.2.2 Cultural differences

Even though there were a lot of cultural differences aspects that intercultural couples had acknowledged before their international marriage, the interviewees mentioned that they were experiencing cultural differences in perspectives of parenting their children. Perhaps it was expected that intercultural couples within Asia might experience less cultural difference as most of their cultures seemed to be root from Confucianism. But the Asian non-Korean spouses from Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia and Hong Kong had revealed that they experience cultural differences with their Korean spouse. For instance, while comparing with their home country, they discussed during the interview that the Korean way of bringing up children create a lot of stress to the child like what people referred to “tiger moms” and the family ties in Korea are very strong that there are a lot of family gatherings.

“I think the parents in Korea create too much stress to the child to be good at everything such as the “tiger moms” that I read from the articles. In Malaysia, we are not that strict in educating children, so I don't think I will be that pushy to my son.” (Parent F)

In spite of the non-Korean parents from Asian countries, the parents from the Western countries such as U.S. (Parent G), also expressed that they had encounter cultural difference regarding their diverse parenting perspectives with their Korean spouse. For example, the parent from the U.S. would prefer the child to do whatever he/she wants and be happy, but the Korean spouse have a high standard of expectations on the child and would like the child to learn a lot of things. Likewise, regarding discipline, parents from the U.S. would like to understand why the child perform improperly while the Korean spouse expressed madness and insist for punishment for the child.

“My way of thinking is I just want my daughter to be happy doing what she wants to do. I feel like my wife really wants her to learn piano, she really wants her to do many many things like other Korean kids like taekwondo, English academy etc. But for me, I don't want my kids to be overworked, over study. I am more of a relax kind of a...let her decide what she wants to do, and my wife is more of a...I want her to do this and do that type of person. [...] When it comes to discipline, I like to just talk to her and ask her why did you do that. My wife on the other hand, she really gets angry. But our daughter is just 3 years old. For me, I want her to kind of understand and realizing the mistake, its okay and we

understand so say sorry. But my wife on the other hand is very strict and it gonna have a punishment that you cannot watch TV for a month.” (Parent G)

On the other hand, the non-Korean spouse also revealed to feel the cultural differences while they are trying to adapt into the Korean culture while they are bringing up their children in Korea. For instance, they were not adapted to the strong hierarchical respect to the elderly and the explicit way of expressing passion to their child from passer-by. Moreover, the parents mentioned that they consider Koreans differentiate in-group and out-group quite strictly that it was quite difficult to make new friends in Korea too.

“I think that the aunties or elderly are very passionate and enthusiastic towards children that I am not sure used to their actions. Sometimes, when I use the baby stroller to take my son out, the Korean grandma just come and touch my son’s face or give him something to eat. Even though I understand they do these actions with a kind heart, but I do not really like these actions. I believe that you seldom see people doing these in my home country. Moreover, due to the need to respect the elderly according to the strict hierarchical manners in Korea, I cannot say anything when they do so. If I say no, they might say I am impolite.” (Parent F)

4.2.3 Discrimination

From the interviews with the intercultural parents, none of their children had experienced serious discrimination but discrimination is always an aspect that most of them mentioned that it is one of their main concern, especially in the near future when their children enter middle school and high school. The age of the kids of the interviewees are still too young to acknowledge or discriminate others, therefore the parents revealed that they have seen less discrimination from other kids at daycare or kindergarten; while discrimination behaviors or words are more obvious from the local Korean parents than kids. Especially, kids with appearance that look foreign were more likely to be spotted and experience discrimination easier. However, as the kids of the interviewees are very young, when they were being questioned about their identity, they sometimes accept it in a positive approach and perceive themselves better than the Korean kids as they can speak both languages.

“Because my daughter and son look like me, which they don't look Korean at all. I have heard from my wife that when she was walking around with them, people are looking at them like....she doesn't look like that can be her daughter and son if I am not here.”

(Parent G)

“There were couple of times when I brought her out to the park, there were certain cases when people say to my daughter, “you are foreigner right? Speak some English!” At first

she was quite annoyed, but sometimes she was fine as she feels like she can speak both English and Korean.” (Parent A)

4.3 Discussion

While looking over the empirical results that I have received through the qualitative interviews, the majority of the intercultural parents mainly concerned about how their children can engage into the Korean local society and how do Korean people see their children, otherwise the majority of interviewed intercultural parents will not be so conscious to teach Korean culture to the children, send their children to local Korean schools and choose Korean as their children’s first language etc. I believe that all of these thoughts and actions rooted from the want of building up confidence of their children in Korea, therefore, the intercultural parents are employing the strategy of culture assimilation to the culture of residence, which is Korea.

I reckon that the Korean society environment also contributes a lot to the choice of Korean culture assimilation among the intercultural parents. Since the Korean culture has been strongly influenced by Confucianism, perspectives and behaviors regarding family and parenting are no exceptions too. In the traditional Confucian family, as discussed in the literature review section, it has a very male-centered structure underlined. Even though the Korean society is becoming more and more westernized, and there are increasing women in the working force, the traditional male superiority in the working

place is still prevalent, while women mostly stay at home taking care of the housework and look after children. Hence, this is supported with the interviewed intercultural parents too, as most of the female interviewees are not taking up full-time jobs outside home, and they are mainly housewives or doing only part-time jobs.

On the other hand, I believe that not only the Korean cultural environment affects the way of bringing up their mixed children, the cultural background of the father plays a significant role too. As most of the interviewed intercultural parents are combination of Korean father with non-Korean Asian mother, even though mothers are often spending the longest time with their children, but in traditional families, the Confucian concept of male-superior is still very strong; therefore the foreign mothers follow their husband's Korean culture after getting married and henceforth bringing up their children through a Korean practice.

Regarding the major challenges that the intercultural parents revealed during the interviews, language barriers, cultural differences and discrimination issues are the key obstacles for them. As one of the parents is from another culture other than Korean, adaptation and integration into the Korean local society might already be their huge task. Furthermore, bringing up their mixed children in a traditionally ethnically homogeneous country Korea is a tough job too. Therefore, below are a few recommendations that hope to provide certain assistance to the intercultural families in the future.

The main challenge regarding the limited Korean language skills of the non-Korean parents seems to be difficult to tackle unless the parents improve their language skills. However, I reckon that the most significant problem of the limited Korean language skills of the parent is the restriction of communication and interaction with their children. Perhaps the children could put effort to learn their non-Korean parents' mother tongue or the parent and child could learn another new language or find their own way to communicate with each other.

Regarding the other major challenge of the intercultural parents, which is cultural differences, I believe that this challenge is unavoidable and should be known before their international marriage. Therefore, in order to minimize the negative comments of each other's cultural practices, the parents should not compare between their spouse's and their own cultural practices and try to appreciate both cultures, then discuss how should they bring up their children together.

As for the concern for the discrimination issue, as it is related to the issue of Korean being a traditionally regarded racially homogeneous nation, which might not be easily resolved in the near future. However, I consider that changing the perspectives of citizens as fast as the globalization comes is difficult, but I believe that the Korean government is working on improving multicultural education of the citizens and providing help to the multicultural families to engage into the society. Since discriminations lies on the viewpoint and action of the other people instead of the multicultural parents, perhaps

assimilating to the local Korean culture might be a way not to be noticed by others, but the primary cause of discrimination lies on the perspectives of the Korean local citizens. Therefore, I believe that increasing multicultural education and improving the acknowledgement of mixed children could help to minimize discrimination in the future.

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

With the rapid growth of globalization, international marriages have been increasing in the traditionally ethnic homogeneous nation South Korea. Along with the mounting international marriages, there is a growing number of “mixed children” too. As parenting create direct impact to the well being of the children, this research is an empirical study to explore an overview picture of how do the intercultural parents bring up their children and try to specify what sorts of challenges do they experience.

Through content analysis after in-depth semi-structured interviews with 10 intercultural parents, I focused on the constantly recurring themes of parenting including education, language and culture. I realized that the Korean cultural context create a huge effect on the way of parenting of the interviewed intercultural parents because most of them would like their children to engage perfectly into the Korean society. On the other hand, I have categorized three key challenges of the intercultural parents, including language barrier, cultural differences in parenting and discrimination issues. Furthermore, I have provided several suggestions and remarks for the intercultural parents, such as not to compare their spouse’s and their own culture but to appreciate both cultures, try to help their children to build up self-esteem as a mixed child in Korea and improving multicultural education.

5.2 Limitations and further research recommendations

This study is an empirical research to understand how do intercultural parents bring up their children and the challenges they experience in Korea. In order to obtain the qualitative data, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 intercultural parents. But with the limited number of interviewees, they might not represent every intercultural parent who is bringing up their children in Korea. Furthermore, as the interviewees were recruited through snowball sampling, which might have a sampling bias in educational level and social economical status etc. However, this study has its significance that it identified the specific challenges that nearly all of the interviewees had experienced in Korea and different reasons for their approach of bringing up their mixed children. Furthermore, through the in-depth interviews, first-hand personal experiences were shared and analyze which reflect the reality situation faced by the intercultural parents in Korea.

Hence, since this empirical study provides an overview of the childrearing practices and challenges of the intercultural parents, as the future task, perhaps dividing the cultures of the non-Korean intercultural parents as the research subjects or choose two cultures to compare might provide an even clearer picture of how they bring up their children in Korea. On the other hand, even though the topic of the mixed children's identity issue was not discussed in the interviews, I reckon that it is an important issue for intercultural parents too. Due to the children of the interviewed parents are too young in age, it is quite difficult to question them about how their children identify themselves, but I believe that

it will be the next step of exploring about the mixed children in the future researches too. In addition, I hope studies regarding the childrearing practices of the intercultural parents could provide insights for helping parents to tackle the researched challenges in the future.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Recruitment Consent

Hello. This is Elsa Lai, a student from the Graduate School of International Studies of Seoul National University. I am conducting research on multicultural parenting. (one parent is Korean, one with another ethnicity) Through this research, I am interested in exploring how do people parenting a bi-racial child in the Korea, which is a country that traditionally regarded as a racially homogeneous nation. Not only the parenting strategies, in relation to the child's sense of identity, but also the challenges that they are facing as a bi-racial parent in the Korean context. The study intends to use the findings of this research to draw an overview picture of the way of parenting and issues faced by multicultural parents and further provide suggestions or guidance to multicultural parents and practitioners in Korea.

I would like to ask for your kindly help for participating in an interview, either online, offline or through the telephone. The interview will last for about 1 to 1 and a half hour and will be voice-recorded. The interview will include several biographical information and open-ended questions in a friendly atmosphere. It can be conducted in English/Korean/Chinese, depending on the preference of the interviewee. It is on voluntary basis and you may withdraw at any point during the interview. All responses are treated as confidential and will be used for research purpose only. And all personal information will be protected and kept confidential.

Should you have any inquiries, please contact Elsa Lai

Recruitment Consent (Korean version)

안녕하세요.

저는 서울대학교 국제대학원 국제협력 석사과정 엘사입니다.

저는 지금 다문화가정에서 육아가 어떤식으로 진행되는지 연구하고 있습니다.

연구과정에서 인터뷰를 통해 여러분의 직접적인 경험을 듣고 싶어 연락드립니다.

일반적으로 한민족국가라 여겨지는 한국에서 한국인과 외국인 부부들 이루어진
가정이 어떻게 아이를 양육하는지를 중점에 두고 논문을 쓰고자합니다. 자녀의
정체성 형성에 있어 지니고 계신 육아철학뿐만 아니라 한국의 사회성에서
다문화가정의 일원으로서 겪는 어려움에 관해서도 여쭙고 싶습니다. 이 연구는
육아방식의 전반적인 상황과 다문화 부모가 직면한 어려움을 바탕으로 다문화
가정과 관계자분들에게 도움이 되는 대안을 제시하고자 합니다.

온라인, 오프라인, 전화 등을 통해 짧게나마 인터뷰에 응해주신다면 저에게 큰
도움이 될 것입니다. 이 인터뷰는 짧게는 한 시간에서 길게는 한 시간 반정도
소요될 것으로 예상되며, 모든 인터뷰 내용은 녹음될 것을 미리 알려드립니다.
인터뷰는 개인정보와 육아와 관련된 질문 몇개를 구성되어 있으며, 질문과

무관하게 육아에 관련된 개인적인 의견이 있으시면 덧붙여주셔도 감사하겠습니다.

인터뷰는 편안한 분위기에서 편하신 언어 (영어, 한국어, 중국어)로 진행될 예정입니다.

모든 인터뷰 내용은 연구 외 다른 목적으로 쓰이지 않으며, 개인정보 역시 철저히 보안에 맡겨질 것입니다.

다른 문의사항이 있으시면 연락주시면 감사하겠습니다.

Appendix 2 Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Basic biographical information:

- Nationality
- Education level
- Occupation
- Religion
- Length of stay in Korea
- Children's gender and age

Questions:

- Why do your family choose to settle down in Korea?
- Any changes or challenges in parenting due to the Korean context?
- Any challenges you experienced in parenting your children as intercultural parents? (Encounters or special episodes) If yes, what strategies did you use to resolve them?
- As your couple has a different cultural background, how do you consider yourself while parenting your children? Do you feel any differences in parenting with your spouse?
- Describe your experience on being a parent of a child from two cultures? How did you go about deciding which culture would be the primary culture of the family?

- How do you define the gender roles of parenting with your husband/wife? What are your expectations about your spouse's role?
- How do you perceive the general parenting in your culture/Korea? Do you practice a bit different now?
- What is the child's first language?
- How do you normally communicate with your children? What is the major language use at home? Why?
- Is the child going to local or international school? Any concern over the child fitting into the local school life/mainstream education system in Korea?
- In what ways do you teach your child (both) cultures? Do you provide the child with traditional cultural experiences?
- In the Korean context, how do you consider growing up in a multicultural family creates impacts to your children?
- What strategies will you use in response to people making remarks about your children? Any coping strategies to assist the child in dealing with racism effectively?
- If you were asked to offer guidance or recommendations to a newly married international couple, regarding parenting their future children in Korea, what would you tell them?