

## *America, Our Home? A Qualitative Study of 1.5-Generation Asian Americans*

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### **Abstract**

**Background:** The term 1.5-generation refers individuals who were born in a foreign country and migrated to the U.S. during adolescence. Unlike their first- and second-generation counterparts, 1.5 generation individuals spend part of their developmental years in their native country and another part in the U.S.

**Objective:** The purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the growing up and acculturation experiences of 1.5-generation Asian immigrants in the U.S.

**Design:** A descriptive phenomenological research design is used.

**Sample:** The purposive sample consists of six 1.5-generation Asian Americans.

**Method:** Interviews are conducted and analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method.

**Results:** Five major themes emerged: (1) "It is always just us, no one else"; (2) "We will always be perpetual foreigners"; (3) "I am in constant in-betweenness, but it's a good thing" (4) "I struggled then I succeed"; and (5) "I want to be a different kind of Asian".

**Conclusions:** Although 1.5-generation individuals articulated many challenges in their path to discovering their self identity and belongingness, they also described their own resourcefulness and strategies to overcome challenges and shared many positive experiences that have helped shape them today.

Keywords: phenomenology, qualitative study, 1.5 generation, Asian Americans, acculturation, Asian students

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## **Introduction**

The United States is a multicultural, multiethnic nation. Today, the number of immigrants in this country continues to rise, increasing from 28 million foreign-born individuals in 2000 to 39 million foreign-born individuals in 2009 (Martin & Midgley, 2010). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Asian population is growing at a much faster rate than any other race groups in the country. As a whole, the total U.S. population increased by 9.7% from 2000 to 2010; in contrast, the Asian population increased by 45.6% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). It is the only population to increase as a result of immigration (Pew Research Center, 2013). As the population of Asian immigrants and their children grow, it becomes increasingly important to improve our understanding of how these individuals experience becoming and living as Americans.

## **Acculturation and Generation 1.5**

Acculturation is briefly defined as a process by which an individual adopts cultural customs, ideals, assumptions and practices from a host culture. Immigrants to this country and their families are faced on a daily basis with the challenge of learning to live in a new culture while simultaneously holding on to the values and beliefs learned in their past. Studying the process of immigrant acculturation is not anything new. Past studies are interested in looking at how the different immigrant generations experience acculturation. These studies sought to explore the various challenges faced by immigrants throughout generations, typically between the first generation immigrants to consequent generations (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Padilla, Alvarez & Lindholm, 1986).

Padilla and Gonzalez (2001) define a first-generation immigrant as an individual who was born in a foreign country and migrated to the United States as an adult. A second-generation immigrant is an individual who was born in the host country to at least one immigrant parent or migrated to the host country before the age of six (Van Ours & Veenman, 2003). In comparing first- and second- generation immigrants, research have shown that there exists significant differences in their physical and psychological developmental stages, their socialization processes in the family, the school, and the society at large, and their orientation toward their homeland (Zhou, 1997).

In contrast to their first- and second- generation counterparts, the term 1.5-generation refers to a group of immigrants, who was born in a foreign country and migrated to the U.S. during adolescence (Portes, 1997). Unlike their first- and second- generation counterparts, these individuals spend a part of their developmental years in their native country and another part in the U.S. (Portes, 1997). The 1.5-generation immigrants have different adaptive experiences from the first- and second-generation immigrants in that they have the social and linguistic exposure as well as immersion to both the U.S. and their native culture within their formative years (Hurh, 1990). Though scholars vary in their specific age cut-off for defining a 1.5-generation immigrant, many agree that a 1.5 generation individual is one who moved to a different country after the age of six and before the age of 12, a time period mostly referred to as “pre-adolescence” (Zhou, 1997). It is a significant period during which

most individuals begin their education and start to develop an attachment to a given culture (Van Ours & Veenman, 2003).

We are finding more and more of 1.5-generation students in every level of education. Typically, these students are familiar with contemporary American culture; however, some still struggle with the academic and social challenges of the American education system (Harklau, Dosey, & Siegal, 1999; Harklau, 2000). Because of their unique status, neither recent immigrants nor mainstream American, they often fall through the cracks and have to fend for themselves. These students could easily deceive their teachers due to their oral fluency in English without an accent, yet continue to struggle with the academic expectations asked of them. Past studies have found that 1.5-generation students experience numerous academic struggles (Rodriguez, 2006; Ruiz, 2003). As an example, Rodriguez (2006) found that upon careful examination of their written English, 1.5 generation Hispanic American students struggled with writing issues that are similar to those found with English as Second Language (ESL) learners. Rodriguez (2006) also pointed out that much of the literature available about how to teach English to students is addressed to first-generation immigrants who are just learning to communicate in English, whereas 1.5-generation students are already orally proficient in the language. Inadequate research on meeting the differing needs of 1.5 generation is found in almost all areas. Fittingly, 1.5-generation individuals are one of least understood and most overlooked group in our education system today.

### **The Model Minority Myth**

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 (Hartlep, 2013; Tran & Birman, 2010). This stereotype is very much engrained in the American culture today; however, such acceptance does not reflect the whole truth.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 52.4% of Asian Americans over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to only 29.9% of the total population and 30.3% of non-Hispanic White Americans, signifying higher overall educational attainment for this group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). However, this high number failed to consider the differences within the Asian population with some subgroups having educational levels that are significantly below the national average. The 2010 U.S. Census also reported that Asian Americans have a significantly higher annual family income than any other racial groups in the country, though it failed to mention that Asian American families tend to be larger with more family members that are contributing to that high annual income number (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

How the model minority stereotype can negatively impact the overall educational experience for the Asian American students is not adequately explored at this time (Museus, 2008). Though some studies have looked at performance outcomes, such as GPA comparisons between Asian subgroups and other racial groups, not enough emphasis have been placed on understanding what their educational process and experiences look like and how the model minority stereotype affects such experience. For instance, Fuligni (1997) reported that while East Asian American students outperformed White students in math and English grades, Filipino American students did not. Hao and Bonstead Bruns (1998) found that while Chinese American students

outperformed Korean and Filipino students on standardized math tests and overall GPA, they performed similarly to White students. These two examples inform us that there exist discrepancies in the outcome performance between different subgroups of Asian American students and other students; however, due to their focus on examining outcomes, they fail to completely paint for us a picture of what their academic “experience” may look.

In 1997, a study by Steele first explored the negative effects posed by what he labeled as “stereotype threat” which is a phenomenon in which “the existence of negative assumptions about a group’s academic ability diminished academic performance among members of that group” (Steele, 1997). It is a type of subconscious test anxiety that somehow lowers test scores in African American students in high stakes testing. Do positive assumptions, for example the assumption that Asian Americans will outperform their peers in most academic subjects, affect academic performance? To address this question, a study was conducted with Asian American female college students (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). Findings from this study revealed that participants who were first primed to their Asian American ethnicity felt the pressure to keep up with the expectation to perform well, which led to their difficulty in concentrating and thus negatively impacted their performance on the test (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). Therefore, just as the fear of confirming a negative stereotype can negatively affect performance of African American students, the fear of failing to confirm a positive stereotype can worsen performance of Asian American students.

Within the academic domain, the model minority stereotype in a way implies that Asian Americans do not need the support offered to other minority populations. For example, affirmative action policies exclude Asian Americans, despite some Asian American having faced many of the same struggles as other minorities, such as coming from families who lack knowledge of the U.S. education system or having limited finances (Trytten et al, 2012). This stereotype also brings about additional problems in the classroom in that it becomes easier for teachers to make immediate assumptions of the Asian students’ self-sufficiency (Divoky, 1988). One study found that regardless of whether the Asian American students had high overall academic achievement, they all experienced to an extent academic difficulty in which they believe their teachers failed to ever notice (Wing, 2007). The overgeneralization that all Asian students will be successful on their own can lead to extensive feelings of inadequacy when one does struggle academically as well as a sense of invisibility, where the students may feel invisible and undeserving of that help.

### **Purpose of Study**

Today, when foreign-born individuals are increasingly becoming a major part of the American day-to-day life, no longer can we ignore our changing demographics and their needs. This study explores the school experiences and overall acculturation process from the perspectives of the 1.5-generation Asian immigrants. This study attempts to paint a comprehensive picture of how the participants experience their life as a 1.5-generation Asian living and attending school in U.S. We will explore the education system through the 1.5-generation eyes.

The information yielded from this study can greatly enhance our understanding of the 1.5-generation experience within and outside of our school systems and assist human

service professionals (i.e. school psychologists, psychologists, counselors, teachers, and others) in better recognizing and knowing how to meet the differing needs of this group.

## **Methods**

### **Methodology**

This study of 1.5-generation Asian experience used a qualitative research design: descriptive phenomenology. The main purpose of a descriptive phenomenology is to examine a phenomenon as individuals experience it without too much emphasis on its origin or causal explanations (Husserl 1962). This phenomenological study provides thick, rich descriptions of the experiences of 1.5-generation Asian Americans that will help build our understanding of the 1.5-generation phenomenon.

### **Methodological Framework**

A framework is a set of broad concepts that guide research. This study is based on the theory of social constructivism, which argues that knowledge and reality are created by social relationships and interactions (Creswell, 2013). According to social constructivism, humans seek to understand the world in which they live in by making subjective meaning of their experiences. This study relied on the individual participant's constructive experiences of being a 1.5-generation individual in the U.S.

### **Data Collection**

The data for this research study was gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants. Each participant was asked to take part in a two-part interview session, a main interview and a follow-up member check as needed.

The main interview lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were a one-on-one interview and for those outside of Denver and surrounding areas, mediated by technology (i.e. via Skype and Facetime video calls). All interviews were audio- and video-recorded. The interview contained broad, open-ended questions that encouraged the participants to express their perceptions and experiences as a 1.5-generation student in U.S. educational institutions. The questions covered a broad range of topics about the participant's past and present school experiences, friendship/relationship development and preferences, model minority experiences, career goals and dreams, belongingness, social and academic struggles at school, and family.

The follow-up interview, or member check, was an opportunity for participants to review and clarify areas discussed during the first interview. It was done as per needed basis to allow participants to rephrase, omit, expand upon, or add to topics that were discussed in the initial interview (Turner, 2010). Out of the six interviews conducted, only one person requested for this follow up interview.

## **Participants and Setting**

Participants in this study included a group of six Asian American adults between the ages of 19 to 35 years old who consider themselves to be 1.5 generation. Zhou (1997)'s definition of 1.5 generation was utilized, which consisted individuals who were born in Asian countries outside of the U.S. and migrated between the ages of six to twelve.

Participants were a convenience and snowball sample consisting of researcher's personal contacts as well as referrals made by existing participants. The participants were not be located in any single geographic location as individuals can experience the phenomenon of being 1.5 generation in many places.

## **Data Analysis Procedures**

Information gathered from these interviews was analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method, which included the following steps that were closely followed:

1. The researcher would read the transcription of each participant's interview and listen to the interviews multiple times in order to get a feeling for the participants and their responses.
2. The researcher would underline and extract significant statements from the transcript that directly pertained to the phenomenon of interest. These statements would be recorded on a separate sheet noting their pages and line numbers.
3. The researcher would formulate and develop meanings for each significant statement. This process would require constant comparing and contrasting between the original transcript, the significant statements, and formulated meanings from all of the participants.
4. The researcher would organize the formulated meanings into categories, clusters of themes, and themes. In order to validate clusters or themes, the researcher would compare them with the original interview and refine them to reflect the original intent of the participants.
5. The researcher would integrate the results of the data analysis into an exhaustive description of the 1.5-generation academic and acculturation experiences.
6. The researcher, as a measure of credibility, would ask available participants to read the final exhaustive description in order to ensure that it accurately represents their experience.

(Sanders, 2003; Speziale & Carpenter, 2007).

## **Scientific Rigor**

In qualitative research, scientific rigor can be measured by credibility and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility ensures that the phenomenon was accurately identified and described (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, effort was made to assure credibility: the audit trail; the iterative comparison of statements, formulated meanings, and the exhaustive description. Confirmability is similar to the concept of objectivity in quantitative research designs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, confirmability was achieved through "bracketing" of the researcher's preexisting knowledge in order to see the phenomenon solely through the eyes of the study participants. Bracketing was done by the writing of a reflexive journal

throughout the entire research process. The reflexive journal included detailed notes of the research process, challenges, and reactions after interviews for the purpose of identifying and reducing bias from the data analysis. Finally, a sample of the interviews was analyzed by another researcher and compared with the researcher's analysis to ensure a bias-free description.

## Results

The final, purposive sample consisted of six individuals who shared stories about their experiences at school and home while being 1.5 generation. There were four females and two males. Two of the participants were originally from South Korea; two from Indonesia; one from Taiwan, and one from China. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 35, while ages at the time of move ranged from 6 to 12. All participants had experienced going to school in their native countries prior to starting school in the U.S.

TABLE 1. *Participant Information*

| Name     | Present Age | Age of Move | Country of Origin | Location of Move | Current Location |
|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Penelope | 19          | 12          | Indonesia         | Texas            | Germany          |
| Natalie  | 26          | 12          | Indonesia         | Colorado         | Colorado         |
| Calvin   | 28          | 6           | South Korea       | Texas            | Texas            |
| Helen    | 22          | 6           | South Korea       | Texas            | Texas            |
| Timothy  | 28          | 12          | China             | Texas            | Illinois         |
| Rose     | 35          | 11          | Taiwan            | Virginia         | Colorado         |

After analysis, 153 significant statements of 1.5-generation experiences were identified and given corresponding 28 formulated meanings. Table 2 below provides selected examples of significant statements and corresponding formulated meanings. The formulated meanings were then clustered around five themes. The themes that emerged from the analysis of the formulated meanings were: (1) "It is always just us, no one else"; (2) "We will always be perpetual foreigners"; (3) "I am in constant in-betweenness, but it's a good thing" (4) "I struggled, then I succeed"; and lastly (5) "I want to be a different kind of Asian". All five themes were experienced by each of the participants, though some of the participants focused more on one theme than another within their interviews.

TABLE 2. *Selected Examples of Significant Statements and Corresponding Formulated Meanings*

| Significant Statement  | Formulated Meaning  |
|--|---|
| Well, everybody knows how crazy the education system is back home, how stringent it is, right? So I think my parents wanted more for us than that, even if it meant leaving everyone else. | Parents of the participants relocated to the US for its better education system and opportunities, even if relocating means having to leave everything else behind. <i>(related to theme 1)</i> |
| ...I was exposed to a new culture and  | Generation 1.5 individuals feel that they   |

language but at the same time I was expected to retain most of [old language] and experiences back home.

are expected to adjust quickly to a new language and culture, yet simultaneously maintain their culture and language of origin. *(related to themes 2, 3)*

I remember the first day of school being a culture shock. It was totally different from what I have been experiencing. I remember it was the first time I ever rode a school bus... I was watching how different the kids interacted, how different the school was, how more laid back it was. Here, you are able to be yourself. There was enormous freedom.

Because generation 1.5 individuals had started school at the countries of origin, they are able to recall the differences between the school systems. One thing that stood out entirely is the enormous amount of freedom for students at school. *(related to themes 4,5)*

The majority of our neighbors were white and they didn't deal with minorities at all. The majority of my classmates at school were white with very few Hispanics and almost none of them were of oriental origin. So for me, I experienced some of those stereotypes, but for them it was just ignorance, I don't think they meant to be disrespectful, they just didn't know any better.

When asked about experiencing the model minority stereotype at school, participants faulted a lack of experience of dealing with minorities. Discrimination and stereotypes happen because others "didn't know any better". *(Related to Theme 2, 4)*

I took care of my sister whenever my parents were at work. It was always just us. My English was also improving at a much faster rate than my parents', so I would also have to translate for them. For example when paying for bills, etc.

For those that are older siblings, taking care of the younger siblings is a responsibility gained as soon as they moved to the U.S. Other responsibilities included translating for the parents whenever English use is required. Some expressed frustration and concern at these added responsibilities. *(Related to theme 1)*

It is really important to retain that Asian identity...[because] it is who you are, how you are built. You are never going to be fully American. Right now, I'm more balanced. Though sometimes I struggle between the two cultures, I feel it is a good thing.

1.5 Generation individuals feel a need to have a balance between their Asian and American identity, a huge part due to feeling that they will never be entirely American. However, they do not see this as a disadvantage, but rather an advantage. *(Related to theme 4, 5)*

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## Discussion

### *Theme 1: “It is always just us, no one else”*

Many 1.5-generation individuals moved to the United States with just their immediate family members (i.e. parents and siblings). Though some expressed that choosing where to move to in the U.S. depended on where other extended family and friends have moved to in the past, for the most part, they start over as a single family in a brand new place. In a way, this struggle to start fresh at a new place necessitated them to be close as a family. As one participant’s father would say “...there is no one that is going to be consistent, a constant in your life other than your family”.

All of the participants expressed a need to care for each other, in particular of their siblings while their parents worked. Calvin described his relationship with his younger sister now to be more than a typical sibling relationship; “[Coming here] definitely brought my sister and me closer. She says our relationship is closer than most brother and sister relationships... there is this fatherly, guardian aspect”. Calvin, however, also mentioned that as much as he can appreciate having to take care of his sister now, he also said, “It was a bit crazy. Because I shouldn’t have to do all of this. I was only a kid too”.

Another participant, Natalie, mentioned with some frustration, “Sometimes I’d get jealous of friends who have cousins, grandmas, grandpas, uncles, aunts. I had no one. It was always just us. Mom, dad, my sister, and me. No one else”; however, Natalie agreed that she is now grateful for such a close-knit relationship with her family.

### *Theme 2: “We will always be perpetual foreigners”*

All of the participants agreed that they will never feel or be viewed by others to be entirely “American”. One participant, Rose, mentioned, “As fluent as I am in English, as familiar as I am to this culture, as many years as I have lived here, others will always see me as an immigrant.” When asked to expand upon this statement, she spoke of an instance where others would question where she was from, “then they would ask, “Where are you from, like where are you *really* from?”. Every single participant spoke of other instances where they are made to feel not entirely belonging in this country.

One of the interview questions asked the participants to talk about where they felt they most belong. “I got used to not belonging. I always feel like we will always be perpetual foreigners”, Rose again said. In contrast, Calvin, who became actively involved in the basketball team at school, mentioned, “I didn’t ever feel like I belonged entirely there either. Like “this is my group!” I feel that I could belong to all of the little groups that I was part of. I think this is still true today.” In a way, participants expressed that being 1.5-generation forces one to “mold” to the different groups in order to belong. Rose also mentioned that being 1.5 generation forces you to be “comfortable” with being the “kid that is different. The new kid. You maintain this title even after being there for so long.”

It is not just others viewing them as “perpetual foreigners”, in a way, it seems that they too view themselves as such. “It could be my accent”, said Rose, whom to the researcher lacked any “Asian” accent, “but I will never be American enough”.

### ***Theme 3: “I am in constant in-betweenness, but it’s a good thing”***

Earlier it was mentioned that most participants share the sentiment of not feeling entirely American. At the same time, they also do not feel entirely Korean, Taiwanese, Chinese, or Indonesian, there seemed to always be this constant “in-betweenness”. However, all participants agree that this is not always a negative, as painted by one of the participants, Timothy:

So there is always going to be that struggle, conflict. For example, when I am hanging out with my American friends, how do I become not so Asian? When I am with my wife’s Chinese friends, how do I become not so American? However, as I mature, I feel that the process becomes more and more natural. With maturity, I have also learned to be respectful and recognize that there are good things about both cultures. It isn’t necessary for me to ignore one and focus on the other at any given time. I have to welcome both. You become a mesh of both. This is what makes you unique.

Another participant, Calvin, stated:

I had the luxury of getting the best of both worlds. I love the fact that I have my Korean heritage. When you belong to 1.5 generation, you may not feel like you fit in entirely anywhere, we can all see that, but you really do get the best of both worlds. For me, I can pick and choose at any time.

In a way, 1.5-generation individuals become masters of adapting. They adapt who they are in order to fit in. Calvin also admitted during his interview that he finds himself “talking a different way when I am with different groups. For example, when I would be with my basketball teammates, I’d be more “street”. When I would be with my church friends, I again speak differently”. This ability to control the amount of “Asian” and “American” seems to be present in all of the participants interviewed.

### ***Theme 4: “I struggled, then I succeed”***

When speaking about challenges faced when first moving to the U.S., one of the first things the participants mentioned was the obvious language barrier. Rose, who was an avid reader before she moved to the U.S. found herself almost “illiterate”:

It was a complete hit on my self-esteem. I had zero English. It seemed that my 6-year-old brother was picking up English way faster than me. For the first time in my life, I couldn’t read. I couldn’t speak.

Another participant also shared this challenge, stating that it was hard not to feel “dumb”. Most of the participants were excelling academically prior to moving to the U.S.; however, the language barrier placed them temporarily behind in comparison to their American peers. One participant mentioned that moving changed her personality in a more permanent way:

I was very outgoing and talkative in Korea...but because of that language barrier when we moved here, I felt that I no longer knew how to communicate with my new classmates or the new people that I was meeting, I became really shy. I really feel that those first 2 or 3 years in the states definitely shaped the rest of my experiences here... I am much better now, but I’m still shy.”

It was also very easy for others like friends and teachers to assume within those initial years of moving to the States, that these individuals knew “nothing”. However, all of the participants attributed others behavior towards them to a lack of “experience” with new immigrants. Most of the participants moved to predominantly white areas in Texas, Colorado, and Virginia; these experiences would most likely be different in more diverse settings.

In regards to English acquisition, all of the participants agreed that their language skills were developing at a much faster rate than their parents’. As a result, they had to take on translating roles in settings outside of the home. This is especially true for individuals who are the oldest children. Parents and younger siblings come to rely on the older sibling to communicate with others.

After the first few years of struggling with the language, most 1.5-generation individuals found themselves on par or even exceeding their peers academically. This is the period when the model minority stereotype became most apparent to the participants, as stated by Calvin:

I remember that other students would assume that I would be really good in math or something. Much to their shame when they finally figured out that I am not very good in math[...] It never hurt me. I would actually joke about it.

Others thought similarly, that the model minority stereotype never really affected them in a negative way. Penelope mentioned, “I really was outperforming my peers. For once, it felt good. It became my identity as the smart kid”. It seems that in most of these cases, the 1.5 generation participants would struggle initially mainly due to the language barrier, which then greatly affected their self-esteem; however, all of the participants ended up finding other roles and identities to once again rebuild that self-esteem. Both Calvin and Timothy found this through sports; others through excelling academically.

### ***Theme 5: “I want to be a different kind of Asian”***

All of the participants interviewed mentioned a desire to be “a different kind of Asian”. Calvin stated:

Back then, it was so important to me that others knew that I was not your stereotypical Asian. I hated math. I was terrible at it. I was awesome at basketball. I didn’t really want to hangout with the “Asian” group at school. For the longest time, it was important to be like everyone else, like the white kids. But, I feel like I have finally grown out of that. I finally realize that only I can define my own happiness... that I actually don't want to be like everybody else. It actually is a very uplifting freeing thing to be different.

Calvin’s case is a bit extreme in that he mostly avoided even befriending the Asian students; however, others try to differentiate themselves by involving themselves in extracurricular activities that were not “Asian”. Rose joined theater and choir. Timothy joined soccer. When asked what the stereotypical “Asian” student would be like, responses varied from students who lack social skills to those who dress a certain way. These stereotypes are ones that all participants fought hard to overcome. In a way, the participants wanted to be the “model” student, not necessarily the “model minority”, who carries with him or her all of the negative stereotypes associated with

having such a label. When asked why it was so important to be “a different kind of Asian”, Natalie said “I don’t know. Maybe for the longest time, that was my only identity. The Asian kid who didn’t talk. So I ended up spending all these years trying to disprove it.” Another participant mentioned, “Because that’s not all I am. I am more than that. I am more than just that Asian kid.”

## **Conclusion**

Although 1.5-generation individuals articulated many challenges in their path to discover their identity and belongingness, they also described their own resourcefulness and strategies to overcome these challenges. Participants also shared many positive experiences that have helped shape their personalities today. It is important to remember that there are unique stories to individual participants not included in this paper that were not shared by all of the participants, which indicates that school experience and acculturation are not always experienced in the same way.

An increased understanding of the experiences of 1.5 generation Asians in the U.S. can help human service professionals to work more effectively with these individuals and other diverse populations. Findings from this study can help us to realize that for most 1.5 generation individuals, their family is oftentimes the only people they have in the country; that they have added responsibilities in the family that their peers may not have; that they often feel a lack of belongingness in group settings, though it is not always a negative; that sometimes they are ashamed of their differences, though over time will eventually learn to embrace them; that they often are struggling for the first time due to the significant language barrier. Our awareness of these results will enable us to be a better teacher, friend, school psychologist, social worker, whatever our role may be, to these 1.5-generation individuals, who oftentimes fall through the cracks within our education system.

This qualitative study aims to improve our understanding of the nature of the 1.5-generation individual’s experience of growing up and living in the United States. It is a good first step to understanding this group, though there continues to be a need for further exploration that will go beyond just their first hand experiences to greater and larger outcomes.

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