Developmental Differences in Meaning Making:

How Ethnic Minorities Make Sense of Their Ethnicities

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Abstract

The research literature indicates ethnic identity as a critical aspect to the development of ethnic minority youth. However, past studies have predominately focused on the extent to which an individual has explored and committed to an ethnic identity, and less on the developmental process as to how ethnic identities are constructed. The current thesis examined the relationship between the sophistication of meaning making reflected through narrative accounts and cognitive and affective dimensions of ethnic identity measured through a survey from two ethnic minority groups: Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults and Asian Heritage youth in the U.S. Results from the study suggested no significant relationship between sophistication of meaning making and dimensions of ethnic identification. However, sophistication of meaning making among ethnicity-related stories suggested developmental and within group differences between the Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults and Asian Heritage youth.

Keywords: ethnic identity, ethnic minorities, meaning making, Mixed Ethnic Heritage, Asian Heritage, narrative identity.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The primary purpose of the thesis was to examine the process whereby ethnic minority youth reflect on their ethnicity-related experiences in the process of constructing their ethnic identities. For my master's thesis, I examined the relationship between the sophistication of meaning making reflected in participants' narrative accounts of ethnicity-related experiences and cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of ethnic identification measured through a survey. The U.S. populace is becoming more diverse in recent years; it is estimated that more than half of the American youth population will be ethnic minorities by 2020, and only 36 percent of all children under age of 18 will be monoracial by 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2015). Hence, understanding the process of constructing multiple identities among youth from diverse ethnic backgrounds is crucial. Among the multiple dimensions of identity, the construction of ethnic identity is deemed important to the development of ethnic minority youth (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Umana-Taylor, 2018).

Fundamentally, ethnic identity is considered as an evolving developmental process that involves the integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of identification with an ethnic group (Umaña-Taylor, 2011; Syed, 2015). The cognitive dimension refers to the clarity and resolution of the meaning of ethnicity; the affective dimension is the pride and emotional significance affiliated with ethnicity; and the behavioral dimension is the degree to which individuals initiate in a process of exploring and learning

about their ethnicity. Studies have shown that the achievement of ethnic identity is associated with psychosocial, academic, and health risk outcomes among ethnic minority youth (Fischer, Reynolds, Hsu, Barnes, & Tyler, 2014; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011). Ethnic identity also impacts the ability to cope with psychological distress caused by discrimination (Umaña-Taylor, & Updegraff, 2007; Yip, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008). With previous studies supporting the argument that ethnic identity achievement has a positive impact on the development of ethnic minority youth, there is a further need to examine how these identities are structured, how they are constituted and formulated with other facets or dimensions relevant to an individual's ethnic identity.

Past research has focused on the lived experiences that constitute ethnic identity and how it impacts the development of ethnic minority youth in various contexts. However, most studies do not examine the process (how individuals arrived at their current identity), content (what do these identities look like), and structure (formulation of relevant identities within an individual) of ethnic identity development (Syed, 2015). In the current thesis, my aim is to understand the complexity and variety of ethnic minority youth's lived experiences in depth to explore the process through which they construct their identities through their reflections on their experiences.

The proposed research specifically examined ethnic identity construction among Asian Heritage youth and Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults. Although most of my Asian heritage participants are either Chinese or Vietnamese, I have used the term Asian Heritage to refer to this group. Past literature about Asian Heritage youth mentioned throughout this paper may

use the term "Asian American" in their study. However, my purpose was to examine ethnic heritage and ethnic composition of Asian Heritage participants in my study; not racial identity of my participants. The definition of race and ethnicity are both socially constructed concepts whose definitions are often conflated and changes over time (Cokley, 2007; Rivas-Drake, 2014). It is also important to note that racialized experiences are embedded in the processes of ethnic identity development. Thus, racial categorizations play an integral role to the meaning making process of identity formation (Pahl &Way, 2006, Umana-taylor et al., 2014). Therefore, as shown in Table 1 and Table 2, there are various ways of how participants are self-identifying and using specific labels to describe their ethnic belonging.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review presents current conceptual frameworks and empirical research on ethnic identity to establish the rationale for the proposed study's focus on Asian Heritage youth and Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults' ethnic identity development.

Approaches to Ethnic Identity Research

Previous research heavily relied on examining ethnic identity status through quantitative and cross-sectional studies. The identity status approach examines the extent to which individuals have explored and committed to their identity. The identity status paradigm is based on Erikson's (1963) theory of how ego identity is formulated during an identity crisis which individuals experience during their late teens to late twenties (Marcia, 1966). An ego identity is described by Erikson (1968) as the coexistence with the awareness of self-sameness and continuity in one's individuality and how one sees themselves in society. Marcia (1966) operationalized Erikson's theory of ego identity formation by using the dimensions of commitment and exploration. Commitment refers to the degree to which an individual invests in a personal decision of one's identity. Exploration refers to the period in which an individual examines and reflects on oneself.

In an attempt to measure the process of ego identity formation, Marcia's identity status paradigm assigns individuals to one of four identity statuses: achieved, foreclosed, moratorium, or diffused. Individuals with the achieved status show high commitment/high exploration in that they have gone through the process of reevaluating their past beliefs and have achieved a stable sense of who they are. Individuals categorized in the foreclosed status

are those who show high commitment/low exploration in that they have not experienced an identity crisis due to their stable commitment and never having the need to explore their identity. On the other hand, individuals in the moratorium status show low commitment/high exploration, in that they are currently in the crisis stage and still determining their commitment to a particular identity. Finally, individuals in the diffused status show low commitment/low exploration in that they have never experienced the crisis stage nor have been concerned about commitment. Within Marcia's paradigm, diffusion and foreclosure are viewed as less mature identity statuses, and the developmental expectation is for individuals to progress into moratorium and eventually to the achieved status. Acclaimed ethnic identity measures such as Phinney's (1993) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure are rooted in Marcia's (1996) identity status model (Syed, 2015).

However, the developmental process is not captured through the identity status approach (Cote & Levine, 2002; McLean & Pasupathi, 2012). To date, there is a dearth of research focused on understanding the process of constructing an ethnic identity. Moreover, there has been criticism regarding Marcia's (1966) status approach as not accurately capturing Erikson's (1968) theory of identity development. Cote and Levine (1987) argue that Marcia's identity status paradigm ignores Erikson's original theorizing of the formulation of an ego identity being a life span process, and also only captures the formation of ego identity through individual's commitment within a narrow conceptualization of an identity crisis. According to Erikson (1968), a healthy identity is one in which individuals integrate aspects of the self, and integrate themselves through past, present and future (Syed, 2015). Based on

Erikson's theory, Syed suggests the need to examine the development of identity not as progression through status as represented in the status approach, but as an increasing sense of integration. Thus, as an alternative to the status approach, the narrative approach is expected to capture the sense of integration in identity development. Furthermore, the narrative approach examines the process of how individuals reflect on their past experiences and make meaning of their experiences related to their ethnicity or ethnic identity (McLean & Pasupathi, 2012).

Supporting a similar line of argument, McAdams' (2001; 2013) autobiographical life-story model focuses on how individuals construct their identities through the process of creating their life stories. McAdams (2013) explains how a constructed sense of self integrates different aspects of the self, including the social actor, motivated agent, and autobiographical author. The social actor is how the individual perceives the objective self from the subjective self; how the I is perceiving the me taking a role in society. For example, when an individual describes feeling different because they spoke more languages than their peers, they already perceive themselves (the I) as being multilingual (the me) in their social context. The motivated agent moves beyond the social actor and specifies personal goals, motives, and values made from exploration and commitment to life projects. Lastly, the autobiographical author is the self as a storyteller who synthesizes episodes regarding the self, interprets the episodes, and forms them into a coherent and integrative life story. According to McAdams (2013), the stage of becoming an autobiographical author is attained from emerging adulthood and continues throughout the life span. McAdams posits that by integrating different social

scenarios in current lives, individuals construct their life story that extends back to the past and forward to the future. Individuals with multiple ethnic backgrounds are constantly faced with different social scenarios where they need to evaluate, reconstruct, and negotiate their multiple ethnic identities through their life span. Thus, the narrative approach promotes gathering stories that individuals have constructed on their current context, revealing what they were thinking or considered important to them at the time (Syed, 2015).

Consistent with McAdam's (2013) and Syed's (2015) focus on narratives as a means of reflecting on integrating multiple dimensions of identity, critical consciousness has been seen as a unique aspect of self-reflection among ethnic minority youth. Critical consciousness is the ability to reflect life events that involve social inequity and take action to change them (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). Critical consciousness development is thought to occur when marginalized individuals are provided support to reflect upon and challenge social inequity (Freire, 1973). Freire originally used the framework of critical consciousness to increase social justice literacy among Brazilian peasants; however, critical consciousness is perceived to also benefit marginalized youth (Watts et al., 2011). As to the aforementioned benefit, Watts et al. (2011) note that having the ability to analyze societal inequities will help marginalized youth in the U.S. to understand their sociopolitical context and lead them to resist unjust situations through constructive social action.

Critical consciousness is composed of three components: critical reflection, critical action, and political efficacy (Watts et al., 2011). Critical

reflection is having the ability to analyze societal inequities that constrain individuals' well-being or agency. Political efficacy is an individuals' perception that they themselves have the ability to change society. Critical action refers to individual or collective action taken to change unjust policies and practices. Freire (1973) viewed critical reflection and critical action to be reciprocal; individuals who critically analyzed their social conditions are more compelled to take action for change.

Previous research suggested social identity and ethnic related experiences shape critical action. For example, Stepick and Stepick (2002) found that ethnic identity was associated with civic engagement among U.S. immigrant adults. Flanagan, Syverten, Gill, Gallay, and Cumsille (2009) also found racial group identity and experiences of racial discrimination help to shape civic behavior. Although previous research has identified the relation between social identity such as ethnic/racial identity and ethnic related experiences help to shape critical action, we still do not know how critical reflection, which is the precursor to critical action, is constructed (Watts et al., 2011).

As a leading researcher, Watts (2010) found that people of color who were involved in social justice organizations grew up in environments that instilled critical reflection, possessed a salient and positive regard towards their social identity, and had personally experienced social injustice. Watts' research results suggest that there are certain aspects that marginalized youth experience to build critical reflection. As an autobiographical author, individuals are integrating episodes of the self, reflecting and making sense of those episodes to form a coherent integrative story. With this in mind, the

current thesis further examined whether marginalized youth who make more sense of their ethnic related experiences are able to expand upon that to exercise critical reflection.

Integrating Status Approach and Narrative Approach

Past research on ethnic identity development was discussed in the previous section and highlighted that most research on ethnic identity focused heavily on examining the outcomes of ethnic identities of ethnic minority youth through quantitative research. However, solely focusing on the outcomes of ethnic identity development does not provide information on how individuals are constructing and reflecting on their lives to reach their current status of their ethnic identity. Thus, there has been a shift in the field to incorporate the narrative approach to examine the process by which individuals are integrating multiple dimensions of their self to construct their ethnic identity.

McLean and Pasupathi (2012) further suggest integrating both the status approach and narrative approach to draw greater insights to examining ethnic identity development, and combine the process and outcomes to individuals’ ethnic identity development. Although limited, empirical work supports the relation between ethnic identity status and narratives. For example, Syed and Azmitia (2008) found that emerging adults told four different types of ethnicity-related narrative themes: (a) experiences of prejudice; (b) connection to heritage culture; (c) awareness of difference; and (d) awareness of underrepresentation. Among the four types of narratives that were coded, participants’ stories varied in relation with their level of ethnic identity; those in achieved ethnic identity status most likely told experiences

of prejudice or connection to heritage culture stories, whereas those in the unexamined status told awareness of difference and awareness of underrepresentation stories. The results from Syed and Azmitia's (2008) study implies that research on ethnic identity processes could relate to the outcomes examined through quantitative research; two approaches considered very independent to each other can be integrated to provide more in-depth examination of individuals' ethnic identity development.

Integrating Different Dimensions of the Self

Individuals are required to integrate different aspects of the self, and provide coherence through their past, present, and future for a healthy identity (Erikson, 1968). Based on Erikson's view of a healthy identity, Syed (2015) suggested an approach viewing ethnic identity as an increasing sense of integration; individuals who have more coherence to their narrative and have better integration to different aspects of the self are capable of constructing a healthier identity. Therefore, the level of coherence in individuals' ethnicity-related stories might help provide insight as to how individuals integrate different dimensions of the self to construct their ethnic identity.

Examining the different levels of coherence, which is the increasing integration of the selves from the past, present, and future, in ethnicity-related stories will be the key aspect to finding how individuals are integrating different dimensions of the self. Meaning making is defined as reflecting on past events to see how individuals have changed over time (McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007). In a study of self-defining memories, McLean and Thorne (2003) defined two types of meaning making: lesson learning and gaining insight. Lesson leaning refers to learning a lesson from an event,

which could possibly direct future behavior and actions when a similar event was to reoccur (e.g. lesson pertaining change in one's behavior if a similar event were to reoccur). Gaining insight refers to extracting meaning from an event that goes beyond the event itself and applies to larger or more abstract interpretations (e.g. transformation in retrospection beyond the specific event experienced). McLean and Thorne (2003) explain the difference between lesson learning and gaining insight using the following example. The meaning is indicated in italics.

> "For example, an event in which a son throws eggs at his mother. If the son comments that he *learned never to throw eggs at his mother again*, he claims to have learned a lesson. On the other hand, if the son comments that he *realized that he has an anger management problem*, his realization counts as gaining insight because it extends beyond eggs and beyond his mother." (p.636)

Between lesson learning and gaining insight, McLean and Thorne (2003) assumed lesson learning as a developmentally less advanced form of meaning making. Furthermore, McLean (2005) found developmental differences in meaning making in which younger participants reported more lesson learning than older participants. Adapting McLean and Thorne's (2003) conceptualization of meaning making, McLean and Pratt (2006) found individuals with more sophisticated meaning making in their stories to have a mature identity status and vice versa. Thus, further examination of the relationship between individual's sophistication in meaning making through ethnicity-related stories and ethnic identity status might help provide new

insights to the process whereby ethnic minority individuals frame the process of constructing their ethnic identities and integrate different dimensions of the self.

Ethnic Identity Development Among Asian Americans and Mixed Ethnic Heritages

The second section of the literature review presents a rationale for focusing on Asian Heritage youth and Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults. The review presents relevant studies regarding integrating the status and narrative approach, existing research on ethnic identity development and psychological outcomes, developmental differences on ethnic identity construction, characteristics of ethnic identity, and considerations of heterogeneity among Asian Americans and Mixed Ethnicities. .

Integration of the status and narrative approach. Although limited, differences and similarities across ethnic minority groups have been examined through research integrating the identity status and narrative approach. In Syed and Azmitia's (2008) study in which they found a relation between participants' ethnic identity status and narratives, they also found differences in narrative themes across ethnic groups. Mixed-ethnicity and White participants told more awareness of difference and fewer experiences of prejudice narratives than did Asian American and Latino participants. Although Asian American, Latino, and White participants told the same amount of awareness of underrepresentation stories, the Mixed-ethnicities recounted none from this theme. In terms of connection to culture, Asian American and Mixed-ethnicity participants told slightly more of this theme than Latino and White participants. Results from Syed and Azmitia's (2008)

study shows interesting results between two groups: Asian Americans and Mixed Ethnicities. While having opposite results in the narrative themes that were told by the two groups, Asian Americans and Mixed Ethnicities also shared similarities by telling stories that were connected to culture. Comparing Asian Heritages and Mixed Ethnicities may provide us further information on why there can be completely different reactions and also similarities behind ethnic identity development among ethnic minorities. Thus, the current study examined Asian Heritage and Mixed Ethnic Heritage individuals.

Ethnic identity development and psychological outcomes. Many have suggested the achievement of ethnic identity to be an important aspect of the development of Asian Americans. For example, Iwamoto and Liu (2010) indicated that racial identity statuses, Asian values (e.g. collectivism, conformity to norms, hierarchical family structure, and avoidance of shame) and ethnic identity affirmation and belonging were predictors of psychological well-being for Asian American adolescents. The research also found that having Asian values were found to moderate the relationship between race-related stresses and positive psychological well-being. In contrast to this result, individuals in low race-related stress conditions who had low Asian values, started with high levels of well-being but the levels decreased as race-related stress increased.

Other research has also shown that the maintenance of heritage culture, and affiliation with ethnic communities are potential protective factors for their social adaptation (Anyon, Ong and Whitaker, 2014; Zhou et al., 2012). Furthermore, Johnston-Guerro and Pizzolato (2016) suggested race and ethnicity to be useful constructs for Asian American adolescents'

understanding of their multiple identities. They also found that those who did not fit into a stereotype towards their race related more with their ethnicity than their race. Thus, ethnicity is a core aspect in helping Asian Americans describe their personal identity and also in navigating across multiple cultural contexts.

Apart from Asian Americans, there is a lack of research around Mixed Ethnic Heritage individuals' ethnic identity. Early work regarded multiethnic-racial individuals to experience a sense of cultural homelessness and have difficulty securing affiliation and belonging to an ethnic-racial group (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999; Williams & Thornton, 1998;). Sanchez (2010) reported that mixed ethnic-racial individuals who held the perceptions of being forced to choose a singular racial-ethnic identity, and who also had lower public regard about their multiethnic-racial identity were associated with depressive symptoms. Given past findings, Mixed Ethnic Heritage individuals are considered to have more negative implications on their ethnic identity compared to other ethnic minority groups (Soliz, Cronan, Bergquist, Nuru, & Rettenour, 2017). However in their study, Soliz et al., (2017) found that multiracial adults reported both benefits (positive) and challenges (negative) in balancing how to navigate their multiple ethnic identities in different social settings. Ethnic identity is more than a dichotomy of negative or positive to multiethnic individuals; ethnic identity is more complex and diverse. Therefore, it is important to further examine how Mixed Ethnic heritage individuals are evaluating, negotiating, and constructing their ethnic identity.

Developmental differences. Cognitive development and age can

influence the amount of complex information individuals are able to process and incorporate into their perception of themselves (Gonzales-Backen, 2013; Phinney, 1989). As individuals become more cognitively mature, they progress from seeing ethnicity in superficial terms such as physical appearance to abstract terms such as having critical consciousness towards ones' ethnicity. Ying and Lee (1999) examined the development of ethnic identity among Asian Americans through the status approach and they found that younger Asian American adolescents demonstrated a developmental progression from foreclosure, to moratorium, to achievement status. Furthermore, they also found developmental progression through ethnic identity outcomes; younger adolescents presented a unidimensional separation outcome, and older adolescents presented a bidimensional integration outcome. A unidimensional separation outcome is a state in which individuals shed their culture of origin to embrace the predominant culture. In contrast, a bidimensional integration outcome is having affiliation with both cultures the individual is associated with. As presented from the aforementioned studies, developmental progression and differences in ethnic identity development is supported through mostly quantitative research, which investigates ethnic identity status. However, there is little to no research examining the cognitive development in ethnicity-related stories constructed by ethnic minorities, especially Mixed Ethnic Heritage individuals. Thus, one of the goals of the current thesis was to fill in the research gap by examining the levels of meaning making within ethnicity-related stories and developmental differences between Asian American youth and Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults.

Characteristics of ethnic identity development. In comparison to other ethnic minority groups, Asian Americans tend to show stronger ethnic identity status. In a study examining the relationship of ethnic identity development and the perceptions of being a typical American among college students from various backgrounds, Weisskirch (2005) found that among the five ethnic groups, Asian American and Latinos had the highest levels of ethnic identity scores followed by those classified as Other, those of Mixed Ethnicity, and Euro-Americans. Furthermore, among the participants who did not see themselves as a typical American, Latino participants had a higher level of ethnic identity score. However for Asian Americans, who also scored a high level of ethnic identity score, the perception of being a typical American made no difference in their levels of ethnic identity scores. Weisskirch's (2005) findings suggest Asian Americans to have unique ways of balancing or integrating their ethnic identity and national identity. In the same study, Mixed Ethnic individuals had lower ethnic identity scores compared to Asian Americans and Latinos, but had similar results to Asian Americans regarding the relation between ethnic identity scores and perception of being typical American. Similar to Syed and Azmitia's (2008) findings, Asian Americans and Mixed Ethnic individuals in Weisskirch's (2005) study both exhibited differences and similarities in how the two groups are navigating their ethnic identities.

Heterogeneity. Lastly, it is important to note heterogeneity within Asian Americans and Mixed Ethnic Heritage individuals. Social context such as immigrant status, family, peers, neighborhoods, and phenotype intersect with individuals' ethnic identity construction. Furthermore, it is crucial to pay

close attention to how these social contexts intersect to create different trajectories of ethnic identity within the same ethnic group. Past studies have supported immigrant status to impact children's private regard and affiliation towards their ethnic group (Pfeifer et al., 2007; Yip, Gee, Takeuchi, & García Coll, 2008). Needless to say, different immigration status, emigration reasons, and social stratification contexts are also pertinent among Asian Americans (Mistry et al., 2016). For example, there are different pathways to why Asian Americans immigrated to the U.S. Emigrating reasons may be due to political push from the country of origin, or non-voluntary reason (e.g., war in the country of origin); some Asian Americans might have entered as refugees, students, or professionals. Thus, depending on immigration and emigration contexts, there are different opportunities, which may reflect various associations of ethnic affiliation between Asian Americans. Yip et al., (2008) found that between immigrant and U.S. born Asian Americans, ones in the immigrant status had higher ethnic identity compared to U.S. born participants. However, despite having stronger ethnic identity, ethnic centrality did not moderate the association between discrimination and distress between immigrant status participants but did for U.S. born participants.

More proximal settings such as peers, family, and neighborhood contexts also play an important role in the development of ethnic identity among ethnic minority youth. Hughes, Watford, and Del Toro (2016) state families to be the primary context for adolescents' identity, cultural socialization, and discrimination experiences. For example, family gatherings, or cultural celebrations provided within the family context can serve as identity triggers and clues to what it means to belong to a certain ethnic group

(Hughes et al., 2008). Greater family cultural socialization is also associated with greater ethnic identity exploration and commitment (Juang & Syed, 2010). Awareness of discrimination, which eventually might lead to public or private regard towards one group, is also mainly exposed from family context (Oyserman, Brickman, & Rhodes, 2007). Thus, depending on participants' exposure to cultural celebrations or receptions of their family's regard toward their cultural heritage affects how individuals perceive or are made salient of their ethnic identity.

Alongside family, peers are also an important contextual influence to how adolescents and young adults are making sense of their ethnic identity; peers are the next proximal association youth have besides family (Brown, 2004). For example, contact with same ethnic peers has been associated with increased exploration and belonging to an ethnic group (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001) and increased private regard (Yip, Douglas, and Shelton, 2013). Interaction with same ethnic peers also affects youth's attitudes toward out-group by influencing how youth see their own ethnic group and out-group (De Tezanos-Pinto, Bratt, & Brown, 2010). Affiliation to different Asian Americans subgroups can result in differing discrimination experiences that individuals may face from their peers at school. In general, Asian Americans are considered to experience less negative stereotypes from peers due to the positive stereotype of being a model minority assigned to Asian Americans.

However, in addition to suffering from the prevalence of the model minority stereotype, Filipino Americans face other discrimination in the classroom. Although being Asian Americans, Filipino Americans are often

mistaken for members of other racial/ethnic groups such as Latinos, Pacific Islanders, and multiracial persons (Nadal, 2011). Due to their different phenotypes in contrast to East Asian Americans, Filipino Americans often receive racial discriminations typically targeted towards Latinos and African Americans, in addition to stereotypes towards Asian Americans (Nadal & Sue, 2008). Teranishi (2002) reported that Filipino American high school students were more likely than their Chinese American peers to be stereotyped as being “gang members” and “delinquent” at school.

In addition to family and peer contexts, neighborhood context provides physical space for youth to enact their identities (Hughes et al., 2016). Ethnic enclaves, community resources, and cultural spaces within neighborhoods provide youth with opportunities to interact with their same ethnic group in positive contexts and learn about their cultural history in ways that positively contribute to their ethnic identity construction. The implications of ethnic diversity of communities for Asian youth's identity development have also been explored in studies of youth self-identification. Kiang, Perreira, and Fuligni (2011) discovered that Asian and Latino youth who reside in low immigrant concentrated areas chose to identify with a specific ethnic heritage or panethnic labels, without American hyphenation. In contrast, youth living in high immigrant concentrated areas were more likely to endorse a bicultural, or hyphenated American, identity. Oyserman and Yoon (2009) also suggested adolescents who resided in segregated areas had lower racial-ethnic connectedness, and awareness of racial/ethnic discrimination; those who resided in segregated areas had less experience of being defined as different.

Relating to the peer experiences of Filipino Americans discussed prior,

phenotype and having a White parent may be a distinguishing factor to the different experiences within Mixed Ethnic Heritages. Lopez, Walker, and Spinel (2015) suggest having darker skin is related to greater ethnic affirmation, belonging, and commitment due to others identifying ethnic labels and putting certain ethnic expectation towards darker skinned individuals than individuals who appear more White. Early research has suggested darker skinned participants among Mexican-origin individuals used more ethnically defined self-descriptors, and expressed more interest towards their Latino community compared to their lighter skinned counterparts (Gonzales-Backen & Umana-Taylor, 2011; Vazquez, Garcia-Vazquez, Bauman, & Sierra, 1997).

The comparison of ethnic identity between lighter skinned and darker skinned participants can also be seen among Mixed Ethnic Heritage individuals. For example, Spencer, Icard, Harachi, Catalano, and Oxford (2000) examined within group differences among multiracial individuals, and their results revealed that all multiracial individuals who were part White had lower ethnic identity scores compared to minority/minority multiracial individuals and mono-minority individuals. Other research has revealed individuals who phenotypically look more Black are more prone to receive negative racial attitudes (Blair, Chapleau, & Judd, 2005; Blair, Judd, & Chapleau, 2004). Thus, ethnic identity can be more salient to darker skinned individuals because it may be a protective factor against feelings of discrimination and distress. Nadal (2011) suggests developing a sense of ethnic affiliation and pride among Filipino Americans becomes a protective factor against discriminatory experiences and prevent psychological distress caused by those experiences. Considering past research results of links

between phenotype and ethnic identity among darker skinned individuals, it is important to note that differences in phenotype is most salient among Mixed Ethnic Heritage individuals given their diverse ethnic/racial compositions. Depending on their ethnic/racial composition, individuals may experience more or less ethnic salient episodes and have different trajectories to their narrative accounts.

Summary of the Literature Review

Overall, the literature review presented conceptual frameworks and empirical research on ethnic identity to establish the rationale for this study's focus on Asian Heritage youth and Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults' ethnic identity development. The review first discussed that previous research in ethnic identity development heavily relied on quantitative research and focused on examining ethnic identity status, which is the outcome of an ethnic identity. However, the status approach itself does not provide the process of how individuals are constructing and integrating multiple dimensions of the self to develop their ethnic identities. Thus, the narrative approach is suggested as the alternative approach to the status approach; the narrative approach captures the process of developing an ethnic identity.

In order to examine through the narrative approach, McAdams' (2001; 2013) autobiographical life story model and Freire's (1973) critical consciousness is introduced as the frameworks that works alongside the idea of the narrative approach. To draw even greater insight to ethnic identity development, McLean and Pasupathi (2012) suggests an integration of the status and narrative approach. Their research indicates that there is a relation between the outcome of ethnic identity examined through the status approach

and process, which is examined through the narrative approach. Thus, instead of examining ethnic identity status and narrative identity independently, combining both approaches allows more in depth research into ethnic identity development. Furthermore, based on Erikson's (1968) description of a healthy identity, it is important to examine not only how individuals are providing coherence to their past, present, and future represented through the autobiographical life story and critical consciousness but also examining how individuals are integrating different dimensions of the self. Sophistication of meaning making is introduced as the key aspect to examining the integration of different aspects of the self to form an ethnic identity. The second section of the literature review presented a rationale for focusing on Asian Heritage youth and Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults. The review presented relevant studies regarding integrating the status and narrative approach, existing research on ethnic identity development and psychological outcomes, developmental differences on ethnic identity construction, characteristics of ethnic identity, and considerations of heterogeneity among Asian Heritages and Mixed Ethnicities.

The Current Study

The study examined the relation between sophistication of meaning making in narrative accounts of ethnicity-related experiences and coordination of cognitive, affective, behavioral dimensions of ethnic identity status measured through a survey. The study utilized data from two ethnic minority groups: Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults and Asian Heritage youth.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: Is there relation between the level of meaning making and participants'

cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of ethnic identity?

H1a: Individuals who have higher scores in their sophistication of meaning making will have higher scores on their cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of ethnic identity.

H1b: Individuals who have lower scores in their sophistication of meaning making will have lower scores on their cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of ethnic identity.

RQ2: Are there developmental differences in the level of meaning making that are apparent between the narrative accounts of ethnic minority individuals of different age groups?

H2: Asian Heritage youth would have less sophistication of meaning making in their stories compared to Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults.

RQ3: Are there contextual differences or similarities that are associated with the narrative accounts between Asian Heritage youth and Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults?

Chapter 3: Research Methods

This study utilized secondary data to examine the relation between sophistication of meaning making as represented in participants' narratives and coordination of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of ethnic identity measured through a survey. The sample consisted of two groups of participants: a sample of 22 Asian Heritage youth, and 19 young adults with Mixed Ethnic Heritage. These two data sets were selected because change in ethnic identity is prominent throughout adolescence and emerging adulthood (Erikson, 1968; Syed, 2015). Furthermore, since ethnic identity is expected to be a revisited process throughout the lifespan (Phinney, 1996; Umaña-Taylor, 2011), it is important to examine developmental differences in how individuals in different age groups are constructing their ethnic identities. The two samples also represent diversity of ethnic backgrounds.

Sample and Recruitment

My data was from the Navigating Across Cultures Research Project (Mistry, Wu, Diep, Lucas, & Chaudhury, 2008). The participants included a sample of 22 Asian Heritage youth ages 15 to 17 years old, recruited at two community clinics in Boston, and a sample of 19 young adults of Mixed Ethnic Heritage ages 18 to 23 years old, recruited at a multiracial organization and two agencies in large cities on the West and East coast.

The sample of 22 Asian Heritage adolescents was recruited for an honors thesis by Diep (2007). Recruitment took place at two community clinics. Participants were informed of the study through fliers posted at registrations desks of the two clinics, face-to-face recruitment in the clinic's waiting rooms, and referrals from physicians. Since the participants were all

minors, written informed consent was obtained from both participants and their parents or legal guardians. Participants who did not have parents or legal guardians with them during recruitment were given consent forms to be signed at home.

The sample of 19 young adults with Mixed Ethnic Heritages was recruited for an independent study. Participants were recruited via a multiracial organization, and two agencies affiliated with summer programs for high school and college students in large cities on the East and West coast area. For the recruitment from the multiracial organization, an advertisement of the study was included in their newspaper. The student researcher followed up on those who signed up or contacted her via phone calls or meetings to provide more information about the study and to obtain consent if they were interested. Participants from the two agencies were recruited similarly by distribution of flyers and informational sheets about the study.

Data Collection and Measures

Two forms of data were collected from each participant. Participants completed the Navigating Across Cultures Scale (NACS) (Mistry et al., 2008), and also participated in a semi-structured interview. Since the data collection procedure differed between the two samples, these procedures are described separately for each sample.

For the sample of Asian Heritage youth, participants completed two paper questionnaires during the first 30-40 minutes of the session, which included the NACS questionnaire and the Youth Self Report that is not utilized for this study. Participants were then engaged in a 15-25 minute semi-structured interview with the researcher. Following the semi-structured

interview, participants were debriefed and given either a gift certificate for a one-month subscription for Netflix.com or $10.00 cash for compensation.

For the sample of young adults with Mixed Ethnic Heritages, participants completed three paper and pen scales: the NACS questionnaire, General Ethnic Discrimination Scale, and the Short Acculturation Scale. The latter two scales will not be used for this study. Following the scales, participants were engaged in a semi-structured interview, which was designed to elicit narrative accounts of experiences growing up in multicultural environments. Participants were also given time after the semi-structured interview to construct open-ended narratives about their lives.

Coordination of cognitive, affective, behavioral dimensions of ethnic identity. Ethnic identity coordination was assessed through participant scores on NACS (Mistry et al., 2008). Mistry et al. (2008) designed NACS based on the conceptual understanding of Rogoff's (2003) notion of culture as participation in communities of practice, as well as, LaFramboise, Coleman, and Gerton's (1993) indication of competencies necessary to function in multiple cultures. The scale consists of 52 items representing four sub-scales to (1) assess affiliation with; (2) knowledge of; (3) participation in; and (4) commitment to multiple cultural communities. The affiliation subscale was a 5-point Likert scale that included 12 items such as "I have a strong sense of belonging to my cultural group/mainstream group" and "I think of myself as being X (a member of my cultural group)". The knowledge subscale was also a 5-point Likert scale, which included a total of 12 items such as "How well do I know popular American TV shows?" and "National/regional heroes from my cultural group?" The 5 items participation subscale included items such as

"I participate in occasions, holidays, and traditions of mostly my cultural group/both: that of my cultural group and mainstream American/Mostly mainstream American." The commitment subscale that was a 5-point Likert scale with 10 items, included items such as "I think it is important for parents to surround their children with the art, music, and literature of their cultural group" and "In general, I agree with the values of mainstream Americans." NACS also included items representing self-identification, diversity of peer groups, and perceptions of public regard for heritage cultures.

Although NACS was not designed to measure ethnic identity status as defined by Marcia (1966), it does assess multiple dimensions of exposure to, participation in, affiliation with and commitment to multiple heritage communities, and was especially designed to assess the competencies necessary for individuals who see themselves as bicultural or as having to navigate multiple cultures.

The scale was constructed with items from multiple existing scales (Kim & Abreu, 2001; Phinney, 1992; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998; Suinn-Lee, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987; Zea, Asner-Self, Birman, & Buki, 2003) to assess the competencies identified by LaFramboise et al., (1993): including (a) knowledge of cultural beliefs and values; (b) positive attitudes towards both groups; (c) confidence to navigate between two cultural groups; (d) communication ability; (e) role repertoire, and (f) a sense of being grounded. Mistry et al. (2008) then reevaluated the six competencies and theorized that the process of navigating across cultures requires the four competencies: having affiliation with multiple cultural communities, knowledge of multiple cultural communities, participation in

multiple cultural, and feeling committed to multiple cultural communities. The four competencies formed are aligned with the components of ethnic identity proposed by Phinney (1997), which are self-identification to an ethnic group, behaviors and practices specific to particular groups, affirmation and belonging to ethnic groups, ethnic identity achievement, and attitudes towards other groups.

Sophistication of Meaning Making. Sophistication of meaning making was measured through a linear scoring system (0-3) developed by McLean and Pratt (2006) from the coded data obtained from the semi-structured interviews of the participants. The increasing scores reflected sophistication in meaning making. A score of 0 is given to narratives with no meaning reported. A score of 1 is given to narratives with lessons, which are only behavioral and have no extended meaning beyond the original recalled event. The following is an example taken from McLean and Pratt (2006):

> "I also worked temporarily at a law firm and realized that I did not want to practice law, but wanted to deal with some aspect of the law" (p.717).

A score of 2 is given to narratives with vague meaning, which contained meaning beyond lessons but not as explicit as insights. McLean and Pratt's (2006) example of vague meaning making is the following:

> "The event gave me motivation to learn more about medicine as a career and learn much more about myself and my desires. I also had to see my own value outside of academics." (p.717).

Lastly, a score of 3 is given to narratives with insights, which are meaning making that extends beyond the specific event to explicit transformation in

one's understanding of oneself, the world, or relationships. McLean and Pratt's (2006) example of insight is the following:

> "That event led me to choose a career in teaching. I had been planning on law school, but changed my mind. I have started my first job and I love it! Every day is different. I know that I can make a difference by helping each student to see the value of themselves. That boy gave me confidence and I am returning confidence to others." (p.717)

Data Analysis

The study examined the relationship between qualitatively coded sophistication of meaning making in the narrative data obtained from a semi-structured interview and quantitative affiliation, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions of ethnic identification data obtained from a survey. The first step of the mixed method data analysis was descriptive in nature: the qualitative data examined for variation among participants' stories and the quantitative data explored statistical variation.

Participants' narrative accounts elicited through a semi-structured interview were first categorized based on Syed and Azmitia's (2008) four narrative themes: (a) experiences of prejudice or discrimination, which are episodes or recalled experiences of prejudice, racism, discrimination, or oppression, regardless of it being intentional or not; (b) connection to heritage culture, which are experiences of feeling connected, close to, or sense of belongingness to ethnic and/or cultural background; (c) awareness of difference, which are experiences when participant became aware of their difference from others, in terms of race, ethnicity, language, physical features,

or cultural practices; and (d) awareness of underrepresentation, which are recalled experiences, events, or episodes reflecting awareness of being in the numerical minority in a particular context.

After narratives were categorized into Syed and Azmitia's (2008) four narrative themes, all participants' narrative construction were sorted and grouped to examine developmental progression from recalled experiences (self as actor), to acting on and making sense of these at the time of occurrence as a motivated agent (self as agent), to current contextualized understanding (self as author) (McAdams, 2013). Narrative accounts of self as actor are recalled experiences and events that only describe what had happened at the time. Narrative accounts of self as agent are coded as episodes or recalled experiences, which focus on behaviors and action taken by the participant as a motivated agent in response to experienced events around feeling different as an ethnic minority (e.g. actions taken to respond to, cope with, or actions taken to strengthen ethnic identity). Narrative accounts of self as author reflect more meta level analytic meaning making such as making sense of the past with reference to the present, and future.

In the third step of analysis, participants' retrospective reflections on the experiences described in each of the narrative types (e.g. discrimination narratives, connection to heritage narratives, etc.), were further coded for sophistication of meaning making adapted from McLean and Pratt's (2006) coding system. In the fourth step, the relationship between sophistication of meaning making and ethnic identity integration was explored through an independent group t-test analysis, and a multiple linear regression analysis. As the final step of analysis, the qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis

were integrated to examine how the qualitative data intersects with the quantitative data to address the research questions.

Validity and Reliability

Misinterpretations of meaning. I am aware that there was a possibility of misinterpretation or overlooking the meanings taken from the stories told by both the samples of Asian American youth and Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults. Interpretation of my data was monitored through peer debriefing with my thesis advisor (and committee members, if willing) with the intent of identifying my biases and assumptions, and also welcoming challenges to my interpretations (Creswell & Miller, 2010).

Inter-item consistency reliability of NACS. The NACS consisted four subscales. The first subscale that measured affiliation consisted of two subscales: Affiliation-Cultural Heritage 6 items (α = .64) and Affiliation-Mainstream 6 items (α = .83). The second subscale that measured knowledge consisted of two subscales: Knowledge-Cultural Heritage 7 items (α = .90), and Knowledge-Mainstream 5 items (α = .85). The third subscale that measured participation consisted of 5 items (Cronbach's alpha was not measure due to the scale being nominal). The fourth subscale that measured commitment consisted of two subscales: Commitment-Cultural Heritage 4 items (α = .79) and Commitment-Mainstream 6 items (α = .63).

Chapter 4: Results

Research Question 1: Is There Relation Between the Level of Meaning Making and Participants' Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Dimensions of Ethnic Identity?

The primary purpose of the quantitative analysis was to examine the relation between sophistication of meaning making through participants' ethnicity related stories and characteristics of ethnic identity coordination measured through a survey. The cognitive, and affective dimensions of ethnic identification were measured through NACS (Mistry et al., 2008). The analysis on the behavioral dimension of ethnic identification was taken out of the study since the subscale for the behavioral dimension was not answered from the Asian Heritage group. Sophistication of meaning making was scored utilizing the linear scoring system developed by McLean and Pratt (2006). The mean scores for all variables were generated for analysis.

A multiple linear regression test was conducted to test associations between participants' mean scores of sophistication of meaning making in their stories as the dependent variable and characteristics of ethnic identity: affiliation towards heritage culture (M = 4.01, SD = .50), affiliation towards mainstream (M = 3.60, SD = .67), knowledge of heritage culture (M = 2.56, SD = .96), knowledge of mainstream (M = 3.51, SD = .81), commitment to heritage culture (M = 3.62, SD = .67), and commitment to mainstream (M = 3.01, SD = .54) as independent variables.

Preliminary Analyses

Normality. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to examine the normality of the six independent variables: affiliation towards cultural

heritage, affiliation towards mainstream, knowledge for cultural heritage, knowledge for mainstream, commitment to cultural heritage, and commitment to mainstream. All variables did not deviate significantly from normal. Affiliation towards cultural heritage (D (40) = .13, p = .07), affiliation towards mainstream (D (40) = .09, p = .20), knowledge for cultural heritage (D (40) = .09, p = .20), knowledge for mainstream (D (40) = .12, p = .13), commitment to cultural heritage (D (40) = .11, p = .20), and commitment to mainstream (D (40) = .10, p = .20) was significantly normal. Since scores for all predictors were normally distributed, I continued examining for correlation among my variables before moving on to the multiple linear regression analysis.

Correlation coefficients among subscales of NACS. A Pearson's correlation test was conducted to examine if there were correlations between affiliation towards cultural heritage, affiliation towards mainstream, knowledge for cultural heritage, knowledge for mainstream, commitment to cultural heritage, and commitment to mainstream to examine the coordination of affiliation, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions of ethnic identification towards cultural heritage and mainstream culture. Correlations provided evidence that affiliation towards cultural heritage (r = .11, p = .51), knowledge for cultural heritage (r = .27, p = .10) did not have significant correlation with commitment to cultural heritage. However, affiliation towards mainstream (r = .57, p < .01) and knowledge for mainstream (r = .40, p < .01) had a significantly positive correlation with commitment to mainstream.

Another Pearson's correlation test was conducted to test for correlations between sophistication of meaning making (dependent variable)

and the six independent variables: affiliation towards cultural heritage, affiliation towards mainstream, knowledge for cultural heritage, knowledge for mainstream, commitment to cultural heritage, and commitment to mainstream. As shown in Table 3, the correlations test provided evidence that affiliation towards cultural heritage (r = .10, p = .57), affiliation towards mainstream (r = -.17, p = .32), knowledge for cultural heritage (r = .22, p = .19), knowledge for mainstream (r = -.27, p = .10), commitment to cultural heritage (r = -.10, p = .57), and commitment to mainstream (r = -.15, p = .38) with sophistication of meaning making among participants' ethnicity related stories were not significantly correlated.

Primary Analysis

Regression analysis of sophistication of meaning making and cognitive and affective dimensions of ethnic identity. Although statistical correlation was not seen among the variables being tested, a multiple linear regression was calculated to test if affiliation towards cultural heritage, affiliation towards mainstream, knowledge for cultural heritage, knowledge for mainstream, commitment to cultural heritage, and commitment to mainstream significantly predicted sophistication of meaning making among participants' ethnicity related stories. As shown in Table 4, the results of the multiple regressions provide evidence that affiliation towards cultural heritage, affiliation towards mainstream, knowledge for cultural heritage, knowledge to mainstream, commitment to cultural heritage, and commitment to mainstream explained 14% of the variance (R^2 = .144, F (6, 29) = .81, p = .57) for sophistication of meaning making. Affiliation to cultural heritage (β = .04, p = .83), affiliation to mainstream (β = .08, p = .75), knowledge to heritage

culture (β = .28, *p* =.16), knowledge to mainstream (β = −.24, *p* = .24), commitment to cultural heritage (β = .02, *p* = .91), commitment to mainstream (β = -.16, *p* =.48) did not have a significant relationship with sophistication of meaning making.

Independent samples t-test. To further examine the relationship of sophistication of meaning making, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the affiliation towards cultural heritage, affiliation towards mainstream, knowledge for cultural heritage, knowledge for mainstream, commitment to cultural heritage, and commitment to mainstream in less sophisticated (lesson) and more sophisticated (insight) conditions. As show in Table 5, there was not a significant difference in the mean scores for lesson (*M* = 4.04, *SD* = .47) and insight (*M* = 3.96, *SD* = .58) for affiliation to heritage culture; *t* (34) = .43, *p* = .67. There was not a significant difference in the mean scores for lesson (*M* = 3.72, *SD* = .57) and insight (*M* = 3.47, *SD* = .72) for affiliation to mainstream; *t* (35) = 1.17, *p* = .25. There was not a significant difference in the mean scores for lesson (*M* = 2.42, *SD* = .68) and insight (*M* = 2.71, *SD* = 1.22) for knowledge for heritage culture; *t* (26.52) = -.90, *p* = .38. There was not a significant difference in the mean scores for lesson (*M* = 3.64, *SD* = .65) and insight (*M* = 3.40, *SD* = .89) for knowledge for mainstream; *t* (35) = .95, *p* = .35. There was not a significant difference in the mean scores for lesson (*M* = 3.68, *SD* = .70) and insight (*M* = 3.61, *SD* = .62) for commitment to heritage culture; *t* (35) = .30, *p* = .77. There was not a significant difference in the mean scores for lesson (*M* = 3.03, *SD* = .50) and insight (*M* = 3.00, *SD* = .58) for commitment to mainstream; *t* (35) = .20, *p* = .84. These results suggest that the different level of sophistication of

meaning making does not have significant relation between the two dimensions of ethnic identification: affiliation, and cognitive.

Research Questions 2: Are There Developmental Differences in the Level of Meaning Making that are Apparent Between the Narrative Accounts?

Sophistication of meaning making was measured through a linear scoring system (0-3) developed by McLean and Pratt (2006) to answer this research question. Stories were categorized into no meaning (0), lesson (1), vague meaning (2), and insight (3). Out of 37 participants, 17 participants were categorized into the lesson group in which the average scores for sophistication of meaning making were lower than 2 on McLean and Pratt's (2006) linear scoring system. 20 participants were categorized into the insight group in which their average score was higher than 2. The following is a lesson learning narrative from a participant from the Mixed Ethnic Heritage group. Meaning is in italics.

> "I had to learn to, I guess, accept some of the drawbacks that my culture has to face in society, and sort of like fight through them. Okay, (laughs) so coming from an Asian background, being specifically a male Asian, we're mostly perceived as very passive and weak and can be pushovers and I get that vibe from a lot of people like when I hang out with strangers they're just like "oh, do this for me, do that, this and that, whatever", *I'm just like no (laughs) I'm not doing that for you and stuff like that and I just have to sort of, I feel like I just have to disprove that*."

In this example, the participant reflects on an event in which he faces

stereotypes towards Asian males and describes a behavioral action taken in regards to the event of facing stereotypes.

The following is an excerpt from a participants' narrative account with gaining insight. Meaning is in italics.

> "So I would have you know my White friends from my classes. I would have my Black friends (…) I would have like just a lot of stratified groups of friends and I think starting my senior year of high school I started to really stopped being so ashamed of how like multi-faceted I was and I started trying to show each of my sides to everyone rather than like kind of being like a cube I kind of wanted to become more like a sphere (…) I would bring really diverse groups of my friends together (…) and it always worked out really well and that. (…) Because it's always been you know my race has always been something that has always been a big issue in my life whether I was like feeling too White or whether I was feeling too Black or whether it was feeling too mixed, and *being able to bring together a lot of different sides of that has helped me kind of work through those insecurities a lot and I feel a lot more comfortable in being [name of participant] other than being like this [name of participant], that [name of participant] at one possible like at each certain time.*"

In contrast to the lesson story, the insight story contains explicit transformation of the self from the actions the participant took from a recalled event. The participant includes reflections of not wanting to be ashamed of

their multi-faceted self and acts upon that feeling to bring friends from different groups together, which eventually helps the participant understand herself and transform her insecurities.

As shown in Figure 1, 13 participants told more insight stories and 6 told more lesson stories among 19 Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults. Also shown in Figure 1, 7 participants told more insight stories and 11 participants told more lesson stories among the 18 Asian Heritage youth. From the descriptive results of sophistication of meaning making, it provides evidence that approximately 70% of Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults' narrative accounts included more sophisticated meaning making stories. In contrast, approximately 40% of Asian Heritage youth's narratives included more sophisticated meaning making stories. When compared the two groups, Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults told more insight stories than Asian Heritage youth.

As noted earlier, critical reflections (Friere, 1973) in narrative accounts were also coded, as a construct that is akin to and reflects more sophisticated meaning making. Critical reflection is one of the three components of critical consciousness and is considered to be the precursor to critical action (Watts et al., 2011). Individuals with critical reflection have the ability to analyze societal inequities that constrain individuals' well-being or agency (Friere, 1973). Critical reflection was originally scored as having the insight level of meaning making since it is meaning making that extends beyond the specific event to explicit transformation in the world. However, critical reflections that did not reach the level of insight emerged in the process of analysis. Critical reflections that did not have the insight level failed to extend beyond general

analysis of social inequity. Thus, critical reflection was divided into two separate levels, vague critical reflection and insightful critical reflection. Both types of critical reflections were incorporated into the linear scoring system based on McLean and Pratt (2006) in which vague critical reflection received a score of 2 and insightful critical reflection received a score of 3. The following is an excerpt of a participant's narrative account with vague critical reflection:

> "I think they don't know how to deal with mixed population, 'cause it's so much easier to sort of like put people into one box or the other. And it's so much easier to like put yourself in that and so like I think the deal is complicated and they'd rather us be like one way or the other."

In contrast, the following is an excerpt of an insightful critical reflection:

> "I don't think they're [American mainstream culture] as accepting of it [being Mixed] as we are in Jamaica. I feel like in America you have to choose which one you look more like to identify yourself as like your mom can be White, your dad can be Black but you come out looking more Black, well, you have to say that you're Black like you kind of disregard the fact that you are like half White as well. Whereas like I mean in Jamaica like as I said it's just you just well you're Jamaican."

As seen from the two different types of critical reflections, the participant with insightful critical reflection was able to reflect on their social analysis about their ethnic groups and relate it to their own lives or experiences. However, the participant with vague meaning making had a generalized idea about how

their ethnic group was perceived by larger society but could not relate it back to their own lives. Figure 2 and 3 show that participants in the insight group for both Asian Heritage and Mixed Ethnic Heritage group had more insightful critical reflection and the lesson group had more vague critical reflection or no critical reflection. These results suggest that critical reflection is related to sophistication of meaning making and ones with more sophistication of meaning making in their stories pertained more insightful critical reflection.

Research Question 3: Are There Contextual Differences Between Asian Heritage Youth and Mixed Ethnic Heritage Young Adults that are Associated with Differences in Their Narrative Accounts?

Contextual differences between and within groups were examined to document the heterogeneity within groups and to offer potential developmental and contextual explanations of the differences noted between the sample groups: Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults and Asian Heritage youth.

Differences in developmental contexts. Stories among Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults and Asian Heritage youth were examined with consideration towards the different contexts surrounding these groups. Among the four different themes the participants' ethnicity-related stories were categorized (Syed and Azmitia, 2008), awareness of difference was a theme told by all participants in the two sample groups: the Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults and Asian Heritage youth. When closely examining the awareness of differences stories among these two sample groups, there were different environmental contexts that were apparent in their stories. The participants in the Mixed Ethnic Heritage group were either college students

or college graduates in which they were already separately living from their parents. Thus, parent/ home context was less salient in their stories. Furthermore, their stories consisted of exploring cultural heritage and navigating between their heritage cultures to find comfort in their identity as being Mixed Ethnic Heritage. The following is an excerpt of the awareness of difference story from the Mixed Ethnic Heritage participant:

> "I think it was like a college (...) I could actually like you know find people (...) at least like mixed or something like a group that I felt comfortable being part of (...) I was just involved in multi-racial groups here and the Filipino Cultural Society. (...) I became more like comfortable with it, but I still don't think like even now that I'm like a hundred percent comfortable with my ethnic background (...) it's like hard to navigate my identity because I realize that I'm not fully Japanese or I'm not fully Spanish or something. (...) Like in middle school and high school like I was definitely like thirty percent comfortable with myself whereas now I'm probably like eighty-five percent comfortable with myself so. I think I'm always like, swaying too far to one side whereas I want to be down in the middle, between, like right down the middle between Japanese and Spanish."

This Mixed Ethnic Heritage participant's reflection of awareness of difference story involves his journey of navigating his Mixed identity and taking agency to seek opportunities to explore being Mixed Ethnic Heritage during college. He also reflects upon how he is trying to balance his Spanish heritage and

Japanese heritage.

In contrast to the Mixed Ethnic Heritage participants who are already independent from their parents, the majority of the Asian Heritage youth participants are high school students who live with their parents. For them, their parents' values/opinions and peer relationships are salient in their stories. The majority of their stories consist of navigating between the home context and the school context. The following is an awareness of difference story from the Asian Heritage participant:

> "Yes, lecturing, I don't like that, once they [parents] lecture me or talk to me about serious things like inside of me I get I get really scared I start crying and they say why are you really crying (...). Like having a boyfriend I want to say my friend [peer name] is the same age as me she has a Hispanic boyfriend but my mom would say that I don't want you to have a boyfriend at this age. I want to say well [peer name] has a boyfriend."

This Asian Heritage participant expresses the difficulty of having to explain to her parents about the "American" ways and the comparison she sees between her peer who is allowed to have a boyfriend and her who is not. The reflection indicates the process to how the Asian participant is still trying to figure how to navigate between the cultural contexts of her Asian Heritage emphasized at home and the mainstream American culture she is exposed through school and peers.

Developmental difference in autobiographical reasoning. Another difference found between the older age group (Mixed Ethnic Heritage young

adults) and the younger group (Asian Heritage youth) was in their autobiographical reasoning within the awareness of difference stories. The older group provided stories that contained reflections on an event, which caused them to take action regarding their Mixed Ethnic Heritage identity concluding with how they are making sense of their self in the present. On the other hand, the majority of the reflection from the Asian Heritage youth consisted with the participants recalling a certain event related to their awareness of difference but concluded with taking or trying to take agency to the recalled event; the majority of their stories lacked the self as author component (McAdams, 2001). The following is an excerpt of an autobiographical reasoning by the Mixed Ethnic Heritage participant:

> “In high school (...) really starting to talk about like "I'm bi-racial" and "you have a White mom" and doing your hair and all that stuff (...) those conversations happened more and then in college definitely. I think a significant thing happened in Argentina because. (...) I was primarily seen as American and not like African American (...) so I think I was able to grow into myself (...) I cut my hair short and natural which is something that I'd like thought about in high school, (...) in the Crayola Club we had discussions about natural hair versus processed hair (...) I played around with different styles but (...) I didn't feel comfortable with other things besides straight hair and it had like cultural and racial implications to choose one hair style over another and being in Argentina it just didn't anymore. (...) it's not like "oh, you're being more Black or

> you're being more White or this is what is means racially if you cut it" (...) in Argentina I was able to kind of grow into myself (...) learned more about African American and African history (...) so I became a lot more I guess associated with that aspect of myself."

This participant's reflection overall involves her journey around navigating between her White heritage, African Heritage, and her identity as being Mixed Ethnic Heritage. Her reflection involves conversations around her hair, which became apparent during high school and college. She describes her experience in Argentina made her comfortable about her Mixed Ethnic Heritage identity and realizes that she wanted to cut her hair, which had cultural and racial implications in the past. She further reflects that becoming comfortable with herself and the actions of cutting her hair, led to her interest in her African Heritage side.

In contrast, to the Mixed Ethnic Heritage participant whose reflection involves integration of the past, present, and future reflections about the self, autobiographical reasoning among the Asian Heritage youth involves reflections around trying to or taking actions towards a recalled event. Furthermore, the majority of the reflections among the Asian Heritage youth do not provide reasoning to how their self as agent components has influenced their decisions or perspectives about their current self. The following excerpt is taken from an awareness of difference story of an Asian Heritage participant:

> "I try to be on the American side because it is a lot more flexible. My parents are so traditional you can't do this and you

can't do that because you are girl you are too young, (...) I have different cultures but I can't express them. (...) When I try to hang out and be social my parents always say no. They are too protective."

This participant describes the difficulty of navigating between her Chinese culture and American mainstream culture. She describes her parents to be "so traditional" and "too protective" and also expresses difficulty in expressing the different cultures.

Nature of discrimination. As shown in Figure 4, 54% of the Mixed Ethnic Heritage participants who were in the insight group were part African Heritage in which one of their parents were of African Heritage. In contrast, 50% who were in the lesson group were part Asian Heritage in which one of their parents were of Asian Heritage. When nuanced differences were examined between the part African heritage and part Asian Heritage participants, the U.S. historical context of race was apparent among the experience of discrimination stories.

Among the experience of discrimination stories, the part African Heritage insight group reflected upon experiencing discrimination and racism from close relatives and peers while drawing from the historical context of racism towards African Americans in the U.S. The following is an excerpt of an experience of discrimination story from a part African Heritage participant:

"The youngest one [among aunts] (...) she'd be classified as a racist. (…). A lot of a lot of people from like Civil Rights or like post Civil Rights Era were racist like they could be classified as racist but since then they changed because they

> had to (...) so outwardly she changed. I have no idea how she feels inside. (...) she treats some of my cousins like a little better I feel like than she does like my family (…) there's this story of like my dad going to pick up my mom for like a date and she's like you know watch that n word doing down there she's not, he's not taking you out, you know so like that story just like resonated with me for like my entire life (…) I read like a ton of biographies like you know Malcolm X, JFK, Martin Luther King, so like I knew about all the, the racial tension that like occurred back then so (...) I don't feel comfortable like around her."

This part African Heritage participant reflects upon not feeling comfortable around her White relative because of the differential treatment towards herself and her Black father. In addition to the experience of perceived discrimination, the participant also draws from her knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement and the racial tension that is still occurring in the U.S. as a reason to distance herself from the "racist" relative.

In contrast to the part African Heritage participants, participants who were part Asian Heritage shared reflections of being teased with racialized terms or ascribed the model minority stereotype. The following is an experience of discrimination story from the part Asian Heritage participant:

> "Basically just like more so racist names like they call you like jap or spic or something like that, but, I mean, it's supposed to be out of fun whatever or like something like that, but, I think it's a time when people are very insecure so they tend to you

know try to put other people down. (…) when I was younger, like middle school age I kind of geared more toward my Spanish side because it was more acceptable than like Japanese. So, it kind of pushes I think, like, if you experience something like that then it pushes you toward one side more than the other. Whatever you think is more culturally acceptable in that community."

In comparison to the part African Heritage participant who reflected discomfort towards interacting with racist individuals through learning the Civil Rights Movement, the part Asian Heritage participant reflects being teased as "Jap" or "Spic" but perceives it as action taken from people who are insecure and want to make fun.

Similar to the part Asian Heritage participants from the Mixed Ethnic Heritage group, the majority of experience of discrimination stories from the Asian Heritage youth also consisted reflections of being ascribed the model minority stereotype and experiences of teasing due to their Asian heritage. The following is an excerpt from the experience of discrimination story of an Asian Heritage participant:

"I never really though about racism when I was younger but I have started to realize it a lot. (...) People think that I am really good at math. Last year in school there was these people they had their huge book bags they were standing around and hit us with their book bags and I was really pissed off, they did it to mostly Asian girls. [They did it] because they are stupid. No [I did not do anything] not really because everybody think my

principal is racist."

In this excerpt, the participant reflects not being aware of racism when they were younger but starting to realize being ascribed stereotypes towards Asians and experience being teased at school due to their race. However, perceives those racist actions as peers being "stupid."

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, I will provide an in-depth interpretation of the results presented in the previous chapter, with a particular focus on my research questions 2 and 3; the questions examined the developmental differences in the level of meaning making and also contextual differences which provide possible explanations to the differences in the narrative accounts among Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults and Asian Heritage youth. Interpretation of the first research question, which examined the relationship between sophistication of meaning making and cognitive and affective dimensions of ethnic identity is briefly discussed in the following paragraph. The remainder of this chapter provides interpretations from the sophistication of meaning making found in ethnicity-related stories with two main aspects: developmental differences between Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults and Asian Heritage youth; and within group differences among the Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults.

The results from the multiple linear regression analysis and independent group t-test analysis suggested that the relation between sophistication of meaning making and the affective and cognitive dimensions of ethnic identification was non-significant. Therefore, contrary to previous literature (McLean & Pratt, 2006), sophistication of meaning making was not significantly related to the affective and cognitive dimensions of ethnic identification. Despite the lack of significant findings, it is interesting to note that when initially examining the coordination of affective and cognitive dimensions of ethnic identity, there was significant correlation between the affective and cognitive dimensions of ethnic identity towards mainstream

culture. However, no significant correlations were found between the affective and cognitive dimensions of ethnic identity towards heritage culture.

The difference in the inter-correlation results among the cognitive and affective dimensions assessed separately for responses to mainstream culture and heritage culture suggests that participants' identification towards their heritage culture may have been ambiguous compared to identification with the mainstream. Specifically for Mixed Ethnic Heritage individuals, their definition of cultural heritage may have differed in that it was more complex. As shown in Table 1, participants' self-ethnic identifications collected from the qualitative data were very fluid and provided more than one label for ethnic identification whereas the majority of the Mixed Ethnic Heritage participants identified as "Mixed" in the quantitative data. The ambiguity around ethnic identification for the Mixed Ethnic Heritage participants in the current study further provides insight as to why individuals identifying as Mixed tend to score lower on their ethnic identity scores compared to monoethnic individuals (Weisskirch, 2005). In future studies, it is important to represent the composition of multiple ethnic heritages to get a more accurate response of ethnic identification.

Developmental Differences in Meaning Making

This study hypothesized that lower sophistication of meaning making will be more apparent in the stories of the younger group (Asian Heritage youth), and higher sophistication of meaning making will be seen in the stories of the older group (Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults). The results were consistent with previous literature in that developmental differences were found in the level of meaning making among different age groups (McLean,

2005; McAdams, 2013). Results for research question three, also suggested developmental contextual differences, which provided possible explanations for the differences in the narrative accounts between the young adult participants (Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults) and youth participants (Asian Heritage youth).

Differences in the level of meaning making. Consistent with previous literature, the younger participants (Asian Heritage youth) presented lower sophistication of meaning making in their ethnicity-related stories compared to the older participants (Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults) who presented higher sophistication of meaning making in their stories (McLean, 2005; McAdams, 2013). Adulthood is when individuals begin to consider intersections of their multiple identity domains compared to adolescence (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Thus, as stated in previous literature, integration of the selves was found in young adult participants compared to the youth participants. As presented from the aforementioned quote by the Mixed Ethnic Heritage participant, who reflected upon her experience in Argentina, the older participants were integrating their past, present, and future selves and also their multiple ethnic heritages to construct a coherent life story.

Along with sophistication of meaning making, the level of meaning making in critical reflection (Friere, 1973) also reflected a developmental differences. The findings suggest that a higher level of critical reflection is formed along with individual's level of meaning making in recounting their ethnicity-related experience. Critical reflection is seen as a precursor to critical action in which one who critically analyzed their social conditions is more compelled to take action for change (Watts et al., 2011). The current study

found that individuals with more sophisticated meaning making in their stories also had higher meaning making in their critical reflection. Thus for future direction, it would be interesting to further investigate whether individuals with more sophisticated critical reflections would take critical action or not.

Developmental differences in contexts. Narratives are largely informed by multiple contexts (e.g. family, school, peer, history), which are embedded in individuals' lives (McLean et al., 2007). Ethnic identity is also an interaction between maturation and context, and it takes different meanings and forms across the lifespan (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Results from the current study also presented developmental contexts that provided potential explanation for the differences in the narrative accounts told by Asian Heritage youth and Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults.

Different developmental contexts surrounding Asian Heritage youth and Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults were salient among the awareness of difference stories, which was the most discussed theme out of the four different themes (Syed and Azmitia, 2008) across the two sample groups. The Asian Heritage youth who still live at home with their parents were seen navigating between the home context and school/peer context in their awareness of difference stories. The salience of home and school context among the Asian Heritage youth's awareness of difference story is relevant since peer and family contexts play an important role in adolescents' identity development construction (Hughes et al., 2008; Hughes et al., 2016).

In contrast to the Asian Heritage youth, Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults were already living away from home. Therefore, the home context is less salient in their stories. Instead, navigation of the self within the college

context and distal contexts is more salient in their stories. Umaña-Taylor et al., (2014) describe middle and late adolescence as a developmental period in which individuals are becoming more independent and less reliant on tacit agreement with parental or peer socialization influences. Furthermore, college is a context, which raises more awareness of the self, and the diversity of peers, coursework, and social spheres often prompt individuals to think about ethnic identity in new ways (Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008). Consistent with previous literature, Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults' awareness of difference stories involved less parental and peer socialization compared to the Asian Heritage youth. In addition, stories involving experiences within and out of the college context played an integral role in how these individuals were exploring their heritage cultures and raising more awareness to their Mixed identity.

The awareness of difference stories between Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults and Asian Heritage youth also presented differences in how participants integrated different aspects of the self within their surrounding contexts. The majority of Asian Heritage participants reflected navigating their different aspects of the self between the home (heritage culture) and peer (mainstream culture) context separately. Furthermore, as reflected in one of the aforementioned quotes from the Asian Heritage participant in the current study, some of them expressed wanting to lean towards the mainstream culture than their Asian Heritage culture. Instead, the Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults presented attempts to integrate their multiple heritage cultures within their surrounding contexts. These findings were consistent with past literature, which examined ethnic identity outcomes. In their study, Ying and Lee (1999)

found that younger adolescents presented a unidimensional separation outcome in which individuals shed their culture of origin to embrace the predominate culture. On the contrary, older adolescents presented a bidimensional integration outcome in which individuals affiliated with their both associating cultures.

Within Group Differences in Meaning Making

Within the Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults, there were differences in the level of meaning making and experience of discrimination stories between the part African Heritage and part Asian Heritage young adults. Specifically, findings suggested the importance to consider the U.S. historical context of racism towards individuals of African Heritage and Asian Heritage when providing interpretation of the differences.

Findings from the current study provided evidence that part African Heritage young adults presented higher sophistication of meaning making. In comparison, the part Asian Heritage young adults presented lower sophistication of meaning making (see figure 4). Further examination of the differences between the part African Heritage and part Asian Heritage Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults showed differences in their experience of discrimination stories.

The majority of the experience of discrimination stories among the part African Heritage group involved racism and discrimination targeted towards individuals of African descent. Similarly, the part Asian Heritage group also described their experience of discrimination to be targeted towards their Asian Heritage. This implies that both of these groups were experiencing monoracial discrimination towards their Black and Asian race rather than discrimination

towards them being Mixed Ethnic Heritage or Mixed Race. When considering the possible interpretations to the difference in meaning making between these two groups, it is important to reflect on the history of racism in the U.S. towards people of African Heritage and Asian Heritage.

Connecting Black history to meaning making. Racial discrimination against persons of African Heritage has persisted throughout U.S. history. Up until the Civil Rights Act of 1964, there was no nationwide legal protection of African Americans or other people of color towards discrimination and racism. Although legal protection such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was provided to people of color, racism is still very prominent in the U.S. (Sue & Sue, 2003; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Sue et al. (2007) claim that all people of color are subjected to racial microagression, which are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (p. 271). In the face of continuing oppression and discrimination such as police brutality, African Americans have created traditions of resistance to the pervasive negative stereotypes about their group, which are exemplified by the Black Power, Black Pride movements and Black Lives Matter Movement (Holt & Sweitzer, 2018; Twenge & Crocker, 2002). With that, the salience of Blackness is integral to the development of Black American success post slavery (Zirkel & Johnson, 2016).

In order to prepare children to maintain their self-esteem, and prepare them to navigate racial barriers within a racist system, African American parents have racially and ethnically socialized their children (Hughes & Chen,

1997). Hughes et al., (2006) suggest that there are four dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization: cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and egalitarianism. Cultural socialization is referred to parental practices that provide children the knowledge of their racial or ethnic heritage history, and promote cultural, racial, and ethnic pride (Hughes et al., 2006). Preparation for bias is considered as parental messages to promote their children's awareness towards discrimination and prepare them with skills to cope with it (Hughes et al., 2006). Promotion of mistrust is referred to practices that emphasize distrust in interracial interactions (Hughes et al., 2006). Egalitarianism is referred to parental practices, which encourage their children to view all individuals as equal and avoid any mention of race in discussion with their children (Hughes et al., 2006). Past research has shown that among the four dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization that were investigated, African American parents were more likely to engage in preparation for bias compared to other ethnic groups (Hughes, 2003;Hughes et al., 2006; Hagelskamp and Hughes, 2014). Therefore, racial socialization is considered important to parents of color but especially seen among African American parents (Hughes et al., 2006).

The salience of Blackness is not limited to monoracial Blacks but also to any individual who is racially part Black. The experiences of discrimination stories provided by the part African Heritage participants in this study suggest the prevalence of the one drop rule in which one drop of Black blood assigns you to be Black no matter what (Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Past literature also suggested individuals who have phenotypes that ascribe them to be seen as Black, are more prone to receive negative racial attitudes (Blair, Chapleau, &

Judd, 2005; Blair, Judd, & Chapleau, 2004). Consistent with the literature, part African Heritage participants in this study also experienced more negative racial attitudes that are often targeted towards a Black person since they were phenotypically perceived as being more Black even if they were part White.

Drawing from the aforementioned history of racism towards African Americans in the U.S., cultural socialization and preparation for bias is prominent for Black households and for children who are part Black. The following was a powerful quote from one of the part African Heritage Mixed Ethnic young adults regarding her perceived experience of cultural socialization and preparation for bias from her parents:

> "We were raised to call ourselves Black (...) and that we should be careful about identifying as Mixed (...) you're still going to be judged in the same way as most people that are Black (...) I definitely think my family [gave me a strong foundation] having a lot of conversations based around race (...) when they [Mixed friends] got to college they were really angry [about system oppression and social consciousness] (...) I was able to be kind of that foundation for them."

With the early opportunities of discussing about race and system oppression with her parents, the above participant was able to provide discussions around race and discrimination to her other Mixed peers at college. Experience of discrimination stories told by the part African Heritage young adults demonstrate the possible interpretation that existing and continuing dialogue of what it means to be Black in the U.S., provides individuals of African Heritage more opportunities to think about their Blackness. This dialogue may

occur earlier and more often than in other ethnic groups who are often excluded from the White-Black racial discourse.

Connecting Asian American history to meaning making. Similar to the part African Heritage participants who reported experiencing discrimination based on their African Heritage, part Asian Heritage participants also experienced discrimination or prejudice towards their Asian Heritage. However, in the case of the part Asian Heritage participants, the historical context of racism was not drawn upon in their experience of discrimination stories. Similar experience of discrimination stories were also presented from the Asian Heritage youth. Although participants perceived being called racialized terms or negative stereotypes towards their Asian Heritage, they did not connect those experiences to the historical context of racism in the U.S as presented from the part African Heritage participants.

As opposed to African Americans, Asian Americans often encounter themselves in racial limbo between the Black and White binary as marginalized or unrecognized as full participants in the racial context in the U.S. (Ancheta, 2006). Discourse on race relations provides minimal space to articulate experiences independent of the Black-White framework. For example, Ancheta (2006) claims public policies that reflect and reinforce race relations approach race in terms of tensions between Black and White. Furthermore, landmarks for racial oppression and progress in achieving racial rights have been measured through the experiences of African Americans. Thus, racial discrimination and inequality among Asian American communities are often ignored in the discourse of racial relations. Adding to the previous discussion, Wu (2002) posits that Asian Americans have been

forced to fit within the racial relations discourse of Blacks or Whites and that there is no placement of yellow in the Black and White analogy; Asian Americans have long been perceived either as near-Blacks or near-Whites.

As recorded in history, Asian Americans have endured racial oppression similar to African Americans (e.g. racial violence, segregation, housing discrimination, unequal access to employment and education). The current shift in viewing Asian Americans as the model minority, which assumes Asian Americans to be well-educated, successful, career-driven, and law-abiding citizens in the United States (Nadal, 2011) has also led to exclusion of Asian Americans from corrective civil rights programs (Ancheta, 2006). In addition, the ascribed positive stereotype of Asian Americans have created tensions between other minority groups of color because of the perceptions of relative inequality and the resentment arising from those perceptions (Ho & Jackson, 2001).

Despite being historically marginalized and oppressed, past studies investigating preparation for bias, which is one of the dimensions of ethnic-racial socialization, found Asian Americans (Japanese Americans and Chinese immigrants) rarely discuss perceived racial prejudice or discrimination to their children (Chen, 1998; Nagata & Chen, 2003). Hagelskamp and Hughes (2014) also found that Chinese youth reported fewer cultural socialization messages from mothers who perceived interpersonal prejudice at work compared to African American and Latino mothers. The findings regarding Asian Heritage parent's ethnic-racial socialization when facing oppression suggest that Asian American parents tend to avoid or provide less discussion around racism and discrimination to their children. The

disconnect of the U.S. historical context of racism to the experience of discrimination stories told by the part Asian Heritage participants may be by virtue of the missed opportunity of discussion regarding Asian American racial history.

Additionally, a part Asian Heritage participant presented the agency to move towards the "more accepted," which was his Spanish heritage in his experience of discrimination story. Bradshaw (1992) found Asian/White mixed individuals are often more passed as White than a Black/White mixed person (Bradshaw, 1992). This is perhaps another potential insight to why the part Asian Heritage participants did not perceive their experiences of discrimination through the U.S. historical context of racism. It should be noted that the aforementioned quote was only presented through one participant; however, this topic should be explored further.

Limitations

This study has important limitations. First, results were examined with a small sample size that consisted 19 Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults who were all college attendees or college graduates, and 22 Asian Heritage youth from the Chinatown area in Boston. Furthermore, the Asian Heritage youth were majority of Vietnamese and Chinese heritage (see Table 2). Therefore, findings of this study cannot be generalizable to all Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults and Asian Heritage youth in the U.S. In addition, the small sample size also limited the study to explore contextual influences and patterns among the different levels of meaning making.

It is possible that this study did not yield significant findings due to the differences in how ethnic identification was measured through NACS (Mistry

et al., 2008) compared to the qualitative semi-structured interview.

NACS (Mistry et al., 2008) included measures of affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions towards ethnic identification towards mainstream cultural group and cultural heritage group. However, for the cultural heritage group, there was only an option of choosing one cultural group. The option of choosing one cultural group is restricting to individuals who identify with more than one cultural heritage (Townsend et al., 2009). Contrary to NACS, the qualitative data presents there were multiple labels used by the Mixed Ethnic Heritage participants to self report their Mixed Ethnic Heritage (see Table 1). It is also important to note that although NACS was developed to measure navigation of multiple cultures, psychometric evidence of its validity and reliability across different groups of ethnic heritages is limited. Thus, revision of options for cultural heritage from one option to open-ended questions, and psychometric testing for invariance across groups for NACS is needed for future studies.

Although the findings show the developmental differences in the level of meaning making among different age groups, developmental progression of the same sample group was not captured through this study. Therefore, the study cannot conclude that developmental progression in the level of meaning making is the same across different ethnic groups. Future longitudinal examination of participants' meaning making among their ethnicity related stories is warranted to examine developmental progression of ethnic identity across the lifespan.

Implications for Future Direction

Despite the aforementioned limitations, this study contributed to the

needed empirical research in which the identity status approach and narrative approach were integrated to examine the relationship between ethnic identity process and outcomes. This study also contributed to the Mixed Ethnicities literature to provide processes in which Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults were making meaning of navigating their multiple heritage cultures. Findings in the developmental differences also suggested the importance of the continuation of examining identity development as a lifespan process and that ethnic identity continues to change beyond the adolescent period.

In addition to developmental differences presented through meaning making between Asian Heritage youth and Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults, within group differences in the level of meaning making were found among the ethnicity-related stories told by the part-African Heritage and part Asian Heritage Mixed Ethnic young adults. The results from the within group differences suggest that it is important for future studies to consider the different ethnic compositions among Mixed Ethnic Heritage individuals when examining their ethnic identity development.

With considerations towards the aforementioned limitations, future studies should examine the relationship between sophistication of meaning making and dimensions of ethnic identification with caution to how ethnic identification and affiliation are asked in the quantitative data. Measurements being used should also be tested for psychometric evidence of validity and reliability across the groups that plan to be examined before the actual study. Future studies should also examine ethnic identity development with a longitudinal dataset to capture the developmental progression of ethnic identity among different groups.

It is also important to consider the proximal and distal contexts that are situated within the groups examined because they explain impacts towards the process of ethnic identity formation. Neither perceived parental, peer ethnic racial socialization, nor the immigrant status of the participants' parents were examined as part of the participants' narratives due to the scope of the study. However, within group differences of meaning making among the Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults imply that these are important factors to consider when investigating how individuals are making sense of their ethnicities. Thus, future studies should examine those proximal contexts in order to understand the nuanced differences of how individuals are constructing and making sense of their ethnicity through their every day experiences.

Implication for Families and Practitioners

The results from the current study posed important suggestions for families and practitioners who have children or clients who are processing their ethnic identity. Regardless of ethnic group (i.e. Asian Heritage or Mixed Ethnic Heritage) and age group (i.e. youth or young adults), findings of the current study suggested individuals are making sense of their ethnicities and negotiating multiple selves to understand who they are; ethnic identity development is a lifespan process. However, there is a dearth of opportunities, especially for younger individuals, to discuss their hardships navigating different cultures. It is also difficult to receive facilitation to help negotiate their multiple selves. For example, the Asian Heritage youth participants discussed the difficulty to navigate between their Asian Heritage culture and mainstream culture in their stories. As shown in the findings, the Asian Heritage participant expresses "I get really scared I start crying." Others have

also expressed frustration about communicating with their families. These are cries from the youth expressing struggles of wanting to be understood.

Being a Third Culture Kid (TCK) who grew up in the U.S. and in Japan, I found my younger self presented through the stories from the participants of Asian Heritage youth. I also went through similar emotions of sadness and frustration of having to navigate between American mainstream culture and my Japanese Heritage culture in a world where I felt nobody understood my struggles. It was not until I went to college where I was provided the opportunities to learn about biculturalism, meet other TCKs, and discuss about my identity. The following is a quote from a Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adult who discussed about the different conversations he has with his friends from high school versus friends from college:

> "My friends back in high school we talk about more mainstream things like football or something (...) but then, like my friends in college we had different discussions about things like race (...) I would never have with my friends back in high school."

Previous to this quote, this participant expressed that he never had the opportunity to think or talk about his Mixed Ethnic Heritage because he did not have the social agencies to discuss it. Attending college had provided him the friends to help him navigate and make meaning of his Japanese Heritage and also what it meant to be Mixed Ethnic Heritage. Similar liberating experiences of finding opportunities and social agencies to discuss identity and ethnicity were seen from the stories presented by other Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults.

However, we should not wait for individuals to independently find social agencies to receive support in feeling a sense of understanding about their ethnic identity. Families, schools, and practitioners should provide more opportunities for individuals and facilitate conversations so that they can feel understood and safe to share their stories.

Conclusions

The findings of this thesis suggest that there was no significant relationship between sophistication of meaning making from ethnicity-related stories and affective and behavioral dimensions of ethnic identification. However, findings from the narrative approach suggested that there were nuanced differences in how participants ethnically self identified in the quantitative and qualitative measurements. Further examination through the narrative approach provided evidence of developmental differences in the level of meaning making among participants' ethnicity-related stories in that the older group presented higher sophistication of meaning making compared to the younger group. Critical reflection, which is a precursor to critical action (Watts et al., 2011), also presented a higher level of meaning making within individuals who had an overall higher sophistication of meaning making in their ethnicity-related stories. Heterogeneity within groups and potential developmental and contextual explanations of the differences were pertinent among both Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults and Asian Heritage youth's stories in which their situated contexts were most salient among their stories. The findings of this study overall suggest that ethnic minorities are reflecting upon their ethnicity related experiences and making meaning of their identities throughout their development and contexts most salient to them.

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Tables

Table 1

Description of Mixed Ethnic Heritage Young Adult Participants

ID	Self-ethnic identification	Mother's ethnic heritage	Father's ethnic heritage
MS01	Half Japanese/Half Spanish/ American (more Japanese and Spanish)	Spanish "White"	Japanese "Asian"
MS02	Mixed Native American and White (more White)	White	Native American
MS03	Black/ West African/ bi-racial/Black and White	Irish American "White"	Cameroonian "Black"
MS04	Mixed	Native American/ Cape Verdean "Black"	White
MS05	Half Tanzanian/ Half American	Tanzanian "Black"	Jewish American "White"
MS06	Chinese-Irish (little bit German)	Chinese "Asian"	Irish German "White"
MS07	Multiracial	Irish American "White"	Native American and African American "Black"
MS08	Half Polish/ Half Vietnamese American	Polish "White"	Vietnamese "Asian"
MS09	Half White/ Half Puerto Rican/ American	Puerto Rican	American "White"
MS10	Multi-racial/non-Jewish	Jamaican Chinese "Asian"	European Jewish (Polish/Belgium/English) "White"
MS11	Mixed/ Multi-racial/ bi-racial/ Black and White/ African American/ Italian American	Italian American "White"	African American "Black"
MS12	Black	Jamaican/ African American "Black"	White American
MS13	African American and Italian American/ Black and White	NA	NA
MS14	Multi-cultural/ Mixed/ Black/ West Indian/ Filipino	Filipino "Asian"	Barbadian "Black"
MS15	Mixed/ Black	Mixed/	Black

		Jewish/ White	
MS16	Jamaican	White Jamaican	Black Jamaican
MS17	Nigerian/ Irish/ Canadian	Fourth generation American "White"	Nigerian "Black"
MS18	Hispanic (is not sure)	French/ Native American/ Black	Asian/ Native American/ Cuban
MS19	Chinese/ White/ Venezuelan/ Jewish	Chinese/ White	Jewish American

Note. MS stands for Mixed Ethnic Heritage, NA refers to not answered. Race of the parent is referred in parentheses.

Table 2

Description of Asian American Youth Participants

ID	Self-ethnic identification	Mother's ethnic heritage	Father's ethnic heritage
AA01	Asian/ Vietnamese	Vietnamese	Vietnamese
AA02	Regular Asian teenager/ Asian	Vietnamese	NA
AA04	Cantonese/ Cantonese American	Hong Kongnese	NA (Born in Berlin but was raised in Hong Kong)
AA06	Asian American	Chinese	Chinese
AA09	Asian American	Vietnamese	Vienamese
AA10	Asian	Vietnamese	Chinese
AA11	American	Chinese	Chinese
AA12	Asian American	Chinese	Chinese Vietnamese
AA13	Asian American	NA	NA
AA14	Asian/ Chinese/ a little Vietnamese	NA	NA
AA15	Asian/ Chinese/ Chinese American	NA	NA
AA16	Chinese/ China Chinese/ Asian	NA	NA
AA18	Chinese/ Vietnamese	Vietnamese	Hong Kongnese
AA19	Vietnamese/ Somewhat Chinese	Part Chinese/ Born in Vietnam	Vietnamese
AA20	Chinese American	Hong Kongnese	Vietnamese
AA21	Asian/ Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
AA22	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese
AA23	Vietnamese	NA (Born in Vietnam and lived in China)	NA (Born in Vietnam and lived in China)

Note. AA stands for Asian American, NA stands for not answered.

Table 3

Correlations Between Sophistication of Meaning Making, and Dimensions of Ethnic Identity

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Affiliation to heritage culture	–	.34	.13	-.07	.11	.25	.10
2. Affiliation to mainstream		–	-.23	.28	.08	.57**	-.17
3. Knowledge to heritage culture			–	.18	.27	-.01	.22
4. Knowledge of mainstream				–	.20	.40**	-.27
5. Commitment to heritage culture					–	.12	-.10
6. Commitment to mainstream						–	-.15
7. Sophistication of meaning making							–

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analysis Between Sophistication of Meaning Making and Dimensions of Ethnic Identity

Source	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Affiliation to heritage culture	.04	.19	.04	.22	.83
Affiliation to mainstream	.59	.18	.08	.32	.75
Knowledge for heritage culture	.14	.10	.28	1.43	.16
Knowledge for mainstream	-.15	.13	-.24	-1.21	.24
Commitment to heritage culture	.02	.15	.02	.12	.91
Commitment to mainstream	-.15	.21	-.16	-.72	.48

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5

Independent Group T-Test Between Dimensions of Ethnic Identity and Sophistication of Meaning Making

	Lesson (n = 19)		Insight (n = 18)		*t*	*p*
	M	SD	M	SD		
Affiliation to heritage culture	4.04	.50	3.96	.58	.43	.67
Affiliation to mainstream	3.72	.57	3.47	.72	1.17	.25
Knowledge for heritage culture	2.42	.68	2.71	1.22	-.90	.38
Knowledge for mainstream	3.64	.65	3.40	.89	.95	.35
Commitment to heritage culture	3.67	.70	3.61	.62	.30	.77
Commitment to mainstream	3.03	.50	3.00	.58	.20	.84

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figures

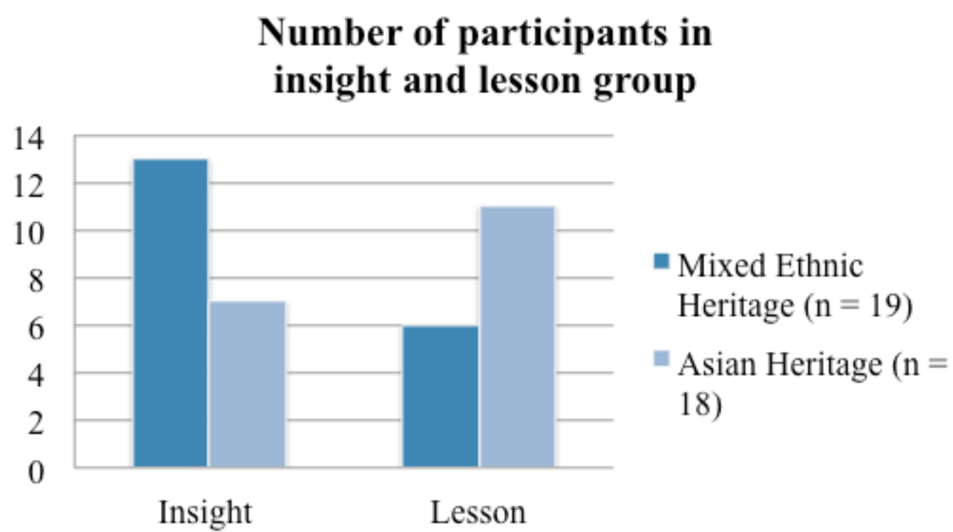

Figure 1. Number of participants in insight and lesson group.

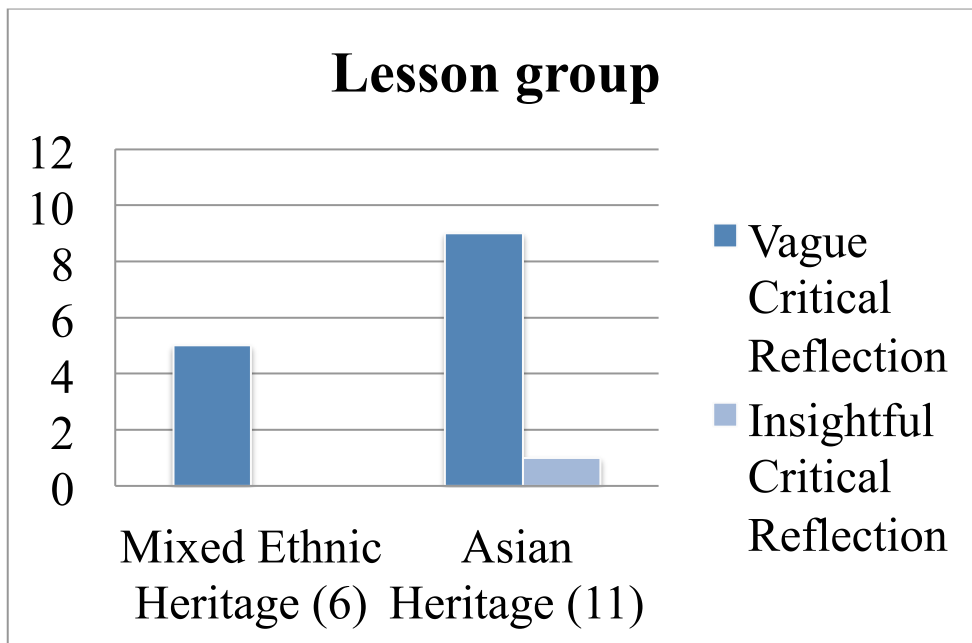

Figure 2. Number of participants among the lesson group with vague critical reflection or insightful critical reflection.

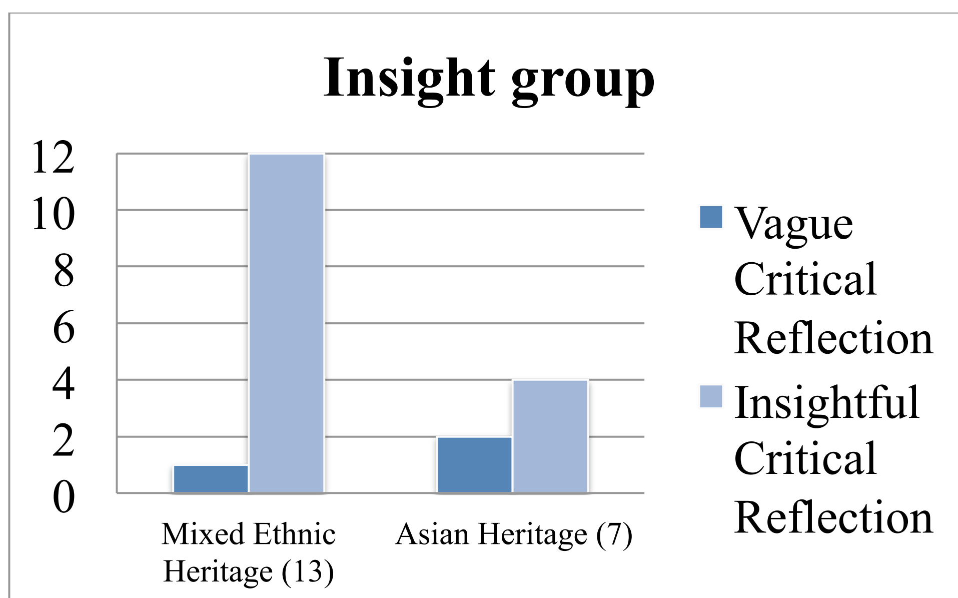

Figure 3. Number of participants among the insight group with vague critical reflection or insightful critical reflection.

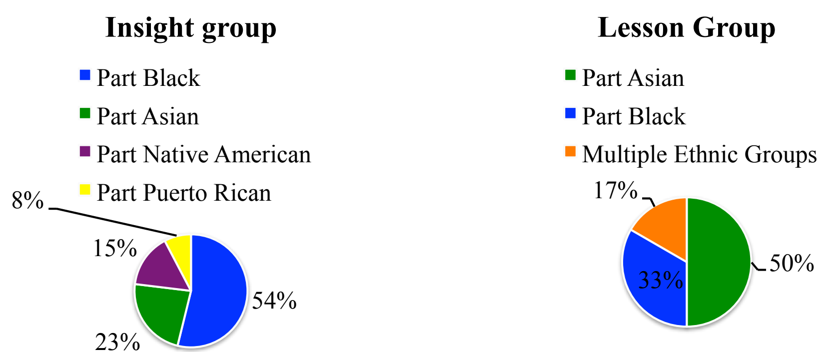

Figure 4. Ethnic group differences between the insight and lesson groups within the Mixed Ethnic Heritage young adults.