

Korean Parents' Perspectives on Korean American Children's Literature

by

Hye Jong Kim

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

Approved November 2013 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Karen Smith, Co-Chair
Josephine Marsh, Co-Chair
Carole Edelsky
Sarah Hudelson

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2013

ABSTRACT

There are few studies on parents' perspectives on multicultural literature. Most studies on Korean American children's literature have relied on the researchers' content analysis of the books, rather than readers' responses to them. To fill this gap, this study sought to understand the Korean/Korean American parents' perspectives on Korean American children's literature by examining their responses to seven picture books on Korean American children.

Data were collected for this qualitative study by interviewing ten Koreans/Korean Americans, twice. The first interview focused on stories about their immigration to the U.S., involvement with their children's reading, and experiences reading books related to Korea or Koreans published in the U.S. The second interview focused on their responses to seven Korean American children's literature books. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed.

The parents' responses, which were infused with their personal, social, and cultural marks, focused on five themes: (a) use of Korean names without specific cultural description, (b) misrepresentation of Korean/Korean American experiences, (c) undesirable illustrations, (d) criteria for good Korean American children's literature, and (e) use of Korean words in English books. The parents' stories about their involvement with their children's reading suggest that to promote multicultural literature, libraries or schools should offer lists of multicultural literature. The parents' responses showed concern about stereotypical images of Korea or Korean American in the U.S. media that often get transferred to stories about Korean Americans in Korean American children's literature.

This study confirms the importance of editors and reviewers, who are knowledgeable about the Korean culture and Korean American experience. It also suggests that more books with varied images of Korean Americans, and more stories about Korean Americans children's authentic experiences are necessary in order to represent the complexity and divergence within Korean people and the Korean American culture.

In memory of my father and grandmother

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincere gratitude goes to my mentor and chair, Dr. Karen Smith, who encouraged me to begin this journey and has stood behind me along the path. Without her patience, support, and caring, I could not have finished this long process. I thank my co-chair, Dr. Josephine Marsh, for her willingness to be co-chair of my dissertation and making a great team with Dr. Karen Smith. Her critical comments and advice on the drafts was invaluable. I am also grateful to my committee members, Dr. Carole Edelsky for her insightful feedback and comments, and Dr. Sarah Hudelson for her kindness and true encouragement. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Teresa McCarty for her thorough comments and valuable suggestions as this study took shape.

I am enormously indebted to all the parents who agreed to participate in the study. Their time and willingness to read the books and talk about them with me is greatly appreciated. Without them, this dissertation would not have been possible.

I would like to express my gratitude to my friends, Sheau-Yann, who spared me time whenever I needed someone to talk to about parenting and studying, and Sarah, who was the first reader of all the drafts and helped me with proofreading. I would also like to thank my dear friends, Miyoung and Mira, for their faithful friendship and continuous encouragement over the years.

My special thanks go to my husband, Woosuk, and my son, Yoobin, who have walked with me through the ups and downs in this journey. So many times I felt I would not be able to complete the dissertation, and they reminded me that I could do it and Yoobin made this study more meaningful to me. And my deepest gratitude is to my heavenly Father, who has always been with me and has loved me unconditionally.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction	1
Rationale and Purpose of Study.....	2
Conceptual Framework.....	9
Literary Theories.....	9
Intertextuality.....	11
McCormick’s Reading Model.....	17
This Study.....	19
Research Questions	20
Overview of Dissertation	21
2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	22
Introduction	22
Koreans in the United States.....	22
Issues in Multicultural Literature	26
Definitions of Multicultural Literature	26
Authenticity: Insider Versus Outsider	30
Publishing Multicultural Literature	34

CHAPTER

2

Studies on Korean American Children’s Literature40
Summary45

3 METHOD46

Introduction46
Qualitative Research46
Data Collection.....48
 Participants48
 Books56
 Interviews58
Data Analysis61
 Transcription.....61
 Highlighting, Organizing, and Open Coding.....63
Summary65

4 FINDINGS66

Introduction66
Parents’ Perception of Korean American Children’s Books66
Parents’ Response to the Selected Picture Books70
 Use of Korean Names70
 Misrepresentation of Korean/Korean American Experiences....76
 Good Korean American Children’s Literature83

CHAPTER

4

Undesirable Illustrations.....88

Use of Korean Words in English Books94

Social and Cultural Factors.....96

 Parental Involvement in Children’s Reading.....97

 Images of Korea/Koreans in the U.S.103

Summary109

5 CONCLUSIONS113

Introduction113

Discussion113

Delimitation and Limitation.....120

Suggestions for Future Research122

Conclusion.....123

REFERENCES124

APPENDIX

A INTERVIEW GUIDE135

B SEVEN SELECTED PICTURE BOOKS137

C. READING GUIDE.....140

D. HUMAN SUBJECTS IRB APPROVAL142

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Children's Books by and About People of Color Published in the U.S., 2002-2012	39
2. Interview Schedule	60
3. Symbols Used for Transcription	62

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	McCormick’s model of the reading situation.....	17
2.	Minho and his mom on a busy street in <i>One Afternoon</i>	72
3.	Sumi in her classroom in <i>Sumi’s First Day of School Ever</i>	73
4.	Yoon in <i>Yoon and the Christmas Mitten</i>	76
5.	Cooper’s parents in <i>Cooper’s Lesson</i>	82
6.	Mike and his grandmother in <i>The Have a Good Day Café</i>	89
7.	<i>Tal</i> (Korean mask) hung in Kimin’s room in <i>Behind the Mask</i>	90
8.	Cooper at Mr. Lee’s store in <i>Cooper’s Lesson</i>	92

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Literature is said to perform at least two functions: (a) to entertain and (b) to instruct. Most people agree that a great value of reading literature is to help us broaden our knowledge of people and society (Rosenblatt, 1995). This value is especially important because we live in a remarkably heterogeneous society. According to Rosenblatt, we possess the ability to understand and sympathize with others through our multiple natures as human being and it allows us to have a vicarious experience in reading. Through this vicarious experience, readers not only understand other people who do not have much in common with them, but also better understand themselves. These benefits are congruent with the values and expectations that many scholars place on multicultural literature.

Scholars in multicultural literature agree that there are two benefits children get from reading multicultural literature. It can promote appreciation and respect for diversity, and it can be an affirmation to children who seldom see themselves in classroom materials (Sims Bishop, 2007, p. xiv). Conversely, according to Sims Bishop, when there are few multicultural books, the effect on students' self-esteem is likely to be negative, because when they do not see any reflections of themselves in literature or find only distorted or comical images in it, they will think that they have little value in society. It is a disservice to other students, too, because reading multicultural literature can help them to question the status quo and to think about discrimination and oppression in the society. Smith (1993) argues that it is educators' moral responsibility to expose children to multicultural literature and emphasize racial and ethnic groups' contributions in the U.S.,

since it will enhance children's understandings of other cultures and increase their flexibility in accepting other groups with a more open mind.

Although the values attributed to reading literature are shared by most people, there are diverse expectations for its use (Cai, 2002; Nieto, 2002), particularly books about non-White people or written by non-White authors. For example, some people think that literature written by Mexicans/Mexican Americans is only for Mexican American communities, and they think ethnic studies classes are for schools with a high percentage of students of color (Nieto, 2002). Nieto calls this ethnocentric interpretation of multicultural education. The value placed on reading multicultural literature varies depending on what people think multicultural literature can do or should do to readers. In classroom settings, what books teachers want children to read and what instructional activities they use in class reflects the purposes they have for reading multicultural books.

Rationale and Purpose of Study

Most studies on multicultural literature have been conducted in classroom settings. The foci of these studies include students' responses to multicultural literature (e.g., Beach, 1997; Glenn-Paul, 1997; McGinley, et al., 1997), teaching strategies (e.g., Al-Hazza & Bucher, 2008; Colby & Lyon, 2004; Mathis, 2001), and criteria for evaluating multicultural literature books (e.g., Mahurt, 2005; Park, 2004; Yokota & Bates, 2005). Research in classroom settings is vital because classroom teachers play a significant role in students' book choices and their responses to literature (Yokota & Bates, 2005). Students' perceptions of the culture and values portrayed in multicultural literature are greatly affected by the teachers' attitudes toward the culture and beliefs about it.

This same argument can be made for the role that parents play in their children's book choices and their responses to literature, since parents are most often children's first teachers and role models (Pattnaik, 2003). However, few studies have examined parents' perspectives on children's literature, especially multicultural literature. For example, *Stories Matter* (Fox & Short, 2003) is a collection of various voices discussing cultural authenticity in multicultural children's literature from authors, illustrators, critics, teachers, and teacher educators. Notably missing is a chapter representing the voices of parents.

One exception to the lack of research on parents' perspectives on multicultural literature is a study conducted by Ruan (2005), in which she found that parental preferences and attitudes about children's literature had a significant impact on their children's book preferences. In this study, she shared different types of books from Chinese American children's literature (e.g., Chinese folktale, immigration) with three children of Chinese heritage. She also visited their homes, browsed through the book collections in each home, and interviewed the parents. Through this process, she discovered that parental attitudes were relevant to the young children's personal responses to books and to their preferences for particular types of books. For example, a boy in her reading group liked books that were either informational or realistic. A folktale was not his favorite because he thought stories like that were not real. From the interview with the child's father, Ruan noticed that he provided his child with factual and informational books mostly because he thought reading was for gaining information rather than for entertaining. To him, a book could be meaningful only when it was realistic. She also found that the parents did not know they could find literature books

about Chinese children in English. They only looked for Chinese children's literature published in Chinese. They, however, showed an interest in English texts that portrayed Chinese children, and they all agreed that reading these books would benefit their children in the future and hoped that it could help their children develop a more positive attitude toward cultural identity in America.

Ruan's (2005) study, to some extent, overlaps with a class project I did a few years ago, which became a pilot study for this research. My interest in Korean American children's literature began when a professor in one of my graduate courses showed me *Dear Juno* (Pak, 1999). I was pleasantly surprised to see that book because I, like the Chinese parents in Ruan's research, did not know I could find children's books about Koreans or Korean Americans written in English. The three Korean mothers I interviewed for my class project had a similar response when I shared with them two Korean American children's literature books (i.e., *Father's Rubber Shoes*[Heo,1995] and *The Name Jar*[Choi, 2001]). They read them with a bit of surprise and curiosity. Although both books were written in English, the main characters are Korean immigrant children and the authors are Koreans who themselves are immigrants like the characters of their stories. The parents told me they had never thought to look for picture story books about Korean children and Korean culture written in English at local libraries. When asked if they were familiar with the Korean American literature I showed them, all of the mothers responded in the negative (as illustrated in the following excerpts), and they wanted to know more about the authors and illustrators:

Mother 1: Parents should know this is a Korean book [a book about Koreans/Korean Americans written by a Korean or Korean American author]. Unless they

tried to find this kind of book, they wouldn't know. We didn't know about these, either. What key words were used for finding these books?

Mother2: If I had known these books, I would have shown them to my kid.

Mother3: We check out books and read them every day. But I didn't see these books.... I checked out books only from the foreign section at the basement level [She is talking about books published in Korea]. There were some stories written in English, too. I think these books will be better for my children than ones written in Korean because he [her son] can read [Korean] well, but she [her daughter] is very slow in reading Korean. It's not easy for her to understand the story [written in Korean] because sometimes she doesn't know the meanings of the Korean words.

Given that these mothers frequently visited the local libraries and checked out books for their children, their responses suggest that even though more multicultural children's books are being published now than in the past, parents may not know about the presence of these books. Additionally, considering that minority literature comprises a small portion of the annual publication of children's books, it is important to make these books available and known to people. As Harris (1993) and Hudson (1991) pointed out about African American children's books, the lack of an adequate distribution system and financial resources of the publishing companies that produce multicultural literature may account for their inability to properly market these books (Taxel, 2002). Hudson commented, "If publishers had seriously considered promotions and sales in the framework of multicultural publishing, this would not be the case" (p. 78).

The excitement these mothers had about the picture books is just one side of the conversation we had. As they looked at the illustrations and texts inside the picture books, they expressed some concerns about the quality of the books and doubts about the books' positive influence on their children. A mother of two boys did not think *The Name Jar* would affect her children, because they could not identify with the character. She explained that her children's situation was not the same as the character's who came from

Korea and had a difficult name to pronounce. Another mother gave a positive comment to *The Name Jar*. She hoped that it would help her 9-year-old daughter rethink the meaning of her Korean name and stop begging her mother to change her name to an English name: “This book can show her [her daughter] that every Korean name has a meaning, and I think this will be beneficial to her.” The other mother told me that although her son’s situation is not the same as the character’s situation in that he is biracial and has both Korean and English names, she still would use this book to teach him to show respect for other cultures by making an effort to pronounce their non-English names.

One concern the mothers shared was an outdated image of Korea in *Father’s Rubber Shoes*. The illustration in the part where the main character’s father talks about his childhood is full of the imagery of the old days in Korea. The mothers said that this book would be suitable for introducing Korean history in the 1950s and 1960s. Two of them mentioned that children who would read this book need to be informed that its background is the Korea of several decades ago. One mother said:

What would my children learn from reading this book? ... They would get the impression that Korea was so poor that the father came to America. Something like, you can be considered well off if you can wear rubber shoes in Korea. So, for your dreams I came here. Then, this child [the character of the story] will think, ‘Korea is so poor that my parents came to America even though it was not easy for them to adapt here. They came here for me.’

She went on to mention other books she had read because her daughter had brought them home, criticizing their obsolete portrayals of Korea:

Sometimes my daughter brings books home from school. When I see them, I find that the pictures in the books are of the 1960s and the *hanbok* [Korean traditional dress] is not pretty. All of the *hanboks* are black and white [meaning old

fashioned, not pretty, inexpensive], and people are wearing rubber shoes. Books I found in American libraries are like this, too.

These mothers asserted that in order to raise their children to be proud of their Korean heritage, it is important to emphasize the good aspects of Korea. They did not think that *Father's Rubber Shoes* would help their children develop a positive sense of their Korean heritage. These outdated images in the books could negatively affect children's attitudes towards Korean language and culture. This is one of the issues that has been discussed frequently in studies on multicultural literature (Sung, 2009; Yokota & Bates, 2005).

Sharing the story books about Korean American children led the mothers to share their own stories. Various issues were brought up, such as identity, Korean language maintenance, multicultural education, and stereotypes, as they responded to the books. I found that professional book reviews about these books were different from what these mothers commented. They did not contain any of these mothers' concerns or doubts. They only provided a summary of the story and comments on the book's artistic quality, rather than its authenticity.

After I became a mother myself and had more opportunities to meet other Korean parents, I got more interested in Korean parents' perspectives on Korean American children's literature. I thought I could continue and expand what I had done for my class project. The project described above, my observation of Korean mothers, and reading articles and books on multicultural literature led me to some questions. For example, would parents agree with scholars who read, study, and discuss multicultural literature books about the importance of reading these books? Would they say that for children

from the non-mainstream cultures, reading books that portray their cultures and experiences *authentically* enhances their cultural identity development and makes them proud of their cultural heritage (Cai, 2002; Leu, 2001)? Would parents think some books might not be beneficial to their children because of the negative portrayals of Korea, as some of the comments from my friends indicate? How would they respond to the experiences depicted in those books? Are there any stories or representations of Koreans/Korean Americans they would like to see in this collection? What insights could parents' voices add to the current discourses about cultural authenticity, representation, and benefits of reading multicultural literature?

While I learned about different positions and various issues from reading what experts (e.g., authors, editors, critics, etc.) in multicultural children's literature have to say about them, I realized that I had not read much about how parents think about the issues. Zipes (2001) urges scholars and critics to be more attentive to the role that parents play in purchasing and reading children's books because they are a major part of the audience of children's literature. He adds that scholars and critics in university academics "must go further and make theoretical and concrete connections concerned with what we and others do to children's literature and to children" (p. 36).

In this study, I explore Korean/Korean American parents' perspectives on Korean American children's literature. The key research questions guiding this study are:

1. What is the nature of Korean/Korean American parents' responses to Korean American children's literature books?
2. What social and cultural factors influence the parents' attitude toward Korean American children's literature?

Conceptual Framework

Literary Theories

What happens when someone reads a text? What makes an interpretation valid or invalid? What is the relationship between an author's life and his or her work? How much does the author influence the reader's interpretation? What effect do cultural and historical contexts have in the production of a text and its interpretation? These questions are some of the questions that many literary theorists have strived to answer (Spikes, 2003). Simply put, all of them are concerned with "the interplay among writer, reader, text, and world" (Moore, 1997, p. 7). As Bertens (2001) says, any interpretation of a text reflects a theoretical perspective of readers whether they are aware of it or not. The knowledge of different literary theories can offer an opportunity to reflect on our stances toward the reading, name them, and see alternative ways of reading a text.

Various literary theories are discussed in relation to the research and practice in the field of children's literature (Beach, 1993; Cai, 1997; Moore, 1997; Rogers, 1999; Sipe, 1994). Beach (1993), for example, discusses literary theories in terms of their perspectives on readers' responses and sorts them out into five categories: textual, experiential, psychological, social, and cultural. Each highlights different aspects of the transaction between reader, text, and context. Cai (1997) classifies reader response theories into three models of reading: uniactional, transactional, and interactional. Similarly, Moore (1997) divides literary theories into three main categories: theories about structures, reader-response theories, and culturally based theories. In reviewing the progression of research on children's literature, Rogers (1999) explains how various traditions have contributed to this progress, from "the notions about construction of the

reader,” then “descriptions of the intersection of reader and text worlds,” and to “a focus on the wider social and cultural context of reading children’s literature” (p. 138). The influence of poststructuralism in the late 1970s shifted literary theorists’ (e.g., Fish, Bleich, and Iser) interest from the texts or authors to the actual readers. The reader, reading process, and strategies began to be viewed as sources of meaning. The recognition of the importance of reader in creating meaning led to the rediscovery of Rosenblatt’s transactional theory. Taking John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley’s concept of transaction as “a continuing to-and-fro, back and forth, give-and-take reciprocal and spiral relationship in which each conditions the other” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. xviii), Rosenblatt explains that a transaction occurs between reader and text as they affect each other continually. The text is a stimulus, activating the reader’s past experiences and guiding the reader’s responses, while the reader brings his or her experiences, assumptions, preoccupations, and beliefs to the reading (Moore, 1997). For Rosenblatt, the concept of transaction is not limited to the reading of texts. She extends it to life experiences, broadening out to include the whole institutional, social, and cultural context. She says that we are always “in transaction and in a reciprocal relationship with an environment, a context, a total situation” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 26). Also, she emphasizes that any reading event needs to be viewed and analyzed “in its personal, social, and cultural matrix” (Rosenblatt, as cited in Cai, 2008, p. 214). However, as Cai (2008) points out, a critical stance of the transactional theory, which recognizes the influence of social, cultural, and political factors, has not been paid enough attention.

Rogers (1999) mentions that cultural studies provides a theoretical perspective that promotes the awareness of these social, cultural, political factors among reader

response researchers. They recognize that readers do not identify with the texts in a predictable way but construct and negotiate their multiple meanings through language and discourse. In addition, authors or texts are not seen free from the social, cultural, and political contexts, instead they construct and reflect the political and cultural situations. Like the other kinds of texts, literary texts can be studied in terms of issues of representation of race, class, and gender. The influence of different theoretical perspectives led many researchers to pay more attention to readers and context rather than authors or the text itself (Sipe, 1994) because they viewed that meanings are not determined by the author's intentions or text itself, but made through the literary experience of readers and their interactions with others. In other words, literary texts are not just words on the page but are reflections of historically and culturally bound ideologies (McGillis, 1996). The concept of intertextuality and McCormick's reading model point to this socially constructed nature of the reader, the text, and the writer.

Intertextuality

The term "intertextuality" was first introduced by Kristeva in the French language through her early work in the 1960s. Her definition of intertextuality is drawn from her chapter "Word, Dialogue, and Novel" within *Semeiotike*, much of which is considered a revision of the work of Russian literary theorist, Bakhtin (Orr, 2003), who was not widely known to Western audiences at that time. It was Kristeva's view that Bakhtin's insight of a word offered an alternative to Russian formalism by situating the text within history and society. For Bakhtin, each word (text) is "an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning)" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 65), and the status of a word is defined in a dialogue among writing subject, addressee, and exterior texts-cultural

context. Bakhtin disputes two views about art, one emphasizing the form of structure as in linguistic analysis of the art and the other studying the psyche of the author (Volosinov, 1976). He argues that our utterances always join the participants in the situation together as co-participants who know, understand, and evaluate the situation. Kristeva notes that Bakhtin introduced the notion of intertextuality into literary theory and claims that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva, 1980, p. 66). In her earlier essay, “The Bounded Text,” the term intertextuality was mentioned for the first time: “The text ... is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a text, many utterances taken from other texts intersect with one another and neutralize one another” (Kristeva, 1980, p.36).

Bakhtin’s approach to our utterance (text) is always mentioned in the explication of the concept of intertextuality (Allen, 2011; Hartman, 1992; Mai, 1991). Although there can always be more detailed, close explanation of the influence of Bakhtin’s perspectives on intertextuality, two points seem to be discussed frequently. As briefly mentioned earlier, he argues for the inherent intertextuality of our utterances which are constituted by citations, parodies, transformations of the voices of others.

In all areas of life and ideological activity, our speech is filled to overflow with other people’s words, which are transmitted with highly varied degrees of accuracy and impartiality...[P]eople talk most of all about what others talk about – they transmit, recall, weigh and pass judgment on other people’s words, opinions, assertions, information; people are upset by others’ words, or agree with them, contest them, refer to them and so forth.... Every conversation is full of transmissions and interpretations of other people’s words. (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 337-338)

Reiteration of others’ utterances does not mean delivering the fixed meaning of the utterances. The meaning is the result of the active relationship between the speaker

(writer) and the listener (reader) as well as the context of “the whole complex social situation in which the utterance emerges” (Volosinov, 1976, p. 79). Because in our utterances, the voices of others are combined with our own words, phrases, or ideas in a new context, the meanings of utterances change. For example, by manipulation, a speech of another person is always subject to change of meaning in spite of its accurate quote, when it is framed in a different context. Bakhtin’s dialogic approach is also concerned with the *addressivity*, “being directed to someone” (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 87). This means that all utterances, whether a simple everyday conversation or a sophisticated, scholarly work, are responses to prior utterances, and seek after further responses (Allen, 2011; Fairclough, 1992); and they are in “the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere” (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 85).

The idea of intertextuality has also been redefined and rearticulated in various studies (Allen, 2011; Hartman, 1992; Pfister, 1991). For example, within reader response theories, the concept of intertextuality is used to describe how the readers’ experience with a certain text is related to their experiences with other texts in their reading history (Beach, 1993). Stephens (1992) defines intertextuality as “a process of the meaning production from the interrelationships between audience, text, other texts, and the sociocultural determinations of significance” (p. 55). In literary studies, there are two views that define the relations between texts (Linde, 2009). When intertextuality is understood from a genealogical view, scholars are interested in examining an author’s use of prior texts and identifying sources and influences of the works. Wilkie’s (1998) study is an example of this view in that the researcher restricts the concept of intertextuality at the literary text level. In this study, she examines how authors of

contemporary children's books adapted ideas from previously read or told stories and categorizes them into three types of intertextuality, that is, texts of quotation, texts of imitation, and genre texts (See Wilkie for details on each category). However, this view is a very narrow interpretation of intertextuality, which was not envisioned by Kristeva when she introduced this term (Mai, 1991; Stephens, 1992). Stephen argues that intertextuality needs to be understood as "a cultural discourse, especially with reference to the relationship between language, signs, and culture" (p. 115).

Hartman (1992) discusses how the theory of intertextuality has rendered the conceptions of the text, the reader, the author, and the context. First, the meaning of the text was broadened, including not only linguistic signs but also nonlinguistic signs (e.g., a gesture, music, sculpture, etc.) as long as it transmits any meaning (Hartman, 1992; Short, 1992). The new understanding of the text through the conception of intertextuality is summed up in Hartman's statement: "From out of many texts, the text becomes many more" (p. 298). "From out of many texts" denotes many voices within a text, which were drawn from other multiple sources. The latter part of the statement means that the text becomes a site for a dialogue with other texts by a reader who makes such connections. In this way, a text is not considered as a bounded, discrete, univocal container but indeterminate, provisional, "an open-bordered" (Hartman, p. 297) space where various texts meet.

The readers are viewed as a weaver who creates a new text using various available texts (Hartman, 1992). They make connections among the texts, including their thoughts and ideas, and generate an "inner text" (Hartman, p. 305) by borrowing, transforming, adapting textual resources. It is an act of interpretation (Frow, 1990). The

prior texts are revised, with some connections between texts strengthened and weakened. Since a text is available only by some process of reading, a deliberate allusion or parody implemented by the author can be unknown to the reader, and at the same time, because of the reader's unpredictable textual resources, the text may be interpreted differently from the author's intention (Worton & Still, 1990).

Hartman (1992) speculates that the theory of intertextuality also brings a new perspective toward the author. The author is seen as plural, with many voices marked in his or her writing, rather than "a solitary actor and voice" (Hartman, p. 300) with originality. Worton and Still (1990) argue that a text is inevitably intertextual because authors are, in a broader sense, readers of texts before they create any text. Like the readers, the authors also reiterate, appropriate, and transform available texts which were already generated by others. For instance, authors of literary works do not just select words from the language system, but they decide on genres, plots, narrative styles, and so forth, from other literary texts or other literary traditions (Allen, 2011). In this sense, no author can ever be wholly original (Linde, 2009). Eagleton (1983) goes further, saying that "an author's intention is itself a complex 'text' which can be debated, translated and variously interpreted just like any other" (p. 69).

The meaning of the context is also described from the intertextuality perspective. The context, according to Hartman (1992), can be divided into two kinds. One is concerned with linguistic textual resources that readers use within and across passages. For example, readers interpret the meaning of a word or sentence as they read the words or phrases around it. Also, they interpret a text as they make connections to other texts read previously. The other kind of context takes into account the sociolinguistic and

sociocultural perspective, and social, cultural, historical ideologies are considered part of the context. These ideologies set rules, whether implied or explicit, which influence readers' adaptation, appropriation, or transposition of a text. Therefore, the meaning of a text readers construct may not be "a direct transference or copy from the author or the text" (Hartman, p. 306).

Fairclough (1992) reminds us that although intertextuality points to the productivity of texts, the productivity does have social limitations and constraints. The theory of intertextuality gives an impression that there is an indeterminable number of intertextual links among texts, however, the number of actual links can be quite limited because of the various constraints within social institutions and practices. For example, reading is determined by a limited range of cultural resources (e.g., knowledge, prejudice, etc.) readers have or ideologies to which their positions allow them access (Barker, 2000). They create a "negotiated" version of a text as they encounter complex and contradictory ideological forces in the text. Moreover, the texts set a preferred reading to a certain degree, through overt or implicit representation of the writer's ideologies (Hollindale, 1988).

The theory of intertextuality reframes a conception of reading from an event bound with beginning and ending at a certain point to the one "intricately bound to a larger dialogue that has preceded and will follow it" (Hartman, 1992, p. 304). The text, the reader, the author, and the context are constituted by multiple textual sources, therefore they are plural in nature but not without constraints.

McCormick's Reading Model

As mentioned above, reading and writing are not regarded just as individual, subjective activities. McCormick (1994) describes reading as an intersection between the “reader’s repertoire” and “text’s repertoire” (see Figure 1).

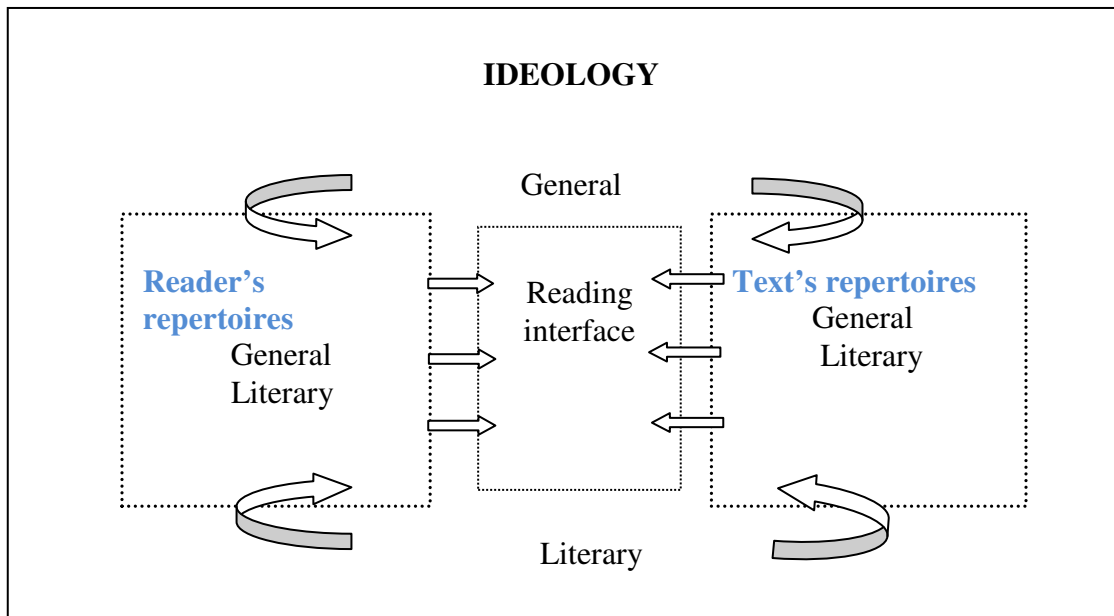


Figure 1. McCormick's model of the reading situation. Adapted from *The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English* (p. 73), by K. McCormick, 1994, Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press.

Here, “repertoire” refers to both a conscious and an unconscious appropriation of ideology from their society. Repertoires specifically about literary matters are called “literary repertoire”, and repertoires about all other, nonliterary matters are called “general repertoire.” For example, each society has particular assumptions, beliefs, and practices in relation to literature, which it called “literary ideology”, and a text or a reader shapes literary repertoire by drawing on this literary ideology in society. Thus, a text’s literary repertoire includes perspectives on the literary conventions like plot, characterization, view points, and so forth. Readers’ literary repertoire consists of their

assumptions, knowledge, beliefs about literature, their previous literary experiences, and reading strategies. The general repertoire of a text includes a nonliterary, general ideology such as the dominant moral ideas, values, social practices, and so forth which are represented in the text. Readers' general repertoire consists of more general matters which they bring to a text, and it refers to their beliefs, knowledge, and expectation about matters such as politics, education, lifestyle, and so forth, as well as their attitudes about gender, race, and class. As the literary ideology is closely related to general ideology in a society, there is a complex interaction between the literary repertoires and general repertoires.

Three kinds of reactions take place when the readers' repertoire intersects with the text's repertoire; "a matching of repertoires," "a mismatching of repertoires," and "a tension" (McCormick, 1994, p. 87). When the reader's expectation is fulfilled by the text's literary or general repertoires, it is called a matching of repertoires. When the reader cannot interact with the text in a meaningful way due to, for instance, the lack of cultural knowledge or the genre preference, a mismatching can occur. A tension takes place when readers' literary or general repertoires are in conflict with those of the text.

As the text cannot be thought of existing in itself but always needs to be reconceived of as text-in-use, its repertoire changes in a different cultural, historical context. Readers' repertoires are also subject to change because they encounter new discourses which alter their beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes. McCormick (1994) claims that by discussing literary and general repertoires of readers as well as texts, readers can become more conscious of the historical and social conditions of the texts' production and their positions as readers of not only the text, but also, the world.

Critical reading of a text begins with the recognition of the socially constructed nature of both the reader and the text. It involves not only analyzing the words, but also examining the text's relationship to the historical and ideological conditions of its production. Readers can analyze how authors position readers to respond in particular ways through their choice of genre, language use, and point of view. They can also investigate the dominant messages that are embedded in other texts (e.g., book review) about a literature book (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). Reading "absence", the unsaid and the unwritten, is as important as what is said and written (Machery, as cited in McCormick, 1994) because it is a part of the text's history.

The notion of intertextuality and McCormick's model helped me to read and interpret Korean/Korean American parents' responses to Korean American children's literature books as expressions of their individual concerns and understandings, as well as of their larger social concerns and understanding (Tobin, 2000). As Bakhtin puts it, I see this study of parents' responses to Korean American children's literature as a response to the dialogues in the field of multicultural literature and as an invitation for more dialogue and greater understandings.

This Study

As mentioned earlier, most studies rely on the researchers' interpretations of the books, using content analysis as their main method. There are a few studies that focus on children's responses to books; however, studies on parents' responses to multicultural literature are even fewer (e.g., Fain & Horn, 2006). This is definitely true of research on Korean American children's literature. Son's (2009) study is the only one that focuses on children's responses to picture books. To date, no studies on Korean/Korean American

parents' responses to Korean American children's literature have been published. Rudd (2000) criticizes studies that rely on textual analysis only and ignore how texts are actually consumed.

As Botelho and Rudman (2009) and other researchers argue, production or interpretation of children's literature cannot be apolitical, thus, it can be better understood when readers are conscious about the political, social, racial, economic, and cultural dynamics that have situated the texts. I assumed in this study that because of their social roles as parents, parents of Korean American children would be able to not only identify with the characters but also step back and distance themselves from the text, as they evaluate children's books for their children. According to Barthes, "To interpret a text is not to give it a ... meaning, but on the contrary to appreciate what *plural* constitutes it" (Barthes, as cited in Rudd, 2000, p.18). In other words, interpretation is involved with multiple discourses that give meaning to a text. Studying the parents' responses to Korean American children's literature books will help us interpret them better, and may offer insights about their production and consumption. Further, it can add interesting, critical discursive threads to the discussion on multicultural literature (Rudd, 2000).

Research Questions

In this research, as cited above, I investigated the Korean/Korean American parents' responses to and perspectives on Korean American children's literature. The main research questions guiding this study are:

1. What is the nature of Korean/Korean American parents' responses to Korean American children's literature books?

2. What social and cultural factors influence the parents' attitude toward Korean American children's literature?

Overview of Dissertation

In Chapter 2, I present literature that (a) provides the social and political contexts which influence much of Korean American literature, (b) outlines three major issues underlying multicultural literature, and (c) reviews studies related to Korean American children's literature. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of data collection and analysis for this study. I also introduce readers to the participants and describe my position in the study. Chapter 4 presents the data analysis in light of my research questions, and in Chapter 5, I present conclusions and implications of this study.

CHAPTER 2: RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, three discourses pertinent to Korean American children's literature are described to situate the study in relevant discourses. First, a brief history of Korean immigration to the U.S. will be presented because Korean American children's literature cannot be understood without knowing the social and political contexts which influence the themes, plots, and characterizations of the stories. Second, three issues in multicultural literature are explored to situate the publishing of Korean American children's books in context. The issues are (a) the controversial definition of multicultural literature (b) authenticity linked to the debate on insider versus outsider authors, and (c) publishing multicultural literature. Finally, studies on Korean American children's literature are reviewed.

Koreans in the United States

Koreans are one of six major Asian ethnic groups in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Most scholars divide Korean immigration into three major periods of time: the first wave at the turn of the 20th century, the second wave during and after the Korean War, and the third wave upon the passage of the Hart-Celler Act of 1965. What makes each wave distinct from one another are the characteristics of each immigrant group (e.g., their socioeconomic backgrounds and motivation for emigrating), which have been defined by its historical context (e.g., the relationship between Korea and the United States, immigration laws, etc.) (Chang, 2000).

The first and second wave of Korean immigration are characterized in terms of the immigrants' background and motivation, and the surrounding contexts, due to the small number of Korean immigrants, as well as the restrictions that allowed only a certain

group of people to enter the United States. Under the *Chemulpo* Treaty (1882) between Korea and the United States, the majority of the first Korean immigrants arrived in Hawaii to work in pineapple or sugar plantations, and they were followed by a group of Korean women who came to marry Korean laborers or to join their husbands in Hawaii. Between 1950 and 1964, another wave of Korean immigration was facilitated by the Korean War and the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 which removed the ban against Asian immigration and naturalization but under the discriminatory quota system based on the national origins (Jo, 1999). The second wave mainly consisted of war brides, orphans, and students. The immigration of these groups that constituted the second wave is still taking place, contributing to the third wave of Korean immigration. For instance, as the aftermath of the Korean War, there are still about 40,000 U.S. military troops stationed throughout South Korea, and every year about 2,000 military brides immigrate to the United States (Yuh, 2005). In addition, the Korean War led to a significant increase in the number of mixed-race children (Choi, 2007). Since the Korean War, Korea has been one of the largest sources of foreign adoption in the United States, and the adoption of Korean children accounted for more than half of the total international adoptions during the 1980s and 1990s (Kim, 2004). The transnational, transracial adoption of Korean children in the U.S. is reflected in quite a few children's literature books about Korean adoptees (Louie, 2005; Park, 2004, 2009).

The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (a.k.a., the Hart-Celler Immigration Act) opened the third wave of Korean immigration that consisted of a much larger population of Koreans compared to the first and second wave of Korean immigration. The Hart-Celler Immigration Act eliminated the national origins quota system. Instead, it

set a total number of immigrants from the entire Eastern Hemisphere. In addition, under this law, people with skills such as professionals, scientists, and artists were accepted with preference (Thomas, 2010). The third wave immigrants from Korea differed from the previous immigrants in many aspects. They were said to be college-trained professionals from the urban middle class in Korean society, whereas most of the first and second wave of Korean immigrants were from lower working class backgrounds with much less education. However, this does not describe all Korean immigrants of the third wave. The Hart-Celler Immigration Act came to be called the “Brothers and Sisters Act” because it allowed immediate relatives of U.S. permanent residents and citizens to enter the United States to join them. They were not counted against the overall immigration quota each year (Thomas, 2010). Although the 1965 Immigration Act did not intend to accept unskilled workers, the relatives or family members sponsored by the Korean professionals who arrived first and earned American citizenship were not required to have certain skills to enter the United States. Since 1972, the majority of the Koreans arriving annually in the United States have come by means of family connections (Lehrer, 1988). This chain immigration increased the heterogeneity and stratification of Korean Americans by encompassing widely diverse groups of Koreans, causing them to categorize one another by their positions as follows:

Most Koreans I know and keep friendly with are professionals, scattered around the city. They avoid the Korean neighborhoods. The people living together in the neighborhoods are from lower-class backgrounds. Back home my family would not mix with such people. Even if they do get lucky and make money, they are still essentially lower class. No education, no sophistication. There are no facets in their personality. They can't carry on a conversation. Some people can only make money. I have much more in common with a native New Yorker than with a Korean greengrocer. (Lehrer, 1988, p. 72)

More than 600,000 Koreans immigrated to the United States between 1971 and 1990, and large Korean immigration communities developed in Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago, and other smaller communities in various places (Thomas, 2010). The recent Korean immigrants' various motives also promoted the heterogeneity among Korean immigrants. The economic reason for seeking a chance to earn a better living was but one of many motives. Many had a desire to pursue their careers in professions or to start businesses of their own (Jo, 1999). The political situation in Korea also was one of the push factors for Korean immigration. Many professionals and intelligentsia, who wanted to leave the Korean dictatorship that prevailed from the 1960s through 1980s, came to the U.S., thinking of America as a land of opportunity, freedom, and democracy. To some Koreans, the possibility of providing a better education for their children was a main factor. For instance, many of the Korean students who came as international students to the U.S. did not return to Korea after they finished their studies, because they saw better and less expensive education opportunities for their children (Weinberg, 1997). Additionally, as English-language ability becomes more and more emphasized, many Korean parents want to give their children a chance to learn English; and they think that the ideal environment for learning English, especially learning to speak fluent English without a Korean accent, is living in an English-speaking country (see Shin, 2005, pp. 51–53 for more discussion).

There are some distinctive characteristics of Korean immigrants in the U.S., such as many ethnic churches and a high rate of self-employment. However, as indicated above, it is difficult to grasp the motives and the characteristics of recent Korean immigrants

because of the increase in the number of immigrants as well as rapid changes in political and economic circumstances.

Issues in Multicultural Literature

Definitions of Multicultural Literature

Multicultural literature has been defined in various ways with different criteria. Some critics say that if a book includes any dominated group in terms of race, class, sexuality, religion, and so on, it can be called multicultural literature. To others, in addition to the contents and characters in the book, the authorship of the book is an important criterion. For example, Fang, Fu, and Lamme (2003) define multicultural literature as “literature *by* and *about* people belonging to the various self-identified ethnic, racial, religious, and regional groups in American society” (*italics added*, p. 260). Authenticity is also considered to be important when defining multicultural literature. McKenna (1996) defines multicultural literature as “literature which *authentically* portrays distinct cultural ethnic groups with values and perspectives distinguished from [sic] those of the dominant cultural norms” (*italics added*, p. 67). However, as Cai (2002) points out, all these different definitions share one assumption: There is a distinction between the dominant and the dominated cultures, and multicultural literature is about people who are dominated racially, culturally, or linguistically. Sims Bishop (1997) and Cai believe that among all the issues in multicultural literature, race is one of the most divisive ones in America.

There are other critics who claim that all literature is multicultural because every book demonstrates the complexity of multiculturalism. Some people argue that there is no need to have a category of “multicultural literature” because it only makes “general”

literature the norm and multicultural literature alien. In addition, it may entail a risk of essentializing the experiences of a group of people and emphasizing only the differences between the mainstream and ethnic groups. A student of Chinese heritage, in a graduate class on children's literature, expressed the frustrations with being categorized and alienated despite the fact that he was a third generation Chinese American. His frustration was reflected in his idea about authentic Asian American literature books (Fishman, 1995). For him, an authentic Asian American literature book is the one in which the character "'just happens to be Asian' but could be any race or ethnicity" (Fishman, p. 74). Similarly, a Korean American author and illustrator, Yumi Heo, says in the interview with Zaleski (2001):

I don't want them to be [categorized as multicultural]. I guess because first of all, I'm Korean. I did a lot of books about Korean folktales, other folktales. Maybe that's why I'm categorized as a multicultural illustrator, but I think my illustrations shouldn't be categorized... But I don't want my books to be categorized...If I do a folktale, it doesn't have a lot of characters so when you see the book itself you cannot tell if it is multicultural. It could be just any story about monkeys. (pp. 187-188)

Others claim the inadequacy of having the category of multicultural literature for a different reason from that mentioned above. For example, Aronson (2003) argues that like any book, we are multicultural because as we share our cultures, stories, and even dreams with others, they get mixed and crossed (p. 78). The complexity of conflicting opinions and ideas does exist in any culture, including the underrepresented culture. Some scholars have shown concerns about the tendency to define multicultural children's literature as literature by and for/about "people of color" (Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Schwartz, 1995; Shannon, 1994). Shannon (1994) comments that this exclusive definition is problematic as it can reduce the concept of multiculturalism to racial essentialism. In

addition, it can lead teachers to believe that multicultural literature is about “The Other” and not themselves. Schwartz (1995) says that Shannon’s critique should be recognized as a shift to a critical postmodern paradigm in which “multiculturalism means across cultures, against borders; multiculturalism doesn’t mean only people of color” (Rochman, as cited in Schwartz, 1995, p. 643). In turn, she considers the work of Bishop and Harris as being within a paradigm of modernism. Like Shannon, she is concerned that the focus on “race only” can exclude issues such as class, gender, disability, religion, and sexual orientation in multicultural literature. Botelho and Rudman (2009) make a similar remark that race and ethnicity, as social constructions, should be emphasized in discussion about all literature, however, without considering other issues it can only offer a limited perspective “because racial oppression interfaces with classism and sexism” (p. 85). To these scholars’ exclusive definition of multicultural literature, Cai (2002) responds as follows:

To keep this fledgling literature [multicultural literature] alive, educators, librarians, parents, and students need to raise their voices to demand its continuing publication, which will not happen if they are confused by the controversy over the definition of multicultural literature. In the interest of multicultural education, I believe we need a narrow, not an all inclusive, definition of multicultural literature. (p. 12)

The dialogue among Shannon, Yokota, Cai, Botelho, and Rudman (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) shows that multicultural literature is still “a concept in search of a definition” (Cai & Bishop, 1994, p. 57). Although Botelho and Rudman agree with Cai that a definition of multicultural literature cannot be discussed separately from the issues of inequality, discrimination, and oppression, they do not think that there should be a line drawn between the literature of the dominant mainstream culture and that of the

marginalized culture: This binary view is inappropriate for describing power as a complex matrix.

As I read various positions in regard to the definition of multicultural literature, I find that the discussion on its definition entails issues beyond the literary features of multicultural literature. Aronson's (2003) point that "*a* culture has *a* view that belongs to *a* people" (p. 78) may be a fiction or myth is somewhat agreeable. In addition, I agree that in any culture, including the underrepresented culture (or parallel culture), there are conflicting opinions and ideas. The power relations are complex and our social identities are multiple, contradictory, and shifting (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). Moreover, any text can be read multiculturally, which means adopting a critical stance and reading the signs of race, class, gender in it (Hade, 1997). Do all these points imply that there is no need for the category of multicultural literature? I do not think "reading critically" should replace the need for publishing multicultural literature or be used as an excuse to publish or read any book. The issues of essentialism, cultural identity, and multiple identities or memberships are all related to the power struggle (Barker, 2000). As long as there are people who are/feel marginalized and underrepresented, multicultural literature, I believe, needs to refer to literature by or about underrepresented groups of people, including women, religious groups, regional groups, gays, lesbians, and the disabled (Sims Bishop, 1997). I also believe that multicultural literature can help "transform the existing social order to ensure greater voice and authority to the marginalized cultures" (Cai, 2002, p. 7) for social equality and justice among all cultures. Literature has the power to make all these changes by "educat[ing] not only the heart, but the head as well" (Bishop, as cited in Moreillon, 2003, p.76).

As with the various definitions of multicultural literature, in studies on Korean American children's literature, researchers use various differing criteria when selecting Korean American children's literature for their studies (Louie, 2005; Son, 2009; Sung, 2009). For example, Louie (2005) does not provide a definition of Korean American children's literature, rather, she selected books based on key words such as "Korean-American," "Korean," "Korean-American juvenile literature," and "Korean juvenile literature." Many books she analyzed in her study were written by non Koreans/Korean Americans, especially in the case of Korean folktales and Korean adoptees. Park (2004) used two criteria to delimit the Korean American children's picture books for evaluation. First, the story should include at least one character that is identifiably Korean American or Korean. She states the reason she includes books with Korean characters is because of "rapid advances in technology, Internet communication, and the constant movement of bodies across borders and oceans" (Park, 2004, p. 22). Park's other criteria relate to the language in the text, the place of publication, and authors' residency: "[T]he picture books are written in English by authors living in the United States (and published by publishing houses in the United States as well)" (Park, 2004, p. 23). The author's ethnic background is not considered. Son (2009) chooses "picture storybooks about Korean people and Korean culture" to share with Korean American children.

Authenticity: Insider Versus Outsider

One of the most debated and controversial issues in multicultural literature is the authorship, that is, whether or not an author can write outside of his or her culture (Cai, 2002; Harris, 2003; McKenna, 1996; Sims Bishop, 2003). People stand in different positions in regard to this issue, depending on how much they think the author's

background influences the cultural authenticity of the book. For example, Seto (2003) stands on one end of this continuum of different positions. She argues that authors, European American writers in particular, should not write about other cultures unless they have a deep understanding of the cultures and have a connection to them. She calls it “a form of cultural imperialism” (Seto, p. 95) and claims that in these authors’ writing, a lack of integrity is easily noticed. She also urges these authors to ask themselves about their motives to write about other cultures and to consider writing about their own heritage instead. Her position may be called politically correct watchdog or reductionist by people on the other end of the continuum. They say that if authors write only their own experienced stories, all stories would be like autobiographies. The idea that “certain stories may be told only by certain people” is viewed as a kind of “literary version of ethnic cleansing . . . with an underlying premise that posits that there is only one story and only one way to tell it” (Lasky, 2003, p. 88). Aronson (1993) disputes the first attitude – only insiders can tell their stories authentically – for a different reason from Lasky and others:

[O]ur ethnicity does not determine the scope of our imagination; and in modern America, it is very difficult to say where one ethnic group ends and another begins... Since we live in a shared society, and since we all grew up in worlds which are inflected with the accents of other cultures... we can all claim an “authentic” connection with many different cultures. (Aronson, p. 390)

Probably most people take a stand at some point between the two extremes mentioned above. Some believe that an insider perspective can be gained through study and life choices, and being born into a cultural group does not guarantee an insider perspective since they may not have any desire to understand or represent their heritage (Yokota & Bates, 2005). Others say that each of the perspectives (insider & outsider) can

offer different kinds of understandings, for instance, the outsiders' views can show something that insiders may not recognize as being different or interesting to outsiders. However, many people agree that it will be difficult for the outsiders to acquire cultural authenticity in their writing, although not absolutely impossible.

Mikkelson (1998) and Harris (2003) point out that some works by the outsider authors may look authentic and accurate on the surface, but because of an authorial distance between the author and the subject their works are likely to fail to look at “the bigger picture – the values, beliefs, and world view” of the group as they impose their perspectives on the experience of the insiders (Mikkelson, 1998, p. 38). Yamate (1997) also reports misrepresentation and distortion of the images of Asian Pacific Americans in children's books. The problem with these books is not just flaws in cultural facts but also these authors' “ethnocentric, biased, or at worst, racist view” in their work (Sims Bishop, 1993, p. 41).

Ironically, the limitation of the outsider authors can make the book successful because of, rather than in spite of, their inability to portray the distinctive features of the culture because the editor or publisher may think it will be received by a broader audience. Insider authors probably have advantages in writing about their own ethnic cultures more than outsider authors, but this does not mean that their views are always shared with the group (Miller-Lachmann, 1992). In addition, not only European American authors but also other writers use mainstream American culture as the frame of reference, intentionally or unintentionally, and the authors' internalization of Eurocentrism without questioning will most likely exemplify “multicultural” books regardless of the authors' ethnicity or cultural background (Chae, 2008). Ma (as cited in

Fang, et al., 2003) shows that even some Chinese writers have a tendency to “orientalize” their Chinese subjects to meet the mainstream American readers’ expectation of otherness and exoticism. Publishing companies’ commercial interests demand minority authors to highlight certain images, usually, stereotypical expectations in their literary works.

This issue is raised in recent studies on Korean American children’s literature (Park, 2009; Sung, 2009) and Asian American literature (Chae, 2008). Not only the works of outsider authors (Park, 2009; Sung, 2009) but also those of the insider authors (Sung, 2009) are criticized for othering Korean culture and Koreans/Korean Americans. For example, Sung points out that in many books Koreans are repeatedly portrayed as just-arrived foreigners from a faraway place. Interestingly, the interviews with Korean American authors, Yangsook Choi and Yumi Heo respectively, show that their picture story books about immigrant children were not initiated by themselves. Asked how her book, *Father’s Rubber Shoes* (a picture story book about a boy whose family came to America from Korea, [Heo, 1995]) came about, she answered, “When I was at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, I did a book about the racial disharmony there. An editor said it would be difficult to publish, but she encouraged me to write a Korean immigrant story” (Clegg, Miller, Vanderhoof, Ramirez, & Ford, n.d.).

The issue of cultural authenticity is further complicated when the idea that not only the authors, but also readers, are bound by dominant ideologies and stereotypes (Fang, et al., 2003). Chae (2008) discusses “perceived exoticism” by comparing an author’s intention with receptions of her work by readers and reviewers. Kingston, a Chinese American author, wrote *The Woman Warrior* to “demystify western viewers’

Orientalism and their stereotypical view of Chinese,” yet her book is in general considered as an “exotic Oriental fantasy” (Chae, p. 47).

As discussed above, various factors complicate the issue of insider/outsider perspectives because it is not just about an individual author’s ability to write a story authentically. It is entangled with various social, political, economical factors.

Publishing Multicultural Literature

One of the important issues in the field of multicultural literature is related to its production. In the 1960s, there was a series of events that helped create a market for books about Black children who had previously been invisible in children’s books (Horning & Kruse, 1991; Sims, 1982; Taxel, 2002). First, Larrick’s (1965) article, *The All-White World of Children’s Books*, published in the *Saturday Review* called attention to the underrepresentation of African Americans. In fact, some African American librarians (e.g., Charlemae Rollins) had already noted this invisibility of African Americans in children’s books before Larrick, however, her being White and having connections with librarians and publishers had an impact that the African Americans had not had (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). Her study showed that the majority of the books published in 1962 – 1964 included only White characters. Among the 5,206 trade books published in those years she surveyed, only 349 (6.7%) contained a Black character or characters in either the text or illustrations. In some of these books, adding just one or more dark faces in the background was the way of including a Black character or characters. For instance, 12 of 44 books telling a story about the contemporary African American were picture books with Black characters in illustrations but without any reference to them in the text. She also found that most of the books about Black

characters were telling the stories of Black people who lived far away or a long time ago, as in African folk tales or histories about the Underground Railroad. There were certain patterns of characterizing Black people in the stories. The description of them was too “gentle” to be real, even when the books dealt with serious issues such as neighborhood desegregation, school integration, and so forth. Most Black characters were described as always good, generous, and cheerful, never losing their temper. Another thing she noted was that in many books, Black characters were portrayed as slaves, servants, sharecroppers, and migrant workers (Larrick, 1965, p. 65). Larrick asserted that this situation was harmful to Black and White children alike.

According to Horning and Kruse (1991), throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, a series of events contributed to expansion of publishing of multicultural literature for children and young adults, in the milieu of a growing recognition of the diversity of a pluralistic society and the social consciousness of the Civil Rights Movement. The Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) was founded to encourage authors and artists of color to create books for children and to spur publishers to produce and market these books (Horning & Kruse, 1991; Larrick, 1965). The CIBC had a tremendous impact on the “all-White” children’s books. Their sponsoring of contests for unpublished writers and illustrators of color was one of the ways to discover talented authors and artists of color. The demand for authentic literature reflecting the lives of children of color opened the door to new authors and illustrators (Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Horning & Kruse, 1991). In 1969, the Coretta Scott King Award was established to acknowledge excellence in published writing by Black authors and illustrators of children’s literature. The passage of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act made available federal funds for

schools and libraries to spend on purchasing books. All these events and others made the publishers realize that “minorities represent a huge and growing market” (Taxel, 2002, p. 172). Many of the African American authors and illustrators who first published their work during this period (the late 1960s and early 1970s) continue to account for authoring the majority of culturally authentic books about the African American experience (Horning & Kruse, 1991).

However, Harris (1993) and Sims (1982) point out that although publishing more books about African Americans is something to welcome, it needs to be closely examined. Sims (1982) conducted a study on books about African Americans published between 1965 and 1979, analyzing the contents of the books such as themes and issues. According to her study, many of the books fit in the categories of “social conscious” literature and “melting pot” books (Sims, p. 14). Social conscious literature is basically written for non-African American readers to “develop empathy, sympathy, and tolerance for Afro-American children and their problem” (Sims, p. 17). They were not written from an African American perspective. Sims found that many of the authors who wrote this type of literature were not Black. The melting pot books are probably written for both Black and non-Black readers. They promote the assumption that except for our physical features including skin color, non-White children are exactly like other American children. In the 1970s, books that reflected the social and cultural traditions associated with growing up Black in the United States were published (Harris, 1993), and they are called “culturally conscious” literature in Sims’ term. They were written to “speak to Afro-American children about themselves and their lives” (Sims, p. 49) from the perspective of African Americans. These changes in publication of African American

children's literature are also observed in the shift of multicultural approaches to inequality (Vincent, as cited in Taxel, 2002). According to Vincent, the earlier approaches to multiculturalism conceptualized inequality as "one of prejudice, misunderstanding and ignorance," however, the more recent approaches focus on "cultural awareness" and "the cultural and political interests of minority group" (as cited in Taxel, 2002, p. 173).

What does this current publishing industry environment tell about publishing multicultural literature? In the publishing industry, editors or publishers may have different definitions of multicultural literature, as Taxel (2002) notes. It can be as simple as publishing an edition of popular English books in another language. Some may view multicultural literature as about underrepresented people, and some will say it is about including more characters of color in books they produce. Not only how publishers and editors define multicultural literature, but also the economic force, is becoming more important in the publication of multicultural literature. During the 1980s and 1990s, when the publishers realized that there was a profitable market for multicultural books, more authors and illustrators of color were able to get into the publishing industry.

The publishing industry has gone through many changes (Taxel, 2002), and has affected the publishing of multicultural literature, too. Taxel notes that the publishing industry in the fast capitalism has undergone the process of integration of individual publishing houses into giant corporations. For example, according to Schiffrin (as cited in Taxel, 2002), 80% of American book sales is controlled by five major conglomerates. The tension continues to increase between those who view the publishing industry as the cultural product and feel the cultural responsibility and those who see the industry as

commercial gains and are concerned mostly about marketplace and bottom line (Taxel, 2002). Under these circumstances, each book is required to “pay its own way” (Schiffrin, as cited in Taxel, p. 161) and new authors often find it very difficult to get their work published. According to Taxel, the commercialization and commodification of children’s literature has intensified. Mass market books are likely to be published over the high quality trade books, and most decisions are made by the marketing people in the firm. Books and films are becoming interdependent, and series or sequels to successful high-end trade picture books are common. As the dependence on star authors is increasing, the author’s name is often the sole prerequisite for publishing. Consequently, a new, unproven author will have a hard time breaking into the business. Harris contends that it is more difficult for unknown authors from underrepresented cultural groups to publish their books, and the commercialization and commodification causes a decrease in the publication of multicultural books (Taxel, 2002, p. 184). For a bigger market, authors may be pressured to “homogenize language and omit crucial internal issues and conflicts,” and “act in ways consistent with the expectations of the dominant culture (Miller-Lachmann, as cited in Taxel, p.178). Schliesman and Lindgren (2007) state that the publishers fail to reflect the changing demographics of the United States, at least in terms of the numbers as shown in Table 1, and they attribute the lack of growth in multicultural publishing to the bottom-line.

Table 1

Children's Books by and About People of Color Published in the U.S., 2002-2012

Year	Number of books received at CCBC	African/African American		American Indians		Asian Pacifics/Asian Pacific Americans		Latino	
		By	About	By	About	By	About	By	About
2012	3,600	68	119	6	22	83	76	59	54
2011	3,400	79	123	12	28	76	91	52	58
2010	3,400	102	156	9	22	60	64	55	66
2009	3,000	83	157	12	33	67	80	60	61
2008	3,000	83	172	9	40	77	98	48	79
2007	3,000	77	150	6	44	56	68	42	59
2006	3,000	87	153	14	41	72	74	42	63
2005	2,800	75	149	4	34	60	64	50	76
2004	2,800	99	143	7	33	61	65	37	61
2003	3,200	79	171	11	95	43	78	41	63
2002	3,150	69	166	6	64	46	91	48	94

Note: An estimate of total number of books published every year in the U.S. is 5,000. Adapted from the Cooperative Children's Book Center [CCBC] (n.d.), *Children's Books by and about People of Color Published in the United States*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/pcstats.asp>

Regarding the distribution of multicultural books, Harris (1993) and Hudson (1991) point out that although many quality books exist about African American children compared to the previous decades, many children, particularly those in the African American community, are not aware of these books. The bookstores do not carry them because they do not believe these books will sell. Harris (2003) argues that book publishing in its various aspects (e.g., editorial, marketing, and sales) remains overwhelmingly the province of Whites, and it contributes to excluding authors with different ethnic backgrounds from breaking into the mainstream (Miller-Lachmann, 1992).

Taxel (2002) says that in spite of the changes in the publishing industry described above, there is still a domain of choices as people (authors, educators, editors, etc.) engaged in children literature resist the pressure. Reviewers and members of award committees can play a vital role in this as well. As Schliesman and Lindgren (2007) state, publishing is a business and if the publishing companies can see multicultural books profitable, they will work to create more multicultural books. For many independent, small presses, grassroots support is critical to their promotion, with customers having the power to make an impact on the current environment of the publishing industry (Taxel, 2002).

Studies on Korean American Children's Literature

Most of studies on Korean American children's literature have been conducted recently, which is probably a reflection of the recent increase in the publication of Korean American children's literature. Often times it was studied as part of Asian American children's literature (e.g., Leu, 2001), and only a few studies dealt with Korean American children's literature as their main focus. The most often used method for examining Korean American children's literature is content analysis, sometimes in comparison to other relevant resources such as book reviews (e.g., Sung, 2009). Interestingly, through content analysis Korean (insider) researchers analyze the books in terms of their cultural authenticity or misrepresentations and stereotypes of Korean/Korean Americans while outsider researchers present different aspects of these books, which will be discussed later in this section.

In some studies, researchers find main themes or issues that appear in many Korean American children's books (Kim, 2001; Leu, 2001; Sung, 2009) however, due to

the books' different foci and reading levels, the findings are not the same. For instance, based on her content analysis of Korean American children's literature, Leu identifies six themes apparent in the Korean American experience: cultural heritage and ancestral tradition, generational conflicts, coming-of-age, survival and the fight for respect and dignity, English language problems, and the changing role of women.

Kim's (2001) analysis of four Korean American authors' works for young adults finds recurring themes and examines how these themes are represented in mainstream awarded books on Asian Americans. Central themes in her study include the collapse of the extended family system, along with the change in the Korean American community and in the portrayals of various women characters. However, in most awarded Asian American children's books, communities are described as a space for the preservation of culture of the ethnic group and the Asian American cultures are presented to be patriarchal. Moreover, despite the huge influx of other Asian groups into the United States since the 1970s, Japanese/Chinese Americans are depicted as representative of all Asian groups in the books that received famous and honorable awards, such as the Newbery and Caldecott Awards. Kim argues that these mainstream awarded books focus on the experience of the first immigrant generation and deliver homogenous idea of the preservation of culture. Therefore, the most popular story plot is that of a protagonist who has just arrived in the United States and struggles with a new identity as an ethnic minority.

Similar findings to Kim's (2001) study are reported in another study on picture story books about Koreans/Korean Americans. Sung (2009) analyzes the illustrations and texts of these books from a theoretical lens of postcolonialism and racism. Twenty four

books she located through a database search were categorized according to the two main themes: (1) Korean Americans immigrating experiences in the U.S., and (2) contemporary non-immigrant Korean-American experiences. Under the first main category, four subcategories are listed: (a) making a transition to acculturate, (b) making cultural connection, (c) becoming American, and (d) consequences of acculturation. Korean Americans as a cultural group or as generic Americans are the two subthemes of the second main theme. The majority of the books are sorted to have the first theme (i.e., Korean immigrating experience) and only a few books are listed under the second main theme. Although her subcategories seem overlapping to one another and a bit confusing, the number of books under each theme indicates that Koreans are likely to be depicted as new immigrants and the major theme in picture story books about Koreans/Korean Americans is transitional adjustment and cultural connections to their Korean heritage and cultural roots (Sung, 2009). In these books, exotic differences or otherness of Korean Americans is emphasized rather than similarities to and connections with audiences from other cultural groups. Some of the frequently used words in these books are “village,” “*hanbok* (Korean traditional cloth),” and “faraway,” and Sung argues that these words promote the image of Korea as a distant, exotic, traditional place in comparison to the image of America as a new, modern place. Korea is depicted as if it were an isolated country from the global change, staying traditional and undeveloped (e.g., no Western food, no English language, no Christmas celebration). Not only outsider but also insider authors describe Korea or Korean culture in accordance with the image that mainstream has built for a long time. The findings from examining book reviews of these books show that most of the book reviewers did not evaluate the books’ cultural authenticity, but only

focused on literary or artistic characteristics of the books. If the books were written to heighten the readers' cultural awareness, then the issues such as cultural authenticity and stereotypes should have been considered in the book reviews. Sung argues that insider readers should be given the opportunity to review books about their cultures, so that its cultural authenticity in a book can be examined by and presented to the readers, especially outsider readers.

In the studies mentioned above, children's books about Korean adoptees are not discussed. In her evaluation of 26 Korean American picture story books, Park (2004) includes "adoption" as one of the four main themes. Six books out of 26 were stories about Korean adoptees. She notes that stories about adoptees are simplistic and fail to grasp the feeling of the adoptees. In another study on Korean adoptees, Park (2009) analyzes representations of Korean adoptees in 51 American children's literature books that were published from 1955 through 2007. She points out that these books do not represent transracially and transnationally adopted Koreans' experiences holistically. Most stories are limited in terms of drawing empathy with these children because they focus on didactically describing or explaining adoption rather than depicting what these children go through from the children's perspectives. In some books, while adoptive mothers are validated, the birth mothers (Korean mothers) are invalidated. Park urges that adult adopted Koreans should write stories which can holistically represent their experiences, rather than let other people write about them.

As mentioned above, while Korean/Korean American researchers focus on the evaluation of published Korean American children's books, non-Korean researchers examine these books from a different perspective. Louie (2005) describes how Korean

traditional values and beliefs (e.g., Buddhism and Confucianism) are being changed and what effects this change brings on the Korean/Korean American lives. She tries to find how it is reflected in Korean-American juvenile literature.

Another study by an outsider researcher focuses on stereotyping of two other ethnic groups in Korean American children's literature, African Americans and Native Americans. Marie de Jesús' (2003) analysis of young adult novels written by a Korean American author, Marie G. Lee, reveals an interesting aspect of Korean American children's literature. She says that Lee's attempt to include interracial relationships between Korean Americans and other ethnic groups is welcoming because it is a counteract against the most common Asian/White binary in young adult novels. However, this attempt seems to have revealed a problematic, interracial perspective reflected in Lee's books. De Jesús believes that Lee's books will help readers to understand Korean American experiences and points of view, but her understanding of Korean Americans as a minority does not transfer in her depictions of Native American and African American characters and issues. The depictions of these groups are stereotypical. In the conclusion, de Jesús comments that Lee's depictions of characters from these two groups are not irrelevant to the reality where Asian Americans are seen as model minorities and they have sought acceptance from White America rather than identifying or solidifying with other communities of color.

Summary

In this chapter, three topics were discussed: the history of Korean immigration, issues in multicultural literature, and studies related to Korean American children's literature. In the section on the Korean immigration history, three major waves of Korean

immigration were explained in relation to the political, economical, and social situations in Korea and the U.S. In the section on the issues in multicultural literature, three issues were discussed respectively. Various positions regarding the definition of multicultural literature show that the discussion on its definition entails issues beyond the literary features of multicultural literature. The controversy on insider versus outsider and the discussion on publishing multicultural literature also point to this. These issues are related to the power relations (Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Cai, 2002). The final section reviewed research on Korean American children's literature and pointed out two problems. First, often Korean American children's literature is dealt as part of Asian American children's literature and most studies on Korean American children's books, which are only a few, rely on content analysis.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

In this chapter, I explicate what qualitative interviewing is and why I chose to employ this method to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of Korean/Korean American parents' responses to Korean American children's literature books?
2. What social and cultural factors influence the parents' attitude toward Korean American children's literature?

Then, I describe how I collected the data. First, I provide a short profile of each participant, including their reason for coming to the U.S., the make-up of their family, and my relationship with them. The books shared with the parents are introduced. Then, I describe how the two interviews were conducted and what the purpose of each interview was. Finally, I present the process of data collection and data analysis.

Qualitative Research

To understand the Korean parents' perspectives on Korean American children's books, this study was designed and conducted using qualitative methodology. The qualitative aspects of this study include focus on meaning-making, researcher as primary instrument, inductive data analysis, and descriptive data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 2009). The primary focus of this study was looking at how Korean parents interpret Korean American children's books and what life experiences or stories they synthesized into their discussions of the children's books (Hartman, 1992). Second, I, the researcher, was the key instrument for data collection and analysis. I contacted and selected all the participants, and interviewed each one of them. I also transcribed all the audio files of the interviews and analyzed the data. Third, the data analysis was an

inductive process in this study, which means that the data were not analyzed to test hypotheses, but instead, I looked for emerging concepts or themes from the data. Finally, the data collected were in the form of words from the interview. I wrote interview logs after each interview to describe the context of the interview such as the meeting place and overall atmosphere. I also included a brief description of each participant which is a summary of their own narratives introducing themselves. The relationship between myself and each participant (e.g., how I got acquainted with her, how long I knew her, etc.) was described because I considered it as an important part of the interview context. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and quotes and excerpts from the transcripts or interview logs were used in Chapter 4 as I discuss the study's findings.

To capture Korean/Korean American parents' perceptions and insights in relation to Korean American children's literature, I used interviewing methods (Patton, 2002). Through the in-depth interview, I tried to understand the parents' experiences, concerns, and opinions from their own perspectives, in their own terms (Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Qualitative, in-depth interview was selected because it could show how the participants become "a kind of researcher[s]" in their own rights and articulate their own interpretations of their worlds in their narrative stories (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 29). I had an agenda and questions for the interview, but my role was to provide a space for discussion and invite the parents to join and construct stories using their various repertoires (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). For example, I had an interview guide (Appendix A) for the first interview which was planned to glean some information about the participants, such as their coming to the U.S., reading books to their children, and any experience of reading English books about Koreans or Korean culture. However, the

questions in the guide were very broad so that I could see how they presented themselves by deciding what to include in their stories.

Data Collection

Participants

For this study, I used the purposeful sampling method to locate the participants and to find “information-rich” key informants who have much to share on issues related to Korean American children’s literature (Merriam, 2009; Warren, 2002). Several criteria were considered in selecting participants for this study. First, all the Korean parents who participated in the study were college-graduates, educated in Korea or in the U.S. Either the husband or the wife came to America to study at an American university, mostly for their graduate studies. Because children’s books used for this study were written in English, I had to take into account their English reading proficiency. I found that all of them read English books to their children or choose English books for their children to read. The parents’ ages ranged from mid 30s to early 40s. Their children were born in the U.S. and there was a preschooler- or kindergartner-age child in each family. Therefore, the parents could share the Korean American picture books, which I supplied, with their children, if they wanted. Also, because their children’s ages were similar to the Korean characters in the books, they could relate to the stories more easily. Unlike the Korean families portrayed in Korean American children’s books as just-arrived immigrants, these families have lived in the U.S. from 5 to 15 years. I thought their experiences would contribute to their different perspectives or assumptions in relation to Korean American picture books.

I had known some of the participants before the study, but I got to know them much better in the course of this study. As for some participants, we first met at libraries or grocery stores but we only exchanged greetings or a few words, and did not have a chance to develop a relationship. As for two participants, the first interview was our first encounter after our talk about the study over the phone.

Below is each parent's brief background regarding their coming to America and my relationship with him or her.

Suna. Suna came to the U.S. in 2005 after her wedding. At that time, her husband was working on his doctorate in Arizona. Unlike most of the parents who participated in this study, she had experienced living in America before her marriage. She has aunts and uncles in other states who immigrated decades ago, and she stayed at the home of one of her aunts' for 6 months during her college years. Then, she came to Texas to take ESL classes for 2 months in 2003. In Korea, she worked but now she is a stay-at-home mom with two children, a kindergartener and a 2-year old. I have known her since 2008 through another Korean friend. Because three of us have children of the same age, we gather together at least once a month with our children. Suna and I sent our children to the same preschool, so we saw each other quite often. She was the first participant in this study. We met at her place for both interviews because of her 2-year-old child, and, at that time, her friend from Korea was staying with her family. Her friend sometimes joined our conversation and shared her opinions.

Jaehee. Whereas the other participants are first generation Korean immigrants, Jaehee is a 1.5-generation Korean American (i.e., born in Korea and came to the U.S. as a child or an adolescent) who came to America in the 1980s with her family when she was

a teenager. She and her husband, who also came to the U.S. to study, went to the same college. She got a job teaching English in Korea and stayed there about 3 years after she graduated from college. Our first encounter was at my friend's house 6 years ago. At that time she had a little boy, and now she is a stay-at-home mom of two children, a 4th grader and a preschooler. I had not seen her for years since I met her that day, but once in a while I heard about her from my friend who invited both of us to her house years ago. Last year when my friend came to Arizona to visit her relative, several of her friends gathered, and there I met Jaehee again who showed up with her younger child. Later I ran into her again at an ice skating rink. She was there for her child's skating lesson. We had a short conversation at that time. In spite of these three occasions of meeting or running into each other, I did not know much about her. But because she is a 1.5-generation Korean American, I thought she might add a different perspective to this study. I got her phone number from our common friend and called her to ask if she was interested in participating in this study. We met at a coffee shop close to her child's preschool after she dropped him off.

Eunjung. Eunjung and her husband arrived in New York for her husband's studies in 1998. After he finished his graduate program, he got a job in Arizona and they moved. Since then, they have been living in Arizona. She said their original plan was to go back to Korea, but because of an "unwise" decision, they settled in America. Eunjung told me that after her children go to college, she and her husband will go back to Korea. She is a stay-at-home mom with two children, one being in junior high and the other in preschool. Last summer I met her at an ice skating rink. I heard about her and her child from my husband before I met her because they were in the same skating class with my

family. On the last day of the class, I decided to go to the rink with my family to meet her. We had a short conversation at that time and exchanged phone numbers. But until I contacted her for this study, we had not met or called each other. Thankfully she remembered me when I called her. I met her at a coffee shop to explain my study. After she agreed to participate in this study, we met two times for the interviews at a bakery she suggested.

Jieun. Jieun came to America in 1997, right after her college freshman year in Korea. At the beginning, she thought she would take some ESL courses for a year and go back to Korea. But once she got a good TOEFL score, she submitted an application to a university in Tennessee and got accepted. She studied English language and English literature in Korea, but at Tennessee she changed her major to music composition. After a year in Tennessee, she came to Arizona to continue her study and graduated with a degree in music therapy. She married an American whom she met on campus, and now she is a mom of three children, a 1st grader, a 3-year old, and a baby. I saw her and her husband a couple of times performing at a church several years ago. Then, about 4 years ago, I ran into her in the apartment complex where both of our families were living at that time. We let our children play together 2 – 3 times, but I did not know much about Jieun until we met for this study. Whenever we were together, we talked about our children, nothing much about ourselves. Interviewing her for this study gave me a chance to know more about her. The two interviews took place at her home. I wondered what stories Jieun would bring to the discussion because her experiences differed from most of the participants in this study (e.g., coming to America by herself, interracial marriage).

Jiyoung. Jiyoung came to the U.S. in 2007, right after completing her thesis in architecture, to join her husband who came earlier than she. They lived in Los Angeles until her husband finished his doctorate. Her husband took a job in Arizona and the family moved in 2011. Now she is a stay-at-home mom with two children, a kindergartener and a 2-year old. We got to know each other because her daughter and my son went to the same preschool last year. In that preschool, there were several Korean children, and about once a month, the Korean mothers and children gathered together at the park or someone's house after school. The interview really helped me know more about Jiyoung. We met at her place for the interviews and it gave me a chance to see all the books she bought for her children and to observe how she read books to her younger child.

Hyejin. Hyejin arrived in Atlanta in 2002 with her husband who wanted to go to a seminary. Her family lived there for 5 years while her husband was studying and serving at a local church as an associate pastor. In 2007, the family moved to Arizona to start a new church for the Korean community. Education for their children was one of the main reasons her family decided to stay in the U.S. She said that the expense of educating children is so high in Korea and learning English also costs a lot of money. She has a degree in social welfare and early childhood education in Korea, and she worked as a preschool teacher. Now she has three children: a 2nd grader, a preschooler, and a 2-year old. I met her at a local public library the first time when I heard a child speaking Korean to her mom. Then we ran into each other a couple of times at the library story time. Sometimes, we saw each other at a Korean grocery store. We remembered each other's face and had a short conversation. Finally, I met her again, as my son's teacher, at

vacation Bible school at a local Korean church. We exchanged phone numbers at that time but never called each other. When I started thinking about participants of this study, I thought of her. Last fall I called her to ask if she could participate in this study. We met at a local library as she suggested. She came with her youngest child and we had our first interview. Then we met again at her place with her three children. We talked about the books while the children were watching television.

Sungjoo. Like most of the participants in this study, Sungjoo came to the U.S. in 1998 because of her husband's doctoral studies. They lived in New Jersey for 2 years and moved to California for her husband's studies. While they were in California, she applied for a graduate program in library science and after 2 years, she got a master degree. Then, she worked at a library located in a Korean community for 3 years. When her husband took a job in Arizona, they moved together in 2008. She has a preschooler. I got to know her through her sister whom I met at a church. Last December, I ran into Sungjoo and her sister at a store. Sungjoo's sister introduced her to me. Although I did not know Sungjoo at that time, she already knew my son's name and told me why she remembered him. Later, while I was looking for more participants, I thought of her. I got her phone number from her sister and called her. Finally, we met on the last day of 2012 with our children at a fast food restaurant which has an indoor play area. While they were playing together, we talked and got to know each other. A week later, we met at a coffee shop without our children who were at school and talked about the books. She introduced two of her friends to this study, Youngae and Jungmi. She gave me their phone numbers with some information about them.

Woosuk. Woosuk came to Arizona to join his wife (me) who was in a doctoral program. In 2001, he had lived in Arizona for half a year as an exchange student. In 2005 he came back as a post doctorate fellow from Korea. Now he works for a local company as an engineer. We have a child who is in kindergarten. For the first interview, I did not ask him about his experience of coming to America because I already knew, but I asked him about his opinions about the value of reading books to children and Korean American children's literature. We had a great conversation and the interview helped me understand his views about reading and Korean American literature. Among all the second interviews, the interview with Woosuk was the longest and really focused on the discussion about the picture books he was assigned to read.

Youngae. Youngae came to America in 2001 with her husband who was going to begin his doctoral studies in Atlanta. They lived there for six years. After graduation, they moved to Arizona because her husband got a job. Before coming to the U.S., they planned to stay in the U.S. after he finished his studies. She and her husband thought that working in the U.S. suited her husband better, in terms of the culture in the workplace. She is a mom of two children, a kindergartener and a 2-year old. Although sometimes she feels she will never overcome the language barrier, she says living in America is more comfortable than living in Korea because she does not have to worry about other people's opinions of her and her family. She studied political science at college in Korea. Sungjoo gave me Youngae's phone number in early January. When I called Youngae, she said she was busy because she had a guest visiting from Korea. I waited until the last week of January to meet her. We met at a fast food restaurant in the morning for the first time.

She came from her son's school after volunteering in his classroom. We met again about 10 days later at a bakery.

Jungmi. Jungmi has been living in Arizona since 2008, but her life in the U.S. started in California in 2005 when she joined her husband who came to study in 2003. She lived in California for one and a half years, but because of her job in Korea, she went back to Korea with her 1-year-old baby and stayed there for one and a half years. Then, she came to the U.S. when her husband took a job in Arizona. She told me that she finished her master's degree in English education in Korea but could not find a teaching job in Korea. Now she is a stay-at-home mom with two children, a 2nd grader and a preschooler. As mentioned above, I got to know her through Sungjoo. I first called her to explain the study. We met at a coffee shop for both interviews. She said that reading children's books is fun. She reads her children's books first and then gives them to the children to read. She likes to do so because she can talk with her children about the books.

The researcher. I came to Arizona in 2001 after I got accepted into the graduate study TESL program. Before coming to the U.S., I worked at a publishing company for several years. Honestly, I was more excited about living in a different country from Korea and experiencing a new culture than getting a degree. My original plan was to stay in America until I ran out of money. Then, I got interested in what I was studying (e.g., linguistics, ESL, etc.), but taking a class about children's literature led me to a new area, multicultural literature. Like many parents in this study, I was surprised to know that there were books about Koreans/Korean Americans. I am a mom of a 5-year-old child, and he was the main reason I got connected to other Korean families who participated in the study.

Books

I decided to use picture story books for this study because I thought texts with pictures would better elicit responses from the parents with a limited command of English and because they have relatively concise plots with a length that can be read within a relatively short amount of time. To identify Korean American children's literature, I used the Children's Literature Comprehensive Database and picked seven realistic picture story books about Koreans/Korean Americans: *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* (Pak, 2003), *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten* (Recorvits, 2006), *Goyangi Means Cat* (McDonnell, 2011), *One Afternoon* (Heo, 1994), *Behind the Mask* (Choi, 2006), *Cooper's Lesson* (Shin, 2004), and *The Have a Good Day Café* (Park & Park, 2005) (see Appendix B for information on each book). In choosing these books among many picture story books about Korean Americans, I considered several things related to the issues reviewed earlier. Since the theme of the immigration experience comprises a large portion of Korean American children's literature, I included *Sumi's First Day of School Ever*. *My Name is Yoon* (Recorvits, 2003) and *The Name Jar* (Choi, 2001) tell similar stories but because these authors' other books, *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten* and *Behind the Mask* respectively, were included in this list, I decided to pick *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* by Soyung Pak for the study. *Goyangi Means Cat* is a story about a Korean adoptee. As Park's (2004, 2009) research shows, stories about Korean adoptees have been published and they may be considered as part of Korean American children's literature. I wondered how Korean/Korean American parents would think about books with Korean adoptee characters and the fact that Korea has been one of the largest sources of foreign adoption in the U.S. (Kim, 2004). I picked *Yoon and the*

Christmas Mitten with an expectation of bringing up the insider/outsider or authenticity issue. This book, written by a non-Korean author, contains a significant flaw in its description of Korea as a country that does not celebrate Christmas.

One Afternoon and *The Have a Good Day Café* portray contemporary Korean American children's daily lives. Yumi Heo, the author of *One Afternoon* wrote several books. *One Afternoon* was published in 1994, and she wrote another, but similar book, *One Sunday Morning* (Heo, 1999). In both books, except for the name of the child, which is Minho (a Korean name), I found no reason to categorize these books as Korean American children's literature. I wanted to talk about what makes a book Korean American children's literature. Is the author's ethnicity or the name of the character sufficient? *The Have a Good Day Café* was chosen because this book describes the life of a Korean American family and the relationship between the grandmother and her grandson. The relationship between a Korean grandmother and a Korean American child has been frequently illustrated in other stories such as Sook Nyul Choi's books about *halmoni* (this Korean word means grandmother) and her granddaughter, and *Halmoni's Day* written by Edna Coe Bercaw (2000).

Cooper's Lesson was chosen because the main character is a biracial child, which is rarely depicted in Korean American children's literature. In addition to that, this book tells the story in both English and Korean, which is also very rare in Korean American children's literature. I wondered what parents would say about the story and the bilingual text. Yangsook Choi is both author and illustrator and she seems to be one of the most prolific Korean American writers/illustrators. *Behind the Mask* is her most recently

published book. In this book, the child wears his grandfather's *tal* (Korean traditional mask) on Halloween, and it is described as his reclaiming of his Korean heritage.

These books were used to help the participants “elicit more details” of their thoughts and opinions about Korean American children’s literature (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 137), especially if they had no experience reading children’s literature books about Koreans/Korean Americans.

Interviews

I met each participant two times for the interviews at various places. In some cases, when I did not feel comfortable asking the participant about her interests in this study over the phone, I met her to talk about the study. The two interviews served different purposes. The first interview was conducted to get to know the parents by listening to their life stories, about topics as such as their immigration experiences and their families, and I was also interested in their opinions and experiences about reading books to their children. In addition, they were asked to tell any stories related to books about Korea or Koreans published in the U.S. and any ideas about Korean American children’s literature. To place the parents’ reading of picture books in the context of their own and their children’s lives (Seidman, 2006), I had an interview guide (see Appendix A). Often times the conversation started with a talk about our children and their schools. For some parents, I felt I needed to share my own story about how I came to America and why I was doing this study. The presentation of my identity as a mom and a Korean immigrant to the parents also shaped the context of the interviews. Its purpose was to build rapport with the participants, and to encourage them to share their own stories, as well as to “cultivat[e] shared awareness and experiences that might be referenced as

bases for interview conversations” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 77). The audio recording began after I asked the participant if I could start recording our conversation. Usually, once the questions in the interview guide were answered by the participants, I showed them the books. After the first interview, they took the books with them to read, by themselves or with their children.

Most participants told me that they needed 1 – 2 weeks to finish reading the books. Some parents were comfortable with setting a date for the second interview before they left. But some parents preferred to call me when they were ready to share their responses to the books. Some of the questions in reading guide (Appendix C) I prepared were created to invite the participants to think critically and be more conscious about their own repertoires (McCormick, 1994). The reading guide was given to the parents with the books but I also told them that they could use it as a reference and did not have to try to answer the questions. The second interview focused on their responses to the books, such as their feelings and thoughts about the books and, further, Korean American children’s literature. Both the first and the second interviews were conducted mostly in Korean. Sometimes, English words or expressions were also used by the parents. Jaehee and Jieun used more English than the other parents.

Table 2 shows the dates of the interviews, meeting places, and time spent for each interview in chronological order.

Table 2 *Interview Schedule*

Name	Date	Place	Time (recorded only)
Suna	September 7	Suna's home	1hr 21 min
	September 13	Suna's home	1hr 16 min
Jaehee	September 11	Coffee shop	1hr 25min
	September 20	Coffee shop	56 min
Eunjung	October 24	Bakery	51 min
	November 7	Bakery	1hr 1min
Jieun	November 1	Jieun's home	1 hr 7 min
	November 28	Jieun's home	1 hr 6 min
Jiyoung	November 13	Jiyoung's home	1hr 1 min
	November 30	Jiyoung's home	1 hr 28 min
Hyejin	December 7	Library	1hr 1 min
	December 11	Hyejin's home	1hr 12min
Sungjoo	December 31	Fast food restaurant	1 hr 21 min
	January 8	Coffee shop	1 hr
Woosuk	January 21	Woosuk's home	21 min
	January 31	Woosuk's home	1hr 38 min
Youngae	January 28	Fast food restaurant	30 min
	February 7	Bakery	1 hr 9 min
Jungmi	February 1	Coffee shop	44 min
	February 8	Coffee shop	1 hr 3 min

Generally the mothers who had young children suggested we meet at their homes. The parents with a child attending kindergarten or half-time preschool wanted to meet in the morning when the child was at school. The meeting places were decided by the participants, either at their homes or other places close to their homes or their children's schools. When the interviews took place at the participants' homes, the interview was interrupted occasionally and we had to stop talking and spend some time playing with the children or responding to them (Merriam, 2009). Because the parents read the books at their homes, their children, husband, and friend sometimes responded to the books and their voices were included in the data. Although the interview was in a one-on-one format, sometimes I shared the other parents' responses with the participant. Some mothers were very curious about what the others said. Sometimes, I mentioned the other participants' comments during the interview to encourage the parents to clarify or defend their positions. After every interview, I wrote a memo about the context of the interview, how the interview went, what I learned, and so on, and it provided me a time to reflect on issues raised during the interview and helped me better prepare for the next interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Data Analysis

Transcription

The first and the second interview were transcribed differently. For the first interview, I did not do a word-for-word transcription of the whole audio file. While I listened to the parts where they shared their stories of coming to the U.S., I jotted down notes in order to summarize each of them and present it as the participant's background information. However, as for the part where they spoke about their children's reading and

their thoughts about reading the literature, I transcribed it word-for-word, because I wanted to see how it is related to their responses to the books and perspectives on Korean American children's literature. Their words about Korean American children's literature were also transcribed word-for-word. The second interview focused on the parents' responses, and the audio file was transcribed with a full word-for-word format. For some parts where the interview was interrupted either by children or by phone, I described the situation in the transcript. Nonverbal details such as laughs, voice tones, or facial expressions were recorded using symbols to contextualize the transcribed conversation. In this way, when I read the transcripts, I could remember the participants' intentions or feelings that might influence the interpretation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The symbols used in the transcripts are listed in Table 3:

Table 3

Symbols Used for Transcription

Symbol	Usage
{ }	Used to explain the situation or tones, ex) {someone called}
... ..	Used for a hesitant moment
(?)	Inaudible
ㅎㅎ	A Korean constant used for laughs
[]	Used to show lapse of time, ex) [5:00] Almost every 1-2 minutes, I marked in the transcripts to show how much time passed so that I could go back to the exact place whenever I wanted to listen again.

While transcribing each interview, I listened to the same part several times in order to transcribe it accurately. All the transcriptions were saved in word files and each

of them was labeled with the participant's name and a number, 1 (for the first interview) or 2 (for the second interview), like "Suna_#1" (i.e., Suna's first interview). Sometimes, I highlighted some words in the transcripts when I noted that they were mentioned several times by the participant or overlapped with the other parents' words. As for some interviews, right after I transcribed the audio files, I wrote some resonating thoughts and saved them in a separate file as below:

Transcribing Suna's interview

- 1) She was not sure what the author wants to say through the story. It was also mentioned by Miyoung several years ago.
- 2) Worries about exposing negative sides of Korea to their children because they don't think children are mature enough to understand the situation properly.
- 3) Expectations about children's literature – illustrations with dark colors are not good for children

Highlighting, Organizing, and Open Coding

The transcripts of the first interviews were read through and sorted according to the topics directed by the interview questions. The topics included the parents' immigration stories, the children's reading habits, parents' book choices for the children, their definitions of Korean American children's literature, and experiences of reading books about Koreans/Korean Americans. While reading each participant's transcript, I marked in the margin what topic was discussed. Then, for each topic I created a file and saved every part of the transcripts related to each topic in it except for the parents' immigration stories, which I summarized as I read his or her interview transcript.

The portions of the transcripts where the parents discussed the children's reading and their book choices for their children were put together and read through to learn about the parents' involvements in their children's reading, as well as to check any relationship between their perspectives on the children's reading lives and their own

responses to the books. The parents' answers about what Korean American children's literature means were also gathered and examined in relation to the controversial issues in multicultural literature, such as authorship and projected audience. Some parents talked more about this topic during their second interview after reading the picture books. Those portions of the transcripts of the second interviews were later added to this file. In addition, their experiences of reading any books about Korea or Korean people published in the U.S. were sorted out because the previous experiences were likely to influence their initial expectations of the picture books and their perspectives on Korean American children's literature.

As I read over the transcripts of the second interviews, I highlighted the parts where the parents spoke about the picture books, and in the margin, I wrote the title of the book (e.g., *One Afternoon*, *Cooper's Lesson*, etc.) that they were discussing. Written notes from some mothers were also read and analyzed along with the transcripts. For example, Jaehee and Jungmi wrote comments on each book and gave them to me when we met for the second interview. Jiyoung emailed me her answers to the questions in the reading guide after the second interview. I collected the transcripts and notes relevant to each book and organized them by the book title. Therefore, there were seven files for the books. As I read the parents' comments on each book, I made a chart of themes that were found in the comments (e.g., ugly faces, dark illustration, generic story, etc.). While looking at the charts of themes across the books, I highlighted the themes that were recurrent (Merriam, 2009).

While I was reading the parents' responses, I found that there was always a part where the participants spoke about the overall impressions of the picture books read for

this study. I marked the parts where the parents made comments on the books over all, rather than a particular book, and they were also collected in a file titled “overall comments on the books.”

The parents’ responses to the books were not limited to the literary or artistic traits of the books but included other nonliterary issues that were related to their lives as immigrant parents (McCormick, 1994). While reading through each participant’s interview transcript, I wrote words or phrases that represented the chunk of interview transcripts in the margin to see if there were any topics or themes emerging from the data. For example, “images of Korea,” “multicultural society,” and “discrimination” were some of the topics I noted (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002). The topics or themes were examined to see how they were related to the parents’ perspectives on Korean American children’s literature and what stories the parents shared in relation to their responses to the Korean American children’s picture books (Hartman, 1992).

Summary

Throughout this chapter, I have explained how the current study was conducted qualitatively. The design of the study was discussed and then a brief description of each participant and the selected seven picture books used in this study was provided. I described in detail how I recruited the participants and conducted the interviews with them. The procedures of data collection and data analysis, including transcription and coding, were also explicated.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS

In this chapter I respond to the following research questions: (1) What is the nature of Korean/Korean American parents' responses to Korean American children's literature books? (2) What social and cultural factors influence the parents' attitude toward Korean American children's literature? In answering the first question, I begin by describing the parents' perceptions of Korean American children's literature in terms of its authorship, content of stories, and audience. I then present five major themes discussed in the parents' responses to the books. The five themes are (a) use of Korean names without specific cultural description, (b) misrepresentation of Korean/Korean American experiences, (c) criteria for good Korean American children's literature, (d) undesirable illustrations, and (e) use of Korean words in English books. To address the second question, I first describe the Korean/Korean American parents' involvement in their children's reading. This is followed by a description of the parents' perceptions of the images of Korea/Koreans in the U.S. in relation to their responses to the picture books.

Parents' Perception of Korean American Children's Books: *"For whom who writes about what?"*

The Korean/Korean American parents' first response to the Korean American children's literature books was one of surprise. For most of them, just learning that there are picture story books about Korean culture or Korean children was a new experience. However, a few parents had had experience with Korean American authors or books about Korea or Korean culture. For example, Jungmi and Suna shared their disappointment with an English version of *Kongjwi-Patjwi* (introduced as a Korean

Cinderella story), a Korean folktale, when they found it at a bookstore and a local library. Two parents, Jaehee and Sungjoo, had some prior knowledge about the books read in this study. Jaehee recalled reading *Behind the Mask* (Choi, 2006) to her child at a local public library. Sungjoo recognized Yumi Heo, the author of *One Afternoon* (Heo, 1994), because she read her other book, *Father's Rubber Shoes* (Heo, 1995), to her daughter several months ago. However, even the parents who already knew there were books about Koreans and Korean culture said that they did not know that there were so many such books and Korean authors writing picture books about Korean American experiences. When they noticed that the books I provided them were checked out from the local libraries, the parents without exception asked me how I found the books. Like the mothers I interviewed in a class project, these parents often visit libraries to check out books for their children, but most of them were unaware of the availability of these books.

During the interviews for this study, Korean/Korean American parents were asked to define Korean American children's literature. To many of them, Korean American children's literature was not a familiar term. They took some time to shape their thoughts and slowly started sharing them with me. Their answers could be summarized under three topics: authorship, content of the story, and purpose. First, many parents mentioned that Korean American children's literature means story books authored by Koreans or Korean immigrants in the U.S. Some of them said that Korean books translated into English could be an addition to this category because books written by Koreans could better serve the purpose of promoting Korean culture more authentically. Second, the parents remarked that the books' content needed to be concerned with Korean culture or children of Korean heritage living in the U.S. When I asked them to give examples of such

content, some parents mentioned several possible topics for Korean American children's books, most of which focused on cultural difference between Korean culture and American culture. Jieun suggested that Korean words for differentiating relationships would be an interesting topic in children's books. For instance, in Korean, "*gomo*" means father's sister and "*imo*" means mother's sister. Eunjung said that a story book could portray a relationship between parents and children in Korean families in comparison to that in American families. Jaehee talked about a typical day of a Korean child living in Korea as a possible subject. Then, she thought of a story about the celebration of New Year's Day,

How about a story about a Korean American child inviting his American friends on Korean New Year's Day? As they have a special meal together, the Korean child explains the meaning of eating rice cake soup, that is, becoming one year older when you eat *tukguk* [rice cake soup]. (2nd Interview, 9/20/2012).

Woosuk said that themes could include conflict and harmony between Korean culture and American culture. Third, the parents thought Korean American children's literature should be written with the purpose of promoting Korean culture to Korean children as well as non-Korean children. Some parents said that people writing about or illustrating Koreans' experiences for children's books need to take their work seriously. Some wished that Korean American children's literature could be a tool for helping Korean American children deal with their identity issues. Jungmi remembered reading *Crow Boy* (Yashima, 1955) in her daughter's school textbook, saying that she was impressed by its Japanese author, who, she thought, successfully introduced Japanese culture to an American audience with a touching story. She wished there were Korean authors like him.

Although the parents may not have been thinking about the meaning of Korean American children's literature until I asked, their almost "think-aloud" ideas shared during the interview are noteworthy. What the parents pointed out for Korean American children's literature echoed what multicultural literature scholars have focused on in their discussions as shown in Chapter 2. Simply stated, both the parents and the scholars are concerned about "For whom who writes about what?" The implication of these parents' thoughts on Korean American children's literature to the discussion on multicultural literature would be that multicultural literature is written by insider authors about a particular cultural group and its culture with a purpose of helping outsiders understand the group and its culture, as well as encouraging insiders to appreciate their cultural identities.

Despite their recognition of its purpose and intended audience, some parents were unsure about the "real" audience for children's literature about Korea or Korean culture for various reasons. Woosuk said that Korean American children's literature seemed to be for Korean Americans or non Koreans who cannot read Korean, because if they could read Korean well, they would rather read books written in Korean and published in Korea. Sungjoo was not sure who would search for children's books about Korea or Korean culture because Korea is not a geographically or emotionally close country to most American people, at least as compared to Mexico or other Latin American countries to which Americans travel often and know more about. She did not think they would be interested in reading about Korea or Korean culture. Even for Korean American children, both Sungjoo and Youngae mentioned that there are so many other great books for

children, and they wondered how many Korean/Korean American parents would look for these books and read them to their children.

Parents' Response to the Selected Picture Books

In this section, I address the first question of my study: "What is the nature of Korean/Korean American parents' responses to Korean American children's literature books?" As I read the parents' responses that were directly linked to the literary and artistic features of the seven picture books, I identified five main themes: (a) use of Korean names without specific cultural description, (b) misrepresentation of Korean/Korean American experiences, (c) criteria for good Korean American children's literature, (d) undesirable illustration, and (e) use of Korean words in English books. Each of these themes is discussed in the following sections.

Use of Korean Names Without Specific Cultural Description

Most of the parents liked the bright colors and style of the illustrations in *One Afternoon*. They felt the faces of the Korean characters, Minho and his mom, were depicted in a cute and pleasant manner compared to other books such as *Cooper's Lesson* (Shin, 2004) or *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* (Pak, 2003). However, many parents said *One Afternoon* was not the kind of book they would particularly choose to read to their children, because they thought it was not different from other English picture books they had been reading to their children. They found that except for the name of the protagonist in the book, there is no element that indicates Korean American experiences. Woosuk said there is no reason the child's name needs to be Korean, and the Korean name, Minho, could have been any English name. Suna even pointed out that Minho would be recognized as a Korean name only by people who know Korean culture. Then

she said, “I don’t think this book belongs in the category of Korean American [children’s literature] because ... the story is so generic” (2nd Interview, 9/13/2012). Jiyoung added, “It’s just like an American book I checked out from the library. Probably that’s why it did not evoke any feelings in me [when I read it]” (2nd Interview, 11/30/2012). Most parents agreed that *One Afternoon* should not fall into Korean American children’s literature.

Giving a character a Korean name is not enough; something related to Korean culture is needed, as Jaehee wrote in her memo:

To indicate that they[Minho and his mom] are Koreans, something unique to Korean families could have been inserted such as some kind of ritual between a child and mom. For example, mom says to her young child, ‘Let’s do *manse*[act of raising both arms upward, the Korean version of ‘Hooray!’]’ as she changes the child’s top.(2nd Interview, 9/20/2012)

Some parents thought there was not enough physical difference between Korean characters and others in the illustrations (see Figure 2). Sungjoo wondered if the author-artist had intended to do that, suggesting that maybe the author wanted to claim that Koreans were not different from the other Americans and could easily mix with them, like the people in the illustrations. Most of the parents talked only about the illustrations in *One Afternoon* and did not mention its messages or themes. Woosuk and Sungjoo remarked that they were not sure what the author wanted to convey through this book, but they both agreed it was not to introduce Korean American culture to its audience.



Figure 2. Minho and his mom on a busy street in *One Afternoon*. Minho and his mom are walking by the school bus.

The parents showed a similar response to *Sumi's First Day of School Ever*. Like Minho in *One Afternoon*, Sumi's name is the only Korean aspect in the text, and it could be replaced with any name without changing the story line. Woosuk assumed that the reason for choosing a Korean name would be to attract a Korean audience who can immediately recognize the Korean name when they see the title of the book. Without any specific descriptions of Korean culture in it, this book is evaluated as one of many books which depict the fears and concerns any child feels on the first day of school (Jiyoung's 2nd Interview, 11/30/2012). Even so, Jiyoung said that this book was not particularly appealing to her because she had already read similar kinds of books to her daughter when her daughter started going to preschool. The illustrations in *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* were also found lacking in cultural specificity. The parents thought Sumi's

face looked the same as the other American children in the book except for her dark skin color (see Figure 3).

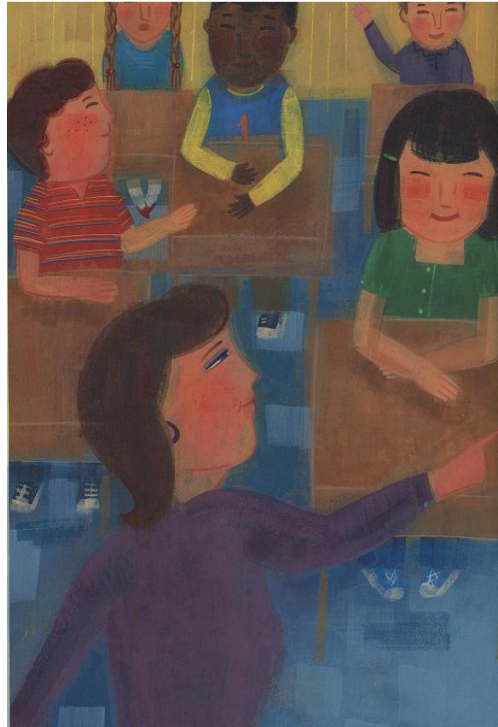


Figure 3. Sumi in her classroom in *Sumi's First Day of School Ever*. Sumi, a girl in a green shirt, is sitting in the front row.

Sims (1982) surveyed 150 books of contemporary realistic fiction about African Americans published between 1965 and 1979 and classified them into three categories based on their contents and audience: “melting pot,” “social conscious,” and “culturally conscious” (pp.14-15). According to her classifications, *One Afternoon* falls into a category of “melting pot” because it deals with universal themes (e.g., family relationships, friendship, everyday experiences) and has culturally homogeneous characters. In *One Afternoon*, the only element linked to Korean culture is the Korean

name, not the illustrations, and the story line itself is about an experience any child in a big city might have – Minho and his mom running errands in a busy, loud city.

Although the parents made similar comments about *One Afternoon* and *Sumi's First Day of School Ever*, *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* is closer to the category of “social conscious” than “melting pot” according to Sims’ (1982) classification. Social conscious books are intended to heighten social conscience in children from the mainstream, so that the children can develop empathy, sympathy, and tolerance for minority children. Sims found that the stories in social conscious books deal with racial conflict and the resolution of this conflict through integration, from the non-African American perspective. The problem with this type of story is a formulaic storyline (e.g., conflict then integration) with an easy happy ending. *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* has the characteristics of social conscious books. The description of Sumi’s feelings of fear and concern is not sophisticated enough (Jieun’s 2nd Interview, 11/28/2012), and the story develops along a highly predictable storyline like a formula (Youngae’s 2nd Interview, 2/7/2013). Most parents thought that this book was written to help American children understand and empathize with English language learners who are new to American culture and language. Jaehee explained,

I felt this book was written for English speakers, I mean, it suggests a view of English speakers toward non English speakers. I could not identify with Sumi ... I don't know why, but probably because she seemed to know so much, considering she was not an English speaker. [I even felt that] In the text, English words come out so fluently from her [such as ‘The school is mean.’ or ‘The school is scary.’]. If I were Sumi, then everything in school would be so strange and scary, not just English....This book seems to be focusing on the language issue only. (2nd Interview, 9/20/2012)

Who holds the key to solve the tension or conflict in a story shows from whose perspective the story is written, and it is, therefore, relevant to the intended audience of the book. In *Sumi's First Day of School Ever*, the concerns and fears of Sumi are alleviated by the help of the teacher and other children in her class. At the end of her first school day, Sumi apparently makes a friend with a girl who approaches her. The illustration shows two girls, Mary and Sumi, walking back to the class smiling at each other while holding hands. Youngae commented about this,

I don't like the underlying assumption of this story that this Korean child will have difficulty adjusting at school, and in this story, the solution to Sumi's problem is someone's coming to her first. I didn't like that part. What if no one approaches.... I don't think this, to wait for someone to come to you and make friends with him/her, could be a solution to my child [if he were in the same situation]. I wish Sumi was more actively engaged in solving this situation. (2nd Interview, 2/7/2013)

Similarly, Jiyoung wished for an active, confident Korean character in the story.

It's okay to find a good friend after being discouraged, but how about having a confident Korean character from the beginning? ... Here White people smile and approach Sumi first, not the other way. I wish the story was about a girl who does not speak English well but goes to the other children first, introduces herself, and talks to them about Korea where she came from. (2nd Interview, 11/30/2012)

The parents' comments and responses in relation to *One Afternoon* and *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* provide insight into what Korean American children's literature means to them. Using Korean names for characters and providing generic story lines about an everyday experience does not make quality Korean American children's books. From the parents' perspective, a quality book must include culturally-specific, detailed descriptions of Korean culture and portray Korean characters authentically, and it must be written from a Korean/Korean American perspective.

Misrepresentation of Korean/Korean American Experiences

Misrepresentation was the most discussed topic in the parents' responses. In particular, three books were criticized because of the writer's or illustrator's ignorance and stereotypical assumptions about Korean people and Korean culture. The three books are *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten* (Recorvits, 2006), *The Have a Good Day Café* (Park & Park, 2005), and *Cooper's Lesson*.

Yoon and the Christmas Mitten was the least favorite book of most of the parents. They pointed out the author's inability to recognize the difference between Chinese culture and Korean culture, which is not unusual in a book written or illustrated by outsiders (Cai, 2002; Fox & Short, 2003). Although parents liked the styles of illustrations overall, many of them told me that Yoon, the protagonist, appeared to be Chinese because of the red coat and hat she is wearing (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Yoon in *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten*. Yoon is wearing a red hat and a red coat.

In addition, although there is no illustration of a dress she is supposed to wear for the New Year's celebration, the text alludes to the fact that the dress is not a Korean traditional cloth, *hanbok*, which Koreans wear on special occasions such as New Year's Day. It is where the author adds more details about the dress that it becomes clear that the dress is not *hanbok* as noted by Sungjoo,

Hanbok [for a girl] usually has only one button but the text says, '[I do not like that dress!] The collar pinches, and the buttons pop open!' This sounded like Chinese style. I read the author's profile on the back flap of this book, and found that she is not Korean. (2nd Interview, 1/8/2013)

Some parents made a similar comment about the illustrations in *The Have a Good Day Café*. Jaehee and Sungjoo thought the Korean characters in its illustrations looked Chinese although they could not pinpoint what made them think so. Other parents did not like the way the illustrator portrayed the faces of the Korean family because of the stereotypical depictions of Asians. For example, Woosuk talked about their overly slanted eyes. One thing to note is that like *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten*, this book was illustrated by a non-Korean artist.

Yoon and the Christmas Mitten was criticized not just because of Chinese-like depictions but also because of the misrepresentations resulting from the author's assumptions. Parents pointed out that the author's stereotypical assumptions about Korea and Korean family shaped an unrealistic plot. One assumption is that a Korean family has nothing to do with Christmas, a "Christian" holiday. Jaehee thought the author had written this story based on her idea that Korea is an "Oriental" country; therefore, it has nothing to do with a Western tradition such as Christmas. Woosuk said that the author

seems to have written this book with a purpose of conveying a “nice” message without checking if her story was based on accurate information:

When was this published? In the 2000s? Where can we find Korean parents who say, ‘It’s not ours. It’s America’s. Ours is different.’? ... The author did not know much about Korea and she may just have thought that a child from foreign cultures must be struggling because of the religious, cultural differences. Then, she tried to show the process how the parents are changing as the story goes. But it’s not realistic. (2nd Interview, 1/31/2013)

Another assumption made by the author is that like “typical” Asian parents, Korean parents must be very strict and rigid. Suna commented,

Yoon’s parents are so rigid in this book. They don’t explain to their daughter why they don’t celebrate Christmas. They only repeat that they are not Christmas family [they do not celebrate Christmas], without any reasonable explanation to their daughter. If there were any explanation or something, then it would be less disappointing. (2nd Interview, 9/13/2012)

When the parents in the study did not pay attention to the author’s background, they thought the author was very old, probably a Korean immigrant in the 1960s. To them, portraying Korea as a country not celebrating Christmas would have been possible for those who immigrated much earlier, in the 1950s or 60s, and never went back to Korea. However, when they found out that the author was not Korean, they wondered where the author got the idea that a Korean family did not celebrate Christmas. Jiyoung asked, “Was this written by a foreigner [i.e., American]? Then, now I’m feeling worse because this is the image of Korea to foreign people [i.e., Americans]. I thought all the books were written by Korean authors” (2nd Interview, 11/30/2012). Some parents told me they could not understand why the author wrote this story as a Korean family’s experience, not a Chinese family’s.

Two parents, Jungmi and Hyejin, showed *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten* to children and shared with me their responses. Jungmi said her children, a 2nd grader and a preschooler, did not understand why Yoon's family does not celebrate Christmas and kept asking their mom for the reason. However, Hyejin's 2nd grader daughter, and a 5th grader who she knew from a Korean school, seemed to accept the story as it is without any question. According to her, the two children remarked that every family can have a different culture from others just as there are some things that are allowed in other families but not in their own families. Hyejin's daughter gave an example, saying that in other families, going on a trip on Sunday is not a problem, but for her family it is almost impossible because her father is a pastor. Hyejin's daughter and the other child did not question whether it was an authentic portrayal of Korea or a Korean family, maybe because they have not visited Korea or did not have enough information about how Korean people in Korea celebrate Christmas. In contrast, when the parents saw the picture on the front cover, immediately they started feeling that something was not right, because of the Chinese looking attire, and they could not follow the story line without some kind of discomfort. Woosuk's comments show why most of the parents' responses to this book focused on the author's assumptions: "If the story were plausible and authentic, I could have been engaged in the story and have had more to talk about what I felt or thought about the story. But because this story is based on nonsense, I couldn't" (2nd Interview, 1/31/2013).

The misrepresentations mentioned above could be attributed to the fact that the author and the illustrator of *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten*, and the illustrator of *The Have a Good Day Café* are not Korean, as observed in many other multicultural

children's literature written by outsiders (e.g., Harris, 2003; Mikkelsen, 1998; Sims Bishop, 1993; Yamate, 1997). However, being an insider of a cultural group does not guarantee the authenticity of the work (Cai, 2002; Chae, 2008; Sung, 2009; Yokota & Bates, 2005). Cai says that an insider author/artist's work can contain a misrepresentation caused by his or her negligence and lack of research (p. 43). It happens even with well-known, award-winning artists and writers. For example, Chinese American author, Amy Tan's novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, includes some inaccurate cultural details although on the whole the book is considered authentic, written from an insider's perspective (Cai, 2002).

A similar case in this study was noted in *The Have a Good Day Café* written by Korean American sisters. This book received some positive comments in terms of its message, but unrealistic details in the story marred its quality. In this story, Mike's family earns a living by selling hot dogs, pizzas, and sodas on a food cart at a park. Their business gets slowed down as two other food carts start selling the same kind of food as his family. Mike and his grandmother plan to sell various Korean dishes on their food cart, instead of American food. Selling Korean food is a success. The Korean/Korean American parents in this study, however, noted that selling the Korean dishes described in the story is not realistic, especially, on a food cart. Suna said, "Koreans who know how to cook these dishes will understand why it's unrealistic. This is the most important point...because I can't help but think whether it's realistic or not" (2nd Interview, 9/13/2012). Then she added that to Americans who do not know how to cook these Korean dishes, this unrealistic part would not be an issue. Youngae commented that Mike and his grandmother's plan to add *Nangmyeon* (a cold Korean noodle soup) to the lunch

menus is “out of mind” because preparing noodles for this dish cannot be done on a food cart. She said, “You know you can’t boil noodles for *Nangmyeon* beforehand because the noodles would get stuck together” (2nd Interview, 2/7/2013). Selling Korean dishes is a solution to the difficult situation of Mike’s family; however, if that solution is not realistic, then how would the reader feel? Youngae told me that the solution was not convincing, and she felt disturbed by the seemingly contrived “happy ending” of the story.

Not surprising, as noted in the parents’ comments on *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten*, the parents in this study showed a keen response to the way Korean parents are portrayed. They compared their attitudes and perspectives in raising their children with those of the Korean parents in the books. Like *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten*, *Cooper’s Lesson* also was criticized for the stereotypical depictions of a Korean mother. In *Cooper’s Lesson*, the parents noted Cooper’s mom pointing her finger to Cooper with an angry look on her face in the illustration, though this is not indicated in the text. They thought that she was too harsh on Cooper. Suna said, “I would illustrate this scene differently, like, his mom bends to look into Cooper’s eyes and asks him gently, ‘Cooper, why did you do this?’” (2nd Interview, 9/13/2012) and she wished there were scenes that showed Cooper’s mom’s love for her son more clearly, such as hugging him. Several parents wondered about Cooper’s American father’s reaction because the illustration portrayed Cooper’s father aloof whenever his wife and son are talking to each other, usually standing behind his wife (see Figure 5). The parents felt that the author and the illustrator depicted the attitudes of Korean adults in *Cooper’s Lesson* as if the setting were the 1960s. When the parents found out that the author and the artist were similar to their ages and that the book was published in 2002, they were surprised because they

thought the way adults treat children in Korea has changed notably; their generation's parenting is different from their parents' generation who were authoritarian and strict. Hyejin's comment about a new approach to Korean language education reflects this change:

We are advised not to teach Korean this way. Cooper's mom and Mr. Lee force Cooper to speak Korean. I don't think this strategy will work.... It would only make children not want to learn Korean. This book would have made sense if Korean immigrants had read it in the 1960s. (2nd Interview, 12/11/2012)



Figure 5. Cooper's parents in Cooper's Lesson. Cooper's mother is asking Cooper where he has been.

Both *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten* and *Cooper's Lesson* do not reflect the changes these mothers mentioned, and the stereotypical, outdated parenting styles indicated in those books made the parents think that they must have been published several decades ago. It seems that readers are likely to assume the setting of a story to be the time it was

published unless the time setting is specified in the story. If a recently published book includes outdated descriptions of their experiences without any explanation of its time or setting, the Korean/Korean American readers would think that those images came from stereotypes about them in the society, as did the parents in this study.

Books with cultural inaccuracies and stereotypical depictions are still being published and often receive positive reviews. For example, *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten* was reviewed favorably in several journals. In *School Library Journal*, Mitnick (2006) wrote, "... children and parents alike will be charmed by Yoon's yearning and determination to experience a bit of Christmas magic" (p.100). Another review from *Booklist* read, "...An affecting story about reconciling cultural identity, beautifully brought to life in Swiatkowska's evocative, feathery portraits and dreamscapes" (Engberg, 2006). The reviewers only relate the literary or artistic quality of the book "but [they] are blind to its cultural incorrectness" (Cai, 2002, p. 91). Seemingly, they did not consider cultural correctness as important as literary merits, not recognizing the fact that when this standard is not met, then "the story will not be engaging rather repelling" (Cai, 2002, p. 91) as seen in the parents' responses to this book. The parents' responses show that for them the cultural correctness of Korean American children's literature is more important than its literary quality.

Criteria for Good Korean American Children's Literature

The parents' criticisms about misrepresentation and negative response about generic experiences and illustrations show that, from their perspective, good Korean American children's picture books require accurate, authentic representations in the text as well as in the illustrations and include culturally relevant stories. The parents' positive

comments about some books present similar points. They said that quality Korean American children's literature shows Korean/Korean American characters' positive attitudes toward Korean culture and language. Also, Korean culture is introduced within the American context in a "natural" way. It conveys messages related to children's identities as Korean and American.

Although there were some features the parents did not like about *The Have a Good Day Café* (e.g., illustrations, unrealistic descriptions of Korean dishes), several parents highlighted the message that this book sends to Korean/Korean American readers, that is, asserting their Korean-ness can have a positive effect as it did for Mike's family. Jiyoung said that she preferred this book to *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* because it shows the main characters' positive and confident attitudes and the Korean family's strength to pull through the difficult situation. She added that we need more stories like this. It was interesting to see the contrast between *The Have a Good Day Café*, and *One Afternoon* and *Sumi's First Day of School Ever*. In *The Have a Good Day Café*, the child's name is an American name (i.e., Mike), however, readers will recognize that his family members are Korean immigrants just by reading the text, without any extra explanation about the story. In contrast, *One Afternoon* and *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* have main characters with Korean names, Minho and Sumi, respectively, however, the texts do not have any indication that the stories are about Koreans. In fact, Woosuk even said that a Korean child with an English name seems realistic. This contrast shows that to the Korean/Korean American parents authenticating cultural details are more critical than using Korean names in considering the quality of Korean American children's literature.

Most parents picked *Behind the Mask* as their favorite among the seven books read in this study. Similar to their response to *The Have a Good Day Café*, they liked its positive messages such as Kimin's attitude toward Korean traditional culture and the loving relationship between Kimin and his grandfather. In *Behind the Mask*, on Halloween, Kimin wears the clothes and mask of his grandfather who was a Korean traditional mask dancer. The parents praised the author's idea of connecting Halloween (i.e., American culture) and a Korean traditional mask (i.e., Korean culture). Some mothers said that when they read the book to their children, they explained to their children about Korean masks and they had a good conversation with their children because the children could make a connection with their own Halloween experiences. For example, Sungjoo said that at first she did not read this book to her child because she thought the illustration, especially the Korean mask, would look too scary to her daughter and the story would be too difficult for her to understand. But Sungjoo's preschool daughter asked her to read the book and when she read it to her, she really liked it. Sungjoo explained,

We talked about what costumes her friends wore on Halloween. ... She liked this book much more than I thought. She had fun while I explained to her the story, like, this is *halabogi tal*[grandfather's dancing mask] and Kimin [the main character in the story] introduced this to his friends and they danced together. (2nd Interview, 1/8/2013)

Jungmi said that she and her children talked about wearing *hanbok* (Korean traditional dress) next Halloween.

Besides the positive messages in *Behind the Mask* and *The Have a Good Day Café*, the parents shared some other characteristics. In both books, Korean culture (e.g., Korean food, Korean mask) is highlighted in the American context. The tensions of the

stories are resolved by the Korean American characters' sharing their Korean culture with outsiders to the Korean culture. Mike's grandmother and Kimin's grandfather in the books appear as transmitters of Korean culture and they encourage and inspire the Korean American protagonists to sell Korean dishes and to wear Korean costume and mask.

Although the author's effort to bring Korean culture into an American setting was really appreciated by all the parents, some parents added interesting comments about *Behind the Mask*. Jaehee compared the values and meanings of Halloween with those of Korean *tal* and said they cannot be equally treated:

In America, Halloween is a casual, not serious, holiday with no traditional value in it. Just a having-fun day. However, Korean *tal* holds the meanings of Korean traditional culture. I don't know how the author could have written differently but I wish *tal* had been treated with more respect in the story Halloween costumes are bought just for one year, disposable, unlike Korean *tals*. (2nd Interview, 9/20/2012)

Similarly, Youngae said that American children would be interested in Korean *tals* as a different Halloween costume only, another type of ghost masks, but they could not understand what *tal* means in Korean culture. She did not think that it could be explained or taught. Sungjoo wondered how much her daughter, who was born and grew up in American culture, would be able to understand the meaning of the letter Kimin's grandfather left, which says, "Behind the mask my spirit remains.... Time will pass and the mask will get old, but I will be with you always" (Choi, 2006). These parents were aware of the difficulty of understanding other cultures although it does not mean that the effort to bridge the gap between cultures is useless.

As mentioned earlier, *Cooper's Lesson* was not the parents' favorite book. It seemed that the main theme of the book was not discussed enough by the parents due to the negative impression they received from the illustrations. Nevertheless, two parents, Jaehee and Jungmi, valued the author's effort to deal with the possible identity issues of Korean American children. If the parents had been comfortable with the illustrations of this book, there would have been more discussion of its main theme, identity. Jungmi stated,

I liked this book most because it delivers many messages, for example, the difficulties that bilingual children experience. My children speak Korean well but do not have confidence when speaking in English like Cooper [the protagonist] in the story. Cooper thinks that Mr. Lee [Korean grocer] makes fun of his awkward Korean when in fact Mr. Lee tries to teach Korean to him. I thought the child could have felt that way. Also, when Cooper steals the brush from the store, Mr. Lee waits for him to recognize what he did wrong. I like that part, too. (2nd Interview, 2/8/2013)

Jaehee's comments were very similar to Jungmi's. Her written memo reads, "Great story, well expressed of the identity crisis most second-generation or adopted or mixed Korean Americans feel."

The above parents' comments indicate that a good Korean American children's book should be a "culturally conscious" book, in Sims' (1982) terms. In contrast to the melting pot books and social conscious books introduced earlier, culturally conscious books reflect the social and cultural backgrounds associated with growing up Korean in the United States. *The Have a Good Day Café*, *Behind the Mask*, and *Cooper's Lesson* include elements that recognize Korean American children's distinctive experience growing up both Korean and American. Although Korean American children learn about Korean culture by reading Korean books, those books do not talk about their unique

Korean American experiences. Many parents believe this is the true value of Korean American children's literature.

Undesirable Illustrations

The parents' responses showed that the quality of the illustrations in picture books significantly influences their choice of books for their children. As a matter of fact, their first responses to the books were about the illustrations, because they started talking about the illustration on the front cover of each book once I showed them the books during the first interviews. For example, when the parents saw the front cover of *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten*, they said immediately the girl in the illustration does not look Korean. This first impression seems to have set "the foundation for [the parents'] response to the rest of [the] book" (Nodelman, 1988, p. 49). The parents' comments on the illustrations were not just about misrepresentations (e.g., *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten*) or indistinctive physical appearances (e.g., *One Afternoon and Sumi's First Day of School Ever*). They were very attentive to how the Korean characters were portrayed through their facial expressions, and they commented on the kind of mood that was created through colors and styles in the illustrations. Nodelman remarked that readers are likely to pay more attention to people in the pictures and see "subtler visual distinctions" of their faces, thus, facial expressions "automatically have great visual weight" (p. 101). Most of the parents felt that the illustrations in some books read were unnecessarily too "dark" for children's books. Some parents said that they did not like the illustrations in *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* because of the use of dark colors and Sumi's sad looks throughout the book. About *The Have a Good Day Café*, several parents made a similar comment that the Korean family looks unhappy, even angry. Hyejin said, "I wondered

why the illustrator depicted the Korean family like this. Their lips are too red and their eyes look creepy. These faces are not pleasant to look at. They look a bit angry” (2nd Interview, 12/11/2012). Youngae raised this problem as she referred to the illustration on its book cover. The front cover presents the two main characters, Mike and his grandmother. Grandmother is holding some vegetable with chopsticks to give it to her grandson. Mike’s mouth is open and it looks like he is smiling, however, grandmother does not seem to be smiling. Youngae said that grandmother even looks like she is wondering whether her grandson would eat it or not (see Figure 6).

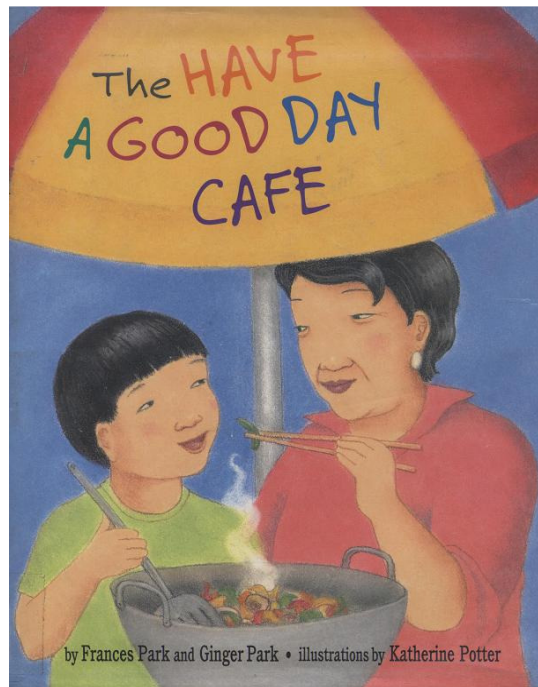


Figure 6. Mike and his grandmother in *The Have a Good Day Café*. Grandmother is letting Mike taste her Korean dish.

Although the plot of *Behind the Mask* was praised by most of the parents, its illustrations were not appealing to them. The parents commented that grandfather’s *tal*

(i.e., Korean mask) looked too scary for their children and even for themselves (see Figure 7). Suna said, “I would give this book four and a half stars out of five because of the illustrations. ... The illustrations were not so bad, but I was a bit scared of looking at grandfather’s mask” (2nd Interview, 9/13/2012). They wished the mask looked less scary because there are many other Korean masks, as illustrated inside the book cover.



Figure 7. Tal (Korean mask) hung in Kimin’s room in Behind the Mask. Kimin is sleeping and tal is above his bed.

The illustrations in *Cooper’s Lesson* were one of the main reasons for the parents’ negative responses to the book. Even the two parents, Jaehee and Jungmi, who counted this book as their favorite, also said that they did not like the illustrations. Like *Sumi’s First Day of School Ever*, they thought the illustrations were too dark for a children’s book. Given that the story is about Cooper’s struggle with his biracial, bilingual identity,

it is understandable that the illustrations were painted with dark colors. Throughout the book, the main characters look sad or angry even when the text does not suggest that. For example, when Cooper's mom finds that Cooper came back without ginger, the reason for which she sent him on an errand, she says, "You forgot? *Aigo!* What were you doing all this time?" The illustration next to this text shows Cooper's very angry looking mom (see Figure 5 above). In a similar scene, illustrated on another page, Eunjung said,

The illustration is odd. Too dark! In this scene, Cooper's mother is asking Cooper to run errands. But look at her face, she looks angry. This is not a face who asks someone a favor. And Cooper seems to have been crying. (2nd Interview, 11/7/2012)

It seems that the illustration makes the situation look more intense than the description of the text. In another example, the text shows Cooper's thought about buying a hair brush for his mother because he ruined her brush by brushing his dog's fur with it: "*I know – I'll buy her a new one with my allowance!* Cooper smiled to himself" (Shin, 2004, p. 8). Woosuk pointed out that Cooper's face in the illustration is not smiling at all, rather he is frowning (see Figure 8).

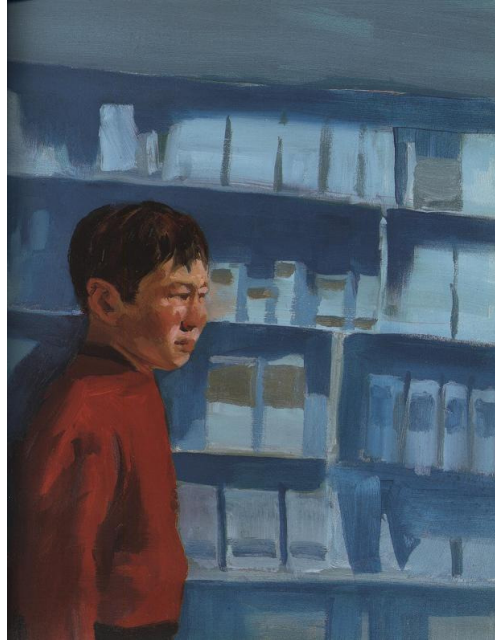


Figure 8. Cooper at Mr. Lee's store in *Cooper's Lesson*. Cooper is thinking about buying a hair brush for his mother.

These parents' responses to the books show how much they take into account illustrations in children's picture books. Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned that Jungmi and Suna talked about their experiences with the Korean Cinderella story, *Kongjwi-Patjwi*. Both of them told me that they were so glad when they saw this book at a bookstore and a library. However, when they opened the book, they were disappointed with the illustrations. The Korean Cinderella, *Kongjwi*, was supposed to be pretty in this Korean folktale, but she did not look pretty at all to them. Most of the parents compared the illustrations in these picture books with those in children's books published in Korea. They said that the faces of Korean characters in the books read for this study were different from those portrayed in their children's Korean books. Youngae said that the illustrated Korean faces are probably the reflection of Americans' view about Koreans or Asians. Jungmi told me that her daughter did not like the books because she thought the

Korean characters were not good-looking, unlike the protagonists in many other books she read. Jungmi's daughter's response seems conceivable given the fact that "there are rarely ugly heroes or handsome villains in illustrated versions of fairy tales" (Nodelman, 1988, p. 112), many of which she must have read. Jungmi then added,

Korean characters in Korean children's books do not look odd or ugly, different from these books. They are pretty. The Korean characters in these books were illustrated this way because they were seen from Americans' perspectives. (2nd Interview, 2/8/2013)

Suna showed me a Korean book which was one of her daughter's favorites, saying,

The character in this book does not look like a foreigner. People will know she is Asian. But, she looks so cute [unlike the Korean characters in the books read in this study]. What about illustrating Koreans like this in books that are being published here [in the U.S.]? (2nd Interview, 9/13/2012)

The parents also said that picture books about Korean American children need to be diversified by using various media and techniques. Jiyoung told me that if I were to give any suggestions through this study to improve Korean American children's literature, the need for better illustrations should come before any other aspects of Korean American children's literature. The comments made by the parents suggest that the discussion on illustrations in multicultural literature should include more than cultural accuracies and stereotypes. The aspect of the pictures as visual literacy or visual art (Galda & Short, 1993; Kiefer, 1993) should not be ignored, because as most parents said, the illustrations attract their attention before the text (Tsarykovska, 2005, p. 114), and they very often determine the parents' decision whether they will pick up the book to read to their children.

Use of Korean Words in English Books

Romanized Korean words appear in three books. In *The Have a Good Day Café*, the names of Korean dishes and an expression for greeting appear in the text, and at the end there is a glossary of the Korean words used in the text. In *Goyangi Means Cat* (McDonnell, 2011), several Romanized Korean words appear in the text with their meanings, and interestingly, some Korean words written with the Korean alphabet were “drawn” as part of the illustrations. *Cooper’s Lesson* is a bilingual book in which Korean and English texts are presented together on each page. In relation to using Korean words, the parents talked about their children’s responses to Korean words used in English books, and the mismatch between Korean and English words selected to express the same idea.

Jungmi and Hyejin said that their children were glad to see Korean words in *The Have a Good Day Café*, because they often saw hamburgers, hot dogs, and other American food names in the books but have never read a book filled with Korean dish names. Some parents who read *Goyangi Means Cat* (a story about a Korean adoptee) to their children also told me that their children attended to Korean words in the text and illustrations rather than the story itself. The children did not ask why the Korean child came to America and has American parents. One mother told me that her child really liked this book because the character’s name was the same as her own. Hyejin’s daughter, a second grader, was excited to learn how to represent Korean words with the English alphabet. For example, in Korean, 고양이 means “a cat” and it can be written phonetically as *goyangi* using English letters. Hyejin’s daughter told her that she found a way to teach Korean words to her friends who do not know *hangul* (Korean alphabet)

when they ask her how to say something in Korean. Jieun's son asked his dad to read this book several times. Like the other children, Ryan enjoyed reading Korean words in the text. Jieun told me that her parents were coming to visit them from Korea soon, and recently Ryan became interested in learning Korean words. She added that maybe because the setting in the book is similar to his, Ryan might have felt as if he became a character in the book, learning Korean words.

Some parents talked about inaccurate translation of Korean words. The glossary in *The Have a Good Day Café* shows Korean foods and a greeting that appear in the text. The parents pointed out that "Have a good day!" said by Mike's family to their customers should be "안녕히 가십시오" rather than "안녕히 계십시오." Most parents seemed to have read either Korean text or English text in *Cooper's Lesson*, thus, there was not much comment on the accuracy of the texts. Woosuk was the only parent who talked about the problems related to the bilingual texts. He said some Korean expressions used in the English texts were awkward. For example, Cooper's mom asks Cooper to run errands by saying "Could you pick up some ginger at Mr. Lee's store? *Kamsahamnida!*" "*Kamsahamnida*" means "Thank you" but "*Komaweo!*" or "*Komapda!*" is a better expression to say "Thank you." to someone who is younger than the speaker in a close relationship like Cooper and his mom. Another example is that in Mr. Lee's store, when Cooper asks if there are more hairbrushes he can look at, Mr. Lee answers him, saying "*Ye. Mullon imnida?*" "*Ye. Mullon imnida?*" means "Yes, of course." and "*Mullon imnida*" is not a question. In addition, it is not a proper expression to answer Cooper's question, "Uh... is this all you have?" However, the Korean texts in both cases were fine, written

as “고마워!” (*Komaweo!*, meaning “Thank you” to a younger or close person) and “이것밖에 없는데 어떡하지? (meaning ‘I’m sorry but that’s all we have.’)” Woosuk thought that because the two Korean expressions, “*Kamsahamnida*” and “*Mullon imnida*,” are probably better known to foreigners than the accurate ones, the author had inserted them in the English texts, although they are not accurate expressions. In addition, he pointed out some places where the English texts do not match Korean texts.

Bilingual books are considered as “a bridge between the home and the school” (Smith & Higonnet, 2002, p. 219) and as a tool to promote children’s biliteracy (Ernst-Slavit & Mulhern, 2003). There are very few Korean American children’s literature books written in both Korean and English like *Cooper’s Lesson*. Only a few parents talked about the bilingual texts in *Cooper’s Lesson* and because *Cooper’s Lesson* was not read to the children, I am not sure how the children would have responded to the bilingual texts. However, given the children’s responses to Korean words in the books and the research on the benefits of reading bilingual books, it seems that publishing more Korean-English bilingual literature books needs to be encouraged. In doing that, the problems with inaccurate, inauthentic use of Korean words, as in *Cooper’s Lesson*, should be avoided by working with editors or authors who are sensitive to and knowledgeable about Korean language.

Social and Cultural Factors in Parents’ Attitudes Toward Korean American Children’s Literature

The parents’ responses were not restricted to the illustration and content of the books, but included issues in their lives as immigrants and parents. Although it would be

impossible to draw a solid line where the context for their interpretation of the books begins and ends (Hartman, 1994), among the issues and stories shared in the interviews, two themes emerged that address the second research question. The parents' involvement in their children's reading and parents' perceptions of the images of the Korea/Koreans in the U.S. frame the answer to the question: What social and cultural factors influence the parents' attitude toward Korean American children's literature? The parents' stories about their investment in children's literacy education and comments on the images of Korea and Koreans in the U.S. implicate the parents' cultural resources and ideologies which they have access as middle-class, highly-educated, immigrant parents (Barker, 2000; Fairclough, 1992).

Parental Involvement in Children's Reading

During the first interview, I asked the parents some questions about their involvement in their children's reading. Most of the time, I did not have to ask all the questions I had in my interview guide because the parents were eager to talk about this topic. It was especially true when the interview was held in their homes. In these instances, the parents showed me their children's bookshelves and explained how and when they got the books and which books their children or they liked and why.

The interviews and the collection of their children's books showed how much the parents were invested in raising their children as readers. When asked why reading was important to their children, the parents gave me various reasons. Youngae and Jungmi said that the ability to read is fundamental to do other things, and it would help children interpret information faster and more deeply. Some parents thought that reading can offer children a vicarious experience, and, from that experience, children can gain wisdom and

discernment which is needed in their lives. While other parents also mentioned reading for their children's language development, Hyejin made an interesting distinction between reading Korean books and English books to her children. She said that reading Korean books was to help the children understand Korean culture whereas English books were for improving their English vocabulary. The Korean/Korean American parents shared with me various ways they encourage their children's reading. Most parents said that they paid attention to their children's interest and searched for books of their children's interest. For example, Jieun tried to expose different kinds of books to her children,

We [Jieun and her husband] check out books from the library and read them to our children. The children would show interests in some of them and ask us to renew the books over and over. Then, I purchase those books. I borrow books of various genres, for example, mystery book, or cook book. They find one or two favorite books out of them. (1st Interview, 11/1/2012)

Most parents said that they read books to their children before bed. In Jieun's family, her husband was the one who read books to their children at bedtime, while Jieun read books to her children during the daytime. She said that before she had the third baby, she tried different activities with her children to make reading fun for them, such as acting out all the characters in the story or making a craft with its setting and characters. Hyejin said that her husband had been reading books to their children every day since they were very young, sometimes 20 books a day. The children chose books and brought them to their father. She added that her husband himself was an avid reader. Hyejin also mentioned when she and her husband want to reward their children, they take the children to a bookstore and buy five books for them, three books chosen by the children and two

recommended by the parents. Jungmi told me that sometimes she reads the same book her daughter is or would be reading.

For lengthy chapter books, I decided to read them with my daughter because she may feel overwhelmed. For example, if a story is of five book series, I read the first one and then give it to my daughter. While she is reading the first book, I start the second book.... That way we will have something to talk about and I enjoy reading children's books. They are fun. I also learn a lot from reading them. (Jungmi's 1st Interview, 2/1/2012)

Besides the children's interest, the parents used other resources to find books for their children. Many parents said that some books they purchased for their children were the ones they used to read when they were their children's age. Korean folktales and famous classical stories they grew up with were usually in their children's book collection at home. Jiyoung told me that her husband is concerned with their children's education a lot more than she is. She added that some sets of books on her children's bookshelf were bought because her husband insisted that the books that he had read in his childhood, such as Korean folktales and Aesop's fables, should be read to their children because he thought that they taught good lessons and they were classic, proven texts. Except for Jieun, who was not as concerned about teaching Korean to children as the other parents, the parents could name sets of children's books which had recently been published in Korea. They mentioned that if their friends or relatives in Korea had children of similar ages to their children, their suggestion was useful to finding good children's books published in Korea. Since Korean books are not available in American bookstores, most parents said that they read book reviews or the partial content posted on the web before they purchased books. According to what I observed or heard during the interviews, they owned hundreds of Korean children's picture books. Korean children's

picture books do not mean they were all written by Korean authors. Some of the books were originally written by authors from all over the world and translated into Korean. Youngae said that she read mostly Korean books to her children when they were little, because she wanted them to be able to read and write in Korean. Obtaining Korean books is not as easy as getting English books. The parents bought the books when they visited Korea or asked their families in Korea to ship the books that they ordered through the web pages of bookstores in Korea. Some of them said they purchased the books at a bookstore in L.A. or from other Korean families in the U.S. Although some local libraries have Korean children's books in their foreign language sections, the collection is very limited. The parents said that they did not have as many English books as the Korean books at home, because they could get English books at local libraries in their neighborhood.

For most parents, reading English books to their children became more serious as the children began going to preschool or kindergarten, since the children were being immersed in an English-speaking context. Youngae said she started buying English books because her son needed books for some school projects in kindergarten. Although many of the parents occasionally read English books before their children started going to school, most of the time they would translate the English sentences in the books into Korean as they read them to their children. Sungjoo said that she tried to read both Korean and English books to her daughter without interpreting the English texts and her daughter liked it. However, after she bought lots of Korean books, she read more Korean books than English books for a while. As a result, her daughter did not like her mom to read in English any more, because she could not understand English words. Sungjoo said,

“When she goes to school [kindergarten], she will not know books other kids know. So, I’m going to try more English books.” Jungmi’s response was similar,

English books... I bought many of them when my daughter entered kindergarten. I just bought popular books because, for example, when she was at a library story time, she did not understand the story whereas the other children already knew the book. So, I bought most popular ones, not knowing about the authors. (1st Interview, 2/1/2012)

Jaehee also said when her child was in the lower grades, she would go to the school book fair to find out what books were popular among the children, and she would buy them for her son. Many parents mentioned that because they were not familiar with American authors, they relied on the recommended book lists local libraries provide. Reading popular, well-known books to their children was considered important, as they did not want their children to feel different from the other American children. Parents also turned to famous sets of children’s books published in Korea, which were composed of foreign books translated into Korean. For example, Sungjoo heard about a set of children’s books (i.e., Proebel Thema *Donghwa* [children’s literature]) that was well-known to Korean parents because of its quality. The set also consists of translated books. Because she believed that the Korean publisher picked only quality books to be translated, she checked if any of the titles from the set could be found at the local libraries. She told me that she found some and planned to read them to her daughter.

Some mothers said that they would read book reviews posted at online bookstores or ask other mothers’ for recommendations when seeking good English books for their children. Jiyoung showed me her daughter’s small collection of English books, and she said she bought them because of the good reviews or someone’s recommendation. The

parents' taste for books was also important in their selection of children's books. For example, Jaehee said,

I still choose books for my son [4th grader]. ... I recently bought a set of '*Boxcar Children*' series. .. He likes reading. I did some research to find some books for my son because I thought he read most books that are popular among his peers. I bought a new set of mystery books. When I was young, I liked mystery stories. I checked similar kinds of stories for my son and found the '*Hardy Boys*' and '*Boxcar Children*' series. [When I choose books for my child] I first consider if they are appropriate for his age and then I select books that I like. (laughter) (1st Interview, 9/11/2012)

Suna told me that she searched for books written by Korean authors published in English after she saw Salina Yoon's book displayed in a bookstore. Through her search on an online bookstore, she found Salina Yoon's books, and other wordless books, illustrated by Korean artists that were republished in the U.S. During the interview, she brought the books to show me and said she felt so glad to find the Korean authors' names, although there was no element indicating Korean culture or Korean people. Salina Yoon's books are board books on different holidays, like Christmas and Halloween.

On the whole, the parents felt less confident selecting English books for their children, because they thought they were less knowledgeable about American authors, publishers, and illustrators. Therefore, while they would choose Korean books by themselves, they tended to rely on the books' popularity or a list offered by the school or library. Jungmi said,

I always ask myself, 'Is this a good book?' I keep thinking about it. If it were a Korean book, I would read its reviews and have a better idea about its content [before buying it]. Then, I'll decide if reading that book will be beneficial to my children but for English books I can't do that. (1st Interview, 2/1/2013)

Sungjoo, who used to work as a librarian and knew some Korean authors' names (e.g., Yumi Heo, Linda Sue Park), told me that she did not know about the other authors,

like Yangsook Choi and Soyung Pak. She was also surprised to find that there were more books about Korean American children than she had thought. Sungjoo remarked that the Korean parents tended to pick English books listed on their children's schools' or libraries' lists. Many parents believed that a book with an award seal (e.g., Caldecott Award or Newbery Award) on its cover must be a good read.

The situation described above implies that unless there is some effort to promote children's books, at schools and libraries, about Korean American experiences, it will be hard for those books to reach Korean/Korean American audiences, especially in areas where the Korean community is relatively small, like in the Phoenix area. Sungjoo explained in some places like L.A., where there are bigger Korean communities, local libraries sponsor events and invite Korean American authors to speak. That was how she learned about Linda Sue Park. She added that the libraries in the Phoenix area may not be able to hold such events, but if the parents of Korean American children see the need for more Korean American children's books, they can submit a purchase suggestion to the library. Woosuk suggested that there be active promotion such as writing articles about Korean American children's literature in Korean community newspapers.

Parents' Perception of Images of Korea/Koreans in the U.S.

The issues of images or representations of minority groups in multicultural literature are summed up as *underrepresentation* (e.g., invisibility, silence) and *misrepresentation* (e.g., stereotype, distortion) (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). The Korean/Korean American parents' strong responses to the misrepresentation of Korean experiences mentioned earlier were related to their perception of the underrepresentation of Korea or Korean experiences. When the parents criticized the inaccurate or negative

portrayals of Koreans or Korean culture in the picture books, they mentioned the images of Korea or Koreans in the U.S. they encountered. The images the parents mentioned were often the same ones, and mostly negative.

Several parents talked about how Korea or Koreans were depicted in the U.S. media, such as films, dramas, and the TV news programs. As she compared Sumi in *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* and the protagonists in *Behind the Mask* and *The Have a Good Day Café*, Jiyoung said she liked the two latter books because Korean characters were portrayed as being confident about Korean culture. Then, she recalled some American films and talked about how the Korean characters were depicted in the movies and why she did not like them.

I don't remember its title but it was a famous movie. In the movie, there is a Korean-owned store, and the people say that the Korean store opens everyday and he [Korean owner] works from early morning till late. A policeman wants to buy something on a special holiday and he knows that stores are not open that day. However, he is sure that the Korean-owned store is open, but he finds it closed. The Korean image in this movie is that the Korean only seeks for more money. In other movies, I saw the Chinese people were depicted in the same way. Japanese people seemed to be portrayed having higher social status than Koreans or Chinese better in the movies. I don't think I have seen many movies in which Koreans were portrayed with positive images. The Korean characters in some of these books are not very different from those in the movies (2nd Interview, 11/30/2012)

This “all work, no play” image of the Korean owner in the movie is one of the most common stereotypes of Asian Americans in the media (Bai, 2010, p.391). In addition, Suna and her friend, who was staying at Suna's home when this interview took place, mentioned how Korean parents were portrayed as authoritarian in American dramas as is the mother in *Cooper's Lesson* and the parents in *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten*. Louie (1996) says, “[S]ince there is so little information about Asian Americans,

this is just what Americans are doing – getting their facts from the movies” (p. 322). The media probably have more influence on people living in places where there is a smaller minority group because they have fewer chances to encounter the minority group (Yamate, 1997).

“North Korea” and “international adoption” were among the words the parents mentioned in relation to Korea. A threat to world peace, militarism, nuclear weapon, dictatorship, oppression, famine, and a communist country would be some English words that are used in talking about North Korea in the media (e.g., Klug, 2013; Kroth, 2013). South Korea is considered a dangerous place because a war can be waged any time by North Korea. Jungmi said, “Korea [South Korea] has a lot of political issues with North Korea. So, to foreigners [i.e., non-Koreans], the images of Korea may not be positive” (1st Interview, 2/1/2013). She hoped that positive portrayals of Korean or Koreans in children’s books could show other positive aspects of Korea and Koreans to non-Koreans, especially Americans. Suna and Hyejin’s first response to *Goyangi Means Cat* was not favorable because the story was about a Korean adoptee. When Hyejin saw the book, she said she had already seen many stories about Korean adoptees and complained about the lack of other kinds of stories about Koreans published in the U.S. Suna did not want to read that book to her children, either. She was concerned that she might need to talk about Korea as “the leading supplier of foreign-born adoptees” (Ma, 2008, para. 10) as she read *Goyangi Means Cat* to her children. Suna stated,

I don’t like to read this book. I would think about introducing this book to my daughter when she is in the upper grades. ... Although Korea held the Olympics [in 1988], [American] people still don’t know much about Korea and there is lack of accurate information about Korea. Given this situation, why would I read this

book to her? There can be many good, positive stories about Korea and Korean people. (2nd Interview, 9/13/2012)

As seen above, the Korean parents perceived that there is not a wide spectrum of representation of Korea or Koreans in the U.S. Some parents raised another issue in relation to the representation of Korean culture, which is insensitivity to the differences between Korean and other Asian cultures. When the parents saw the illustrations in *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten*, all of them thought Yoon (a Korean girl) looked Chinese because of her red attire. Suna and her friend said they noticed the same mistake in the movies and dramas (e.g., *hanbok*[Korean dress] is confused with Japanese kimono). Lumping Asian cultures together or mixing up two different Asian cultures has been a problem, although there are over 50 different ethnic groups of Asian Pacific Americans who “share no common history, language, religion, or culture” (Yamate, 1997, p. 96). Similarly, when there are comparable cultural items in different ethnic groups, they tend to be recognized as one that belongs to a better-known group. Some anecdotes the parents shared illustrate how this issue plays out in their children’s lives. Jieun shared a story from a child whom she tutored several years ago:

The child was making a poster about his favorite food for a school project. *Kimbap* was his favorite dish but he did not want to write *kimbap* on the poster. I asked him why. He told me that he would like to write *sushi* rather than *kimbap*. I told him *kimbap* is different from *sushi*. Then, finally he wrote spaghetti as his favorite food because he thought it sounded American most. (2nd Interview, 11/28/2012)

Youngae told me a very similar story about her child and it seemed to answer why

Jieun’s student wanted to write *sushi* instead of *kimbap*.

One day I packed *kimbap* for his lunch. I inserted only sausage and ham [in *kimbap*] because he doesn’t like vegetables. When he came home from school, he told me that he will not take *kimbap* to school any more. I asked him why and he

said that the other kids called it *sushi* [when they saw *kimbap*]. A Korean girl was the only one who said it was *kimbap*. Because most of the kids think it was *sushi*, he felt uncomfortable and he doesn't want to make a situation that other kids speak about his lunch. (2nd Interview, 2/7/2013)

In this instance, a piece of Korean culture, *kimbap*, was not recognized as a Korean dish but as a type of Japanese *sushi*. Similarly, *Taekwondo*, a Korean martial art, is often viewed as a Korean version of Japanese karate (Jiyoung's 2nd Interview, 11/30/2012). Some parents noted that because Japanese food is more popular and well-known to Americans, Korean owners tend to adopt Japanese words for their restaurants' names when they serve both Korean and Japanese dishes.

While there was more discussion about the mis(under)representations of Korea and Korean culture, several parents mentioned Psy, a Korean singer, as a positive source of Korean image. When I was meeting the parents for interviews in the fall, Psy's dance and song became a sensation all over the world, including America. His music video became the first video to reach one billion viewers on YouTube (Gruger, 2012). He appeared in various American TV shows and his song was played almost everywhere. The parents shared how his presence in American media impacted their children's and other Korean American children's thoughts on their Korean heritage. For instance, Hyejin told me how her students at a Korean heritage language school responded to Psy's popularity in America:

I found that the children's perspectives on Korea have changed since the *Gangnam Style* song became popular. I taught 4th or 5th graders this semester. They said, "Mrs. Shin[Hyejin], isn't Korea great?" ... They said to me that every American kid knows this song. Whenever the song is played, everybody dances to the music. (laughter) I think the image of Korea changed a lot. Among my students, Psy's having an interview in English without any interpreter became an issue, too. (1st Interview, 12/7/2012)

The first year when I became their teacher at the Korean heritage language school, they were in 2nd or 3rd grade. They had been saying that although they were learning Korean, they were Americans. This semester because of Psy, these children started saying that they were Korean, too. They started having self-esteem about their Korean heritage. Now they are saying that they are Korean Americans. (2nd Interview, 12/11/2012)

One of the reasons for the parents and children's excitement about *Gangnam Style* and Psy was his positive character, as presented in the media, which is very different from the stereotypical Korean image. He was not shy and did not mumble when he spoke in English; instead, he looked very confident in his interviews and performances, despite his limited English proficiency.

Several parents commented that the stories in Korean American children's literature seem to be limited in that they were set in the 1970s or 1980s with similar immigration and adjustment stories. The stories have not caught up with changes in the images of Korea and do not reflect the experiences of diverse Korean immigrant groups. Jiyoung said,

The children in these books [e.g., *Sumi's First Day of School Ever*, *The Have a Good Day Café*] seem to be living in the 1980s or 1990s maybe because the authors wrote these stories based on their childhood experiences. Twenty or 30 years have passed already. While there were more people immigrating for economic reasons in the past, now many people are coming to America to study. The image of Asian children should be different from that of the past because they, including my children, will grow to be confident [unlike Sumi]. (2nd Interview, 11/30/2012)

Hyejin mentioned that to most Americans, the image of Korea in the 1970s or 1980s was a poor country that received aid from the U.S., but the young generation of Koreans and Americans has a different perspective of Korea. As an example, she talked about the popularity of Korean-brand smartphones among her nephew's American

classmates. Then, she added that the content of Korean American children's literature should be shifted in accordance with other social and cultural changes.

The parents' interpretation of the picture books and their talk about the images of Korea in the U.S. are concerned with social, cultural, and historical ideologies regarding Korean immigrants in the U.S (Hartman, 1992). The limited and insensitive representation of Korea and Korean culture in the American media suggests that the general repertoire (McCormick, 1994) of Korea and Korean culture circulating in American society fails to embody the complexity and diversity within Korean culture and people. With few choices of representation (e.g., North Korea, Asian stereotypes) drawn from this narrow range of repertoire, it will be hard to expect a matching of the repertoires of the readers with those of the text (McCormick, 1994) as seen in the parents' comments.

Sims (1993) states that literature is to represent, interpret, and envision one's world. Reading helps children not only describe or reflect their experiences but also envision and explore possible selves (McGinley et al., 1997). It seems that there needs to be more books about Korean American children's experiences that not only authentically reflect their experiences, but also help them envision and explore possibilities. Listening to the Korean American community's needs in children's literature could provide a guideline in publishing such Korean American children's literature (Yamate, 1997).

Summary

The Korean/Korean American parents were surprised to see the picture books I showed them. The parents said that they did not expect to find many books about Korean/Korean American children because most of them had not seen such books. The

parents' responses to my question on the meaning of Korean American children's literature pointed to the issues that have been discussed among scholars in multicultural literature, although most of the parents had never thought or heard of the term. They believed that Korean American children's literature (a) is written by Korean/Korean Americans, (b) deals with Korean American children's unique experience, and (c) has a purpose to encourage Korean American children to appreciate their cultural identity and to help non-Korean American children understand Korean American children's experience. The parents' perception of Korean American children's literature shared before reading the picture books became refined and intricate as they read the selected picture books and shared their responses to the books with me.

The parents' responses to *One Afternoon* and *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* showed that highlighting cultural distinctiveness in Korean American experiences is an important factor to them. In addition, the parents commented that *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* provides an easy, almost formulaic storyline that seeks for readers' empathy with the protagonist. Most parents did not find any particular reason why they would pick these books for their children because these books are like other English books they have seen. The protagonists' Korean names in the books did not appeal to the parents, only making them wonder what was the authors' intention for using Korean names.

Another issue the parents focused on was misrepresentation. They pointed out the authors' and illustrators' insensitivity to Korean culture and stereotypical description of Korean parents in some books. *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten* was picked as the least favorite book by the parents because of its inaccurate and inauthentic representation of the Korean parents and Korean culture in the story, as well as in the illustrations. The

stereotypical image of Asian parents was also raised in their response to *Cooper's Lesson*. Some parents said that unrealistic details in *The Have a Good Day Café* marred its positive aspects (e.g., a confident protagonist, introducing Korean culture).

The first comments from the parents were mostly about the illustrations on the front cover. For example, as soon as the parents saw the front cover of *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten*, they asked me if that book was about a Chinese girl. In the case of *Behind the Mask*, the parents appreciated its message and plot, but they did not like the illustrations. The parents told me that the tone of the illustrations in some books is too dark for children's books, and the facial expressions of the Korean characters look a bit angry. Several parents commented that the faces of Korean characters in the books look strange to them and wondered if it was because the illustrators, even the Korean American illustrators, drew the pictures through the eyes of Americans.

Finding Korean words in the English books was a new experience to the parents and their children. Particularly, some parents, who shared the books with their children, told me that the children showed more interest in Romanized Korean words than any other aspects of the books. The parents' comments were mostly about the inaccurate translation in the text of *Cooper's Lesson*, a bilingual book, and in the glossary in *The Have a Good Day Café*. Because most parents thought that *Cooper's Lesson* was not a good book for their children, they did not share the book with them.

The parents shared with me their perspective on their children's reading and ways to help them grow as readers. Their stories and the collection of books in their children's bookshelves demonstrated their belief in the benefits and importance of reading in their children's lives. Most of the parents have read books to their children every day since the

children were very young. They also told me what resources they rely on when selecting books to read or buy for their children. The parents' stories revealed that they are less confident about choosing books written in English, because they think that they do not have enough knowledge about American publishers, authors, and illustrators. Therefore, they said they would look for award seals or rely on recommended book lists provided by the libraries or schools.

The parents' comments on the books were not restricted to the contents of illustrations of the books. They related the misrepresented, stereotypical images of Koreans and Korean culture in the books to the images of Korea or Korean people represented in the U.S. media. The parents said they seldom saw positive images of Korea or Koreans. They also noted that mixing up Korean culture with other Asian cultures is not uncommon.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to examine Korean/Korean American parents' perspectives on Korean American children's literature and to understand social and cultural factors that influenced their perspectives. The study was proposed for two reasons. First, the majority of studies on Korean American children's literature have relied on content analysis of the text, rather than readers' responses to it, discussing researchers' interpretation and criticism of the illustrations and stories of the books (e.g., Louie, 2005; Park, 2004, 2009; Sung, 2009). In this study, the parents' responses add a new and valued perspective to this body of work. Second, although parents play a significant role in their children's reading education (Pattnaik, 2003), studies on parents' perspectives on multicultural literature, particularly Korean American, books are few (Ruan, 2005). In the current study, 10 Korean/Korean American parents read seven selected Korean American children's books and shared their responses with me. Their responses reveal both positive comments and negative concerns about the production and consumption of Korean American children's literature. They also disclose ways parents are involved in their children's reading lives. Finally, they uncover the parents' concerns about how the image of Korea and Korean culture is perceived in the U.S., and how these perceptions influence the content and illustrations in Korean American children's literature. In this chapter, I discuss the findings and the implications of this study. I also discuss this study's limitations and offer suggestions for future research.

Discussion

The parents in this study had little or no experience reading children's books related to Korea and published in English. They thought that Korean American children's

literature was written by Korean/Korean American authors about Korean/Korean American experiences. Furthermore, they thought the purpose for publishing it was to help non-Korean American children to understand the experience of Korean/Korean American children and to encourage Korean American children to appreciate their own cultural identity. These global perceptions were explicated and refined as the parents read the picture story books and shared their responses with me. Hartman's (1992) argument that readers' responses to literature are infused with traces of their life experiences and informed by their social, cultural, and ideological beliefs was borne out in the parents' responses. For example, the notion that some author's or illustrator's assumptions about Korean Americans or Korean culture are adopted from a general repertoire related to Asians in American society (Hartman, 1992; McCormick, 1994) was shared by several parents. To make their point, they noted stereotypical, strange depictions of Korean faces in some of the illustrations, and they felt the portrayal of Korean parents in some of the books seemed to reflect Americans' perceptions of strict Asian parents.

The parents' responses to the books revealed both concerns with and positive aspects of the Korean American children's literature they read. Their concerns dealt mostly with cultural misrepresentations and stereotypes in the books, which resulted from "a tension" between the parents' literary or general repertoires and those of the texts (McCormick, 1994). Misrepresentation is one of the critical issues in multicultural literature, and it is often discussed in relation to the authorship because inaccurate, inauthentic representation has been found in the books written or illustrated by outsiders of the culture depicted in the books (Cai, 2002; Harris, 2003; Mikkelsen, 1998; Yamate, 1997). However, being an insider does not guarantee the authenticity or accuracy of a

story (Cai, 2002) as seen in the parents' response to *The Have a Good Day Café* (Park & Park, 2005). In this book, they noted that selling the Korean dishes as described was unrealistic. The Korean/Korean American parents said that books without misrepresentation are more critical to non-Korean readers, because Korean/Korean American parents can recognize inauthentic or inaccurate information in books and tell their children about it. However, for non-Korean readers it would be difficult, unless they were familiar with Koreans or Korean culture.

Parents also voiced concern over what constitutes a multicultural book. Their responses suggest that a multicultural book must include cultural markers that illuminate the experiences of growing up a member of a particular, non-White group (Sims Bishop, 1992, p.44). In other words, as the parents pointed out, simply using a Korean name for characters in the story, without other cultural markers, is not adequate criteria for designating a book as Korean American children's literature. Interestingly, and contrary to the parents' beliefs, *One Afternoon* (Heo, 1994), whose only cultural marker is the character's name, made it into two different lists of selected multicultural children's books. This book is included in the list of "50 Multicultural Books Every Child Should Read" on the National Educational Association [NEA] website, which was originally compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC, as cited in NEA, n.d.). In addition, on a well-known publisher's website, Clegg, Miller, Vanderhoof, Ramirez, and Ford (n.d.) selected *One Afternoon* as one of the "10 Great Children's Books about Asian Americans" and mentioned that it portrayed the Korean immigrant experience.

Although parents were firm in their beliefs about the need for cultural markers in a book, they also commented on word choices, tones, illustrations, and writing styles

used in the books. These comments suggest that a multicultural literature book should be evaluated not solely because it is culturally correct. Reading literature, whether multicultural or not, “ought to be an aesthetic experience” (Sims Bishop, 1992, p. 6). Cai (2002) warns that mediocre literature should not get good reviews and attention simply because it is labeled as multicultural. Even when they are “culturally correct” (Cai, 2002, p. 91) or “foster a particular perspective” (Harris & Rosales, 1998, p. 26), mediocre works cannot touch the reader’s heart. Another point made by Harris and Rosales and by the parents about some books, like *Cooper’s Lesson* (Shin, 2004), is that too much didacticism and seriousness can overwhelm the plot (Harris & Rosales, 1998).

The Korean/Korean American parents’ positive responses to the books alludes to the kind of story they want to see in Korean American children’s literature. Most of them had a larger collection of Korean children’s books than English books, because they think that reading Korean books helps their children maintain their heritage language and understand Korean culture. However, they also realize that their children’s experiences are not the same as theirs. They, therefore, know they cannot impose their ways on their children because the children are growing up in America, whereas they came to America as adults. The parents’ recognition of the sociolinguistic and sociocultural context of their children’s lives (Hartman, 1992) underscores the need for the cultural conflict or harmony in bilingual and bicultural Korean American children’s lives to be major themes in Korean American children’s literature. For example, the parents commended *Cooper’s Lesson*, *Behind the Mask* (Choi, 2006), and *The Have a Good Day Café* as books that illustrate authentic experiences of Korean American children who are in between Korean and American cultures. Louie (1996) argues that books about immigrant children should

show how the children participate in both cultures. She takes *Hoang Ahn* (Hoyt-Goldsmith, as cited in Louie, 1996), a book about a Vietnamese American boy, as an example. In this book, the illustrations show that the protagonist participates in a football game and attends a traditional Vietnamese festival. Louie's argument can be applied to books about Korean American children. Living in both cultures can mean something as simple as eating ethnic and American meals using different utensils every day, or as complicated as struggling with one's own identity. Unfortunately, as Sung (2009) points out, the majority of the published children's picture books about Koreans focus on their experiences as new immigrants. *Father's Rubber Shoes* (Heo, 1995), *The Name Jar* (Choi, 2001), *Good-Bye, 382 Shin Dang Dong* (Park & Park, 2002), *My Name Is Yoon* (Recorvits, 2003), and *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* (Pak, 2003) are some of the examples of such books. The parents' comments, along with evidence of the paucity of books about children living in two cultures, suggests that there needs to be more books published about Korean American children who were born and are growing up in America. For Korean/Korean American families, with a similar background to the participants in this study, such books would hold a distinct position that cannot be replaced by Korean books or other English books.

Bilingual texts are yet another way of representing Korean American children living in bilingual contexts, Korean at home and English at school. While the Korean/Korean American parents in this study focused on the errors in the Korean expressions found in some of the books, their children responded differently. They were excited to see familiar Korean words and fascinated by how Korean words were Romanized in the books. *Cooper's Lesson* and *Aekyung's Dream* (Paek, 1988) are

examples of the few Korean-English bilingual books that focus on Korean American children's experience. The children's responses to the Korean words in the books support what others suggest: Bilingual books can bridge a gap between the school and the home and promote the reader's biliteracy (Ernst-Slavit & Mulhern, 2005; Fain & Robin, 2006; Smith & Higonnet, 2002).

In summary, this study shows that, according to the parents' responses, quality Korean American children's literature should include accurate, authentic representations in the text, as well as in the illustrations, and it should avoid stereotypical depictions of Korean/Korean Americans. This means that the publishers should have editors who are knowledgeable about and sensitive to Korean culture. In fact, several parents said that publishers should consult with Korean people about any possible inauthentic, inaccurate information in the manuscript before publishing it. One thing to note is that certain aspects of Korean culture change faster than other aspects; therefore, when a story or its illustrations do not reflect those changes, readers may feel that the book misrepresents their experiences. This issue was brought up when the parents talked about *Cooper's Lesson* and *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten* (Recorvits, 2006). The parents thought that those books must have been published several decades ago because of the way Korean adults treat the children and the way Korea was portrayed as a country that does not celebrate Christmas.

In addition, the critical role of book reviewers cannot be emphasized enough because librarians, educators, and parents rely on them (Taxel, 2002; Yamate, 1997). Yamate argued that there are only a few reviewers who are qualified to review multicultural children's literature. Often reviews of picture books on Korean/Korean

American experiences only focus on literary or artistic characters without discussing their cultural authenticity (Sung, 2009). This is a true disservice since cultural authenticity is critical, maybe even more critical than literary or artistic merits of a book, because unauthentic, stereotypical portrayals fail to make the story plausible or desirable. The parents' astute responses to the books in this study suggest that the pool of reviewers of Korean American children's literature could be easily increased by adding parent voices to the few authorities who currently serve as reviewers.

Finding ways to listen to insiders' feedback on the books seems important to improving the qualities of Korean American children's literature. However, as seen in the parents' first responses to the books, insiders often do not know there are books written about their culture and experiences. This issue has been raised repeatedly by scholars and publishers (Harris, 1993; Hudson, 1991; Sims, 1982; Taxel, 2002). The Korean/Korean American parents suggested ways to promote the books about Korean American people and Korean culture. They talked about writing articles about Korean American children's literature in Korean community newspapers and introducing books on the large online Korean communities. The parents' stories on how they choose English books for their children show that libraries and schools can increase the chance for Korean/Korean American families getting to know Korean American children's literature by offering a list of books related to Korean Americans.

Finally, and simply stated, more Korean American children's literature books need to be published. When there is a wide spectrum of representation of a group available, there is not a great concern about negative images because those images comprise only a portion of its total representations. However, for a group with few

representations in the media, negative stereotypes are powerful (Shohat & Stam, 1994). Similarly, when there are only a few books available, it is hard to appreciate the complexity and diversity of cultures and individuals within those cultures through reading books (Aaronsohn, 2000). More stories and more diversified images about Korean culture and Korean/Korean American people would help children question their perceptions of other people, reflect their own experiences, and envision possibilities (McGinley et al., 1997; Yokota & Bates, 2005).

Delimitation and Limitation

The group of Korean/Korean American parents who participated in this study does not represent the entire population of Korean/Korean American parents in the United States. As described in Chapter 3, all of them spent their childhood in Korea and came to America as grown-ups, except for Jaehee who came as a teenager. Therefore, they are more familiar with Korean culture and language than with American culture and English. All of them had a strong educational background and all of the families settled down in America after either they or their spouse finished their study in the U.S. During the interview, some parents told me that other Korean/Korean American groups would have different responses to the picture books from theirs. Korean American parents who came to America at a young age or second or third generation of Korean Americans may not be familiar with the Korean language and Korean culture. They may have different expectations about the books. Also, Korean/Korean Americans who have different educational background or immigration experiences may have a different opinion of the books read in this study.

The ways the parents shared their responses to the books did not have a particular frame or order. I did not want to lead their responses in a certain direction; rather, I wanted to see what they brought to the book talk themselves. The list of questions I gave them, along with the books at the first interview, was not meant to be addressed question by question in the second interview. In fact, I told the parents that it was not necessary for them to answer those questions but to think about them while they were reading the books. The less structured interview allowed the parents to determine what stories to discuss and led the interviews in many directions. Some parents started to talk about their overall feelings and thoughts about the books and then shared particular points they wanted to make about each book. Other parents chose to talk about each book in more detail and then commented on Korean American children's literature in general. Some parents brought their written notes about each book or emailed me the answers to the questions in the reading guide. Sometimes, rather than focusing on the books, the parents talked more about other stories including their relationships with their children's American teachers and other parents, the language barriers, and so on. However, because I believed that those stories might have had some relation to the context of the parents' responses to the picture books, it was not easy to draw a line between digression and relevant comments to this study (Mercer, 2007).

My similar background to most participants (e.g., ethnicity, reason for coming to America, children of similar ages, etc.) has two sides (Mercer, 2007). On the one hand, I had relatively easy access to the participants and was able to understand the contexts of the interviews and the parents' demeanors. On the other hand, I may have taken the parents' comments for granted or not have challenged their, probably our, assumptions.

For example, about *Yoon and the Christmas Mitten*, Jaehee told me that the author seemed to have assumed Korea was an undeveloped, third-world country. I should have asked her to explain how not celebrating Christmas could be an indication of an undeveloped, third-world country, but I did not consider that question until one of my committee members asked me about this. Also, when the parents paused to find a word or shape their thoughts, I tended to give a word as if I had already known what they were trying to say, instead of waiting for them to complete their sentences. Being a speaker of the same language as the participants was beneficial because I could capture subtle nuances and intentions of the parents' utterances. However, I acknowledge that some Korean expressions may have lost their complexity and subtlety while they were being translated into English.

Suggestions for Future Research

Several parents shared with me how their children responded to the books and the children's responses were different from the parents'. As mentioned in Chapter 2, research on Korean American children's responses to books written about their experiences is rare. Children's comments to the books can provide additional insights into the publication and consumption of Korean American children's literature.

While talking about the selected picture books, some parents asked me about children's books written about other ethnic groups. Comparative analysis of multicultural literature about different ethnic groups can provide insight into what is lacking in Korean American children's literature and how it can be improved.

Another interesting comparative study would be to examine how different ethnic/racial backgrounds affect the responses to Korean American children's literature.

My American friend had a chance to read the picture books I used in this study and her response to the books was very different from the Korean/Korean American parents'. When I shared some of the parents' responses with her, she was surprised. The Korean/Korean American parents' concerns about misrepresented or negative images of Korea or Korean culture were not mentioned in her response. This comparative research may show how to help outsiders better understand Korean culture and Korean American experiences.

Conclusion

The Korean/Korean American parents' responses to Korean American children's picture story books show that they are critical readers who recognize the socially constructed nature of the reader and the text (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). They questioned the way Korean/Korean Americans are depicted in books and discussed what good Korean American children's literature should be like as they wove different texts and contexts into their interpretation of the books (Beach, 1993; Hartman, 1992). Their concerns and expectations about Korean American children's literature deserve attention from the publisher, librarians, reviewers, and other professionals related to multicultural literature. I hope more conversations about Korean American children's books take place, not just in academia but in other spaces, such as within Korean communities and between the publishers and Korean communities. Such conversations would improve the quality of Korean American children's books and help both Korean/Korean Americans and non-Koreans/Korean Americans better understand themselves as well as each other.

REFERENCES

- Al-Hazza, T. C., & Bucher, K. T. (2008, November). Building Arab Americans' cultural identity and acceptance with children's literature. *Reading Teacher*, 63(2), 210-219.
- Allen, G. (2011). *Intertextuality*. London: Routledge.
- Aaronsohn, E. (2000). Controversial literacy: A conversation with Sonia Nieto. *The Dragon Lode*, 18(2), 1-7.
- Aronson, M. (1993). Letter to the Editor. *The Horn Book Magazine*, 69(4), 390-391.
- Aronson, M. (2003). A mess of stories. In D. L. Fox & K.G. Short (Eds.), *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature* (pp. 78-83). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Bai, S. Y. (2010). Constructing racial groups' identities in the diasporic press: Internalization, resonance, transparency, and offset. *Mass Communication and Society*, 13, 385-411.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). Discourse in the novel (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). In M. Holquist (Ed.), *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by Mikhail Bakhtin* (pp. 259-492). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press. (Original work published 1937).
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1994). Speech genres and other late essays (C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Trans.). In P. Morris (Ed.), *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov* (pp. 81-87). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Barker, C. (2000). *Cultural studies: Theory and practice*. London: Sage.
- Beach, R. (1993). *A teacher's introduction to reader-response theory*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Beach, R. (1997). Students' resistance to engagement with multicultural literature. In T. Rogers & A. Soter (Eds.), *Reading across cultures: Teaching literature in a diverse society* (pp. 69-94). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bertens, H. (2001). *Literary theory: The basics*. London: Routledge .
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S.K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (4th ed.). Boston: Allen & Bacon.

- Botelho, M. J., & Rudman, M. K. (2009). *Critical multicultural analysis of children's literature: Mirrors, windows, and doors*. New York: Routledge.
- Cai, M. (1997). Reader-response theory and the politics of multicultural literature. In T. Rogers & A. Soter (Eds.), *Reading across cultures: Teaching literature in a diverse society* (pp.199-212). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cai, M. (2002). *Multicultural literature for children and young adults: Reflections on critical issues*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Cai, M. (2008). Transactional theory and the study of multicultural literature. *Language Arts*, 85(3), 212-220.
- Cai, M., & Bishop, R. S. (1994). Multicultural literature for children: Towards a clarification of the concept. In A.H. Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), *The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community* (pp. 57-71). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Chae, Y. (2008). *Politicizing Asian American literature: Towards a critical multiculturalism*. New York: Routledge.
- Chang, E. T. (2000). Korean kaleidoscope: An overview of Korean immigration to the U.S. *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin*, 11(2), 5-20.
- Choi, A. S. (2007). *Korean Americans*. New York: Chelsea House.
- Clegg, L. B., Miller, E., Vanderhoof, B., Raminetz, G., & Ford, P.K. (n.d.). *How to choose the best multicultural books*. Retrieved from <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/how-choose-best-multicultural-books>
- Colby, S. A., & Lyon, A. F. (2004). Heightening awareness about the importance of using multicultural literature. *Multicultural Education*, 11(3), 24-28.
- de Jesús, M. L. (2003). Mixed blessings: Korean American identity and interracial interactions in the young adult novels of Marie G. Lee. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 20 (7), 98-109.
- Eagleton, T. (1983). *Literary theory: An introduction*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Engberg, G. (2006, December 1). Yoon and the Christmas Mitten. *Book Review*, 103(5), 55.

- Ernst-Slavit, G., & Mulhern, M. (2003, September/October). Bilingual books: Promoting literacy and biliteracy in the second-language and mainstream classroom. *Reading Online*, 7(2). Retrieved from <http://www.readingonline.org/articles/ernst-slavit/>
- Fain, J., & Horn, R. (2006). Family talk about language diversity and culture. *Language Arts*, 83(4), 310-320.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.
- Fang, Z., Fu, D., & Lamme, L. L. (2003). The trivialization and misuse of multicultural literature. In D. L. Fox & K.G. Short (Eds.), *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature* (pp. 284-303). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Fishman, A.R. (1995). Finding ways in: Redefining multicultural literature. *English Journal*, 84(6), 73-79.
- Fox, D. L., & Short, K. G. (Eds.).(2003). *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Frow, J. (1990). Textuality and ontology. In M. Worton & J. Still (Eds.), *Intertextuality*, (pp. 45-55). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Galda, L., & Short, K. (1993). Visual literacy: Exploring art and illustration in children's books. *The Reading Teacher*, 46(6), 506-516.
- Gerson, K., & Horowitz, R. (2002). Observation and interviewing: Options and choices in qualitative research. In T. May (Ed.), *Qualitative research in action* (pp. 199-224). London: Sage.
- Glenn-Paul, D. (1997). Toward developing a multicultural perspective. In V. Harris (Ed.), *Using multiethnic literature in the K-8 classroom* (pp.257-276). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Gruger, W. (2012, December 21). Psy's 'Gangnam Style' video hits 1 billion views, unprecedented milestone. *Billboardbiz*. Retrieved from <http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/1483733/psys-gangnam-style-video-hits-1-billion-views-unprecedented-milestone>
- Hade, D. D. (1997). Reading multiculturally. In V. J. Harris (Ed.), *Using multiethnic literature in the K-8 classroom* (pp. 233-256). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

- Harris, V.J. (1993). African American children's literature: The first one hundred years. In T. Perry & J. Fraser (Eds.), *Freedom's plow: Teaching in a multicultural classroom* (pp. 167-183). New York: Routledge.
- Harris, V.J. (2003). The complexity of debates about multicultural literature. In D. L. Fox & K.G. Short (Eds.), *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature* (pp. 116-134). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Harris, V. E., & Rosales, M. (1998). Biracial and multiracial identity: Another paradox for children's literature. In T. Raphael & K. Au (Eds.), *Literature-based instruction: Present issues, future directions* (pp. 13-38). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Hartman, D. (1992). Intertextuality and reading: The text, the reader, the author, and the context. *Linguistics and Education*, 4, 295-311.
- Hollindale, P. (1988). Ideology and the children's book. *Signal*, 55(1), 3-22.
- Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (1995). *The active interview*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Horning, K.T., & Kruse, G. M. (1991). Looking into the mirror: Considerations behind the reflections. In M.V. Lindgren (Ed.), *The multicolored mirror: Cultural substance in literature for children and young adults* (pp. 1-13). Fort Atkinson, WI: Highsmith.
- Hudson, W. (1991). Just Us Books. In M.V. Lindgren (Ed.), *The multicolored mirror: Cultural substance in literature for children and young adults* (pp. 77-79). Fort Atkinson, WI: Highsmith.
- Jo, M. H. (1999). *Korean immigrants and the challenge of adjustment*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Kiefer, B. (1993). Visual criticism and children's literature. In B. Hearne & R. Sutton (Eds.), *Evaluating children's books: A critical look; Aesthetic, social, and political aspects of analyzing and using children's books* (pp. 73-91). Urbana-Champaign, IL: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois.
- Kim, E. (2004). Korean adoptees' role in the United States. In I. J. Kim (Ed.), *Korean-Americans: Past, present, and future* (pp.180-202). Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym International Corp.
- Kim, Y.- H. (2001). *Asian American children's literature*. Unpublished master's thesis,

Eastern Michigan University.

Klug, F. (2013, September 23). U.S. experts: North Korea can likely build key nuke parts. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://world.time.com/2013/09/23/u-s-experts-north-korea-can-likely-build-key-nuke-parts/#ixzz2icfAgjJO>

Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desires in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art* (T. Gora, A. Jardine, & L. S. Roudiez, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Kroth, J. (2013, April 12). North Korea and American insanity. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jerry-kroth/north-korea-and-american-_b_3065651.html

Larrick, N. (1965). The all-white world of children's books. *Saturday Review*, 48, 63-65.

Lasky, K. (2003). To sting with love: An author's perspective on writing outside one's culture. In D. L. Fox & K.G. Short (Eds.), *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature* (pp.84-92). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Lehrer, B. (1988). *The Korean Americans*. New York: Chelsea Housing Publishers.

Leu, S. (2001). *Struggles to become 'Americans': Historical and contemporary experiences of Asian Pacific American immigrants in children's and young adult fiction, 1945-1999*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

Linde, C. (2009). *Working the past: Narrative and institutional memory*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Louie, A.-L. (1996). Asian Americans and images of integration. In K. Vandergrift (Ed.), *Ways of knowing* (pp. 321-342). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

Louie, B. (2005). Unwrapping the Pojagi: Traditional values and changing times in Korean-American juvenile literature. *Children's Literature in Education*, 36(2), 173-195.

Ma, K. (2008). *Where is home?* Retrieved from <http://iamkoream.com/where-is-home/>

Mahurt, S. F. (2005). The aesthetics of Caribbean children's literature. In D. L.

- Henderson & J. P. May (Eds.), *Exploring culturally diverse literature for children and adolescents: Learning to listen in new ways* (pp. 277-285). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Mai, H.-P. (1991). Bypassing intertextuality: Hermeneutics, textual practice, hypertext. In H.F. Plett (Ed.), *Intertextuality* (pp. 30-59). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Mathis, J. B. (2001, July/August). Respond to stories with stories: Teachers discuss multicultural children's literature. *The Social Studies*, 155-160.
- McCormick, K. (1994). *The culture of reading and the teaching of English*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- McGillis, R. (1996). *The nimble reader: Literary theory and children's literature*. New York: Twayne.
- McGinley, W., Kamberelis, G., Mahoney, T., Madigan, D., Rybicki, V., & Oliver, J. (1997). Re-visioning reading and teaching literature through the lens of narrative theory. In T. Rogers & A. Soter (Eds.), *Reading across cultures: Teaching literature in a diverse society* (pp.42-68). New York: Teachers College Press.
- McKenna, H. R. (1996). *Ethnobiography: Ethnic identity development through multicultural literature*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Washington.
- Mercer, J. (2007). The challenges of insider research in educational institutions: wielding a double-edged sword and resolving delicate dilemmas. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33(1), 1-17.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mikkelsen, N. (1998). Insiders, outsiders, and the question of authenticity: Who shall write for African American children? *African American Review*, 32(1), 33-49.
- Miller-Lachmann, L. (Ed.). (1992). *Our family, our friends, our world*. New Providence, NJ: Bowker.
- Mitnick, E. (2006, October). Yoon and the Christmas Mitten. *School Library Journal*, 52(10),100.

- Moore, J. M. (1997). *Interpreting young adult literature: Literary theory in the secondary classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Moreillon, J. (2003). The candle and the mirror: One author's journey as an outsider. In D. L. Fox & K.G. Short (Eds.), *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature* (pp. 61-77). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Nieto, S. (2002). *Language, culture, and teaching: Perspectives for a new century*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Nodelman, P. (1988). *Words about pictures: The narrative art of children's picture books*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Orr, M. (2003). *Intertextuality: Debates and contexts*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Park, S. Y. (2004). *Korean American children's picture books: Content analysis*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Park, S. Y. (2009). *Representations of transracial Korean adoption in children's literature*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses. (AAT 3363051)
- Pattnaik, J. (2003). Multicultural literacy starts at home: Supporting parental involvement in multicultural education. *Childhood Education*, 80 (1), 18-24.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pfister, M. (1991). How postmodern is intertextuality? In H.F. Plett (Ed.), *Intertextuality* (pp. 207-224). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Rogers, T. (1999). Literary theory and children's literature: Interpreting ourselves and our worlds. *Theory into Practice*, 38(3), 138-146.
- Rosenblatt, L. (1995). *Literature as exploration* (5th ed.). New York: Modern Language Association of America.
- Rosenblatt, L. (2005). *Making meaning with texts: Selected essays*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Ruan, J. (2005). Responding to Chinese children's literature: Cultural identity and literary responses. In D. L. Henderson & J. P. May (Eds.), *Exploring culturally diverse*

- literature for children and adolescents: Learning to listen in new ways* (pp. 243-251). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Rudd, D. (2000). *Enid Blyton and the mystery of children's literature*. Houndmills, UK: Macmillan.
- Schliesman, M., Lindgren, M.V., & Horning, K. T. (2007). *Publishing in 2006*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/choiceintro07.asp>
- Schwartz, E. G. (1995). Crossing borders/Shifting paradigms: Multiculturalism and children's literature. *Harvard Educational Review*, 65(4), 634-650.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*(3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Seto, T. (2003). Multiculturalism is not Halloween. In D. L. Fox & K.G. Short (Eds.), *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature* (pp. 93-97). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Shannon, P. (1994). I am the canon: Finding ourselves in multiculturalism. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 20(1), 1-5.
- Shin, S. (2005). *Developing in two languages: Korean children in America*. New York: Multilingual Matters.
- Shohat, E., & Stam, R.(1994). *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the media*. London: Routledge.
- Short, K. (1992). Researching intertextuality within collaborative classroom learning environments. *Linguistics and Education*, 4, 313-333.
- Sims, R. (1982). *Shadow and substance: Afro-American experience in contemporary children's fiction*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

- Sims Bishop, R. (1993). Multicultural literature for children: Making informed choices. In V. J. Harris (Ed.), *Teaching multicultural literature in grades K-8* (pp. 37-53). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Sims Bishop, R. (1997). Selecting literature for a multicultural curriculum. In V. Harris (Ed.), *Using multiethnic literature in the K-8 classroom* (pp.1-19). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Sims Bishop, R. (2007). *Free within ourselves*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Sipe, L. R. (1994). Children's response to literature: Author, text, reader, context. *Theory into Practice*, 38(3), 120-129.
- Smith, K. C., & Higonnet, M. R. (2002, Summer). An interview with Nicolás Kanellos, Director of Piñata. *MELUS*, 27(2), 217-224.
- Smith, K.P. (1993). The multicultural ethnic and connections to literature for children and young adults. *Library Trends*, 41(30), 340-353.
- Son, E. H. (2009). *Responses of Korean transnational children to picture books representing diverse population of Korean people and their culture*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses. (AAT 3362084)
- Spikes, M. P. (2003). *Understanding the American contemporary literary theory*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Stephens, J. (1992). *Language and ideology in children's fiction*. London: Longman.
- Sung, Y. K. (2009). *A post-colonial critique of the (mis)representation of Korean-Americans in children's picture books*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses. (AAT 3366708)
- Taxel, J. (2002). Children's literature at the turn of the century. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 37, 145-197.
- Thomas, W. D. (2010). *Korean Americans*. New York: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark.
- Tobin, J. (2000). *"Good guys don't wear hats": Children's talk about the media*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Tsarykovska, O. (2005). Picture books and ESL students: Theoretical and practical implications for elementary school classroom teachers. In D. L. Henderson & J. P. May (Eds.), *Exploring culturally diverse literature for children and adolescents: Learning to listen in new ways* (pp. 108-117). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2012, March 21). *Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month: May 2012*. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb12-ff09.html
- Volosinov, V. N. (1976). *Freudianism: A Marxist critique* (I. R. Titunk, Trans.). New York: Academic Press.
- Warren, C. B.(2002). Qualitative interviewing. In J.F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context & method* (pp.83-102). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Weinberg, M. (1997). *Asian-American education: Historical background and current realities*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Wilkie, C. (1998). Relating texts: Intertextuality. In P. Hunt (Ed.), *Understanding children's literature* (pp. 130-137). London: Routledge.
- Worton, M. & Still, J. (Eds.). (1990). *Intertextuality: Theories and practices*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Yamate, S. S. (1997). Asian Pacific American children's literature: Expanding perceptions about who Americans are. In V. Harris (Ed.), *Using multiethnic literature in the K-8 classroom* (pp. 95-128). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Yokota, J., & Bates, A. (2005). Asian American literature: Voices and images of authenticity. In D. L. Henderson & J. P. May (Eds.), *Exploring culturally diverse literature for children and adolescents: Learning to listen in new ways* (pp. 323-335). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Yuh, J.-Y. (2005). Moved by war: Migration, diaspora and the Korean War. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 8(3), 277-291.
- Zaleski, J.(2001). A conversation with Yumi Heo. *New Advocate*, 14(3), 183-188.
- Zipes, J. (2001). *Sticks and stones: The troublesome success of children's literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter*. New York: Routledge.

REFERENCES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

- Bercaw, E. C., & Hunt, R. (2000). *Halmoni's day*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.
- Choi, Y. (2001). *The name jar*. New York: Knopf.
- Choi, Y. (2006). *Behind the mask*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Heo, Y. (1994). *One afternoon*. New York: Orchard Books.
- Heo, Y. (1995). *Father's rubber shoes*. New York: Orchard Books.
- Heo, Y. (1999). *One Sunday morning*. New York: Orchard Books.
- McDonnell, C., Johnson, S., & Fancher, L. (2011). *Goyangi means cat*. New York: Viking Press.
- Paek, M. (1988). *Aekyung's dream*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.
- Pak, S., & Hartung, S. K. (1999). *Dear Juno*. New York: Viking Press.
- Pak, S., & Kim, J. U. (2003). *Sumi's first day of school ever*. New York: Viking Press.
- Park, F., Park, G., & Choi, Y. (2002). *Good-bye, 382 Shin dang dong*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society.
- Park, F., Park, G., & Potter, K. (2005). *The have a good day café*. New York: Lee & Low Books.
- Recorvits, H., & Swiatkowska, G. (2003). *My name is Yoon*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Recorvits, H., & Swiatkowska, G. (2006). *Yoon and the Christmas mitten*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Shin, S. Y., Cogan, K., & Paek, M. (2004). *Cooper's lesson*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.
- Yashima, T. (1955). *Crow boy*. New York: Viking Press.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

The following interview questions were used in the first interview (in Korean).

1. 어떻게 미국에 오게 되었나요? 지금의 생활을 한국에서의 생활과 비교한다면?
2. 얼마나 자주 책을 읽어주나요? 어떤 종류의 책을 읽어주나요? 아이는 어떤 종류의 책을 좋아하나요? 아이에게 읽어줄 책을 어떻게 구하나요? 가장 최근에 읽어준 책은? 왜 책을 읽어주나요? 아이가 독서를 통해서 뭘 얻길 원하세요?
3. 혹시 미국에서 출판된 책 중에 한국에 관한 책이나 한국사람에 대한 책을 읽어본 적이 있나요? 무슨 책이었나요? 만약 Korean American children's literature 하면 뭐가 떠오르나요? 어떤 책을 Korean American children's literature 라고 부를 수 있을까요?

1. Immigrating experience: Can you tell me when you came to America? How did you come to America? How would you describe your day in America, comparing it to the one in Korea?
2. Reading habits: How often do you read books with your children? What sorts of books do you and your children read? How do you or your children get books to read? What kinds of books do your children like to read? What was the title of the book you have read with your child recently? Why do you read to your children? What is it you want for your children by reading books?
3. Experiences of reading books about Koreans/Korean Americans: Have you ever read any books about Korean Americans or Koreans? What were they? What would be the definition of Korean American children's literature? What should be included or not included? Have you read any of these books?

APPENDIX B
SEVEN SELECTED PICTURE BOOKS

All the information listed below is from the Children's Literature Comprehensive Database.

1. Sumi's first day of school ever

by Soyung Pak ; illustrated by Joung Un Kim.

New York : Viking, 2003.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 25 cm.

Annotations: By the time Sumi finishes her first day of school, she decides that school is not as lonely, scary, or mean as she had thought.

2. The have a good day cafe

by Frances Park and Ginger Park ; illustrations by Katherine Potter.

New York : Lee & Low Books, 2005.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. 27 cm.

Annotations: Mike's grandmother, who has moved from Korea to live with Mike and his family in the United States, inspires him to suggest an idea to help their floundering food cart business.

3. Cooper's lesson

story by Sun Yung Shin ; illustrations by Kim Cogan ; [Korean translation by Min Paek].

San Francisco, CA : Children's Book Press : Distributed to the book trade by Publishers Group West, 2004.

30 p. : col. ill. ; 28 cm.

Annotations: When Cooper, a biracial Korean-American boy, feels uncomfortable trying to speak Korean in Mr. Lee's grocery, his bad behavior eventually leads to a change in his attitude.

4. Yoon and the Christmas mitten

Helen Recorvits ; pictures by Gabi Swiatkowska.

New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 cm.

Annotations: "Frances Foster books." Yoon, a Korean American, is excited to hear about Santa Claus and Christmas at her school, but her family tells her that such things are not part of their Korean tradition.

5. Behind the mask

Yangsook Choi.

New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm.

Annotations: "Frances Foster books." Kimin, a young Korean-American boy, has trouble deciding on a Halloween costume, but as he looks through an old trunk of his grandfather's things, he suddenly unlocks a childhood mystery.

6. Goyangi means cat

by Christine McDonnell ; illustrated by Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher.

New York : Viking Children's Books, 2011.

p. cm.

Annotations: An understanding cat helps a young Korean girl adjust to her new home in America.

7. One afternoon

by Yumi Heo.

New York : Orchard Books, c1994.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm.

Annotations: Minho and his mother have a busy afternoon doing errands in the neighborhood.

APPENDIX C
READING GUIDE

A list of questions (written in Korean only) was given to the parents with the picture books to read.

책 읽으면서 생각해 보세요.

1. 가장 마음에 드는 책은? 왜 그 책이 가장 마음에 들까?
2. 한국인 또는 Korean American 에 대한 책을 누군가 추천해 달라고 하면 어떤 책을 권하고 싶은가? 이유는 무엇일까?
3. 이 책들 중 아이가 읽었으면 좋겠다고 생각되는 책은?
4. 정말 별로다 생각되는 책은?
5. 저자의 의도는 뭐였을까? 출판사는 왜 이 책을 냈을까? 책이 전하고자 하는 메시지는 뭘까?
6. 이 책에 그려진 한국/Korean American 문화는?
7. 이 책에서 말도 안 된다 하고 생각했던 부분이 있었는지...
8. 만약 이 책에 등장하는 사람들이 한국인이 아닌 다른 나라 사람이었다면, 아님 다른 인종이었다면 또는 다른 계층의 사람이었다면, 내용이 어떻게 달라졌을까?
9. 혹시 이야기나 삽화 중에 바꾸고 싶은 부분은?
10. 책을 읽으면서 혹시 Korean American children's literature 가 어떤 의미인지 생각이 바뀌었나?

Think about the following questions as you read.

1. Which book is your favorite book? Why?
2. If you were asked to pick a book that presents Koreans or Korean Americans, which book would you choose? Why?
3. If you would like to choose one or two books to read to your children, what would you choose?
4. What is the last book you would like to read to your children? Why?
5. Why do you think the author wrote each book? Why did the publisher decide to publish this book? What do you think the writer wants readers to think?
6. How is Korean/Korean American culture portrayed in the book?
7. Are there any things that in the book that don't make sense to you?
8. What happens if various elements of the text are transposed (i.e., ethnicity or race, gender, economic class)? How would the story or the message change?
9. How would you change the story/illustration?
10. What do you think about Korean American children's literature after reading the books?

APPENDIX D
HUMAN SUBJECTS IRB APPROVAL

To: Karen Smith
ED

From: Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 08/30/2012

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 08/30/2012

IRB Protocol #: 1208008174

Study Title: Korean Parents' Perspectives on Korean American Children's Literature

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.