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Title: Interracial Relationships and Korean American Families

About the Author:

Keywords: Dating, Marriage, Assimilation, Korea-American, Cultural Barriers, Interracial relationships, Korean Culture, Chicago

Abstract: The point of this project was to discover the reason why some Korean American families supported interracial relationships while other, seemingly similar Korean American families discourage it. In answering that question we also learn about Korean culture to discover why some discourage/encourage interracial relationships.

To collect data I interviewed many Korean Americans who attend University of Illinois. I specifically sought out those with particular interesting stories to use as examples. I also attended several Christian dating seminars at a Korean Church to provide background information.

Generally I found that several items that effect the decisions of Korean Americans on interracial marriage. They were, briefly: cultural barriers, language barriers, religious differences, Korean history, and the level of assimilation of Korean American families.

Initial Exercises:

Question:

Plan:

Data: Research Question

Why do some Korean American families encourage interracial relationships while seemingly similar Korean American families discourage it?

Key Words

Dating, Marriage, Interracial Relationships, Cultural Differences, Assimilation, Korean American, Korean History, Chicago, Korean Culture

Interview Questions

Each interviewee was asked specific questions depending on the course of the interview, but the following ten general questions were typically asked.

- 1) When did your parents come to America and why?
- 2) How do your parents feel about interracial relationships? What would they say if you were part of one? Why do think they would say that?
- 3) Do your mother and father have different views on interracial relationships?
- 4) How do you feel about interracial relationships?
- 5) How well can your relatives speak English and does your extended family live?
- 6) Has anyone in your family ever been involved in an interracial relationship? And if so, what was the outcome?
- 7) How does the family opinion on interracial relationships change as you move down the family tree from you towards your great grandparents?
- 8) Are there any races/ethnicities that would be perceived as more or less desirable than others?
- 9) What religion are you, and how does that influence the person that you would date/marry?
- 10) How well assimilated is your family currently and where do you live? Do you see a connection between assimilation and location?

Oral Interview

The following is an oral history for my first interviewee, who shall be referred to as "Esella".

My childhood was a very different way of life, nearly 180 degrees

from how I currently live. The change happened when we moved out of what is now the “Southside” Chicago, to the outskirts of the city, Northbrook. In fact, life changed more from the Southside to Northbrook than it did from South Korea to America. Haha, I guess that’s sort of odd, isn’t it?

Well, my parents were both born in South Korea and were getting along alright, but not great. At the age of about 35 they wanted better, and they looked towards the United States to fulfill their dreams. They would always say to me when I was little, “America is the land of opportunity. You can do anything that you put your mind to.” Since I was only two years old at the time, it’s difficult for me to remember, but my parents said the boat trip here was difficult, crowded and rough, with many other immigrants getting sick.

When my parents arrived here it was harder than they expected, they could only afford a small run down house that was freezing in the winter. The neighborhood wasn’t safe; I remember my dad always walked with my mom outside, and it was located on the South Side. Our neighborhood was only blacks and whites, not a single person of Asian ethnicity. My parents needed money right away, to get their feet on the ground, so my Father took up a quick job as an electrical carpenter, and my mother took a cooking position at Burger King. They were really bright people, but obviously they were impaired because they didn’t know any English yet. One of the saddest stories from my youth is when my I was about six years old and my younger sister Sarah was 3 or 4. My mother put my little sister in a day care center, assuming even though Sarah was the only Korean among whites and blacks that she would get along. It wasn’t until three months later that the teacher called my mother and recommended moving Sara to a kindergarten with more Korean children, because Sarah was discriminated against, even at such a young age. She just sat in the corner and put legos together and took them apart. Each day, every day. Ever since my mother realized this, she cried each night and felt horrible; she even became sick from the feeling of guilt.

Eventually my parents saved enough money and we moved to the outer city, which is the first time I remember seeing another Asian. We moved when I was 14 to Northbrook where I attended Niles West High School. Niles West is one of the most diverse high schools in the state, and was very new to me, leading to some racial and ethnic problems, such as the idea of dating

outside of my ethnicity.

My parents feel differently on the topic of dating/marrying a non-Korean. I know all this for a fact, because I usually ask my parents questions like this for fun, to see what they think. My Father is hands down, flat out against the idea, without a doubt. He wants me to date a nice Korean guy, no question. My mother, on the other hand, is open to the idea. She realizes that this is America, and we marry who we love. Once she gets to know the person I am dating, as long as she likes his personality, she won't have a problem. She's really friendly and trusting, we talk about everything together.

I think the problems are more apparent than the advantages of me marrying/dating outside my ethnicity. For starters, there would be a communication problem even though my parents speak English. The rest of my family is back in Korea, and they would not be able to communicate with my new English family. Even my English speaking parents would have some difficulty with all the cultural differences, for example we have a different wedding procedure and a different Thanksgiving and Christmas ceremony, to name just a few. Of course my family and I would become more open to other cultures and "broaden our horizons", but this doesn't really compete with the language and cultural barriers, ESPECIALLY in the case of my father.

I, personally, don't have a problem with dating or even marrying a non-Korean, but I know that it would 'cause a lot of stress and potential problems for my family, even my Mother, and it's for this reason that I think I will probably end up dating and marrying a Korean. I don't really want to do that to my parents, my dad and even my mom (I suspect) would be much happier if I were to marry a Korean and retain my culture. I think some of this difference comes from the fact that my parents had an arranged marriage. It turned out well for them in the end, but at first my mother didn't like my father, and even rejected his first marriage proposal.

But my parents can and will adapt to the idea of dating and marriage in America. If I really love someone and he's a good person, they will allow the marriage. I know it, deep inside. Actually one of my older cousins married a white American just a couple months ago. It worked really well, and our [Korean] culture really emphasizes a close family, so immediately he was treated as one of us. He even participated in a traditional Korean

wedding and is now learning Korean. It's actually funny; all my really young cousins enjoy playing with him and teaching him Korean. In the end, I think as long as the man is a good guy, my family will respect my decision, and yes, even my father, though he may take a little more convincing than my mother.

Discuss: Please note: All data is as stated from interviews. Any views of Koreans/Korean Americans are the views expressed by those interviewed and do not indicate Korean/Korean Americans as a whole.

Interracial Relationships in Korean American Families

Interracial relationships are both new and old at the same time. They are old in that humans were marrying and dating outside their races as soon as races had emerged, yet they are new in that they are always changing. Interracial romantic relationships are very different depending on the place, time, and races involved. For example, an interracial marriage of today between an Italian American and German American is completely acceptable; none would give it a second thought. However, if you compare this to an interracial marriage between an African American man and a white woman during the 1700s in the South you would get a very different reaction. It is in this way that we find interracial dating and marriage to be a thing of the present, because ever since World War II they are much more common and accepted than before.

Each interracial relationship is different depending on the time, place, and races involved. What if two different instances of interracial dating were going on, both between Korean American students at the University of Illinois and white students at the same university and in the same period? Since both cases are apparently the same, will the parents be just as accepting? Will the two families both encourage or discourage the relationship? The answer is "no". Despite the same races being involved and the same time period and location the reactions of the family will not necessarily be similar in any way. So then what causes the differences? Why do some Korean American families discourage interracial dating and marriage when other Korean American families encourage it?

In Korean American families four items play a key role in

determining the reactions of the families to the idea of dating or marrying outside the South Korean race. Those four items are: the cultural distinctiveness of South Korean culture, language barriers, religion and history in South Korea, and the assimilation of the particular Korean American family.

One of the most obvious reasons why some Korean families are against dating or marrying a non-Korean is because of the cultural differences between the two families. Korean culture is unique in so many ways, especially compared to a Western culture; to someone new to Korean culture it can be hard to find anything in common with American culture. For instance, according to Ben, emphasis on respect is a defining characteristic of Korean culture. In Korea respect is huge; if someone is older than you they deserve the utmost respect no matter what the situation. Once Paul took his American friend with him to Korea for vacation and forgot to tell him about the respect issue. His friend actually got in trouble for not offering his seat to an elder who was standing in front of him on the train. Ben said that age is so important that it overrides positions of power (such as a "boss" in some cases) and intelligence. If someone is older you respect them, period. All of my interviewees said that the children today would be viewed as extremely disrespectful in Korean culture. This is just one reason Korean families are weary of having non-Korean families become part of their own. It's nothing that non-Koreans can't learn but it certainly is a large cultural obstacle. In a way the two ethnicities are on different pages straight from the beginning.

Still, the respect issue is not the only cultural obstacle; there is also the whole issue of bowing, which is non-existent in Western cultures. There is sitting on the floor for meals, holding chopsticks only in the right hand (even if you're left handed), taking your shoes off before you enter the house, spending your first paycheck on family and friends, slapping your friends' knees and excessive, casual touching of your friends, calling your siblings brother and sister as their actual names, and that's not even getting into the myriad of food differences. Koreans also have separate wedding, Thanksgiving, and Christmas traditions different from typical American traditions. It becomes very hard to be on the same page with so many little differences adding up. Most of my interviewees said it would be more acceptable if the person they were dating/marrying spent some time in Korea first, the reason for this being to have a better understanding of these differences.

The importance of the cultural differences above depends on the family, and specifically how well/poorly assimilated they are. For example one of my interviewees, Alice, was not only born in America, but her parents moved to America when they were only eight years old and grew up living a very American life. Then when Alice grew up (to her present age), she was even more American than her parents, and thus very detached from Korean culture. Needless to say, Alice's parents were very laid back on the topic of interracial dating and marriage, there wasn't a problem. Alice said her parents would prefer a Korean, but it really isn't that important. In fact her parents almost married Americans themselves. Along similar lines Joe and his family were born in Australia and moved to America when they were each about 35 years old. Joe and his family speak with an Australian accent and are more Australian than Korean. Similar to Alice's family, interracial marriage is not frowned upon in his family but seemed as natural, since they grew up around non-Koreans anyways, which goes to show the importance of physical location on comfort with other cultures.

That's one end of the extreme, the extremely well assimilated family, and then there is also the traditionally Korean family. Henry is first generation Korean, he moved to America when he was only 4 years old, so he learned English well and speaks English with no accent. However his parents never really learned English; they opened up a dry cleaner's shop and they worked exclusively with fellow Korean in downtown Madison. Through the shop they built a network of Korean Americans whom they turn to for not only help but for friendship; and their family is all back in Korea. Henry moved here with his parents and older sister, the rest of his family as never been to the United States, thus they remain very traditional. As you may guess, because his family is so traditional all those cultural differences take on new meaning. Traditional Koreans are very strict, as Susan recounted a story of eating with her Grandpa when she was 6 years old in Korea and using chopsticks with her left hand. This is offensive in Korea and her Grandfather got up and took the chopsticks from her, not allowing her to eat dinner for the rest of the night. Just imagine someone like that, and imagine how they would respond to someone unfamiliar with their culture, tradition, and even language. Since Henry and Susan's family are heavily traditional with family living still back in Korea, their families are against interracial marriage.

One of the largest cultural barriers is the language barrier. Very

few non-Koreans can speak Korean, and all of the interviewees say they are surprised when ever they hear a foreigner speak Korean, even if it is broken Korean. In this aspect Korean is very different from languages such as Spanish, Latin, and even Chinese, which are spoken on a much more universal scale than Korean. On the flip side, many Koreans in Korea know English, especially the younger ones since English is studied in school as Spanish is studied here. According to my interviewees several classes are even taught in English at the Universities in Korea. However, the English is broken English as is not sufficient enough to communicate with native Americans, and most Koreans think their English is better than it is; discovering only when they travel to America that they are unable to communicate and that their language really does pose some assimilation problems.

Despite Koreans' knowledge of English the language barrier is still a large obstacle to interracial marriages. Communication would be difficult between the two families. When asked why language is so important in interracial relationships most interviewees responded with a funny look and by asking, "What do you mean? How would our families communicate at all?" Logically thinking, interracial marriages just would not happen. Can you imagine a Dad supporting the marriage of his daughter to a family he knows nothing about? He wouldn't be able to ask the boyfriend/groom any questions, and the same goes for the non-Korean family. In fact Kimberly's Aunt was Korean-American with her family back in Korea who married an Irish-American immigrant. Unfortunately the marriage ended in tragedy because the two families could not communicate; they had no common grounds. Whenever one family wanted to communicate with the other side of the family it had to go through Kimberly's Aunt, which was an ineffective method and the cause of the eventual divorce. Kimberly says ever since that incident she is not allowed to marry a non-Korean, for the reason of language barriers.

However often this is the case there are always anomalies, take the story of Paul for instance. Paul came to America when he was fifteen years old, the latest one to arrive in America of all my interviewees. He lived with his Aunt in Glenview who spoke very little English and who had no desire to learn English. His Uncle was American and had a well paying job, so his Aunt never had to work or learn English. On top of that, Paul's entire family other than his Aunt remained in Korea. He is about as "Korean" as you can get. Though you might expect the language barrier to be

especially restraining in this instance, this wasn't the case. Paul's mother actually *made* him date a white girl. Against his will even. His mother contacted his Aunt and his Aunt had his Uncle set him up with an American girl to date. The reasoning of his mother was that it was the only way Paul would learn English. His mother was even for him marrying an American girl, as she believed this would be the best possible way for Paul to assimilate and "get a better job". So the language barrier can go both ways, although this example may be less common than the first example it still goes to show the diversity in these decisions, and is one possible answer to why some Korean-American families would discourage interracial marriage while similar families would encourage it.

Another determinant of the acceptability of interracial marriage is religion. Korea is, not surprisingly, very different from America. The dominant religion in South Korea is Christianity, though it isn't the same as in America. In Korea Christianity is practiced much more faithfully, with most Christians going to church every Sunday, where-as here Christianity is more of a label than a way of life. One of my interviewees, Ben, spoke on religion in Korea. He said if you were to go to Korea and point to a random person on the street, they would be Christian. Then to give an example of how dutifully Christianity is practiced in Korea he told about a pastor who became so wealthy from his Sunday services that he actually bought a football stadium for his weekly services. Not only does the stadium hold thousands of people at once, but it has multiply services each day, and Sunday each service is full; there are no seats left. Another one of my interviewees recalls being startled when traveling to Korea for the first time, as a couple random strangers approached her on the train, asked her what religion she was, and then starting discussing the ways that they worship Jesus with her. Here in America you just don't find religion practiced like that.

There are several ways that this Christianity of Koreans affects their marriage to non-Koreans. First of all, this is similar to the cultural differences mentioned to before. Many Americans and many non-Koreans don't make worship as large a part of their lives as Koreans do, and this will inevitably cause some conflicts, just based on the lifestyle differences. Besides that, though, a Christian, in accordance with Christian guidelines, cannot marry a non Christian. This poses another obstacle, since most Koreans will not overlook this difference, as many Americans would. One of my interviewees, Mindy, said "I will not date and certainly not marry a non-Christian". When asked why, she responded, "I

wouldn't even consider it, besides even if I did there's no way my parents would go along with it. My family is extremely Christian and marrying a Christian to us is like marrying someone that people just don't marry." Furthermore, about half my interviewees said they or their families would have a problem with their girlfriend/boyfriend converting to Christianity for the sole purpose of being with them. Religion is a very touchy topic with some Koreans.

Religion is unique to most of the other cultural differences in that it is not heavily influenced by the degrees of assimilation as most of the other cultural differences are, such as language, food and respect. The reason for this is that religion is, in a way independent from where you live. Once the religious values are instilled on you they are a part of you no matter where you go. There is nothing to hold anyone up in their pursuit of religion in America, which is also one of the reasons most commonly mentioned in the reason why my interviewees' parents chose to come here. The typical case is that the parents who grew up in Korea came to incorporate Christianity into their lives and when they arrived in America they simply continued the tradition, passing it onto their children. The majority of Koreans in America attend church regularly, at least much more often than the typical American does. Every single one of my interviewees attended Church once a week and a church oriented activity also every week. If religion was a large part of the life somewhere down the family tree, there is a good chance that it is still present somewhere among the children; religion doesn't seem to fade as easily as other cultural habits when moving from Korea to America, which in turn causes some problems in romantic interracial relationships.

Yet another factor that contributes to what Korean/Korean American families think is Korea's history. For instance, there is still a bitter sense lingering in the Korean community towards China, because of their assistance to North Korea in the Korean War. The Korean War is one of the most expressive topics in Korean history. It tore families apart and pitted brother against brother, the feeling aroused by mentioning the War are made even stronger by the recentness of it. The fifty-fifty split between South and North Korea is a direct result of China's assistance. Were it not for China, South Korea would have won with the assistance of America. One of my interviewees, Ben (whose father was the first secretary for the President of Korea, Kim Young-sam) reflected the political interactions of his father. When

asked how Koreans felt towards the Chinese due the Korean War, Ben just went on an all out hate speech, claiming China had slaughtered Koreans and had taken their women as sex slaves. This is just one example of the bitterness that resides in some Koreans (but not all) to this day.

Speaking of the Korean War, Koreans think more highly of Americans because of it. Similar to how some hold bitter feelings towards the Chinese for their assistance of North Korea, some Koreans feel some gratitude towards the United States for their assistance in the war. This especially goes for the older generations, who were living during the war. Even though this point is difficult to prove for a fact, since Koreans are so well integrated with America in so many ways it's difficult to separate one cause from the others. But generally speaking, all my interviewees felt that there was definitely some feeling of gratitude for American intervention on their part. This could be a possible explanation for Koreans' high rate of interracial marriage with Americans. (more on that later)

Japan is similar to China in terms of popular sentiment. During the era of World War II Japan actually controlled Korea, although the exact dates are still disputed, it was roughly thirty years. Again, as with China there are still bitter feelings towards Japan lingering from the war. One of my interviewees, Paul, held a particular grudge against the Japanese. First he enthusiastically described to me the abuse the Japanese inflicted to Koreans, and then he went into how Koreans never really got back at the Japanese. He even included how Japan is stealing kimchi (probably the most common Korean food; a side dish) from Korea; he says Japan is marketing Kimchi as if it was Japanese and foreigners believe it. Lastly he finished on how currently Japan is trying to take land from Korea. While Paul doesn't represent all Koreans by any means, his strong (to put it gently) grudge against Japan can't be ignored. Paul can't be considered an anomaly because other interviewees have responded similarly to the same question, just not as vibrantly.

The importance of these histories depends heavily on the age of the family and how long they have lived in Korea. Not because of assimilation though, it has more to do with whether the family was impacted by World War II or the Korean War directly. For example, there are some World War II veterans who feel very strongly towards the Japanese for the invasion and control of Korea; and the Korean War is even more recent in the minds of

Koreans, instilling painful memories and that of China causing their defeat. Evidently Korean Americans who have a grandfather or father whom the wars touched closely with will be more strongly opposed to an interracial marriage with Japanese or Chinese. This is very important, especially in Korean cultures, since the father's decision has much more influence than the decision of an American family's father, due to the traditional Korean family structure and the "respect of elders" issue. In this case age and time lived in Korea do not matter in respect to assimilation, rather in respect to involvement in those wars, because their involvement dictates the how they feel towards Chinese and Japanese.

This brings us to our next point, that not all races are seen as equal. Through my interviews a "racial pyramid" structure has emerged, the higher up you move on the pyramid, the more desirable (generally speaking) the race to date or marry. The race that the majority of Korean American and Korean families would have a problem with in an interracial marriage is African Americans. This is interesting because African Americans were discriminated against in American society, also. In American society it primarily started with slavery in the South; however slavery didn't exist in Korea. In Korea Americans, according to my interviewees, the discrimination is more economical, because it appears whites generally hold higher paying jobs. Another reason for this is that there are almost no African-"Koreans", so Koreans are potentially unfamiliar with Africans.

According to the interviewees a little more acceptable are Hispanics. Susan said that her parents admire Hispanics for their hard work, but again are too unfamiliar with them since there aren't many in Korea. Other interviews echoed this idea and suggested this would not be an issue if there were more Hispanics living in Korea. If you move again one step up you reach the Indians and West Asians. Supposedly they are respected for their hard work and intelligence, and are somewhat envied for their higher paying jobs, plus they are more familiar to Koreans due to their geographical location, even though there aren't many living in Korea.

We arrive at a discrepancy when we get to the last two levels. A majority of the interviews place Americans above other Asians, such as China and Japan, but two interviewees said their parents would prefer Chinese and Japanese over Americans. The advantages that Chinese and Japanese have over Americans is

familiarity with Koreans. Even though Koreans aren't on good terms with them, at least they know them fairly well, whereas they don't hold any specific grudges against Americans, but they aren't familiar with them and there are many differences between the cultures. But then again, America is seen as the "land of opportunity" and Americans have the stereotype of being wealthy. Despite the disadvantages of the Americans the overall trend is to place Americans above Chinese and Japanese, even though there are a few instances where Korean American families prefer them due to much more similar customs.

As with nearly all the previous factors, the levels of assimilation do play a large role on the preference of races. Usually the longer a family has been in America, the less they care about the race their children will marry, and the more time the family has spent in Korea, the more commonly their views fall in line with the previous social pyramid. When asked what they thought about this several of the interviewees suggested that it was just because there were so few non-Koreans that lived in Korea, so Koreans didn't really get to become familiar with different cultures. This hypothesis is in accordance with the data as well. Joe's parents lived in Australia for a majority of their life, and Alice's parents came to America when they were only eight years old. These two were the two whose parents were most liberal. Not only did they not mind interracial relationships, but they didn't have any racial preference. As long as Joe and Alice are happy so are their parents, whereas the majority of parents who have grown up in Korea and traveled to America in their thirties or who's decisions are heavily emphasized by family back in Korea are much more narrow minded and specific to typical Korean stereotypes.

Through comparing the different interviews a similar trend has occurred, but rather than with Korea versus America it is large cities versus small cities in America. In this example, if a Korean American first moves to a large city they will experience effects similar to those being more assimilated in the last paragraph. If a Korean American family has moved into a smaller, less diverse city in America they will consequently have views on interracial marriage similar to Korean Americans who are less assimilated. It seems that the variety of races and cultures of large cities, especially Chicago and New York, speed up the process of assimilation. One of my interviewees, Carolyn, agreed. She told a story that perfectly illustrated the point.

When her family came to America they came with another family, which Carolyn says were very close with her family, but they settled in different locations. Carolyn's family got an apartment near downtown Chicago but Carolyn's parent's friends chose to start their family with some friends already in America; they decided live and start their family in Kansas. Gradually the two families fell out of touch, and when they finally did meet about eight years later in Chicago (the other family came to visit and catch up) each of them had two young children and were substantially influenced by the places which they chose to live.

What is interesting is how their views differed when the two families finally met about ten years after they settled down and started families. The couple who lived in Kansas remained much attached to their Korean culture; they continued to speak Korean in the house, ate all Korean food, watched Korean television, and didn't create any social circles outside of their friends that they stayed with in Kansas. On the other hand the family that stayed in Chicago turned out to be the exact opposite. While their Korean Culture remained with them and still influences them, it dictates their actions on a much less severe scale. At the time the families met, Carolyn's family ate American food; her parents spoke as little Korean as possible, even waiting to have Carolyn learn Korean until she was in 6th grade, to make sure she would be more comfortable with English. But perhaps the most important difference is that Carolyn's family built an interracial network of friends through their work which allowed them to diversify their beliefs and culture not only throughout their work but through their social life, since the network included their friends.

One explanation for the location affecting their expression of culture is the different diversities in the cities which they lived. Chicago is known for its diversity whereas Kansas is known for its predominant white population. You would expect the Korean family in Kansas to assimilate more quickly because there are so few Koreans around, but this seems to be the opposite of what happened. Rather, it seems the lack of Koreans in the area (other than the family they stayed with) isolated the family to its own household, where the outside views have never had the chance to enter. In contrast, the Chicago environment, with everyone practically living on top of each other, seems to have drawn out everyone's culture and different views and mixed them together. Chicago is, after all, the melting pot.

It would seem at first that diverse races of Chicago would prompt

Carolyn's family to only interact with fellow Korean Americans and retain their "pure" Korean identity, but that isn't the case. The possibility is certainly there, for example Korea Town, but Carolyn says that many of her friends' families would rather diversify to help with the inevitable assimilation. That environment fosters everyone being themselves and to learn from each other, similar to the feeling that you experience when walking down the streets of New York; you see every possible kind of person so you don't feel odd about acting strangely. Besides making you feel comfortable the diversity really opens your eyes to new ideas, and even if you're set on your own culture it is guaranteed that life in Chicago will make you more tolerant to other ideas, even if you don't accept them as your own. This is why the interviewees who lived in Chicago at one point or another are more open to the possibility of interracial marriage than those who have lived in smaller, less diverse cities.

In conclusion, there are many different reasons why Korean American families would encourage or discourage interracial marriage or dating. They are all valid reasons that make perfect sense. Korean culture is very unique, and especially different from American culture. All the reasons discussed effect the decisions of Korean American families when it comes to interracial relationships; they also account for the difference in opinion between two seemingly similar Korean American families.

From understanding the true reasons why Korean American families may be against interracial relationships we not only learn about their culture but we can avoid unnecessary criticism. It is a fact that many people believe interracial marriage is often frowned upon because Koreans "think they're better than everyone else" and want to keep their blood "pure" and "untainted". If one thing comes from my research it should be a better understanding of our cultural differences. The idea that many Americans hold of Koreans and interracial marriage is in fact more racist than then could possibly imagine Korean Americans to be in their interracial decisions.

Racism, stereotyping, and assumptions can make the lives of those different than us so painful to live. This pain is not only unnecessary but unfair, as it isn't based on facts what-so-ever. If we would just take the time to learn about other cultures we would be much better off. Since America is made up of so many different cultures this learning is more of a necessity than a luxury. We must take every opportunity to learn about our

surrounding community, so that we can better be a part of it. Looking at interracial relationships in Korean Americans is just the beginning of understanding interactions between differences, but much can, and has been, learned.

EUI Links: [Interracial Families](#)

Reflect:

Recommendations: There isn't much the University can do here, since dating and certainly marriage are more private matters. I can, however, recommend that the University offer a class to enlighten students on the concepts of interracial relationships and the complexities in determining if a family would encourage or discourage an interracial relationship.

Students would pay attention because it is an interesting topic and the thought has crossed everyone's mind, "I wonder how that works?", when they see two seemingly different people in a relationship. Besides, studying interracial marriages is a great way to learn about different cultures. Not only do you need to understand both cultures, but you have to be able to compare and contrast them.