TRaversing the border of two cultures:
Understanding internalized cultures of korean-canadians

by

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Abstract

This research explored the ways in which Korean-Canadians make meaning of their lives as foreign-born immigrants. Using a generic qualitative research methodology, this research aims to increase the understanding of internalized experiences of Korean Canadians. In-depth interviews were conducted with eight Korean immigrants who have lived in Canada for more than 10 years. In line with Braun and Clarke (2006), the collected data were analyzed through thematic content analysis. Twelve categories and 28 subcategories emerged from the interview data. The results highlight the bicultural experiences and internalized culture of Korean-Canadians and reveal three main topics: balancing the pros and cons, complexity and ambivalence of cultural identity, and issues related to coping and receiving support.
Preface

This thesis is an original intellectual product of the author, Stephanie Suhwa Seo. The participant interviews, of which this thesis is a part, received ethics approval from the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board (ID: H14-03353). No part of this thesis has been previously published.
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This thesis is dedicated to

the eight individuals who participated in this research
and other Korean-Canadian individuals in my life whose stories continue to
remind me of resilience and inspire me to become a better person,

*and*

my parents,

who always give more than enough.
Chapter One: Introduction

Personal Context and Potential Biases

According to literature, common difficulties new immigrants experience in Canada include learning English, missing support from homeland, adopting to the new culture and values, and regaining social interaction (Lee & Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Yi & Tidwell, 2005; Yoo, 2001). Settlement into a new country is a long journey that often involves both adaptation and acceptance. Although many immigrants gradually rebuild their life in the new country throughout the first years of transition, some of them are adversely affected by cultural barriers and keep experiencing various difficulties. When I was a teenager who had recently immigrated, I took the cultural diversity in Vancouver as a challenge that I had to overcome independently. Understanding my own struggles and seeking assistance in my settlement was not only difficult, but also uncomfortable. I often felt distanced from everyone as I continued to search for a place to belong. Before too long, I began to realize that I was not the only one who was faced with such barriers. Adjusting to the new environment was a psychological and social challenge to many immigrants around me.

My first opportunity to personally interact with other immigrants was in my ESL class. I clearly recall how glad I was to have found people who could empathize with me. As the semester progressed, I was able to make friends with other students in the class, and particularly enjoyed socializing with Korean students who shared similar cultural experiences with me. I became close to many foreign-born Korean immigrants since then, and have had stimulating conversations about their immigration stories and the feelings associated with their everyday life experiences in Canada. The daily interaction I had with long-term Korean immigrants taught me that many Korean immigrants maintain a strong collective cultural identity. Such tendency
toward collective identity maintenance among this population seemed to raise unique considerations and issues in their immigration experiences that are different from other cultural groups. Because I could also relate my own personal experience to such concerns, I began to wonder about implications to their counselling needs in dealing with short-term and long-term cross-cultural issues.

What I hope to achieve through my training in counselling and research is a rich understanding of the experiences of the Korean immigrant population in Vancouver. This interest begins with the recognition of limited information about Korean immigrants in the literature. Especially, I am hoping to extend the understanding of their psychological processes and social interactional patterns and how they interpret and make meaning of their immigration life and culture.

**Significance of the Study**

Further studies on internalized cultural experiences of Korean Canadians can increase professionals' understanding of the immigrant group in several ways. First, such studies would be useful for challenging the traditional assumptions and stereotypes held by the majority of scholars and for increasing understanding of the group. As pointed out by Yi and Tidwell (2005) and Yoo (2001), mental health professionals have often dismissed Korean immigrants' issues as either minimal or nonexistent due to the group's underutilization of mental health services. This inaccurate assumption has led Koreans to frequently be illustrated as model immigrants who have abundant financial and social support according to Lee and Westwood (1996) and Yi and Tidwell (2005).

However, a number of researchers have recently started identifying various underlying issues evolving around the life of Korean residents and immigrants in North America (Cheung,
Leung, & Cheung, 2011). It has repeatedly been found that Korean students experience challenges at school such as bullying, discrimination, academic difficulty, financial hardship, and cultural conflict (Lee & Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Lew, 1998; Yeh, 2002). For example, in one study comparing psychosocial development of Asian international and American college freshmen, Asian students, including Korean individuals, scored considerably lower on scales such as Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships, and Intimacy (Sheehan & Pearson, 1995). Another group of researchers explored the bullying and discrimination experiences of Korean-American adolescents and found that more than 30% of the student participants have experienced bullying and have a higher level of depression which is clinically significant (Shin, D'Antonio, Son, Kim & Park, 2011). Other researchers suggested that students of Korean heritage are challenged on a daily basis with various stressors (Lee & Padilla, 2014).

For Korean adult immigrants, it was commonly reported that they experience problems in their physical and mental health, relationships with others, financial status, and social and cultural conflicts (Cheung et al., 2011). These challenges tended to be more intense relative to other immigrant groups due to their relatively limited resources (Lee & Woo, 2013). According to Lee, Moon, and Knight (2004), about 40% of Korean adult immigrants experience clinically significant level of depression while 15% to 20% of their American counterparts experience it.

In both students and adults, various combinations of academic and work pressure, estranged family, and altered and/or altering identities can have negative impact on their physical and mental well-being (Lee, Hong, & Harm, 2104; Lee & Hwang, 2013; Lee & Woo, 2013). It has been reported that in some extreme cases these post-migration challenges and pressures contribute to suicidal behaviours among Koreans in Canada and the United States (Han, Oliffe, & Ogrodniczuk, 2013).
Despite these findings about the life of Korean immigrants in North America, it should also be noted that available information and current knowledge about this particular group of immigrants is mainly based on data from American studies. According to the findings of various researchers, including Somerville and Walsworth (2009) who compared immigrant vulnerability in the United States and Canada, the same ethnic group in different countries reported dissimilar levels of success in employment, economic status and mental health. While the mental health issues among Korean immigrants in the United States emphasized the need for deeper investigation into their lives in general, there is also a need to explore the experience of Koreans who were born overseas and living in Canada presently.

Second, the present research aims to enhance professionals’ understanding and sensitivity to Korean immigrants by broadening the scope of future studies and their practical implications. As a means of understanding the immigration experience, scholars have proposed a number of universal models for acculturation and cultural identity development (West-Olatunji, Frazier, Guy, Smith, Clay, & Breaux, 2007). Such models, including Sue and Sue's Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model (1990), are frequently used in multicultural studies to predict, communicate, and normalize the shared experiences of minorities and have been very helpful in providing an important overview of the cultural and psychological development of the multicultural individual (West-Olatunji et al., 2007).

Despite these strengths, however, these models focus exclusively on the transition of the individual's values and the appreciation that exists between the two cultures. Therefore, the conceptual framework that the universal models provide is often through a binary and unidirectional analysis that overlooks the individual's internalization of an experience as well as his or her conflicting feelings toward different cultures. Such binary approaches to understanding
immigrant experiences - which will be further discussed in the literature review section - neglect to consider the ways in which each individual makes meanings of his or her situation and experiences, and therefore, fail to explore in-depth the cultural influences operating within the individual that shape various aspects of psychological functioning. This current study, on the other hand, acknowledges the importance of exploring meanings and emotions attached to internalization of cultures and therefore pursues an investigation beyond the scope of a binary understanding of the phenomenon.

Lastly, it is hoped that the findings from this study will offer meaningful implications to counselling and other mental health practice. For example, the information gained about Koreans may be able to support mental health experts and help other professionals to build their own cultural competence and improve sensitivity to the impact culture has on people's lives. Acknowledging the influences of various aspects of culture, such as on an individual's values, norms and lifestyle would help practitioners become more open to diverse world views and able to take culture into account when they generate strategies to help minority clients. This might be a general statement that is accepted among helping professionals, however, the professionals would benefit from the anticipated study findings which can fill in some of the gaps in information specifically concerning the influence of Korean culture. The study findings, therefore, would contribute to the cultural competence development of helping professionals when they interact with Korean clients.

One of the challenges mental health practitioners have in helping Korean immigrants is that the mental health services utilization rate among Koreans is among the lowest of all ethnic groups (Cheung et al., 2011; Jang et al., 2007; Seo, 2005). A study by Jang et al. found that only 6.5% of Korean participants had previously consulted mental health service providers regarding
their depressive symptoms and stress-related issues (Jang et al., 2007). In another study, less than 10% of the respondents reported visiting professionals for their mental issues (Cheung et al., 2011). Such statistics not only reflect the comparatively low utilization rate, but also the discrepancy between what the individual experiences and what is known to the professional.

Recent researchers have found that Korean immigrants' collective tendency to underutilize counselling services may be due to their anticipated encounter with cultural differences between the counsellor and themselves (La Roche & Maxie, 2003; Shin, 2002; Yi & Tidwell, 2005). It has been pointed out that the counselling field requires a better understanding of this particular immigrant group in order to decrease the cultural gap between the counsellor and the client, which tends to make it challenging for both parties in the therapeutic relationship to explore in depth the complex, dynamic, multifaceted experience of the client (La Roche & Maxie, 2003). Therefore, for the purpose of making current mental health services more effective for Korean Canadians, future studies need to address specifically the issue of the authentic meaning-making and internalization of the cultural group's experiences in Canada.
Chapter Two: Review of Literature

As further justification of my research and methodology, I will provide the following review of current literature. This literature review examines current research findings and will begin with a broad illustration of the Korean community in Canada and some common stereotypes about Korean immigrants in general. After that, a number of cultural transition models and acculturation models will be examined in detail to illustrate the noted deficiencies in the literature. Lastly, a brief overview of several existing theories and concepts on cultural factors contributing to cultural identity negotiation will be provided. This overview is relevant to the current study because the theories and concepts aim to explore how culture forms and shapes personality and psychological processes.

The Korean-Canadian Community

Since the formation of formal diplomatic relations between Canada and Korea in 1963, there has been a steady growth in the total number of Koreans in Canada (Baker, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2007). In 1991, the Korean community consisted of only 45,890 individuals, however the number of Koreans living in Canada more than doubled and surpassed 100,000 ten years later (Baker, 2008). Moreover, the census conducted five years later in 2006 reported that there were 145,550 Koreans across Canada, which signifies a further growth of almost 46% (Baker, 2008).

A further expansion of the Korean-Canadian community in more recent years—including temporary residents and students—shows that Koreans are now a significant presence in Canada. Specifically, their contribution to the economy and to education is noticeable in among other Canadians (Baker, 2008). Concentrated in Canada's metropolitan cities, many Koreans own and manage their own businesses including grocery stores and restaurants, and even banks and credit unions (Baker, 2008). In terms of employment, Canadians of Korean origin hold more high-
paying positions in management, in sales and in the service industry, as well as in jobs related to natural and applied sciences, than in manufacturing or labour jobs (Baker, 2008; Lee, 1994).

As the intake of new immigrants and international students in Canada has significantly increased over only a few decades, a vast number of English language institutions owned by Koreans have also opened up (Baker, 2008). However, Korean Canadians are not only the producers but also the consumers in the education system and in various education-related businesses. Canadians of Korean origin are more likely to be attending school, to be enrolled in a full-time educational program, and to have a post-graduate degree compared to their other Canadian counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2011).

In spite of their growth in number and contribution to society, scholars in the fields of mental health have raised a number of concerns about Korean immigrants who are distinct from other ethnic minority groups. First, the tendency of Korean newcomers to establish networks which are often confined to their own ethnic community and many of them experience difficulty being involved and participating in a larger community as to Canadian society (Noh & Avison, 1996). It is not clear as to why new immigrants from Korea are less actively participating in social interaction. Nevertheless, some scholars argue that it might be because the uprooting process reconnects them with their families and relatives in the host country (Noh & Avison, 1996). Also, it has been suggested that the disruption of immigrants' social networks that occurs upon migration is complex, and therefore, further assimilation to the mainstream culture is required before they can broaden their newly built networks beyond their cultural boundaries to the mainstream communities (Noh & Avison, 1996). This tendency of having confined social networks seems to greatly impact Korean immigrants' mental health because it limits their sources of social and emotional support and keeps them away from potentially useful
information about improving their mental health. For example, a number of studies on stress have found indisputable evidence that social support and social resources play a significant role in reducing and coping with stress (Noh & Avison, 1996).

Second, it was also found during my literature review on Korean adults that Korean Canadians’ utilization of health services (especially mental health resources) is significantly lower than that of other Canadians (Noh & Avison, 1996). Some of the reasons for this under-utilization included the stigma associated with mental health services (Han, Oliffe & Ogrodniczuk, 2013; Noh & Kaspar, 2003), the lack of information on resources (Noh & Kaspar, 2003), and the language barrier between the Korean and the professional (Sue & Sue, 1977). Considering the known prevalence of ongoing issues in the lives of Korean Canadians, this tendency of being reluctant to seek mental health services requires special attention.

Lastly, the amount of information available about the Korean-Canadian community and individual Korean immigrants is seriously lacking (Lee & Westwood, 1996; Noh & Avison, 1996; Yi & Tidwell, 2005). The group’s underrepresentation in the literature is a concern for many mental health professionals who work with them because the life of Korean immigrants is largely understudied. Particularly, a number of studies on multiculturalism and acculturation have recognized the current understanding of the Korean population in foreign countries is clearly insufficient and inaccurate and, therefore, information about how members of this specific cultural group make sense of their lives in the new country remains uninvestigated (Lee & Westwood, 1996; Noh & Avison, 1996; Yi & Tidwell, 2005).

**Common Stereotypes about Korean Immigrants**

One of the main concerns of discerning researchers in the multicultural field is the stereotype that assumes Koreans and other Asian groups to be the model minorities (Lee, 1994;
Trytten, Lowe & Walden, 2012; Yeh, Pei-Wen & Hunter, 2005). This inaccurate assumption has often described Korean population and other Asian immigrant populations as model immigrants who have abundant financial and social support and continue to thrive throughout their transition and adjustment process (Lee & Westwood, 1996; Yi & Tidwell, 2005). Despite the comparatively positive characteristics that are visible on a surface, it has been found in numerous research that their need for help has been largely dismissed (Cheung et al., 2011; Yeh et al., 2005; Yi & Tidwell, 2005). Such an inaccurate assumption is often influenced by the low utilization of mental and physical health services, as well as a different degree of importance about self-expression in Asian groups (Lee, 1994). Nevertheless, there is much to be examined behind these stereotypes of well-functioning, successful immigrant groups in terms of what circumstances they are actually faced with in their immigration experience (Lee, 1994).

Another term often introduced in the literature when examining stereotypes and prejudices about Korean immigrants is the "middleman minorities" (Kim, 1999; Min & Kolodny, 1994). When this term was coined by Blalock (1967), it referred to the group of minority entrepreneurs who act as an intermediary between the majority group and other marginalized racial or ethnic groups. Several commonalities were shared among different middleman groups including their tendency to maintain strong in-group ties and ethnic cohesion. In many cases, these middlemen migrated to their host countries with an intention to stay temporarily as sojourners and later decided to settle and become integrated into the new culture (Bonacich, 1973).

Often illustrated as playing the role of middlemen and small businessmen, Korean adults are sometimes perceived to have characteristics that may be subjective to stereotyping (Min & Kolodny, 1994). Being clannish and being overly concerned with making money are two of the
stereotypes that are commonly applied to working Korean immigrants in North America (Min & Kolodny, 1994). In some cases, they are viewed as insensitive and disrespectful to North American customs and as having negative attitudes toward assimilation into the host culture (Min & Kolodny, 1994; Yoon, 1997). Such stereotypes are largely due to Korean immigrants' tendency to have strong in-group ties that sometimes cause misunderstandings and provoke dislike and hostility toward them in forms of discrimination and verbal and physical attacks in extreme cases (Min & Kolodny, 1994; Yoon, 1997). Moreover, Korea's global competitiveness contributes to the various stereotypical characterizations of adult Korean immigrants because their hard work and passion for their career is often interpreted as being overly money-oriented and exceedingly occupied with the desire to gain the social and economic status of the elite (Yoon, 1997).

Acculturation and Transition Models

Since the exponential growth in the number of immigrants coming to North America, a large number of studies have been conducted aiming to conceptualize the experience of immigration and acculturation (Sabnani, Ponterott, & Borodovsky, 1991). These researchers have recognized the paucity of detailed information on the shared experiences of ethnic groups and have acknowledged the need for a theoretical framework to comprehend the transition process and immigration experience (Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997). Consequently, a diverse array of development models were proposed by different theorists and researchers in an attempt to understand the perceptions and actions of cultural and racial minorities from different angles with respect to their cultural development (Ibrahim et al., 1997; Sabnani, et al., 1991). These models provide valuable information about the shared experience of minorities and have become great tools for professionals in helping diverse populations (Poston, 1990). Despite these
benefits, however, some professionals in the multicultural forces in Psychology and Counselling Psychology field have argued that there are major limitations to these models, including their linear and unidimensional approach (Ibrahim et al., 1997; Poston, 1990; Sabnani, et al., 1991). In the following paragraphs I present two of the most well-known theoretical models and highlight some of their common weaknesses. A wider range of models would include the Cross-cultural Awareness Model (Christensen, 2011) and the Asian American Identity Development Model (Kim, 1981).

One of the most prominent models illustrating an individual's acculturation experience is the Racial-Ethnic Identity Development Model developed by Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1989). In their model, the development of minority identity is presented as a continuous process of moving from one stage to the next as the individual goes through five different phases in their experience in the host culture (West-Olatunji et al., 2007). The model aims to understand attitudes and behaviours of minorities with a focus on changes in minority persons' perception of the origin and host culture (Atkinson et al., 1989; West-Olatunji et al., 2007).

On the other hand, Poston's Biracial Identity Development Model (1990) acknowledges the complex and undefined nature of the multicultural individual identity development process. The model's intention to understand biracial identity involves investigating a range of factors within the biracial individual's environment and, therefore, multiple aspects of personal identity have been included, such as family and peer influences, choice of group affiliation categories categorization, and the level of acculturation (Poston, 1990).

Although these acculturation and transition models contribute to the current knowledge about the cultural development of minority individuals, the models described above create their own beliefs to anchor their understanding of the immigrant experience, and they tend to stick
with those beliefs. For example, both of the models assume that the minority individual would be situated in one of the stages and that identity development is unidirectional (Ibrahim et al., 1997; Sabnani, et al., 1991). This assumption creates a process of transition for the individual to move from one stage to the next in the same direction and does not permit flexible migration from a higher stage to lower or omitted stages. Another limitation of these models is the process-focused nature of understanding the minority individual’s ethnic identity development (Ibrahim et al., 1997; Sabnani, et al., 1991). Because the models identify and categorize individuals into different stages, the valuable and qualitative information stemming from the individual's descriptions of his or her feelings can be lost. Moreover, the models underline the common experiences of minority individuals regardless of their ethnicity or other demographic factors, thereby assuming the universality of multicultural experiences (Ibrahim et al., 1997; Sabnani, et al., 1991). Again, this could prevent professionals from appreciating other variables that account for the individual's personal experiences and perceptions (Ibrahim et al., 1997; MacDougall & Arthur, 2001; Sabnani, et al., 1991). Lastly, the models seek to understand the life of relatively new immigrants, while individuals who have lived in the host culture for a longer period of time seem underrepresented in the literature.

A review of literature indicates that there is an urgent need for research aiming to understand how this specific immigrant group perceives the cultural influences in their lives. Researchers need to consider limitations of preexisting information into account and be curious about the individual experience, thoughts and emotions, rather than being determined to evaluate the individual with respect to different stages in such models.
Cultural Identity Negotiation

Multicultural counsellors have been concerned with the meaning of crossing cultures in their counselling processes with immigrants. A number of researchers have acknowledged the intellectual benefits of studying the common issues of cultural transition for multicultural practice and counselling in general, and have attempted to explore how the different cultural influences operate within the individual immigrant.

Cultural frame switching is a concept that addresses an individual's shifting between cultural frames in response to cues in the social context (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). According to LaFromboise et al. (1993), immigrants consistently experience challenges in social settings where they are faced with conflicting cultural demands and expectations. In such situations, they often feel obligated to change their perceptions of the world to appropriately react to the cultural cues, and eventually learn to shift between different sets of interpretive frames that are embedded in different cultures. Cultural frame switching seems to be able to explain this tendency of immigrants and to describe how an individual switches between cultural systems in the presence of culture-specific cues and stimuli. The concept of cultural frame switching is often documented empirically in the domain of personality (Ramírez-Esparza, Gosling, Benet-Martínez, Potter, & Pennebacker, 2006). However, it can also be seen in more practical examples such as how bilinguals choose and use the language that applies best to the situation they are in.

The process and manifestation of cultural frame switching depends on the individual's subjective perception of acceptability and compatibility of each culture, and the level of integration is also determined by the individual (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006). Hence, immigrants with identical ethnic and cultural background can exhibit different
reactions to the same situational cue. The notion of frame switching is also based on the premise that different cultures are not always blended smoothly in a compatible way within an individual, and that acquiring or absorbing an additional culture does not necessarily replace the pre-existing culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

The shifting self is a concept which Yeh and colleagues (2005) referred to when they tried to explain the condition of shifting between two cultures in Korean-American youth. Generally, the shifting self is useful for explaining how an individual negotiates across various cultures and expresses the self in multiple ways according to social and contextual influences (Maass, 2008). It is based on and related to the idea of cultural frame switching, and the concept of shifting self emphasizes the effort which the individual exerts on adapting to the continuous shifting of psychological functioning and social behaviours.

In a study by Yeh et al. (2005), it was found that bicultural youth constantly make adjustments in their behaviours and negotiate across different cultural environments. They are consistently faced with cross-cultural encounters, and continue to experience cultural negotiation on various levels such as language use, values, beliefs, activities, and sometimes even appearance (Yeh et al., 2005). As the researchers suggest, the shifting self is integrated with the individual's interpersonal responsibility to respond and change the way the self is expressed according to the social situation (Yeh et al., 2005). As a theoretical concept, however, the shifting self fails to explain how the bicultural individual came to construct this pattern. Moreover, it is insufficient in that it does not give an account of how the individual understands or experiences the self that is expressed in multiple ways.

Both the terms, cultural frame switching and the shifting self, address the way in which an individual reacts to the context with different cultural cues. Selfways, a concept which shares
similarities with the two terms, describes culturally constructed patterns of an individual's being and behaving in a cultural context (Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997). Therefore, it is a term that encompasses a meaning broader than the two previously explained concepts and includes critical beliefs and attitudes that are adjusted and/or enhanced through social learning and interaction in various cultural contexts (Markus et al., 1997).

The concept of selfways also includes the way an individual is involved and participating in particular sociocultural contexts (Markus et al., 1997). According to Markus et al. (1997), based on the cultural notions and beliefs that are reflected on an individual's selfways, a shared understanding of morality can be reached. For example, in Japanese context, a good and moral person is described as someone with interdependent relationships with others and a sense of belonging (Markus et al., 1997). This is quite different from the European-American idea of an independent individual (Markus et al., 1997). Nevertheless, the notion of selfways is far complicated than the East/West binary approach. Consistent with the ideas of cultural frame switching and the shifting self, Markus et al. disagree with the traditional idea of rigidity in the individual's culture, and suggest fluid forms of cultural influences on one's perception and understanding of the world (Markus et al., 1997).

**Definition of Key Terms**

In this section, a list of terms that have significant meaning for the study will be presented. Since some words may have various meanings, the central concepts of the study will be clearly identify and defined. Generally understood concepts, principles and concerns have been omitted.

'Culture' is a term which varies in meaning from text to text, and from context to context. It is a term that is value-laden, and therefore, different definitions have been used in different
areas. According to Statistics Canada (2013), the general definition of 'culture' includes elements such as "economic systems, political ideologies and processes, ways of life and social mores, educational institutions, social programs, the environment, technological systems, recreational practices, customs and traditions, artistic and heritage activities, transportation and communication industries, and religious and spiritual activities." On the other hand, Ballard (2002) describes the term 'culture' as cognitive structures that include "a set of values, ideas and understandings which people deploy within a specific network of social relationships use as a means of ordering their inter-personal interactions and hence to generate ties of reciprocity between themselves" (p. 12). Based on his definition, culture is like language, and is a vehicle for communication and the foundation for the worlds of meaning people create around themselves (Ballard, 2002). Because no standard definition exists for 'culture', incorporating a fixed definition with some inclusive and exclusive criteria would be useful for focusing on specific aspects of culture in research. For the purpose of this study, the term 'culture' is defined as "the shared patterns of cognitive constructs, behaviours, and interactions that are learned through accumulated experience and social learning." This definition emphasizes the influence of 'culture' on the way people perceive, interpret, express, and respond to the realities around them.

The term 'foreign-born Korean-Canadians' in this study will be used to describe immigrants who were born in Korea and moved to Canada as young children, teenagers, or adults. For the purpose of the study, Korean participants will require to be either permanent residents or citizens in Canada to meet the definition. This definition excludes second generation Korean immigrants who were born in Canada as well as short-term residents with student visa.
Ho (1995) defines 'internalized culture' as "the cultural influences operating within the individual that shape (not determine) personality formation and various aspects of psychological functioning." In this study, the same definition will be used with an added emphasis on its impact on individual behaviours and social relationships.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This research utilized a qualitative methodology based on interviews with participants to discover the internalized experiences of the targeted population. In order to provide a rationale for the applicability of the method, the following section will describe the postpositivist perspective of the generic qualitative research design and highlight its relevance to my study. I will then provide a breakdown of my research procedures including participants and data collection. After, a results chapter, a discussion chapter, and a conclusion chapter will follow, also with a brief epilogue on my research journey on this personally meaningful topic. Furthermore, I will then explore the potential influence of my own predispositions as well as the strategies for ensuring credibility and trust in order to address the issues of validity and reliability. Finally, the ethical and cultural considerations will be outlined and discussed.

Philosophical Perspective of Postpositivism

According to Creswell (2003), it is important for researchers to consider their philosophical assumption about how knowledge is conceptualized and claimed through their studies. He suggests that it is an important question since stating a knowledge claim leads to determining approaches and design process of the research (Creswell, 2003).

Among the four theories of knowledge claims proposed by Creswell (2003), postpositivistic worldview acknowledges that we cannot fully be certain about claims of knowledge when studying humans. Based on the postpositivist traditions in the physical and social sciences, this paradigm holds to a critical realist position regarding reality and argues reality can never be completely apprehended (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Researchers with postpositivistic worldview regard the absolute truth as unachievable and perceive the world as infinitely complex and variable therefore open to interpretation (O'Leary, 2004). They argue that
only careful observation and measurement of the objective reality can allow us to build on knowledge (Creswell, 2013).

Postpositivism is a paradigm which has largely replaced positivism and other paradigms in the social sciences (Willis, 2007). It has been favored by many researchers today because of its ability to test and refine the existing theories (Creswell, 2013). Postpositivists accept that any collection of data and the interpretation is dependent on theory (Willis, 2007). Another strength of this kind of research is its purpose of discovering universals or laws (Willis, 2007). It looks for universal beliefs, concepts, and ideas that can be generalized across contexts (Willis, 2007). To achieve this purpose, researchers working in this paradigm seek to properly frame problems and often aim to develop relevant true statements about reality through well-defined methods (Creswell, 2013; Willis, 2007).

Relevance to the Current Study

This study aims to understand the experiences of Korean-Canadians. More specifically, the study looks into the internalized cultures of Korean-Canadians and seeks to answer the following question: How are the two cultures — Korean and Canadian — internalized in foreign-born Korean-Canadians? Hence, the main goal of this study is to have a better understanding of the complex nature of the targeted population.

Postpositivist research is most commonly aligned with qualitative methods of data collection and analysis since it involves intuitive and holistic investigations to achieve and explain findings that are qualitative in nature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It has been argued that qualitative methodology reflects the paradigmatic influences of postpositivism because it allows researchers to infer information from observational data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 1998). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative research involves a collection of
interpretive, material practices that transform the world into a series of representations through methods such as interviews and conversations. Among various major types of qualitative research, a generic qualitative design, which is also known as noncategorical or fundamental qualitative research, has been gaining popularity in a wide range of disciplines. It has been argued that this type of research provides a foundation for the postpositivist paradigm of research (Merriam, 1998).

Generic qualitative method, according to Merriam (1998), can be used when researchers seek to discover and explore a phenomenon, a process, or the perspective of the people involved. It is believed to take a general approaches towards the research topic and not to rely specifically on one particular approach such as phenomenology and ethnography (Cooper & Endacott, 2007). Rather, data collection could include either semi-structured or unstructured interviews, observations or documents examination or any combination of the three. Generic qualitative method provides information about the population of interest, and may use content analysis to analyze oral or written data. First, this specific design is believed to be appropriate when a research is an attempt to investigate phenomena, concepts, and ideas that cannot easily be quantified or measured. Second, this method allows researchers to develop his or their own procedures and to generate a variety of ways of doing research. Third, researches using this type of research approach identify recurrent patterns in the form of themes or categories through rich description, interpretation, and understanding of data, and it may also outline a process (Merriam, 1998). Lastly, this method gives researchers flexibility in interpreting the research data (Merriam, 1998). Since my research involves basic and fundamental qualitative description of a specific population and requires flexibility in conducting and analyzing, I acknowledge the appropriateness and benefits of using a generic qualitative research methodology.
Despite these strengths, guidelines for conducting research using a generic qualitative research methodology have been not clear enough. Generic qualitative research methodology has often been criticized as a less rigorous method than other methods, and new researchers often find it challenging to be sensitive to the way they choose the sample and analysis processes, as well as relevant methods of data collection (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, it is important for the researcher to be clear about the objectives of the study and to ensure the trustworthiness of the research process and interpretation of data.

**Participants**

With the goal of exploring the experiences of Korean-Canadians, I recruited eight Korean permanent residents and/or citizens who are over 19 years of age and have been living in Canada for at least 10 years. This specific number of years of residence in Canada was selected in order to focus on the life as a long-term immigrant rather than the experience of cultural transition, and is an arbitrary one that was set for this study. Koreans with a temporary student visa were excluded for the same reason. The participant criteria also exclude second generation Korean-Canadians as the study specifically aims to describe the life of foreign-born immigrants. Moreover, Korean immigrants who moved to Canada before the age of 13 were excluded in this study. This was to ensure that participants have had adequate experiences with Korean culture.

The recruitment was mainly done online combined with another method of snowball sampling to maximize the outcome of my recruitment effort. An ad was posted on UvanU blog, one of the most active online webpages in the Korean-Canadian community. I did not need to contact organizations that provide services for immigrant families to recruit participants because enough number of people had already signed up for the study.
When participants contact me with their interest in participating, I provided them with information about the study including its significance, contributions and methods. In the case of snowball sampling, I provided my contact information to those participants I had interviewed so that they could pass it on to people who might be interested in taking a part in the study. Once I heard back from potential participants who agree to be interviewed, a date and time was determined for one-on-one interviews with me based on their availability.

Eight Korean-Canadians participated in the study. There were three male participants and four female participants. They were in their 20s and 30s, and the average age was 27.38 years. The highest level of education varied among participants; four of them graduated from university, three finished specialized programs, and one completed high school degree. All participants attended high school in Canada for at least one year. Table 1 outlines the backgrounds of participants of the study. Fictitious names were used to protect participants' identities.

Table 1
*Participant Background Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age at Immigration</th>
<th>Years in Canada</th>
<th>Current Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miranda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brendon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

*Informed consent.* In the initial step of the interview, a consent form with an explanation about the research procedure, level of confidentiality, benefits and potential risks, means of recording data, right to withdraw, and approval of the research ethics board was presented to the participants. After signing the consent form, each participant filled out a demographic form to provide general information about their background.

*Validationgram.* To encourage reflection and further elaboration by participants, each participant was asked to complete a validationgram. A validationgram is a semi-structured activity designed to help individuals identify meanings and values and discover associated emotions (Ishiyama, 1995). Specific cross-cultural experience domains - relationships, physical objects, activities, and places - are articulated throughout the exercise, and personally significant sources of self-validation are recognized. After creating their own validationgrams, participants were informed that they can, but do not necessarily need to, choose to base some of their interview responses on the content and the experience of their validationgram activity.

The significant amount of overlap between their validationgram and interview responses showed that the validationgram activity was effectively used to encourage self-reflection and reveal inner thoughts and feelings about their bicultural experiences. The validationgram activity seemed to have impacted and enabled participants to look beneath the surface meanings of different aspects of their lives and to narrate their discoveries in their own words. During the interview, one participant pointed out and referred to the answers he provided on his own validationgram as he explained his clear preference for living in Canada over living in Korea. When asked at the end of the interview, all eight participants reported that they enjoyed the validationgram activity and that they found it fun and helpful.
Interview. After the pre-interview validation activity, I conducted approximately 1.5 hour-long, semi-structured and in-depth using open-ended questions in a quiet, private space. As stated in the consent form, each interview session was audio-taped, and written notes were by the interviewer. At the beginning of each of the interviews, I asked about the participant's language preference. The interviews were mainly in Korean and were translated into English during the final stage of data analysis process.

Data Analysis

The collected data in the form of audio-recordings were transcribed and analyzed according to the five phases of thematic content analysis recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). These were: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Prior to the first step in the process, I made sure to suspend my expectations and interpretations and to be open to anything that emerges in the data. This suspension was achieved by writing down the presuppositions and biases that I was aware of and discussing them with my supervisor.

When I felt confident that I can approach her interview data with openness to whatever meanings surface, I moved onto the first phase of data analysis which involved quickly browsing through all transcripts as a whole. After examining the transcripts, I made notes about the first impressions of different parts and familiarize myself with all aspects of the data through repeated reading. This phase was particularly time consuming since I was developing much deeper understanding of the data. In the second phase of data analysis, initial codes ("subcategories") were identified as I labeled relevant words, phrases, sentences, or sections. I aimed to give full and equal attention to each data item being attentive to both semantic and conceptual readings. Searching for themes ("categories"), the third phase of the analysis, took place as I went through
all codes created in the previous phase and form new codes by combining two or more codes together. At this point, I had a collection of candidate themes based on the relationship between codes. In phase four, the candidate themes were reviewed and refined. I considered creating new themes, finding themes for data extracts, and removing some themes. This was done through checking whether each theme relates to the coded data item as well as the entire transcripts. When I was satisfied with the themes, I began with phase five by defining and naming themes. Understanding how the different themes fit together and make sense of the participant's story was the main purpose of this phase. Each theme was named in a concise and informative way.

**Trustworthiness of the Collected Data and Interpretation**

Demonstrating trustworthiness is crucial to ensure the quality of the research to strengthen the study’s validity and reliability (Golafshani, 2003; Shosha, 2012). In this section, I present the basic issue of trustworthiness through an assessment of the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of each study procedure.

Credibility deals with the internal validity of the study and is particularly concerned with ensuring the results are credible or authentic from the participant’s perspective (Golafshani, 2003; Shenton, 2004; Shosha, 2012). There are a number of strategies suggested to ensure the credibility of qualitative studies, including prolonged engagement, persistent observations, member checks, and peer scrutiny and debriefing (Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). To promote my confidence in the credibility, I engaged fully in each stage of the study to make sure that any distortion from my impact on the data would be minimized and if possible prevented. Self-reflection and persistent observations were recorded in my notebook, and helped minimize my subjective bias towards any data.
Furthermore, I assessed the credibility of the data and the interpretation by going back to the source of the information, which is each interviewed participant. This member check procedure allowed me to identify discrepancies between the original response and the interpreted data, correct errors, and receive additional information. During the process of analyzing my interview data, there were a number of times when I shared some of the findings with participants for a member check. Usually, I restated what they had said in the interview and asked them to affirm whether the summary accurately illustrates their experiences and reflections. For example, I contacted Miranda, one of the female participants, to clarify her feelings around her experience of role-reversal. Miranda explained the complexity of her emotions, and I was able to capture the ambivalence within her experience. By honestly and openly sharing my intention of truthfully representing her experience, I was given the opportunity to assess the accuracy and adequacy of my data and also to acquire additional information that is meaningful.

Peer researchers, such as my program cohort, were also helpful in evaluating and ensuring credibility in ways similar to the participant. Their roles included detecting unnoticed errors and/or discrepancies in my data analysis and helping to correct them. Since they were outside the context of the study, they were able to provide insight from a more objective perspective and in the more transparent way. Particularly, I discussed the research data, analysis, findings and conclusions several times with one of my colleagues who also studied counselling psychology in a similar program. She was born and raised in Korea until she was 13 years old, and has a similar immigration background as most of my participants. Her knowledge about the Korean culture and the Korean-Canadian culture, as well as her fluency in the Korean language were extremely helpful since she was able to understand and capture the subtle meaning of participants' response. The fresh perspective that she brought into our discussion allowed me to
challenge my own preexisting assumptions based on my personal experiences, redefine the study findings, and strengthen the study conclusion.

Moreover, my thesis supervisor, Dr. Ishu Ishiyama, oversaw my research process and provided guidance in every step of it. Particularly, he reviewed the thematic content analysis on the study data, identified overlapping subcategories and helped me maintain the uniqueness of each subcategory. Also, a few colleagues from my practicum site provided great suggestions in similar ways, especially by offering different perspectives toward analyzing the data. They were clinical counsellors who have an extensive knowledge, experience, and training in multicultural counselling and counselling research in general, and helped me particularly with naming the categories and making sure the names catch the true meaning of participants' responses.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of a study can be generalized or applied to other contexts (Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). It aims to show whether the findings from a study are applicable in different settings (Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). Since the current study generated personal stories and aims to explore individual experiences, achieving high transferability was not within the scope of the current study. Nevertheless, the study findings generated unique and valuable information about the Korean-Canadian population which can be further explored in future research that aims to generalize experiences of Korean-Canadians.

Dependability is another essential criterion for qualitative research. The idea of dependability addresses the issue of reliability and is concerned with obtaining the same or similar findings if the research were conducted repeatedly in an identical context (Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). Recognizing that reality is infinitely complex and variable, my job as a qualitative researcher was to be aware of the changes occurring in my study and to be
responsible for describing how they occur and affect the results of the study. To enhance dependability in the study, it was necessary that I plan a detailed step-by-step procedure and articulate an interview protocol prior to conducting the research. Also, every stage of the research process was recorded on notes in order to account for the changes in the research and to maintain dependability.

Confirmability is based on the recognition that researchers bring subjectivity to the study. It refers to the degree to which the results are supported and confirmed by the research participants and independent of the researcher (Morrow 2005). More specifically, confirmability deals with the difficulty of promoting real objectivity and the extent to which the data are the result of the participants' responses rather than of the motivation or interest of the researcher (Morrow 2005; Shenton, 2004). Confirmability in this study was achieved by bracketing my assumptions, values and beliefs, and by using an audit trail, which is a detailed chronological record documenting the study processes and my decision making.

**Ethics and Cultural Safety**

In their book on the application of qualitative approaches, Morse and Field (1996) state that some ethical issues considered in qualitative research are very specific to the particular type of research, largely because of the unstructured nature of data collection and the level of intimacy involved in the interaction between the researcher and participants. To ensure the quality and integrity of my research, therefore, it was important for me to be sensitive and respectful to the application of fundamental research norms and to conduct my study in accordance with the highest ethical standards. An ethical review and approval of this study was sought from UBC's Ethics Board. As a researcher, I am aware of my responsibilities for maintaining the dignity and welfare of all participants. This obligation also entails minimizing
the risk of psychological, emotional, professional and personal damage as well as protecting confidentiality. Participants of the present study was informed of: (a) the purpose, (b) procedures, (c) potential benefits and risks, and (d) the right to consent and the right to withdraw without penalty, and signed the consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the study.

The context of the current study sometimes involved disclosure of personal information and discussion of sensitive topics. Adequate precautions were taken to identify any signs of emotional discomfort in participants and to create a safe environment in the interview. I continuously checked with participants to ensure they feel comfortable and to protect the right to withdraw.

Protecting confidential communication is an explicit requisite for research involving human subjects. I ensured that each participant's privacy is respected at all times and that all data are treated with appropriate confidentiality and anonymity. First, the usual identifiers such as participant names were removed from the data and replaced with pseudonyms. Second, the appropriate data security was respected as I increased data protection to the greatest possible extent by keeping it safe from unauthorized access and transfer or from unintended loss or destruction. All the audio-tapes, notes, and transcripts from the interviews were stored securely on a password-protected computer.

Risks to participants were minimal and participating in the current study had a number of added benefits. First, participants may have experienced personal benefits such as feeling listened to or having an opportunity to share their views. The interviews in the study could give voice to the voiceless and help them increase their self-awareness. Second, by having an opportunity to express pent-up feelings, participants in the study may have experienced emotional ventilation and self-validation through interviews and may have gone through self-
transformation in some cases. Third, they may have also felt that their participation would contribute in developing better ways to help people by influencing policy and practice. This could grant a sense of empowerment and contribute to a sense of purpose. Finally, participants may have found the research experience enjoyable and/or interesting.

Maintaining sensitivity to the cultural norms of Korean-Canadians was fundamental in empowering my participants and building a trusting relationship with them. Fortunately, I am of the same ethnicity and have a good understanding of the shared values. Research has pointed out developing trust is easier and requires less time when the researcher and the participant share the same culture (Eide & Allen, 2005). Sharing the same ethnic background with participants was an advantage in collecting trustworthy and reliable data from participants about their stories of immigration history. To heighten my awareness and sensitivity to the importance of cultural diversity and cultural competence in interview settings, I prepared myself to provide a culturally safe research atmosphere through self-reflection on my awareness and respect towards the values participants bring to the study. In this study, participants took the position of being the expert of their own experiences. I also presented study materials including interview questions in either English or Korean or both, depending on each participant's preference.
Chapter Four: Results

Reflection of the Interview and Analysis Process

It is widely acknowledged that unique researcher characteristics may potentially influence the collection and analysis of empirical data in qualitative research (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). Therefore, it was important for me to examine how my characteristics as a researcher corresponded with the qualitative research data. Through the process of documenting my role as a researcher and engaging in reflexive evaluation, I have learned that I share certain aspects of my cultural background with participants that allowed me to ensure the comfort and respect of participants and to lead me to richer responses.

Being a Korean-speaking researcher was a great advantage. As the research data indicate, language barrier is one of the most difficult challenges that participants face in their daily lives. Despite the fact that they feel comfortable having casual conversations and have no difficulty in expressing themselves in English, all of them preferred their interviews to be in Korean when given the option of choosing between the two languages. As shown implicitly in their language preference, conducting the interview in Korean helped recruit participants. One participant shared with me when he first contacted me that he would participate only if he could speak in Korean for the interview. Since Korean is my first language, I personally felt natural and closer to participants as I conducted the interviews in Korean. The use of Korean language created a connection between the participant and me, and talking about language preferences fostered building rapport. Moreover, the terms and expressions that participants used were familiar to me and their meanings were not lost in transition.

Since the current study involves exploring inner feelings and personal experiences of participants, it was important for me to develop rapport and create a trusting environment that is
free from judgment. Bringing the emotional intimacy in an accelerated timeframe to allow participants to feel free to share their thoughts and emotions was a challenge however, the shared background elements of participants and me facilitated the process in conjunction with my communication and counselling skills such as active listening. One of the reasons I first became interested in the specific population within the Korean-Canadian community was because I belong to that group. I meet every inclusion criteria of the current study, and have had similar adjustment and immigration experiences. With my each of my research participants, I had opportunities to share briefly about my immigration background and experiences, and was able to express empathy in a more direct way. They seemed interested and engaged more actively as I gave examples from my own immigrant life that are quite similar to their experiences. My background as a foreign-born Korean Canadian helped me enormously in shortening the distance between participants and me.

As a person who has always been actively involved in the Korean-Canadian community and different cultural organizations, I have gained a great understanding of the unique culture of Korean immigrants and witnessed the changes in the structure and dynamic of the population. Through my volunteer work at different cultural events and organizations, I have interacted with Korean immigrants with a variety of immigrant history and backgrounds. The Korean-Canadian community has supported me in every phase of my life since my family and I moved to Canada, and I have developed a grand vision for the growth of the Korean-Canadian community and other cultural groups. This current study is a reflection of such commitment which was communicated both directly and indirectly to participants. Some participants expressed their heartfelt gratitude to me for contributing to a better understanding of the cultural group, and shared with me their interest in the research findings.
Overview of Emerged Categories and Subcategories

Twelve categories and 28 subcategories emerged from the interview data. Table 1 shows an overview of the categories, subcategories and descriptive types of each subcategory. The 28 subcategories are the encoded qualitative information of the data which were generated by documenting where and how pattern of the participants' responses occurred. To represent the data as summary markers for more efficient analysis, the subcategories were then combined and developed into categories.

Achieving well-saturated data was a main concern in the process of analysis. To ensure that data collection reaches the point where no new or relevant information emerges and the relationships between the categories are maintained, I took the recommendation of Guthrie, Yongvanich, and Ricceri (2004), and Harwood and Garry (2003) and started with preliminarily collected data from the first three interviews. After grouping the data and creating categories, I looked at the data from my forth interview, and saw if any new information emerges. When the process of analyzing data was no longer observing new categories, I moved on to the fifth interview data and repeated the procedure.

Table 2
Categories, Subcategories, and Descriptive Types of Subcategory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Participation Rate</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
<th>Descriptive Types of Subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 1</td>
<td>Understanding of family</td>
<td>8/8 (100%)</td>
<td>Parental expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Role reversal</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Participation Rate</td>
<td>Subcategories</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2</td>
<td>Transition Experiences</td>
<td>8/8 (100%)</td>
<td>Challenging factors</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple transitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category 3</td>
<td>Cultural conflict with others</td>
<td>7/8 (87.5%)</td>
<td>Conflicting cultural groups</td>
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<td>Response to conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category 4</td>
<td>Language as a challenging factor</td>
<td>7/8 (87.5%)</td>
<td>Disadvantage</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 5</td>
<td>Advantages of being bicultural</td>
<td>7/8 (87.5%)</td>
<td>Broader perspective</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cultural exchange</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Participation Rate</td>
<td>Subcategories</td>
<td>Descriptive Types of Subcategory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 6</td>
<td>Disadvantage of being bicultural</td>
<td>6/8 (75%)</td>
<td>Stereotypes / Discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Being bullied, discriminated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of information, lack of resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Limited career opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Behaving with discretion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Small community</td>
<td>Renouncing Korean nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sacrificing for residency and/or citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Missing Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 7</td>
<td>Ambivalent attitude toward being bicultural</td>
<td>6/8 (75%)</td>
<td>Living in Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Love and hate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regret and satisfaction</td>
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<td>Discomfort and comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bicultural identity</td>
<td>Immigrant identity, half immigrant identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Justifiably Canadian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Korean identity</td>
<td>Increased Korean national pride</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Foundation of identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 8</td>
<td>Feeling positive about being bicultural</td>
<td>6/8 (75%)</td>
<td>Gratefulness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grateful toward parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Affection</td>
<td>Affectionate toward Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>Comfortable, stable living in Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of accomplishment</td>
<td>Rewarding, worthwhile acculturation experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 9</td>
<td>Feeling negative about being bicultural</td>
<td>6/8 (75%)</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tired, confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Insecurity</td>
<td>Responsibility and pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unstable, uncomfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Participation Rate</td>
<td>Subcategories</td>
<td>Descriptive Types of Subcategory</td>
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<td><strong>Category 10</strong></td>
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<td>Close relationships</td>
<td>Korean-dominated</td>
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<td>Korean-speaking</td>
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<td>Relationship with non-Korean</td>
<td>Similar immigration background</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6/8 (75%)</td>
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<td>Language as barrier</td>
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<td>Cultural difference as barrier</td>
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<td>Relationship with non-immigrant Koreans</td>
<td>Lifestyle difference as barrier</td>
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<td>Cultural difference as barrier</td>
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<td>Moments of parting</td>
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<td><strong>Category 11</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Language-dependent</td>
<td>English language vs. Korean language</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>4/8 (50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fundamentally Korean</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Category 12</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Having a place to return</td>
<td>Privilege, stability</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3/8 (37.5%)</td>
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**Category 1: Understanding of family.** All participants reported that family plays an important role in their lives. Brendon shared that his family is the "drive" for his hard work and is one of the major reasons why he is staying in Canada. At the same time, however, every participant, including Brendon, stated that their interactions with their family members often involve conflicts and challenges. According to them, this is particularly true in their relationships with their parents.

As Angela stated, "I do not want to see my parents' money being wasted on me, and I do not want to disappoint them. That is why I need to work hard to adapt to Canadian culture," everyone shared that they feel pressure to meet their parents' expectations (i.e., academic and financial success) which then often contributes to the aggravation of intergenerational and cultural gap. Despite the differences in their family backgrounds, it has also been reported that it
is challenging for participants not only to communicate effectively with their parents, but also to share their values in life. Betty describes the pattern of her conversations with her mother which often involves arguments more than negotiations.

*I have tried many times to convince my mother to understand that the culture here in Canada is different from that of Korea. I have asked her to send me to my high school's prom, a trip with a few of my friends, and so on, and she never lets me do any of them because she does not know what they are about. Whenever I attempt to help her understand, my mother is very much occupied with the thought that anything that happens outside home is dangerous. When asked, "why everyone else, but not me?,’ my mother answered, "you just can't"* (Example of Category 1, Understanding of Family).

As evident in Betty's response, it was a common for participants to describe their conversations with their parents as brief and unidirectional. They added that they are expected to be obedient to their parents and instructed to maintain the values of their family such as succeeding academically and financially, depending on parents, and having close family ties.

On the other hand, it was also typical that participants are consciously aware of role reversals occurring in their family. Because younger people become involved in the new culture relatively quickly and acquire a new language skill more rapidly, it was usual for parents to become dependent on their children and lose significant ground in their function as heads of their families. Participants reported different degrees of their role reversal experiences. Miranda explained that because her parents moved back to Korea, she and her sisters been sharing "the responsibilities that should be the domain of their parents". The responsibilities do not only include maintaining a safe and healthy environment at home, but also carrying out legal and financial responsibilities such as filing their parents' taxes and paying for their bills.
**Category 2: Transition experience.** The transition from living in Korea to living in Canada was not easy for participants. They were consistently let down by the limitations of their own abilities and competence, and were lonely in the process. For Sarah, it was particularly difficult and stressful because it hurt her pride to ask for help with tasks that she would have no problem completing on her own in Korea. She shared that she "hated being dependent."

Participants also reported that it was particularly harder due to the lack of familiarity with the local resources. Their main sources of support were their family members, other Korean immigrant friends, and for some people like Miranda and David, friends at church. As for Miranda, her mother was the only "support" available for her.

*Whenever I struggled, my mother also struggled because she did not understand the culture here either. Nevertheless, she still offered to help even though she had to learn from scratch just like I had to. She was helpful, though* (Example of Category 2, Transition Experience).

Betty had similar experiences. During the first years of her life in Canada, her father was working in Korea, and her mother had a limited knowledge about the culture and the language. Although she was having a hard time at school being bullied by other students, the only people she could go talk about her life was other Korean students. According to her, she still had to keep most of her concerns to herself. Her school counsellor was proactive in helping international students like Betty, however, his advice and suggestions were not suitable for Betty.

Interestingly, a few participants reported that there was another moment of transitioning as they entered postsecondary institutions and also when they started to work full time for the first time. According to Cindy, she parted with many of her high school friends as she entered her university, and started to be involved in different circles of friends which are mainly consist
of Korean-Canadians. This was also when she began to participate more actively at her Korean church. On the other hand, for David, starting to work at his current workplace opened the gate to building meaningful relationships with non-Koreans.

**Category 3: Cultural conflict with others.** Cultural conflict occurs when different cultural values and beliefs clash. As immigrants with bicultural experiences, participants are consistently faced with it in their lives. It was generally reported by participants that cultural conflicts are normal and expected in their daily interactions with various people.

Most participants reported that their first reaction to a cultural conflict is to avoid it. As both Angela and David shared, it was common for participants to respond to a conflict by "not reacting to it, but rather converting it into an internal conflict and dealing with it within themselves." Angela and David added that they have learned to conceal their own values in order to minimize unpleasant interaction and to prevent further disagreement. Internally, however, participants wish to maintain and preserve their values that are based on their culture of origin. They are aware of the other culture's influence and impact on their own value system. Nevertheless, they also believe that they will never fully become in agreement many of the values and beliefs that clash with their Korean cultural background. Brendon discussed how important it is for him to adhere to Korean norms and values.

*Whenever my values are in conflict with those of others, I hold on to my belief that the conflict will resolve itself as long as I keep myself aligned with my [Korean] values and principles. I do respect other people's values and acknowledge the differences, though. I think that is the way I live. I stand firm on my ground, and will continue believing the same things I do now* (Example of Category 3, Cultural Conflict with Others).
According to participants in the study, cultural conflict is not limited to interactions between Korean immigrants and Western people. Participant shared that they experience themselves faced with differences in their beliefs about life also with other Asians and people from other parts of the world. Moreover, participants added that their values and beliefs have also parted away and grown differently from those of Korean traditional culture as experienced in their interactions with Korean short-term residents in Canada. As Sarah expressed, participants sometimes find them "having different values and purposes in life."

**Category 4: Language as a challenging factor.** One of the frequently discussed challenges in immigrant life in Canada was the language barrier. Seven out of eight participants shared that they have a limited ability in the English language and believe that they will never be perfect in the second language as they are in their first language which is Korean. For Angela, Brendon, and Sarah, not being perfectly fluent in English brings up challenges at work and social settings. According to them, it limits their ability to function as effectively and efficiently as they can, and constrains them from interacting as closely with English-speaking individuals as they are with Korean speakers. Brendon explained the frustration he experiences when he cannot fully express his opinions in English.

> Sometimes, I say to myself that I can confidently and easily convince this person only if I could speak to him in Korean. When I speak in English, there are too many pauses, and I use 'umm' a lot. I have lived here for 11 years now, and the barrier is still there (Example of Category 4, Language as a Challenging Factor).

Based on John's response and other participants' answers to questions about language barrier, not being fluent in English seems to generate a deep sense of shame in them. Miranda, especially, reacted quite emotionally and shared that learning the new language was "very difficult" and "so
sad that it made [her] cry." Similarly, Sarah also expressed that language barrier was the most difficult thing she had to overcome.

You can overcome cultural differences. You just need some time. But, not being able to express myself in English? That is the real problem. It gives you the feeling of being intimidated. It makes you feel daunted (Example of Category 4, Language as a Challenging Factor).

It was repeatedly reported by participants that learning English was a challenge which impacted negatively on their self-esteem. Some participants also added that they think one's English ability may correlate negatively with the amount of struggle when living in Canada. For example, Sarah shared that she believes that if an immigrant moved to Canada with an adequate level of spoken English ability, his or her transition and life in Canada in general would be much easier than an immigrant who does not speak the language.

Despite the fact that the acquisition of the language ability is quite stressful, all participants agreed that they believe that being able to speak two languages is a great asset and an advantage for their future career opportunities. They have an expectation that being bilingual would give them more chances getting a job in both Canada and Korea, with the opportunities for higher paying jobs in Korea.

Category 5: Advantages of being bicultural. Typically, participants reported that one of the major advantages to living in Canada as a foreign-born immigrant is the acquisition of multicultural understanding. Coming from a relatively homogenous society with an absolute majority of the population of Korean ethnicity, the exposure to cultural diversity in Canada has thought them to learn to understand different points of view.
In my opinions, some of the advantages of being a bicultural individual in Canada is being able to experience two different cultures at once without feeling unnatural or weird. And also, being able to appreciate multiculturalism itself is another one. I feel like I am okay with being exposed to different cultures (Example of Category 5, Advantages of Being Bicultural).

As described in Angela's response, participants shared that they enjoy and appreciate multiculturalism in Canada, and learn something new about another culture on a daily basis. According to them, their multicultural understanding is demonstrated when they are being flexible, open-minded, and accepting of other people's views and perspectives. John further explained this advantage as "developing a global perspective". He shared that he has increased in "his understanding of economic, social, and political forces across the world", and is able to appreciate the links between his own life and those of people throughout the world.

Bilingual ability is another advantage that participants find important in their lives in Canada. Participants reported that this ability does not only enable them to engage and be a part of the Canadian society, but also to maintain relationships with friends and families who are also Korean. Although most of them consider themselves as having a better fluency in Korean than in English, being able to speak English allows participants to facilitate cross-cultural communication and to support fellow immigrants and/or international students from Korea. For Sarah, who used to work at a hospital, her bilingual ability allowed her to be "the liaison between Korean patients and other hospital staff". At her last workplace where she worked as a sales associate, she helped Korean customers by answering their questions and navigating them through the store. Sarah explained how rewarding it was for her.
The store that I used to work at was in downtown area where there are many tourists and short-term visitors from across the world. Whenever there was a Korean customer, my coworkers used to send her to me. I was able to speak in Korean with the customer, and she would give me good feedback about the service that I provided her. It made me feel good. My sales went up quite rapidly because Korean tourists usually buy a lot of our products as their gifts for their family and friends in Korea (Example of Category 5, Advantages of Being Bicultural).

Category 6. Disadvantages of being bicultural. Although participants reported overall satisfaction in their lives in Canada, it was evident that many of them have experienced discrimination and racism. Betty spent some time during the interview explaining how she was bullied in high school for not being able to speak English. Most of the things that she experienced (i.e., being left out, getting her possession stolen, etc) were emotional and heartbreaking for a young teenage girl.

John also shared that he thinks "many people still have certain stereotypes about Koreans and Asian minorities in general," and believes that such stereotypes still exist at work and social life as a barrier to economical success. His story about his brother illustrates how many Koreans experience discrimination in their workplace.

My brother is often looked down by his bosses and coworkers just because of the fact that he is an Asian guy. It becomes more evident when it comes to promotions. It is almost like they think my brother would not be able to do anything even if he is treated quite unfairly. It is obvious that Canadians or Caucasians have more opportunities. It really is obvious. Generally speaking, we, Koreans, always get behind. Who would succeed in Canada? Of
course Canadians do. Unless we try exceedingly or meet a really nice boss, it never happens to us (Example of Category 6, Disadvantages of Being Bicultural).

Other participants also reported that there are limited job and/or career opportunities for them in the community. They are often confused about where and how to receive information, and are unfamiliar with accessing and utilizing resources. It was reported by Cindy that this is mainly "due to the confined network of people in the immediate ethnic community, and the disconnection to the mainstream community."

In exchange for acquiring their legal status in Canada that allows them to live and function as citizens, participants had to forfeit their Korean nationality. For all participants, this exchange was made when they were younger by their parents, and often before their assent. As Brendon stated, "I recently felt homesick after visiting Korea last winter, and had considered seriously about going back," participants shared that they miss Korea and will always have a longing for their mother country.

**Category 7: Ambivalent attitude toward being bicultural.** Typically, participants were ambivalent about their bicultural experiences and life in Canada in general. Feeling love and hate toward their own bicultural experiences was discussed, and participants reported that they have felt both regretful and satisfied about living in Canada. Brendon's response illustrates his ambivalent feelings and attitude towards living in Canada.

*I often think about what are valuable things that I have gained throughout my immigrant experience and what advantages that I can take from it. Right now, I feel like there are good things and bad things, and benefits and drawbacks. I am okay with living here in Canada. I have no problem living here forever. Nevertheless, if I could go back in time*
and have the option of resetting everything, I would choose not to come back (Example of Category 7, Ambivalent Attitude Toward Being Bicultural).

As is evident from Brendon's response, participants were conscious of the advantages and disadvantages of living in Canada as an immigrant. Sarah, along with a few other participants shared that she is grateful that she has "less tension and pressure in life in general", however, was resentful about losing experiences in Korea. There are moments of discomfort for them when they become reminded about the limited cultural knowledge and experience in Canada. Nevertheless, they stated that they have learned to be comfortable with the discomfort and be able to function confidently in their everyday life.

Identity is another concept that contribute to the ambivalent experience of participants. When asked about their understanding of their own identity, most participants responded that they consider themselves as Korean-Canadians, with an emphasis on their pride in Korean ethnicity. For example, Angela described herself as culturally "half Korean and half Canadian," and Sarah shared feeling like "being right in the middle". Interestingly, every participant who discussed cultural identity mentioned experiencing an increased pride in their Korean ethnicity recently as they become more exposed to Korean culture through media.

I am grateful that I was born Korean. I really am thankful. I love Korean culture. I keep myself updated with Korean news and entertainment because I do not think they have nothing to do with me. I do not know what I am proud of about my Korean background, but, to sound simple, I like Korea because it is my country. It is more of an affection or fondness (Example of Category 7, Ambivalent Attitude Toward Being Bicultural).

Similarly, John reported maintaining a close connection to different aspects of Korean culture. He explained that it would be closest to how he defines his own identity to consider him as
having a half immigrant identity. He reported that he is "consistently conscious of his status as an immigrant in Canada", and shared that he will "never feel fully Canadian". To him and other few participants, Korean identity was the foundation of their identity.

**Category 8: Feeling positive about being bicultural.** Participants reported that they feel comfortable and stable in Canada in general. According to David, he holds genuine affection toward the culture and people of Canada, and is grateful for his life in the country.

*I am very much satisfied with where my life is at right now. As I share my experiences with you, it becomes more clear that I am satisfied with what I am doing in my life currently. I have people that I love, live in comfort, and have settled in a wonderful environment. I am happy because I live without lacking* (Example of Category 8. Feeling Positive About Being Bicultural).

Participants, including David, were particularly thankful for their parents who provided them the opportunities to reside and start a new life in Canada. As Angela shared, they are glad that they moved to Canada and are "grateful for [their] parents for making the decision".

Living in Canada is also rewarding for participants and gives a sense of accomplishment to them. John shared that it is "truly worthwhile for [him] to have overcome the difficult transition period". He reported that he was able to establish emotional and financial security in Canada "because he has successfully adjusted to the new culture".

**Category 9: Feeling negative about being bicultural.** According to participants, the feeling of frustration, along with worries and anxiety, also exist in their lives. Without fully understanding where the emotions stem from, participants feel both physically and emotionally tired and frustrated, and oftentimes are confused.
Every Korean immigrant I know struggles living in Canada. It is difficult for them, and they are tired. They feel neither comfortable nor secure. I do not want to keep living a tiring life like everyone else does. That is why I often go on a long-term trip, as an escape from reality (Example of Category 9. Feeling Negative About Being Bicultural).

As is evident in Sarah's passage, insecurity is another common word that participants used to describe their bicultural experiences. It was quite commonly reported by participants including Miranda that they are insecure about their future, relationships, and coping with worries. In addition to feeling generally anxious and insecure, John reported that as he becomes more acculturated and familiar with Canadian culture, his responsibility and pressure to strive also grows.

**Category 10: Relationship dynamics.** Participants commonly reported having close relationships with Korean immigrants. They shared that they have deeper and more personal friendships with ethnically identical Korean people than non-Koreans due to the commonalities across their language and culture. Participants find their cross-cultural interaction and communication with people with different cultural and/or ethnical backgrounds less comfortable and often confined to work or school.

*Because my friends and I grew up in similar family environments, we share similar thoughts and interests. Most of my friends are family-oriented as I am, and still live with their parents. If my non-Korean friend finds out that I still live with my parents, she will think that I am weird* (Example of Category 10, Relationship Dynamics).

Above is one of the examples Cindy shared about having more intimate relationships with her Korean friends than with her friends who are not Korean. Cindy explained that many more of the culture-specific norms and beliefs that she preserves in her life are often misinterpreted or
misjudged by people outside Korean culture. In line with Cindy's response, Sarah also reported that she usually feels awkward when she visits her non-Korean friends because she is "conscious of what is appropriate and what is not when someone visits their friend's house in Canadian culture."

Cindy and Sarah were two of the six people who discussed the differences between their relationships with Korean immigrants and non-Koreans. Interestingly, the six people also equally pointed out that they feel closest to Korean immigrants who have similar immigration backgrounds as them than Korean short-term residents in Canada. They reported that they have little commonalities with Korean short-term residents in Canada, and feel more understood by Korean immigrants who have spent similar amount of time in the country. Sarah further explained that she no longer puts effort into making friends with non-immigrant status (i.e., international students from Korea or Korean people with work visa) because she finds it challenging to find common ground with them. According to her, this preference is also "due to having experienced parting with many friends who left Canada after a certain time to return to Korea". Therefore, participants' close relationships are predominantly limited to Korean-speaking immigrants who have had similar acculturation experiences and are residing in Canada with an immigrant status.

**Category 11: Frame switching.** Several aspects of participants' bicultural experiences emerged within this category. Generally, participants shared that they feel comfortable switching between their cultural frames in response to cues in the social context. They find themselves able to change their perceptions of the world and react appropriately to cultural cues and are used to experiencing moments of frame switching on a daily basis.
Switching between the two cultural modes is something that is embedded in me. It is very natural and is a part of my everyday life. I have no problem switching back and forth between my Korean mode and Canadian mode, and I am rarely aware of the process (Example of Category 11, Frame Switching).

The quote describes how easy and natural it is for Sarah to shift between cultural frames in response to cues in the social context.

According to participants including Sarah, frame switching is largely language-dependent. Based on the language that they are using to communicate in the moment, they are likely to act more according to the culture in which the language is spoken. For example, Cindy reported that she finds herself "more extraverted and upfront when [she] communicates in English while [she] becomes more gentle and emotional when she speaks in Korean." Considering that being polite and humble is a gesture of being respectful to another person in Korean culture, her frame switching is consistent with the language that she uses.

Another example of this tendency is when participants communicate in English with second generation Korean-Canadians who have a good understanding of Korean culture. Despite the fact that they share similar cultural values and foundation, participants act in the way that they would when they are interacting with non-Koreans who do not speak the Korean language. Cindy also relates to this tendency and shared:

I speak in English with my sister, who is much more Canadian-minded. I know this might sound strange, but when we talk to each other, the conversation itself becomes more Canadian-like. Well, for sure, my personality changes when that happens. I am originally quite a shy person, however, I tend to become more outgoing (Example of Category 11, Frame Switching).
In line with Cindy's response, participants, including Miranda, John, and Betty, added that they feel more comfortable with the way that they are when they are speaking in Korean and think that their fundamental cultural frame is Korean.

**Category 12: Sense of choice.** According to three participants, Miranda, Brendon, and John, having a place to return to (i.e., Korea) gives a sense of power in their situation and a feeling of control over their life. They consider it a privilege that not everyone possesses. Brendon describes how it is to consider Korea as a place where he can return to in the future.

*I have thought about maybe going back to Korea for awhile. I always think in my head, 'I can always go back to Korea.' If anything happens, I can just leave everything and go live with my parents. This thought gives me a sense of security and control in my life. If I were living in Korea whole my life, I would not have a choice. But I do have the privilege because I am an immigrant living in Canada* (Example of Category 12, Sense of Choice).
Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to have a better understanding of the complex nature of foreign-born Korean-Canadians and to investigate how the two cultures - Korean and Canadian - are internalized in the targeted population. The categories and subcategories generated from the interview data reveal three main topics: balancing the pros and cons, complexity and ambivalence of cultural identity, and issues related to coping and receiving support.

The results of this study indicated that participants are aware of the advantages and disadvantages of living in Canada, and that they consciously weigh the pros and cons of each of their bicultural experiences. The ways they understand their identity are hard to be generalized, and yet, are similar in that both their Korean and Canadian identities coexist internally. Despite the emotional challenges they face in their daily lives, support is often limited in the community due to their disconnection to the mainstream society.

Balancing the Pros and Cons

Participants in this study were generally clear about the benefits of being a bicultural individual in Canada, and were able to identify major challenges at the same time. According to them, the benefits of living in Canada as Korean-Canadians include: developing a multicultural understanding, having a global perspective, increasing flexibility and open-mindedness, acquiring English language ability, and acting as a bridge between Korean and Canadian cultures. It was evident that participants feel adjusted and enjoy their life in Canada. It was described as more active and free, and as offering a better quality of life and economical advantages.

Some of the challenges participants commonly reported having faced with in their life in Canada include: language barrier, limited career opportunities and resources, stereotypes and discrimination, and cultural conflicts. Many of them shared that they struggle with feeling
emotionally insecure and also with general uneasiness about themselves and life. Korean-Canadians, as described by participants, are constantly conscious of these difficulties, and strive to search for compensations in their life.

One of the ways that they act to neutralize their experiences is through offsetting their difficulties by gaining benefits of being a Canadian permanent resident or citizen. Participants reported that they appreciate their entitlement to legal, social, and economical benefits, such as health care, free education, and pension plan. They consider these advantages well worth the challenging transition period as well as the ongoing acculturation experiences. To participants, the presence of negative experiences and feelings function as the reasons that justify their status in Canada. Due to the past and current struggles and challenges, they believe that they rightly deserve to be called Canadian and to have rights and freedoms as any other citizen of Canada. This belief and the process of weighing pros and cons seems to act as a catalyst for being more satisfied with the bicultural life.

**Complexity and Ambivalence of Cultural Identity**

Considering the ambivalent feelings and unique immigrant experiences of their life in Canada, trying to find a balance in the bicultural lifestyle can be a sensitive and confusing concept for Korean-Canadians. Participants of the study, for example, typically reported that they do not have a strong sense of belonging in the mainstream culture nor in the modern Korean culture. Despite the potential struggles in developing their identity related to their own culture, however, participants of the study did not find their cultural identity confusion to be a serious issue in life, and were able to use their own terms to describe who they are culturally. Some of the descriptions included: 'Korean-Canadian,' 'Korean Vancouverite,' 'half immigrant Korean,' and 'half Korean and half Canadian.'
One of the typical responses of participants was that they are constantly being reminded of their bicultural identity on a daily basis. According to them, there are a number of factors which cause them to become conscious of their status as immigrants, including the challenges and barriers discussed in the previous section. Additionally, participants are frequently exposed to various aspects of Korean culture via the internet and media, and become easily aware of their fondness for Korea. Yet, all of them commonly reported that they have not experienced identity crisis or struggled desperately to define who they are culturally.

During the data analysis, a number of psychological processes were identified as the strategies participants use to make sense of their bicultural identity. First, participants typically reported that they have effortfu!
l!lly practiced to accept the uncertainty and ambivalence in their cultural identity. Throughout their immigrant years, they have learned to perceive themselves in a unique way that does not require them to belong to any of the two categories of 'being Korean' and 'being Canadian.' In this way, they were able to acknowledge their own experiences of being confused about their cultural identity, and to maintain their values from both cultures. Furthermore, this strategy has helped them normalize their longing for some aspects of Korean culture including food, entertainment, family and friends. The increased sense of acceptance in their bicultural identity seemed to have helped them validate their feelings and experiences of their life in Canada.

Second, participants shared that they enjoy being in the border of Korean and Canadian cultures because it allows them to combine and blend aspects of the cultures involved. According to them, they have developed an enhanced ability to carefully weigh the merits of each culture and integrate them into a coherent whole when needed, and reminding themselves about such ability gives them a sense of being well-adjusted and regaining control in life. For example, one
participant shared that he cherishes the nature in Canada and loves engaging outdoor activities. One the other hand, he likes Korean music and enjoys reading Korean literature. The fact that they have the ability to navigate and utilize advantages of each of the cultures seems to be empowering for participants.

Lastly, it has also been reported by participants that they have learned to appreciate themselves for being an intermediary between Korean and Canadian cultures. Taking part in and being comfortable with both cultures, they perceive themselves being able to bridge the gap between their Korean heritage culture and Canadian culture. Specifically, they often find themselves become a conflict mediator or communication facilitator for their family members and friends who have limited understanding about either of the two cultures. On a societal level, they have shared the insights, skills, and unique psychological experiences that they have gained throughout their own adjustment and acculturation period to help others who might be taking a similar path. In this way, participants feel pride in being bicultural and find it rewarding to be the bridge between the two cultures.

**Issues Related to Coping and Receiving Support**

Despite being generally well-adjusted, participants reported that they experience a series of challenges and hardships which create stress in their lives as immigrants on a daily basis. According to them, they are frequently distressed by various emotional, financial, and relational issues, and are often confused about how to cope better with such stressors.

Emotionally, participants reported being ambivalent about living in Canada. Considering that they are exposed to conflicts over assimilation and bicultural experiences, it is easy to understand that they feel uncertain and insecure about their identity and sense of belonging. Based on their responses, being able to support a standard of living now and in the foreseeable
future is also important to participants. Due to the challenges in locating a window of employment opportunities, however, participants shared that finding financial stability is difficult for them and causes distress in their lives. In their everyday relationships, they feel great pressure from their family members and experience feeling left out of the social and cultural mainstream.

When coping with these challenges, however, they are often faced with a number of barriers to accessing resources and support. First, the Korean-Canadian community they belong to is disconnected from the mainstream society, and has a limited amount of resources and information, according to participants. The people in the community are often uninformed or misinformed about certain health care services and social support available in Canada, and do not know where and how they receive help. Second, participants reported that they typically solve personal problems on their own or rely on friendships and family members. They shared that they feel most understood by people who share similar backgrounds with them (e.g., friends who also moved to Canada as a teenager) because they are more easily understood. Lastly, another barrier to accessing resources and support is participants’ limited proficiency with the English language. Given that language barrier is a life-long challenge to participants, it is reasonable that they are hesitant to seek help from professionals with whom they need to communicate in English.

During the interviews, many participants shared that they generally feel quite isolated from Canadian culture and wish for a newly built connection that is culturally sensitive. There is clearly the need for effective communication about accessing appropriate services and a wider social network with the mainstream society.
Limitations

This study achieved meaningful information about the life of Korean-Canadian immigrant and provided participants with the opportunity to freely share their experiences. Nevertheless, there were a number of limitations in the study, and future work in this field may benefit by looking to improve on these areas. First, the ability to focus on different aspects of each category could be more improved. The current study achieved its goal by exploring a variety of experiences and generating rich information about the bicultural life of participants. A variety of categories and subcategories were emerged, and the study captured the wide range of participants' experiences. Nevertheless, it would be important for future researchers to consider investigating more fully on a few of the existing categories to deepen the knowledge about each of them.

Second, given that the interview often involved a short-term, asymmetrical relationship between me and the individual, it is possible that social desirability intervened when the individual's responses were communicated. Since the study provided little time for me to develop rapport with participants, some participants might have attempted to leave a good impression by selectively sharing their experiences and emotions. To be more specific, they might have overreported positive experiences and underreported negative ones, or vice versa, in order to be viewed favourably by me. With multiple interviews with longer duration, the discussion between the researcher and the individual may be more natural and draw more information.

Although generalizability is not within the scope of the current study, the current study extracted meaningful themes and experiences of the Korean-Canadian bicultural individuals. The results of this study, however, represent bicultural immigration experiences for only eight individual - a small number of individuals from a large population. It is important to
acknowledge that the term "Korean-Canadians" cannot stand for the unique and personal experience of every one of the individuals in the fast-growing population. Therefore, future research, even with participants from very similar cultural and immigration backgrounds, could generate results that are quite different. While it was not an intended goal of this current study, it would be important for future research to broaden the scope of the study by including the perspective and input of a variety of populations such as: individuals with longer immigration history, people in their 40s and 50s, and second generation Korean-Canadians.

Other potential limitations of the study were discussed in the section on personal context and potential biases as well as in the section on the trustworthiness of the collected data and interpretation.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

This study examined the internalized culture of Korean-Canadians who were born and raised in Korea and moved to Canada at or after the age of 13. A total of 12 categories and 28 subcategories of participants' responses uncovered three main topics that are of relevance to the population: balancing the pros and cons, complexity and ambivalence of cultural identity, and issues related to coping and receiving support.

The study affirmed previous research findings (Cheung & Cheung, 2011; Lee & Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Lee & Padilla, 2014; Shin et al., 2011) and explored the commonalities between the experiences of Korean-Americans and Korean-Canadians. Korean-Canadians, similar to Korean-Americans, have been known to face widespread prejudice, discrimination and barriers to equal opportunity, and are sometimes victims of racially motivated bullying. Additionally, both immigrant groups similarly reported feeling disconnected from the mainstream society (Chung & Chung, 2011; Noh & Avison, 1996; Yeh, 2002). Similar to the previous research (La Roche & Maxie, 2003; Shin, 2002; Yi & Tidwell, 2005), this study has shown that Korean-Canadian participants also reported persistent underutilization of mental health services when dealing with emotional and interpersonal problems and overcoming various challenges in their everyday life. It was highlighted that Korean-Canadians in distress are likely to cope with the stressor on their own or by receiving assistance from the members in the same ethnic community. Therefore, it appears that Korean-Canadians are comparable to Korean-Americans in that it is important for scholars and professionals to better understand their psychological help-seeking tendencies and the barriers preventing access to services.

The current study shed light on the possible underlying psychological processes experienced by Korean-Canadians. For example, through being conscious of their bicultural
identity and maintaining their resilience in their experiences, participants have created the internal process of balancing the pros and cons of living in Canada. This particular internal response pattern is found to be natural for participants, and to allow them to create meaning and purposes in their lives. I believe this particular information is extremely valuable because it fills the gap in understanding the population by adding the knowledge about the internal and emotional experiences of Korean-Canadians. It expands and adds to the previous studies and models of acculturation by challenging the existing beliefs and assumptions about the population. Most importantly, it challenges the illustration of Korean immigrants as weak and vulnerable in literature and shed new light on their strengths and resilience.

Lastly, this study has provided helping professionals with useful information about participants that might apply to other Korean-Canadians in a similar circumstance. Coming from the perspective of helping profession, the importance of understanding the unique needs of the population and how the needs are integrated in their everyday life was illuminated. Particularly, it has been found important for helping professionals to acknowledge and validate the internal processes and personal experiences of Korean-Canadians. Moreover, professionals should bear in mind that this specific cultural group has a limited connection to the mainstream society and that they require service providers to approach them in a more active way. For example, finding opportunities to publically promote the access to available services at various cultural events and community centres where many Korean-Canadians attend could help decrease the distance between the mainstream society and the Korean-Canadian community. Due to their tendency to seek help within their own cultural group, it would also be effective to spread the information about available resources through word-of-mouth. The extra effort to promote effective communication about accessing appropriate services and help Korean-Canadians would allow
professionals to help Korean-Canadians connect with the mainstream society in a more efficient way and self-actualize. Therefore, the study findings can be used for exploring and carrying out implications in their research and practice, and delivering appropriate services to the specific cultural group.

The study also has implications for counselling process since its results and discussion can be incorporated as a part of planning a culturally sensitive individual session or counselling program for Korean immigrants. More specifically, the meaningful categories and subcategories extracted from the current study could be used as different topics for group counselling and as discussion questions in individual counselling. The questions used in the interview would be suitable to be included in prescreening questionnaires and/or assessments. Additionally, Validationgram, which was used in the beginning of the interview to encourage reflection and further elaboration by participants, could be used as a separate counselling tool and help individuals narrate their immigrant stories in a more elaborate way.

With the initial recognition of limited information about Korean immigrants in the literature, the current research results will hopefully contribute to expanding previous research on bicultural Korean-Canadian immigrants who were born and raised in Korea until they moved to Canada as teenagers. By contributing to a greater understanding of the population, I hope the study data present in-depth acknowledgment and validation of the bicultural experiences of Korean-Canadians which enables researchers in the field to generate more studies on the population.

The results of this study have reinforced my belief that participants have the capacity to be flexible and empathetic, the ability to bounce back from a difficult situation, and the source of strength and resilience within them. In everyday life, they are faced with adversities related to
being bicultural, and yet, are able to navigate across cultures, constructing their own personalized cultural contexts by synthesizing their heritage Korean culture and Canadian culture.

As a person who has also lived through the distress of language barriers, employment roadblocks, and transition difficulties, I empathically understand the struggles of participants on a personal level. In fact, I could easily connect and empathize with participants through being open, honest, and self-aware of my own experiences as a bicultural individual. Being able to appropriately normalize and relate to participants' concerns and needs allowed me to express my respect and admiration for participants. The stories and experiences of participants moved me greatly with humbleness, and have pin-spotted the stories and experiences of my own. The overlapping aspects of our experiences revealed what I have developed internally throughout my own days in Canada: the same kind of resiliency and the potential to strive.

In addition, the current study has a personal value since it fulfills my desire to contribute to society and to the Korean-Canadian community. Throughout the study, I felt I was acting as an advocate for the Korean-Canadian population and giving back to the community that supported me as a new immigrant. All of the eight individuals who completed the interview commented that it was a positive experience and a great opportunity to reflect on the past and to make decisions for the future. Some of them shared that the interview motivated them to expand their own scope of their multicultural understanding, and also reminded them of the uniqueness of their bicultural experience.
Bibliography


Appendix A: Recruitment Poster

1. WERE YOU BORN IN SOUTH KOREA?
한국에서 태어나셨나요?

2. ARE YOU PERMANENT RESIDENT OR CITIZEN OF CANADA?
캐나다 영주권자이거나 시민권자이신가요?

3. DID YOU MOVE TO CANADA AT OR AFTER THE AGE OF 13?
13세 이후에 캐나다로 오셨나요?

4. HAVE YOU LIVED IN CANADA FOR 10 YEARS OR MORE?
캐나다에 10년 이상 사셨나요?

UBC 상담심리학과 대학원에서 인터뷰 대상을 모집중입니다

- 캐나다에서 한인 이민자로서 살아가는 경험을 나눠주세요
- 자유롭게 캐나다, 한국 두 문화에 관해 이야기를 들려주세요.
- 인터뷰 내용은 비밀 보장이 확실히 되며 연구 결과는 한국 이민자 문화와
  삶의 질을 위한 연구에 쓰입니다.
- 문의나 신청은 아래의 연락처로 전화나 이메일 부탁드립니다.

문의 및 인터뷰 신청
Stephanie Seo 서수화, MA Candidate at UBC  

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Appendix B: Consent Form

Title of Study: Traversing the Border of Two Cultures: Understanding Internalized Cultures of Korean-Canadians

Principle Investigator: Dr. Norman Amundson, Professor, Ph.D.; Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education; Faculty of Education; University of British Columbia (UBC)
Contact Information: 604-822-6757 or email: norman.amundson@ubc.ca

Co-Investigator: Stephanie Seo, M. A. (Candidate), Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, Faculty of Education; UBC.
Contact Information: 604-818-4564 or email: stephseo@gmail.com

This research is part of Stephanie's thesis requirement for completing a Master of Arts (M.A.) in the Counselling Psychology Program. Upon completion, the thesis will be a public document that can be viewed through the UBC library.

Why we are doing this research? The purpose of this research is to explore the ways in which Korean-Canadians make meaning of their lives as foreign-born immigrants. Although a considerable amount of research has documented the experiences of Korean immigrants in the United States, little research has been conducted solely with Korean immigrants who reside in Canada. Thus, the aim of this study is to learn more about how Korean-Canadians perceive and understand their own lives as immigrants by inviting them to share their stories, opinions and points of view.

What happens if you agree to participate? If you choose to participate, you will be asked to fill out a brief demographics form, and then complete a validationgram which is a semi-structured activity designed to help individuals identify meanings and values. The purpose of the activity in this study is to encourage participants' reflection and further elaboration, however, it is not required for you to base your interview response on the content and the experience of your validationgram activity. After creating your own validationgram, you will be asked to engage in an open-ended interview. The interview will last approximately 1.5 hours, and you will only need to share what you feel comfortable. Approximately 1-2 months following the interview, you will be contacted for a short meeting and will be given an opportunity to review what we found.
**Study Results:** The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis and may also be published in journal articles. We may also share the information at meetings and conferences, however, your name will not be mentioned in any publication or presentation.

**Potential Risks:** We do not think there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. The context of the study, however, may sometimes involve disclosure of personal information and discussion of sensitive topics which may seem personal or uncomfortable to you. Therefore, it is important you know that you do not need to talk about anything you do not want to.

**Potential Benefits:** By being part of this study, you will get the chance to have your opinions heard and to have an opportunity to share your view. Your participation will contribute to the knowledge base needed in working with Korean immigrants and in developing better ways to help people by influencing policy and practice. The study may also help you increase your self-awareness and to have an opportunity to express pent-up feelings.

**Confidentiality:** All the information we collect in this study that is related to your identity will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone without obtaining your permission first. All the audio recordings, notes, and transcripts from your interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the UBC Department of Education and Counselling Psychology and Special Education and will be saved on a computer that is password-protected. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Instead, we will replace your name with a number and/or a pseudonym. It is UBC's policy that after five years, all data will be destroyed.

There are three exceptional circumstances under which confidentiality cannot be maintained: 1) If there is reason to suspect physical, mental or sexual child abuse; 2) If there is serious risk of suicide and/or self harm and 3) If a participant presents a clear and imminent threat to someone else or society at large. If at any point we assess participant’s self-disclosure to indicate any one of these three situations, we will have to take steps to ensure the safety of participants. This might include, but is not exclusive to: emergency services, the Ministry of Child and Family Development, and counselling support services. Participants will always be informed of the precautions that are being taken and will be given the option of accessing these services themselves with the support of the investigator.

**Contact for Information about the Study:** If at any point before, during or after the study you have questions about the study, please feel free to contact the principal investigator or co-investigator. Their contact information is on the first page of this document.

Contact for Concerns about the Rights of Research Participants: If at any point you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598. If long distance, e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.
Consent and the Right to Withdraw: Consent to be part of this research study is completely voluntary, which means that you have the choice to decide if you want to be part of it or not. People who agree to be part of this research can also choose to withdraw at any time with no explanation and with no consequences. You also have the right not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer, and can choose to take a break at any time during the interview.

Signature:
I understand the information provided for the study "Traversing the Border of Two Cultures: Understanding Internalized Cultures of Korean-Canadians" as described in this consent form.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

“I consent/I do not consent (circle one) to my participation in this study.”

___________________________________  _________________
Participant Signature                  Date

___________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

☐ Check box if you are interested in receiving a summary of the research findings.

Signature of Investigator:

"These are the terms under which I will conduct research."

___________________________________  _________________
Signature of Investigator                  Date
Appendix C: Demographics Form

Participant Demographics Form

Please answer the following questions by filling in the blank sections and circling answers where appropriate. If you need any help, please feel free to ask the researcher. If there are any questions that you feel uncomfortable answer, you have the right to leave them blank. **All information provided will be kept strictly confidential.** Thank you for your participation.

1. **Age:** _________________________
2. **Gender:**
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Other: _________________________
3. **Religion/Spiritual Belief System:** _________________________
4. **Sexual Orientation:** _________________________
5. **Relationship Status:**
   a. Married/Common-law
   b. Committed relationship
   c. Divorced
   d. Single
   e. Widow/Widower
   f. Other: _________________________
6. **Country of Origin:** _________________________
7. **Length of time you have lived in Canada:** _________________________
8. **Area of Canada that you live in:** _________________________
9. **People in your household (please specify their ages and relationship to you, but no names):**
   __________________________________________________________
10. **Language Spoken:** _________________________
11. **Current Employment/Career:** _________________________
Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Validationgram Activity (30 minutes)

"Before we begin with the actual interview, I would like you to engage in this validationgram activity. This is an activity designed to help individuals identify meanings and values and discover associated emotions. The purpose of this exercise in this research is to help and encourage your reflection and further elaboration, and it is not necessary for you to base your interview response on the content and/or the experience of your validationgram activity. For the next 10-20 minutes or so, please indicate on this sheet what are personally important to you in these four areas. The items closer to the center should be the ones that are more important to you. If there is any item that doesn't necessarily belong to any of the categories, you can put them in the center circle where it says "self." You can start anywhere and you're welcome to move back and forth among these areas if you wish. Feel free to ask me any questions during the activity."

Interview Questions (60 minutes)

A. Open Ended Warm Up Question:

"I know you have completed the demographic form, but it would be nice for me to get to know you a little bit."
- "Could you tell me about yourself?"
- "What would you like me to know before we begin?"

B. Living in Canada As Korean-Canadian

"As I have explained earlier, this research aims to understand how Korean immigrants in Canada make sense of their lives. I am interested in exploring how the Korean-Canadian individual understands their identity, and how the individual understand the interaction between their Korean culture and Canadian culture in their lives."

- "How do you identify yourself, culturally?"
- "Can you tell me about what it is like to live in Canada as a Korean immigrant?"
- "How would you describe the interaction of the two distinct cultures in your current life and the results?"
- "How do you deal with the conflicts between Korean culture and Canadian culture, if you have noticed any cultural differences?"
- "Tell about a time when you felt living in Canada as a foreign-born Korean-Canadian was helpful or useful."
- "Tell about a time when you felt living in Canada as a foreign-born Korean-Canadian was hard, difficult, or unhelpful."
- "Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience of living in Canada as a Korean-Canadian?"
Appendix E: Validationgram Activity

Validationgram Template