METRO VANCOUVER’S KOREATOWN: MEDIATING PLACES OF BELONGING WITHIN THE POLITICS OF MULTICULTURALISM

by

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Abstract

Canada is one of the first countries to establish and maintain state sponsored policies of multiculturalism to address multiple identities, cultures, and mass migration within its national borders and under a singular national identity. As a way to examine how these state ideologies and policies inform the everyday notions and practices of multiculturalism at the local level, this thesis examines the emerging space of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver to highlight how multicultural spaces are constituted and contested within discourses of ‘accommodating difference and diversity’. This paper also explores how multicultural tensions within this space are articulated and mediated to contribute to further discussions around the meaning of home and belonging within multicultural spaces in Canada.

Situating the discussion within theories of liberal multiculturalism and its criticisms as well as social space theories, this research highlights the complex and interconnecting local, national, and global dimensions of multiculturalism and its discourses. This thesis also uses local newspaper coverage of a local leasing dispute and interviews with individuals working within the ‘Koreatown’ area to highlight how local actors strategically mediate these discourses to develop the space in its current location and associated meanings of representation.

Although there is currently no civic recognition of a ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver, this thesis maps a strong argument for its existence through the narratives of key actors who have initiated and developed the space. While seeming to illustrate multicultural tenants of ‘difference and diversity’, ‘Koreatown’ in fact represents a complex and dynamic space where local actors are negotiating contradictions and tensions of multiculturalism to constitute spaces of meaning in everyday local spaces. It presents a case study to illustrate how local actors are mediating multiculturalism within spaces to (re)create and (re)define spaces of belonging in Canada.
Preface

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Within contemporary global systems of mass migration and movements of capital, Canada has maintained its commitment to multicultural frameworks to address the politics of living with cultural and linguistic differences within one nation. As one of the first countries to establish state sponsored policies of multiculturalism, Canada is often perceived as effectively ‘accommodating’ these aspects of ‘difference’ and ‘diversity’ within its national borders and national identity. While multiculturalism tends to be recognized as a unifying concept able to take many different national identities and unify them under the umbrella term Canadian, many scholars have noted that there exists no clear definition of multiculturalism itself.

Although it is beyond the scope of this research to discuss the collection of theories, ideologies, and state practices which have come to constitute various notions of what multiculturalism has come to mean, this paper aims to begin from the point where everyday meanings and practices are influenced by the paradoxical tensions often occurring between concepts of Multiculturalism as a state level ideological discourse in managing ‘difference’ or ‘diversity’ and multiculturalism as the practices, meanings, and expressions in creating everyday realities of citizens. As a way to frame an analysis of these M/multicultural inconsistencies, this paper draws on the concept of “situated multiculturalism” (Gunew, 2004) to capture the multiple, interconnecting, and dynamic social processes embedded in informing everyday meanings of multiculturalism that are “always enmeshed in constructions of the local, the national, and the global” (p. 2). Gunew emphasizes “the need for sensitivity to the situatedness of a multicultural dynamics” (2004, p. 3) which is useful in enabling critical discussions of the processes of multiple contestations and constitutions of multicultural meanings and practices.
This research examines an emerging Korean commercial space in Metro Vancouver\(^1\), referred to in this paper as ‘Koreatown’\(^2\), as a site where “multicultural dynamics are situated”. I will argue that ‘Koreatown’ can provide a space through which notions of home and belonging in Canada can be interrogated. Through a focused exploration of the ways in which this space is constituted and contested, and how the discourses of multiculturalism are negotiated, maneuvered and deployed during moments of rupture or conflict, I hope to highlight the precariousness of a unifying multicultural rhetoric of ‘accommodating difference’. Particular attention will be paid to those moments when tension manifests in racialized anxieties. The aim of this research is to contribute to discussions that seek to moor spatially the discourses of multiculturalism through an examination of how citizens are engaging in multiple and complex ways to mediate, contest, and (re)imagine places as home within Vancouver’s ‘Koreatown’.

In Metro Vancouver, there are a number of Korean commercial spaces that have emerged, with the largest concentration being located around the intersection of North Road and Lougheed Highway between the Burnaby and Coquitlam municipalities. This commercial area, informally referred to as the space of ‘Koreatown’, services a number of surrounding municipalities and is emerging as an important symbolic and material space for Koreans in Metro Vancouver as well as Canada as a whole. Although ‘Koreatown’ \textit{seems} to represent and celebrate the nation’s commitment to multicultural policies and its international reputation as one of the few countries successfully implementing national policies of inclusion, respect for

\footnote{\textsuperscript{1}Metro Vancouver is the official organizing body that represents 22 municipalities in the greater Vancouver area, and includes Vancouver, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Surrey, and Langley. Formerly known as the Greater Vancouver Regional District, the name was replaced in September 2007 to Metro Vancouver (\url{www.metrovancouver.org}).}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{2}At the time of this research, there was no civic recognition of a ‘Koreatown’ area in Metro Vancouver. My use of ‘scare quotes’ in reference to ‘Koreatown’ is to indicate my personal choice in using this name as a descriptive tool to describe the Korean commercial area specific to this research. It is also to recognize the shifting and contested dimensions embedded in the politics of naming or identifying the Korean commercial area that will be discussed further in this paper.}
‘diversity’, and equality, what happens when these localities of accommodating ‘difference’ become ruptured by the very discourses they seem to be constituted by?

1.1 The H-Mart Incident: Ruptures in Multicultural Spaces

![Figure 1: Signage of West Willow Shopping Centre, Langley, B.C. 2007.](image)

On October 3, 2006 “The Province”, a Vancouver newspaper, printed a cover story about a leasing dispute between the owners of a strip mall and a few of its tenants that triggered a controversial debate about multiculturalism in its applications in local spaces. This leasing dispute began when Standford Plaza Incorporated, the new owner of the West Willow shopping mall in Langley, British Columbia located on the corner of Fraser Highway and Willowbrook Drive (Figure 1), leased the largest space in the building to H-Mart, a large United States-based multinational Korean grocery chain as an anchor tenant. Confronted with falling profits and a desire to increase flow to their shopping center, it was expected that as a well-known US-Korean international grocer, H-mart would increase sales in the strip mall which had been experiencing lagging sales since the previous large retail tenant had left (“Strip-mall owner denies race was
factor”, October 18, 2006, p. A4). Based on membership information collected from their other H-Mart stores, H-mart’s intention was to develop a Korean commercial district to service the large number of Koreans who were commuting up to an hour from Langley and Surrey to shop at their other Coquitlam location (Mason, October 16, 2006, p. A6). Subsequently, when leasing agreements were being re-negotiated for a few long-term non-Korean tenants in the mall, accusations were made by three business tenants that the mall owners had refused to renew their leases because they were non-ethnic Korean business owners and did not fit into an alleged agenda of a Korean-only mall. According to John Pook, manager of one of the affected businesses, “they’re making this into an Asian shopping plaza and I guess we don’t fit the bill” (Luymes, Oct 3, 2006, p. A8). He goes on further and states, “We were excited that a new anchor tenant was coming in, and we thought that we would be part of it like we have for the past 25 years. We got the rug pulled out from under us” (Claxton, October 14, 2006, p. 11).

The public response to the coverage of this leasing dispute was almost immediate and in a flurry of English print media attention, newspapers began printing articles, editorials, and letters from citizens weighing in on the incident. Opinions quickly focussed on the perceived element of racism and discrimination surrounding the H-Mart leasing disagreement. In his letter to the editor of the Vancouver “Province”, Dave Shearer writes:

Absolutely disgusting, this is pure racism ... I have to laugh every time I see the country patting itself on the back as to its “cultural diversity.” I see races heavily segregated and sticking to themselves in their own communities (i.e. Asian in Richmond, East Indians in Surrey, whites in Langley/Cloverdale). Asians putting up a mall for Asians is yet another example. I am ashamed that this type of racial discrimination is legal in Canada. (Shearer, October 6, 2006, p. A27)

Following this sentiment, Stephan Kolper expresses this dimension of racial discrimination in his letter to the editor of the “Vancouver Sun”:

If a group of white supremacists bought a shopping mall and ordered out all the Asian tenants, the politicians would be screaming, along with the public, right across Canada. [...] It’s a pity I was naive enough to believe that we’re equals, rather than skin color and
eye shape still playing a part in what we can get away with. (Kolper, October 14, 2006, p. C3)

For both Mr. Shearer and Mr. Kolper, the issue of discrimination and ‘reverse’ racism were seen as the key issues at the centre of the H-Mart dispute. This was based on the belief that leases were not renewed based on race or ethnicity (i.e. non-Korean ethnicity) by another group (i.e. Koreans), a common thread that was echoed by the majority of responses that were published in dailies in cities across Canada. These opinions hinged on the meaning of diversity, equality, accommodation, and inclusion to support their assertion that racism was occurring by those who refused to renew the leases of the non-Korean tenants.

As the public debate continued and the tone became more heated, one contributor in the Toronto “Globe and Mail” keenly noted that the H-Mart incident was “testing the strength, limits and definition of multiculturalism in Canada” (Mason, Oct 16, 2006, p. A.6). It became a case study that evoked controversial and emotional debate over the meaning of multiculturalism and how it ‘should’ or ‘should not’ be practiced by ‘good’ Canadians. The following excerpts from an editorial printed on October 16, 2006 in the Toronto “Globe and Mail” illustrate the connections made between the H-Mart incident and multiculturalism:

The joy of a multicultural country is that immigrants can become part of a Canadian society while retaining traditions and practices that mean a lot to them. There isn’t an either-or choice; differences are respected. The risk is in the institutionalizing of those differences. It is natural for people unfamiliar with English or French to seek at first the comfort zone of people who speak their language and to patronize stores that sell the food they know from their homelands; but the hope of a truly multicultural society is that they will fan out as they grow more comfortable with the broader Canada, and will not isolate themselves in ethnic enclaves.

[...] But beyond the legality is the question of being a good corporate citizen, of knowing right from wrong. As B.C. Opposition House Leader Mike Farnworth said, “We’re a multicultural society that is supposed to be building bridges, not walls.” Malls are big places; they can be shared. Non-Korean tenants might hire Korean-speaking staff to accommodate an influx of customers. Shoppers attracted by familiar offerings might try the thrill of the new. It’s called living and working together, and Canada has made rather a speciality of it.
On its website, H Mart makes a big deal of the “cultural diversity of foods and products” it offers and speaks of a “wide-ranging customers [sic] base.” In Langley, it aims for a narrow base and the opposite of cultural diversity. That may make business sense to H Mart; it may help it focus its marketing pitch to Korean-Canadian and Korean-American customers. But the message it sends – the business message as well as the social message – is that non-Koreans aren’t welcome and that, far from sharing the Canadian ideal of accommodation, H Mart is pursuing a uni-cultural model. As messages go, it’s a lousy one. (“Not Korean-Canadian? Can’t be a mall tenant”, October 16, 2006, p. A20).

The rhetoric of multiculturalism in these statements emphasizes how the H-Mart incident (i.e. Koreans) became framed as contrary to perceived Canadian value systems of cultural accommodation, inclusion, and respect thereby suggesting a transgression of individual rights by discrimination on the basis of race.

Eventually, public pressure called for the Attorney General of British Columbia to intervene before “things [got] really ugly” (Mason, October 16, 2006, p. A6). The Attorney General and Minister of Multiculturalism at the time, Wally Oppal, declined to become involved but directed all interested parties to appeal to the BC Human Rights Tribunal which deals with complaints covered by the BC Human Rights Code (Claxton, October 14, 2006, p. 11). The disgruntled tenants whose leases were not renewed, submitted an application that was accepted in January 2007, stating they had faced discrimination on the basis of race.

In their final decisions, the BC Human Rights Tribunal concluded there was no evidence to suggest racial discrimination of any kind had taken place. The Tribunal reasoned that the leasing disagreement was due to inaccurate and fragmented coverage in local media that ultimately led to inflated and incorrect assumptions and misunderstandings by involved parties. On November 23, 2007 the case was dismissed. Tribunal member, Lindsay Lyster concluded:

…that the complainants’ case is based on little more than conjecture based on what they read in the media and H-Mart’s reputation as a “Korean market’, as seen through the lens of their own unhappiness in being unable to maintain their businesses in the mall. There was something of a media storm, to which the complainants themselves contributed, in which the same, disputed, statements were repeated and subjected to interpretation and comment. Assumptions were made that a desire to serve as Asian market necessarily
equated with a preference for Asian tenants. The media coverage appears to have both led to and strengthened the complainants’ belief that they were being discriminated against. The complainants’ believe that they were discriminated against on the basis of race, however, sincerely held, is not a sufficient basis to warrant this complaint proceeding to hearing. (British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal, 2007: 436, 27)

In fact, the representative for Stanford Plaza Inc, the owners of West Willow shopping mall had argued all along that ‘race’ had never played a factor in the decision to not renew the three business tenants saying “it’s not personal, it’s business” (“Times Colonist”, October 18, 2006, p. A4). The decisions not to renew the leases of the three tenants were based on what was thought to be in the best financial interests of the mall owners and included an assessment of the inability of one business to pay market value for the space, a record of habitually late and in arrears rental payments by another shop, and in one case an exclusivity clause that conflicted with the mall’s intention to bring in a financial institution (Levitz, October 17, 2006). Therefore, if one concludes that the H-Mart incident was primarily a local business dispute, why did it escalate into a public debate about racism, discrimination, and multiculturalism that ultimately led to a review with the BC human rights Tribunal?

This research begins by drawing on the case study of the H-Mart incident as a point of entry to explore underlying tensions and anxieties surrounding ‘multicultural’ interactions in local spaces of Metro Vancouver. The H-Mart debate in the media revealed multiple meanings and understandings around terms of inclusion and exclusion, race and racism, citizenship and belonging. It draws attention to a moment in a particular local where ideological ‘Multiculturalism’ becomes incongruent with the ‘multicultural’ of everyday lived experience. The challenges of this paradox are not new to the multicultural debate. What is significant, however, is that the H-Mart incident accentuates a sort of anxiety specific to understandings and articulations of what is perceived to be multicultural practices in local spaces. Specifically, and more concerning was how the H-Mart incident presented itself as a moment of rupture that
revealed the spatial anxieties about Korean and Asian concentrations and enclaves in Metro Vancouver expressed through the discourse of multiculturalism.

The spatial dimension of racialized tensions in Metro Vancouver that are specific to Asian spaces and communities is not a new phenomenon and has been researched by scholars examining spaces within immigration trends, racial discourses, and urban and multicultural contexts. Although limited in research specific to Korean spaces in British Columbia, the focus on interconnections between Asian spaces and racialized discourses is useful to situate a discussion of spatial tensions in the region. For example, Kay Anderson (1991) historically situates the symbolic and material creation of Chinatown in Vancouver from 1875-1980, drawing attention to the ways racial and essentialist discourses were deployed and manifested in competition with one another. Within the spatial boundary of Chinatown, Anderson notes how race (i.e. Chinese/other) and place (i.e. Chinatown/outside) locally created oppositional meaning and consciousness for white European Canadians and continually reproduced and “affirmed white society’s own cultural sense of itself” to maintain their interests (K. Anderson, 1991, p. 158). David Ley (1995) and Katharyne Mitchell (1997) also examine racialized tensions but in residential spaces through their research on Hong Kong immigration to Vancouver and the subsequent “Monster House” debate that occurred in the 1990s. With Hong Kong’s transfer of sovereignty to the People’s Republic of China in 1997, Vancouver experienced increased immigration of Hong Kong nationals in the 1990s and racial tensions began to emerge in residential areas between these new immigrants and their neighbours over architectural housing aesthetics. These “monster houses” were large, multi-story, multi-family dwelling homes built to the maximum allotted square footage on property lots in traditionally Anglo elite, Tudor style

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white residential neighbourhoods in Vancouver. Mitchell explores how these homes not only ruptured white spatial entitlement and their hegemony over the shaping of space but also highlights how these power relations became contested in the public sphere by Chinese residents with a significant amount of “financial power and cultural savvy” to challenge local resistance (Mitchell, 2004, p. 172). But as David Ley (1995) notes, the monster house debates are much more than residential conflicts over space; rather, they are “markers of a grander divisiveness across the Canadian nation, as people from their own subject positions, inflected by language, ethnicity, class, gender, region, colonial status, and interest group, all employing the rhetoric of rights, make the practice of citizenship a jostling, competing fracas” (p. 204). The conflicts arising from the “monster houses” made apparent the tensions and contradictions of the multicultural subject who is confronted with ‘difference’ in the spaces they live. For Mitchell (2004), “proper behavior was behavior that would not be deemed offense to culturally British Canadians, and that would allow everyone to “get along”’ (p. 93). In this sense, conflicts over residential aesthetics were in actuality an issue of competing entitlements in spaces where assumed British frameworks of multiculturalism were being disrupted. The common thread through the works of Anderson, Ley, and Mitchell is the condition of space as a key site where conflict and contestation of individual interests and social relations are located. Specifically, they present cases studies of racial and spatial anxieties focused on perceived ‘Asian encroachment’ into traditionally homogenous Anglo Canadian neighbourhoods in Metro Vancouver.

1.2 (Re)Conceptualizing Spaces as Sites of Place Making

While the H-Mart incident allows us to situate ‘Koreatown’ within a particular Metro Vancouver climate, this analysis is contingent on a critical understanding of the concept of space as a site where social processes are occurring. This research paper draws on the notion of space presented by Doreen Massey (1994) that resists descriptive, static, and ahistorical analysis of
sites to move towards a concept that assumes it is always in a state of being constituted through complex social interactions, power, and local and global contexts. According to Massey:

Such a way of conceptualizing the spatial, moreover, inherently implies the existence in the lived world of a simultaneous multiplicity of spaces: crosscutting, intersection, aligning with one another, or existing in relations of paradox of antagonism. This is most significant because the social relations of space are experienced differently, and variously interpreted, by those holding different positions as part of it” (1994, p. 3).

This reconfiguring of the concept of space reveals the “inherent dynamism of the spatial” (Massey, 1994, p. 4) while also providing a framework to analyze the significance of power through social processes at multiple levels of interactions as well in relation to other spaces.

Massey goes on further to argue that this (re)conceptualization of space is essential if we are to move toward critical discussions of the social significance attached to the concept of place. She notes that although space and place are interconnected, the concept of place is defined by the social processes which attach it to a particular identity. She highlights two key aspects defining the identity of place:

First, what is specific about a place, its identity, is always formed by the juxtaposition and co-presence there of particular sets of social interrelations, and by the effects which that juxtaposition and co-presence produce. Moreover, and this is the really important point, a proportion of the social interrelations will be wider than and go beyond the area being referred to in any particular context as a place.

Second, the identities of places are inevitably unfixed. They are unfixed in part precisely because the social relations out of which they are constructed are themselves by their very nature dynamic and changing. They are also unfixed because of the continual production of further social effects through the very juxtaposition of those social relations. Moreover, that lack of fixity has always been so. The past was no more static than is the present. Places cannot ‘really’ be characterized by the recourse to some essential, internalized moment. (Massey, 1994, pp. 168-169)

In this context, the notion of place and attachment to identity becomes always constituted and contested. Its ever shifting and mobile definition “immediately problematizes for instance, any automatic associations with nostalgia and timeless stasis” thereby revealing there is “no authenticity of place” (Massey, 1994, p. 121). Massey concludes that “the identity of any place,
including that place called home, is in one sense for ever open to contestation” (p. 169). It is this
concept of place or place making that will be used in this research paper to explore ‘Koreatown’
in Metro Vancouver as a dynamic place where intersecting social processes, investments, and
identities are continually constituting and contesting its meaning and significance within local,
national, and global contexts. Further, these histories are in turn always informing the practices
of place making in the fluid present. This concept of place making also frames ways to discuss
how the place making of ‘Koreatown’ and tensions surrounding ‘Asian’ spaces is understood in
relation to other sites of place making and meanings of identity, home, and belonging in Canada.

1.3 Situating Koreans and Korean Spaces in Metro Vancouver

Recently, there has been a change in the social and cultural imaginary as North
Americans become more familiar with a number of Korean references in popular culture. As the
editors of one of the premier texts on Koreans in Canada note:

Representations of Koreans in North America have shifted dramatically over the past few
decades... for example ... American television programs such as M*A*S*H depict
Koreans as inferior and needing to be saved by the West – the Americans in particular.
More recently ... cultural signifiers of Korean food such as kimchee, products such as
Hyundai cars, cultural icons like Korean American actor and comedian Margaret Cho,
and top-ranked golf players Se Ri Park, Grace Park, and 17-year old Michelle Wie, as
well as ... discourses about North Korean leader Kim-Jong Il, are increasingly recognized
and consumed by the Canadian mainstream. Additionally ... U.S. media reports of the
1992 Los Angeles riots ... may still resonate with Canadian audiences. (Korean Canadian
Women’s Anthology Collective, 2007, p. 4)

For scholars attempting to create a frame of reference for Korean Canadians within global
movements and multi-ethnic contexts, the emergence of these “Korean” representations is useful
as they “appear to possess a certain kind of cultural currency” (Korean Canadian Women’s
Anthology Collective, 2007, p. 4) and can be an entry point to explore this community. At the
same time, they also provide challenges to those wanting to acquaint themselves with more
critical approaches and for those who are more “wary of any overly-celebratory presentations of
cultural difference that are integral to the Canadian project of nation-building in global economic contexts” (Korean Canadian Women’s Anthology Collective, 2007, p. 4) “Koreanness” has become part of the Canadian social imaginary but there is still a limited amount of secondary literature to explore this community.

Scholars and census data in Canada have well documented the long history of Asian migration to Canada since the mid-1800s, but there is relatively limited research on the Korean demographic in Canadian communities compared to the United States. Korean immigration to the United States has a longer history than Canada and as a result has more literature documenting Korean Americans. Ch’oe (Ch‘oe, 2007) and Patterson (Patterson, 1988, 2000) note that Korean immigration to the United States began in 1903, with early Korean indentured labour working on sugar plantations in Hawaii. According to the US Census Bureau statistics from 2010, there are currently just over 1.7 million Americans who identify of Korean origin. In North America, scholarship on Koreatowns emerges mainly in US contexts, the largest ones being in Los Angeles and New York. This attention to Koreatowns increased after the extensive media coverage of the 1992 Rodney King trial and the subsequent Los Angeles riots that occurred in the local Koreatown. Much of this research examines racial and economic factors between minority groups such as Black, Korean, and Jewish communities within American melting pot contexts, which are distinct and separate from Canadian multicultural contexts, immigration patterns, and histories.

In contrast, Korean immigration to Canada is relatively recent with immigration from South Korea beginning in the late 1960s and steadily increasing, particularly in the late 1990s (Kwak, 2004). According to the Statistics Canada Census data from 2006, there were over 146,000 people in Canada who identified of Korean ethnicity. The greater Vancouver area was a key destination for ethnic Koreans with estimates just over 46,000 compared to 35,000 in the
greater Toronto area. This group is highly educated, possess large amounts of capital, and are twice as likely to be self-employed compared to other visible minority groups. Most live in the two provinces of Ontario (54%) and British Columbia (32%), arrived during the 1990s, are relatively young (41% under 25), are twice as likely to have a university degree compared to the overall population and almost all can carry on a conversation in at least one official language (89%) (Lindsay, 2007, p. 7). In addition, there is also a significant international student population from Korea to Canada. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada data, in 2008 Korea had been the top source country for foreign students to Canada for the past decade. Metro Vancouver has also become a top destination city for both immigrants and students, contributing to a growing Korean diaspora in Canada.

Ethnic enclaves often play a critical social and commercial role for many newer immigrants and ethnic communities in multi-ethnic contexts. From my personal experiences and observations living in Metro Vancouver, there seems to be informal evidence of a number of Koreans areas that have developed to service the growing population of ethnic Koreans commercially and socially. These areas have become important symbolic and material spaces for ethnic Koreans as well as Canada as a whole, seeming to support the nation’s international reputation as one of the few countries to implement and maintain national multicultural policies of inclusion, respect, and equality. However, there has also been limited research that has critically explored the role of these Korean enclaves within this context. In Metro Vancouver, Kwak (2004) identifies a number of Korean residential and commercial concentrations in downtown Vancouver and the suburbs of Burnaby, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Surrey, Langley, and Maple Ridge (p. 4). Yu and Murray (2008) note that the “Korea Town” in Coquitlam is the “economic heart” of Korean residents (p. 103). Both discuss these spaces to contextualize their own work but do not critically explore the social significance within discourses of M/multiculturalism. There are a number of
areas in Metro Vancouver which can be identified as being Korean spaces based on the signage in both Korean and English and the kinds of services they offer. In Vancouver, these include the older district of Broadway and Fraser Street which consists today of a grocery store, a few restaurants, and a gift shop (Figure 2). A more well-known area is located on Robson Street in downtown Vancouver, which consists mainly of Korean restaurants and English language institutes (Figure 3) catering primarily to Korean international students and tourists. North of Surrey also has a Korean pocket consisting mainly around the Hannam Korean grocery chain (Figures 4, Figure 5).

Figure 2: Broadway near Fraser Street, Vancouver (2007)

Figure 3: Downtown Vancouver Korean District on Robson Street (2007)

Figure 4: Entrance Gate to Hannam Supermarket, North Surrey (2008)

Figure 5: Signage of Plaza beside Hannam Supermarket, North Surrey (2008)
A larger and denser Korean commercial area in Metro Vancouver is located at the juncture of North Road and Lougheed Highway in Coquitlam (Figure 1.6). This space is a large and diverse commercial district situated on three of the four main corners of the intersection. Most services centre around the three main commercial landmarks on each corner: Hannam is a Korean grocery located on the south west corner; Hanahreum is a large US Korean grocery chain located on the South East corner; and the Korean seafood restaurant, Insadong, is located on the North East (Figure 6). Signage is in both Korean and English and there are a range of services offered including automotive, medical, financial, beauty and wellness, dining, notary, and immigration consulting. Compared to other Korean concentrations like Robson Street which caters predominantly to tourists, this area in Coquitlam encompasses a larger geographical area and also offers a wider range of services to a diverse local clientele. This research paper will suggest that this commercial district is the emerging space of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver.

Figure 6: ‘Koreatown’, North Road and Lougheed Highway, Burnaby and Coquitlam (2008)
1.4 Research Overview

This research aims to examine the space of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver as a site of “place making” (Massey, 1994). Grounding discussions of space in the process of place making as conceived of by Massey will enable an exploration of the ways in which multiple social processes contest and constitute multicultural spaces. It also frames ways to participate in discussions of how people on the ground negotiate their multicultural lived experiences in dialogue with larger structural movements put in motion by Multicultural policy. This paper will also investigate how these processes inform the decision making of local actors invested in (re)producing the place of ‘Koreatown’ within discursive fields articulating racial and spatial anxieties of ‘Asian’ encroachment. The following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. Who are the actors involved or excluded in the place making process of ‘Koreatown’ and what are their forms of investments (e.g. social, moral, financial, political, etc)?

2. How are the place making practices of ‘Koreatown’ racialized, gendered, and/or classed?

3. What tensions or anxieties emerge in relation to the place making of ‘Koreatown’ and why?

4. How does the place making of ‘Koreatown’ complement or contest Canada’s national commitment to multiculturalism?

By addressing these research questions, this thesis aims to contribute to discussions of how ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver functions as a space of place making that is continually contesting and constituting its meaning through multicultural spaces by multiple and intersecting identities who are (re)articulating notions of home and belonging.

To situate discussions of Koreans and ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver, Chapter two will provide a contextual overview of theoretical literature specific to multiculturalism, social space, and notions of race and identity. Literature on multiculturalism and its discourses will be explored to contextualize its dimensions within Canada as well as its articulations within nation building processes. Critical space and place theories will be discussed to frame ways to investigate how spaces, like ‘Koreatown’, are constituted through complex and intersecting
relations of power and local and global processes that are closely linked to multicultural discourses of home and belonging. In addition, a review of research on ‘Asian’ communities and spaces will be used to initiate a point of reference to situate Koreans and ‘Koreatown’ in these discussions. This review of theory aims to create a framework through which to situate the social processes taking place within this particular multicultural context and illustrate how tensions exacerbated by racial spatial anxieties are taking place in Metro Vancouver.

Chapter three will present an overview of the methodological frameworks used in this research, specifically discussions on methods of feminist critical discourse analysis that interrogate text as data as well as the methods of data collection used in this study. Part of this review will also present the benefits of incorporating a feminist intersectional analysis which recognizes that power and social relations are never mutually exclusive but rather intersecting and interconnected. These proposed methodological frameworks will be outlined to present a more complex and critical context to explore, unpack, and nuance how these power relations are embedded in the place making of ‘Koreatown’ and how they inform the everyday practices that constitute its sense of home and belonging. This chapter will also present a discussion of the researcher’s personal reflections and interrogations of the challenges of conducting research that aims to complicate the ‘partial insider/partial outsider’ dichotomy.

Chapter four incorporates a discussion of interview research data to illustrate how ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver emerges as a site of place making. The first section will describe how the site of ‘Koreatown’ became constituted through a series of contestations and developments over the social and material significance and meaning over place and identity. The second section examines the local actors invested in the place making of ‘Koreatown’ and how their practices of constituting the place are informed by its inherent and intersecting power and social relations. The final section of this chapter aims to explore moments of conflict in the place
of ‘Koreatown’ to highlight connections to broader anxieties over the meaning and significance of national belonging within multicultural spaces in Canada. This discussion will also examine how these social anxieties and ruptures in multicultural discourses of home and belonging are mediated and maneuvered by local actors invested in the place making of ‘Koreatown’.

Lastly, the conclusion of this paper is outlined in Chapter five where a summary of key theoretical, methodological, and substantive implications of this research are provided as well as future considerations for this work. This study examines the site of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver as a way to explore this space and the social processes continually working to develop notions of place often linked to meanings of identity and home, and ultimately feelings of national belonging. While this research does present a descriptive element of analysis of the site of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver, the overall aim of this work is to resist homogenizing and essentializing a static narrative of a particular space. Rather, the goal of this study is to interrogate how places of belonging, such as ‘Koreatown’, inform discussions about the multiple and interconnected social processes that are constituting, contesting, and mediating conflict and as ways to (re)produce meaning and significance in spaces in multicultural Canada.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks

This chapter provides the theoretical frameworks used as an entry point to examine the place making of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver. Key concepts by Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka will be used to provide a brief introduction into two main streams of thought about multiculturalism in the Canadian liberal tradition. This will be followed by a discussion of the main criticisms of liberal multiculturalism by Himani Bannerji, Ghassan Hage, and others who challenge the notion of ‘managing’ cultural ‘differences’ within national discourses. In order to set the context for an analysis of ‘Koreatown’ as an example of place making for meanings of home within national belonging, I will be engaging with Doreen Massey’s concepts of space and place as well as Ghassan Hage’s understanding of how spaces function as multicultural spaces. Lastly, this chapter presents a discussion on the need to deconstruct the discourse of ‘Asian’ to better frame how anxieties and tensions toward racialized ‘Asian’ communities, like ‘Koreatown’, are situated in Metro Vancouver.

2.1 Multiculturalism in Canada: Liberal Discourses and its Challenges

As noted in Chapter one, this paper recognizes the dynamics of a “situated multiculturalism” (Gunew, 2004) to analyze the interlinked local, nation, and the global social processes and discursive elements of multiculturalism that are enmeshed in the place making of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver. To do so, however, requires an overview of the history and main concepts, theories, and debates of the meaning of multiculturalism in Canada. The origins of official Multiculturalism in Canada first developed out of the resistance to the Report on the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1969 which concluded that “Canada comprised a multicultural commonwealth of ‘other ethnics,’ albeit within the cultural (or binational) framework of two founding peoples” (Fleras, 2012, p. 309). This bicultural nature of the ‘two founding nations’ and limited acknowledgment of other ethnic groups in relation to
nation building in Canada was lobbied against by various non-Anglo/French groups, particularly Germans and Ukrainians, who demanded recognition of their contributions. As a result, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau introduced the federal Multicultural Policy in 1971 which would incorporate “multiculturalism within a bilingual framework” (Fleras, 2012, p. 309). This was later advanced into the adoption of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988, officially constituting Canada as a multicultural nation.

2.1.1 Liberal Multiculturalism

Although there has been much debate over a single definition of multiculturalism, there is a consensus that its framework in Canada is rooted on the commitment to liberal ideologies of equality and individual rights and freedoms to address ‘difference’. It is useful here to discuss the influential works of Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka, well recognized as proponents of theorizing liberal multiculturalism and its challenges with cultural pluralism in Canada. Significant for this paper is Charles Taylor’s notion of the “politics of recognition” (1994) that understands the basis of equality as the link between a presumed authentic identity and the necessities of recognition. He states:

The demand for recognition in these latter cases is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity, where this latter term designates something like a person’s understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being. The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (Taylor, 1994, p. 25)

For Taylor, this deployment of recognition theory is based on the notion that groups must be recognized in order for individual members of community to be assured any sort of longevity and it is at the site of community where individuals maintain connections to an ‘authentic’ identity. His main argument centres on the influence of recognition on the formation of identity.
and that this condition must be garnered through mutual respect and recognition of its values. For example, Korean groups in Canada would require or desire recognition of their ‘authentic’ Korean identity as valued within the larger national society so as to avoid the dangers of ‘misrecognition’ or constricting readings of their identity and values. For Taylor, this premise of recognition through identity is necessary for minority groups to survive within an equality focused, tolerant, and accommodating liberal society.

Kymlicka, also a proponent of liberal approaches to multiculturalism in Canada, sees the accommodation of cultural diversity necessary for a just, tolerant, and inclusive society. As a way to reconcile the problematic of multiculturalism in its challenges with tensions between French, English, and Aboriginal groups and the increasing growth of immigrant communities, he suggests making a clear distinction between the patterns of minority groups that comprise cultural diversity within a nation. Kymlicka (1995) suggests that two categories of minority groups are entitled to rights within the nation, “national minorities” and “polyethnic minorities” (1995). The first category of “national minorities” comprises groups that were present at time of the national constitution, see themselves as a distinct society or culture and want to maintain this status through some form of self-governance or autonomy; and that existed or came to be part of the nation either voluntary or involuntary. In Canada, national minorities would include French and Aboriginal groups compared to the national English majority in Canada. The second category of “polyethnic minorities” includes groups who voluntarily immigrated to the nation and who desire full rights to integration and accommodation within the national systems and institutions rather than wishing to have separate governing status and structures. Based on these classifications, Kymlicka argues that Canada is both a multinational and polyethnic state with its cultural diversity being defined by national minorities (i.e. French and Aboriginal) and polyethnic groups (e.g. Korean, Chinese, Jamaican immigrants). It is this distinction between
cultural minorities that determines the degree of minority group access to rights and accommodation in a liberal democracy. He advocates for a theory of “liberal minority rights” and outlines three “mechanisms used to accommodate cultural differences” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 33). Situated along a continuum, these include 1) self-governmental rights (e.g. French sovereignty, Aboriginal territorial claims and self-governance), 2) polyethnic rights (e.g. immigrant integration into society and institutions without self-governance), and 3) special group representation rights (e.g. affirmation action policies) (Kymlicka, 1994, pp. 27-32). Based on this framework, Kymlicka would argue that as a polyethnic minority in Canada, Koreans would demand rights to ‘integrate’ into the majority norms of the nation and are less ‘deserving’ of unique rights and self-governance compared to French or Aboriginal national minorities.

Both Taylor and Kymlicka attempt to reconcile the challenge of cultural diversity within liberal frameworks of multiculturalism; Taylor through his politics of recognition and Kymlicka through his theory of liberal minority rights. Through these theories, minorities groups like Koreans in Canada must be seen and positioned through their identities to maintain or access their status within the nation. While this attention to identity roots a position to be accommodated and included in liberal ideologies of equality and freedoms (e.g. maintain a Korean-Canadian identity and community), it finds its limitations in the attempt to encompass the multi-faceted nature of identities (e.g. first generation and second generation Korean Canadians, gender, class) and remains silent on the power to define them.

2.1.2 Criticisms of Liberal Multiculturalism:

Critics of liberal multiculturalism have noted how mass movements of people, material, and social capital have fundamentally shifted traditional meanings of identity and community in national contexts. Their main disjuncture from liberal notions of multiculturalism is rooted around the limitations of identity as a concept and the central role it holds in the establishment of
liberal theories of equality and inclusion. Specifically, critiques of liberal theories of multiculturalism rest on a discussion of power and who has the authority to define and evaluate notions of identity. There are two closely linked aspects of this discussion that are significant to this paper. The first is the attention to the discourse of ‘difference’ and ‘diversity’ as it relates to power inequality and second is how these discourses are deployed within logics of ‘tolerance’ or ‘accommodation’. These discussions present attempts to illustrate the power differentials in liberal theories of multiculturalism to challenge the problematic of who is entitled to define which identity is valued and deserving of rights within the nation.

Critical to Taylor and Kymlicka’s liberal theorizing of multiculturalism is the focus on the notion of identity as the basis for rights and recognition of cultural differences. This focus on identity has been criticized for reifying essentialist categories, which in turn are central to the valuing and recognizing of minority groups within multiculturalism. Himani Bannerji (2000) argues against this notion of identity because of its attachment to concepts of ‘difference’ and ‘diversity’ that assume a neutrality in cultural pluralism which ignores how power relations or social processes create inequalities and multiple subjectivities. She states, “This is its paradox – that the concept of diversity simultaneously allows for an emptying out of actual social relations and suggests a concreteness of cultural description, and through this process obscures any understanding of difference as a construction of power” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 36). For Bannerji (2000), “diversity is not equal to multiplied sameness” (p. 41) because it is defined by power relations organizing ‘difference’ within political agendas that manage minority groups in the interests of the majority:

The language of diversity is a coping mechanism for dealing with an actually conflicting heterogeneity, seeking to incorporate it into an ideological binary which is predicated upon the existence of a homogenous national, that is, a Canadian cultural self with its multiple and different others.” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 37)
This attention to deployment of discourse of ‘difference’ and ‘diversity’ in national agendas is the principle critique of Taylor’s politics of recognition. It problematizes the power dynamics and practices of those who are defining the ‘worthiness’ of accommodation against an already homogenous self:

This core community is synthesized into a national we, and it decides on the terms of multiculturalism and the degree to which multicultural others should be tolerated or accommodated. This ‘we’ is an essentialized version of a colonial European turned into Canadian and the subject or the agent of Canadian nationalism. It is this essence, extended to the notion of community, that provides the point of departure for the ideological deployment of diversity. (Bannerji, 2002, p. 42)

It is here that the binary framework of the politics of recognition is disrupted by Bannerji. In this line of argument, the accommodation of ‘differences’ based on identity becomes relational to the norms of the nation constructed largely with English and French Canadian culture as referent. This framework for recognition seems to fail for Bannerji because it can never acknowledge an equal playing field. By introducing the significance of power in both the deployment of discourses of ‘difference’ and in the ways in which it disperses identity, it challenges the agenda of ‘recognition’ and by default ‘misrecognition’.

This also presents the possibilities that not all groups may want to be recognized in ways that would coincide with recognition theory. The interviewee responses in this research suggest that in some cases, Koreans seemed to be strategically resisting or mediating desires for ‘recognition’ in order to define their own realities of home and belonging within the nation. Ghasson Hage (2000) also draws attention to the limitations inherent in notions of ‘accommodation’, suggesting that this recognition dialectic is founded in a sort of inequality which gives the majority the power to recognize (if they so choose) and constructs the ‘other’ as passive and waiting to be recognized. Also a critic of liberal multicultural frameworks, he argues that the discourse of ‘accommodation’ assumes that the majority has power to assess the value of the cultural ‘difference’ being considered for inclusion and acceptance within the nation. Hage
notes, “their belonging to the national environment in which they come to exist is always a precarious one, for they never exist, they are allowed to exist. That is, the tolerated are never just present, they are positioned” (2000, p. 90). This “logic of tolerance” is premised on ‘intolerance’ over ‘others’ revealing the position of power to define in the ‘tolerators’ or ‘accommodators’ of cultural ‘differences’. This highlights the role of the national imaginary or nation building discourses that are deployed by hegemonic groups within liberal multicultural frameworks.

### 2.1.3 Situating the Nation in the Politics of Multiculturalism

As Bannerji suggests, the element of nation building through the politics of multiculturalism is not a benevolent or neutral process. It is constituted through discursive and ideological positions that are (re)produced by social relations and colonial legacies to maintain positions of power within the nation. She refers to this as the “the dark side of the nation” and argues for a critical examination of these relations of power to reveal what lies in the shadows of the national narrative of multiculturalism. Key to this process involves historicizing multicultural nation building discourses within the context of colonialism, racism, conflict, exclusion, and globalization to explore how these relations of power and dominance are deployed in the formation of a ‘Canadian identity’. As many scholars have argued (Bannerji, 2000; Mackey, 2002; Razack 2002; Thobani, 2007), Canada is a white settler society built on the dispossession and colonization of Indigenous lands and communities and racialized immigration and labour. As a settler state it carries a heavy historical burden of exclusion, dominance, and oppression that is often left out or marginalized in the national imaginary. For those invested in maintaining and legitimizing the narrative of European settlement and entitled dominance, there is a consistent attempt to perpetuate a peaceful narrative of Canadian history that reconfigures narratives of colonization. As Sherene Razack (2002) notes, this “quintessential feature of white settler mythologies is, therefore, the disavowal of conquest, genocide, slavery, and the
exploitation of the labour of peoples of colour” (p. 2). In Canada, the continuing narrative of French and English tensions embedded in the national discourse makes invisible the dark colonial histories and present day tensions with non-white settler identities. Bannerji (2000) states, “It is the nationhood of this Canada, with its two solitudes and their survival anxieties and aggressions against “native others,” that provides the epic painting in whose dark corners we must look for the later ‘others’” (p. 93). The struggles, experiences, and communities of the hidden ‘other’ must somehow be situated in, conform to, and be perceived and understood through Canada’s bilingual and bicultural lens.

Within Canadian multicultural discourses the history of colonization and exclusion becomes articulated in the politics of difference and coded in law that validates the particular issues of ‘visual minorities’ only within the somewhat narrow parameters established for English and French bilingualism. This move puts white settler identities in the center as a sort of universal referent while all other identities are defined as outside and other to the nation. Rooting nation building discourses in this way moves French and English experience and regimes of truth and knowledge into the neutral position of referent. In effect this move frames the kinds of discussions that are possible as ‘visible minorities’ speak to or contest the state and its practice. Bannerji shifts the discourse of multiculturalism from being a benevolent policy of inclusiveness of ‘difference’ to a more active agent embroiled in the political and social processes of who is entitled in and excluded from the nation. She expands this discussion of power relations within the paradigm of multiculturalism:

The transcendence or legitimation value of the official/state discourse of multiculturalism – which cherishes difference while erasing real antagonisms – breaks down, therefore, at different levels of competing ideologies and ruling practices. A threat of rupture or crisis is felt to be always already there, a fact expressed by the ubiquity of the integration-fragmentation paradigm in texts on Canada. Instead of a discourse of homogeneity or universality, the paradigm of multiculturalism stands more for the pressure of conflict of interests and dynamics of power relations at work. (2000, p. 109)
Despite our contemporary reluctance to deal with the legacy of ‘race logics’ in White settler colonies, it seems that we have not fully come to terms with how foundational race thinking has been in the formation of the modern state (Gilroy, 2000). This legacy, however, is nonetheless gestured to in terms such as ‘visible minority’, which rely on phenotypical markers to speak to the controversial status of non-white immigrants in Canada. While multiculturalism aims for plural equality, visible markers continue to perpetuate the historical hierarchies of groups, peoples, and communities based on the social construct of race.

The irony of this discourse of multiculturalism becomes apparent when “visible differences often amount to a coded way of referring back to those apparent biological essences that formed the grounds for scientific racism” (Gunew, 2004, p. 21). In Canada, management of these categories of racialized difference are coded under liberal discourses of individual rights, freedoms, and inclusivity. As scholars have noted, this process has always been positioned in majority/minority binaries where the minority (racialized other) has always been represented as in need of management by the cultural majority (Anglo-white) for multicultural nation building purposes. Put another way, the white man’s burden and “the invention of ‘needs’ and the mission to ‘help’ the needy always blossom together” (Trinh, 1989, p. 54). The racialized other essentialized as an excluded, ahistorical, static, and homogenous group, always engaged in irrational contradiction and, like a recalcitrant child, always subversive in nature and constructed as a challenge to the legacies of colonial authority and the cohesiveness of the nation state. Through this colonizer/colonized dialectic the other is constructed as a subject continually in need of integration, modernization, and organization (according to liberal free market modes of production and generally as cheap labour). The civilizing of the native is a key aspect of the Western metanarrative of progress and development.
For scholars who challenge liberal multiculturalism, the concept of nation is imperative to the deployment of multiculturalism because of how its discursive elements of power become internalized and maintained by the state and individuals to control ‘others’. Sunera Thobani (2007) argues the national imaginary of the Canadian subject is constituted by the concept of the “exalted subject,” a national identity that embodies a distinctly universal character of entitlement and privilege that is maintained through the practice of “exaltation” or reverence and the desire to uphold its power and significance over others positioned outside of the nation:

The association of precious rights and entitlements with such an identity creates a material stake in protecting these from the encroachments of irresponsible and undeserving Others, and exaltation gives rise to the desire among insiders to defend and protect this valued nationality from the perversions and pollutions of the Other. It creates the desire to limit the Other’s access to the much coveted nationality it organizes. In Canada, this exercise of power has provided tangible benefits to the national subject, in the form of proprietary access to land, citizenship, mobility, employment, social entitlements – in short, to all the accoutrements that the state accords its citizen-subjects. As such, exaltation wins over the national’s support for the various disciplinary techniques deployed by the state against outsiders to preserve the coherence of the nation, to preserve this subject’s privileged access (even if ultimately illusory) to the state. (pp. 20-21)

In Canada, the exalted subject legitimates colonial legacies and continues to racialize difference where the “national remains at the centre of the state’s (stated) commitment to enhance national well being; the immigrant receives a tenuous and conditional inclusion; and the Aboriginal continues to be marked for loss of sovereignty” (Thobani, 2007, p. 18). The national subject is always positioned at the top of the national hierarchy or centre in the national imaginary, always exalted and desired by the Canadian nation.

Similar to Thobani’s discussion of exaltation and the exalted subject, Ghassan Hage (2000) describes the “fantasy of the white nation” to explain the desired national subject in discourses of multiculturalism in Australia. For Hage, the ‘white nation’ fantasy is rooted in the imagined ‘white’ national subject’s affective desire to construct ownership, belonging, and
supremacy in the nation. Whiteness in this context is the nostalgic return to white settler histories and culture of dominance. As a fantasy, it is never achieved but always sought after. He states:

It is in this sense that fantasy is not outside the subject, but is the very world the subject inhabits. A national fantasy is the very way nationalists inhabit, experience, and conceive of their nation and themselves as nationalists. The nationalist in this construct is always a nation-builder, a person whose national life has a meaning derived from the task of having to build his or her ideal homely nation, a national domesticator. (Hage, 2000, p. 71)

For Hage, this imagined national white identity becomes the site where the fantasy of the white nation is deployed through “nationalist practices” by individuals and the state. National practices are articulated within national spaces, or fantasy spaces, always constructing the ‘other’ as an object in opposition or threat to the fantasy. The ‘other’ constitutes the rational for the fantasy:

…the other is what allows nationalists to believe in the possibility of such a space eventuating. It helps them avoid having to face the impossible nature of what they are pursuing, the traumatic kernel of the real, by constructing the other as that which stands in the way of its attainment. It is in this sense that the other is necessary for the construction and maintenance of the fantasy. (Hage, 2000, p. 74)

National practices are also not exclusively deployed by white nationals. Hage notes that as the white nation fantasy creates a position of entitlement and belonging to the nation, it also tempts subjects outside the imaginary to yearn and gain access to the privileges it awards. This enables a space to discuss how immigrants, Aboriginals, women and so forth, desire to accumulate national practices themselves, despite always being positioned outside of the white nation imaginary. Hage (2000) highlights how the white nation fantasy or whiteness is “an aspiration that one accumulates various capitals to try to be” (p. 60) and the accumulation of that capital is dependent on how we are positioned in the imaginary. In this sense, multiculturalism is seen as a nationalist practice of white fantasy, legitimatized and reproduced through national spaces of subjects yearning and desiring to profit from the sense of entitlement and belonging. This framework of national practices enables an analysis of how multiple subjectivities within a
Korean ‘identity’ may maneuver desires for national belonging differently based on their own investments, immigration histories, class, or gender.

The significance of globalization has also fundamentally challenged concepts of nation and politics of multiculturalism as mass migration, global movements of capital, and transnationalism create multiple and complex identities and communities. As Korean immigration has been relatively recent to Canada and has been influenced by these global dimensions, it is helpful to situate how multiculturalism is linked to these larger systems. As flows of immigration, multiple citizenships, and movements between nation states increase and create complex structural and social contexts, there is a trend for nation states to re-evaluate and invigorate traditional strategies for the management and containment of diverse populations to stabilize notions of citizenship and belonging. Mitchell (2004) argues traditional multiculturalism is not able to exist within globalization and is not able to accept the transnational subject stating “liberal multiculturalism in Canada exists in profound conflict with the idea of the person and the community as multidimensional and multispatal, as a set of linked relationships and allegiances that extend over space” (p. 119). The relevance of liberal multiculturalism which was concerned with individual rights, managing bilingual and bicultural tensions, and unifying a growing immigrant population began to wane within these global contexts. According to Mitchell, there was a shift towards a “neoliberal multiculturalism” that frames a strategic global pluralism that desires ‘differences’ within the nation that maximize profit and position the state as a competitive force in global economics. This suggests that the nation state actively and assertively responds to the effects of globalization on its economies, borders, and citizenships through the (re)articulating of multicultural frameworks to maintain its interests. The concept of neoliberal multiculturalism is useful in this research to situate how Koreans are situated within national strategies of competing in global markets and its effects on
immigration policies and desires for ‘model minorities’ that define cultural pluralism and inclusion within the nation. As a way to contextualize and interrogate how Koreans maneuver through these global, national, and local dimensions in the meaning of multiculturalism, it is helpful to draw on Gunew’s concept of “critical multiculturalism”. She finds it useful to see multiculturalism in two ways: “state multiculturalism” which refers to the managing of difference and “operates most clearly in the discourses and practices of education, sociology, the law and imagination and is always contradictory in its application and assumptions”; and as “critical multiculturalism” which is the agency “used by minorities as leverage to argue for participation, grounded in their differences, in the public sphere” (Gunew, 2004, pp. 16-17). Gunew (2004) suggests critical multicultural theory is a “way of situating subjectivities outside certain nationalist investments and hence may be used as a way of paying attention to minority perspectives, using them to critique dominant discourses and practices” with the acknowledgement that “minority perspectives are neither free of their own investments nor do they automatically retain a hold on some kind of privileged moral capital” (p. 28). This moves the discussion of Koreans and Korean spaces into more transnational contexts to complicate local and nation politics of multiculturalism and meanings of home and belonging.

This research draws on the concepts and frameworks presented in this section to highlight that the seemingly benevolent practices of state multiculturalism in Canada are haunted by colonial legacies, contradictions, and contested anxieties of power within the nation. Concepts such as the exalted subject and the white nation fantasy suggest that white settler entitlements remain rooted in a national imaginary and are (re)produced through nationalist practices and discourses to position outsiders and insiders within multicultural frameworks that code these differences within liberal discourse of equality, diversity, and accommodation. These discursive practices are enmeshed with axioms of power, influenced by global economic capital,
and become primarily articulated and coded through discourses of multicultural belonging. These concepts provide a critical framework to situate how Korean identities and commercial spaces in Metro Vancouver become constituted sites within Canadian multicultural discourses.

2.2 Multicultural Spaces: Localizing the Politics of National Belonging

This research explores ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver and is premised on the notion that national discourses of institutional or official Multiculturalism becomes locally situated, articulated and constituted in specific spaces and as such become sites where concepts of home and belonging within the nation are being constituted and contested. It assumes anti-essentialist constructs of space similar to the criticisms discussed earlier in this chapter that deconstruct liberal concepts of ‘difference’ and identity. As space is intricately linked to attachments to identity and home, this distinction of space is defined as complex, dynamic, and embedded with multiple and intersecting subjectivities that constitute and contest its meaning. This becomes the site at which this paper aims to explore how multicultural discourses become embedded, articulated, and mediated by multiple actors invested in (re)creating meanings of home and belonging within the nation.

As mentioned in Chapter one, this research primarily draws on Massey’s concept of place making which reconceptualizes essentialized notions of space and its attachments to concepts of place and identity. She notes that there is often a tendency to link spaces as places of identity (e.g. Chinatowns or Koreatowns) but argues against this move to contain identities and spaces. Expanding the definition of space which Massey defines as dynamic, socially produced, and relational, she argues that places are also constituted through social processes and thus are always contesting and engaging in meaning. This applies specifically to the identity of place as she argues it is always unfixed, never rooted, and always contested:
The anti-essentialist construction of this alternative concept of place immediately problematizes, for instance, any automatic associations with nostalgia and timeless stasis. It underscores the lack of basis for any claims for establishing the authentic character of any particular place (whether such claims are used as the grounds for arguing for ethnic exclusivity or for opposing some unwanted development – ‘it would be out of place here’). There is, in that sense of a timeless truth of an area, built on somehow internally contained character traits, no authenticity of place. (Massey, 1994, p. 121)

In this context, rather than a static or descriptive notion, place becomes constituted through social process and will therefore have multiple meanings for different people. This emphasizes the need to pay attention to the processes and interactions that are producing and contesting particular representations within and across that place. This framework makes it possible to explore for example what kinds of social processes are interacting internally and externally to constitute the meaning or understanding of a ‘Koreatown’ as attached to an ethnic identity versus just another commercial space in Metro Vancouver. It also frames a way to examine how it is constituted by people who are invested differently in relation to the space and each other (e.g. through intersecting dimensions of race, class, migration histories, transnational identities) and also in relation to other geographies (e.g. non-Korean spaces, or other ‘Asian’ concentrations like Chinatown). Massey (1994) explains this further:

Thinking of places in this way implies that they are not so much bounded areas as open and porous networks of social relations. It implies that their ‘identities’ are constructed through the specificity of their interaction with other places rather than by counterposition to them. It reinforces the idea, moreover, that those identities will be multiple (since the various social groups in a place will be differently located in relation to the overall complexity of social relations and since their reading of those relations and what they make of them will also be distinct). And this in turn implies that what is to be the dominant image of any place will be a matter of contestation and will change over time. (p. 121)

This recognition of place making as an active process continually disrupts essentializing tendencies and allows for a critical interrogation of the social processes that are defining the ‘dominant’ meanings and representations of particular spaces which will always be a “result of social negotiation and conflict” (Massey 1994, p. 141). Within a discussion of multicultural
spaces, this enables a framework to explore moments of conflict or tensions may be expressing social contestation over particular meanings of ‘difference’, ‘recognition’ and ‘inclusion’ to define spaces of national belonging.

Hage moves the discussion of belonging into subnational local spaces where social relations are embedded in the process of inhabiting the imagined nation or “white national fantasy”. This concept of nation creates national subjectivities and modes of belonging to the nation that create differential access to the modes of power to constitute or manage meanings in multicultural spaces. This “empowered spatiality” is dependent on the level of national belonging which he categorizes into “passive belonging” and “governmental belonging”. Passive belonging would refer to individuals who believe they have a right to be included and feel at home in the nation while governmental belonging refers to the feelings of legitimizated entitlement over the national spaces to maintain notions of home (Hage, 2000, p. 45-46). Hage notes that governmental belonging is not specific to state or institutional structures but rather articulated by dominant positions. It is internalized as a “national will” (Hage, 2000, p. 46) and enacted through the individuals in roles as “spatial managers” to govern and police national spaces (p. 46). This discussion is useful to explore how ‘Koreatown’ is rooted as a site of national belonging and is constituted through the national entitlements of its spatial managers.

2.3 Deconstructing ‘Difference’ in ‘Asian’ Discourses

As many scholars have noted, concepts of difference such as race, ethnicity, and diaspora have long been contested and the category of ‘Asians’ in Canada has not been exempt from this process. To ‘de-race’ the contemporary discussion of ‘difference’ and terms such as ‘Asianness’ requires a closer examination of how these categories are contextualized, challenged, and reproduced within discourses of globalization and postcolonialism. The category of ‘Asian’ is embedded within historical and political processes that have homogenized a diverse and
heterogeneous group with multiple migration histories, culture, language and interests. Deconstructing the term ‘Asian’ provides a space to examine how Koreans and ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver are situated within its discourse.

The concept of ‘difference’ in contemporary contexts requires an engagement with the historical, social, and political relations of power that root this discussion in racial discourses. Edward Said’s (1979) concept of “Orientalism” is fundamental in understanding the historical and contemporary scope and imagination of the “The Orient” or the “Other” within Eurocentric assumptions and frameworks. He notes how “[t]he relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of complex hegemony” (Said, 1979, p. 5). The Orient is represented and reproduced as a fixed and homogenous construct, always inferior and in contradiction to the West as authority, centre, and truth. In effect, the stories that Orientalist scholars told about the Orient were key in the establishment of Western political hegemony. Many of the central metaphors and tropes that were used to create an almost mythical discursive field that became known as the Orient were exported and used to establish dominance in other colonial contexts. This colonial discourse informed and legitimized a set of bureaucratic practices and ways of understanding Europe’s Aboriginal others. Within British Columbia, these articulations of a sort of ‘Orientalist’ perspective and approach have historically been an integral part of how white settler colonists excluded, managed and controlled their racial others, both Aboriginal and their fellow settler competitors.

Anti-Asian anxieties have long been a part of British Columbia’s reaction to non-white settler migrants and communities, particularly those from East Asia. Scholars such as Kay Anderson, Roy Miki, Sunera Thobani and others have well documented the practices of racialization and marginalization of ‘Asians’ in the 1900s in such cases as the Indian Act, Indian residential schools, Chinese Head Tax, “Yellow Peril” sentiments, Japanese internment camps
and Redress, and the South Asian Komagata Maru incident. More recent articulations of Orientalism and racialization in British Columbia have continued to express anti-Asian anxieties toward immigrants from Asia. As Ley and Mitchell point out, the emerging business class of immigrants from Hong Kong and China have created anxieties towards ‘Asian’ enclaves or concentrated ‘Asian’ communities in both residential and commercial spaces. The feeling of apprehension toward ‘Asian’ immigration, though less overtly racist in discourse than earlier articulations, continues to racialize this group in opposition to white settler or Western identities. In addition, recent anti-Asian anxieties have tended to focus on Chinese immigration and communities, thereby homogenizing the term ‘Asianness’ with Chinese experiences in British Columbia. This tends to conflate other ‘Asian’ identities and communities, such as Koreans, into an imaginary notion ‘Asianness’ much in the same ways that Orientalist discourses reduced the cultural and historical complexity of ‘everywhere east of Europe’ to the obscuring logic of the Orient. In this context, Koreans in British Columbia have become constructed, represented, and encountered through a Chinese ‘Asian’ narrative of the ‘Other’ that is positioned in opposition to the Anglo Canadian subject. In practice, this erasure of Asian heterogeneity particularity hides important differences in migration history, language, culture and community and reduces their identities to essentialized and homogenous objects that can be easily understood and managed by dominant culture discourse about ‘Asians’ in British Columbia.

Avtar Brah (1996) and Ien Ang (2001) further develop Said’s discussion by exploring how postcolonial and global contexts, with mass movements of capital and people, complicate discourses of ‘difference’. They complicate concepts of diaspora and hybridity to challenge essentialist readings of the ‘other’. Through her personal experiences of tensions and contradictions with transnational “Chineseness”, Ang problematizes the move from identity politics, which embraces a collective experience, to diaspora, which draws on difference for
social and symbolic capital. She argues that diaspora remains embedded in essentialist concepts of a common identity and experience and ultimately is a “concept of sameness-in-dispersal, not of togetherness-in-difference” (Ang, 2001, p. 13). Instead, Ang argues for the need to deconstruct the concept of diaspora in order to analyze the complex global (and local) ways difference and identity are shaped in relation to historical, social, and political processes. To do so requires a position of “living hybridity” that is rooted in politics aimed at complicating lines of distinction and “implies blurring or at least a problematising of boundaries, and as a result, an unsettling of identities” (Ang, 2001, p. 16). This concept of living hybridity has relevant applications to understanding the complexities of “Koreanness” in its transcultural context, allowing for more nuanced understandings of differing migration histories, language and cultural investments, and intersecting relations of power such as gender and class that are operating in Korean Canadian communities.

In her examination of the racialized category of ‘Asian’ in post-war Britain, Brah (1996) also argues that we need to challenge essentialist readings of diaspora identities and communities by complicating the concept of difference with experience, social relation, subjectivity and identity and as always intersecting with multiple modes of power (e.g. race, gender, class, sexuality) that are being contested within political and social processes. As a result, “all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common ‘we’” (p. 184). Key to her discussion is the concept of diaspora space, the site at which these contestations are intersecting relationally:

Diaspora space is the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural, and psychic processes. It is where multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed; where the permitted and the prohibited perpetually interrogate; and where the accepted and the transgressive imperceptibly mingle even while these syncretic forms may be disclaimed in the name of purity and tradition. Here, tradition is itself continually invented even as it may be hailed as originating from the mists of time. What is at stake is the infinite
experientiality, the myriad processes of cultural fissure and fusion that underwrite contemporary forms of transcultural identities. (Brah, 1996, p. 208)

For Brah, diaspora space reconceptualizes any assumptions of racialized communities as homogenous and static sites. It is “the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of ‘us’ and ‘them’, are contested” (Brah, 1996, p. 209). This continual and relational process of place making provides a useful framework to conceptualize how the diaspora space of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver is a constitution of complex and dynamic interaction of a myriad of forming identities, experiences, and social relations.

As a result of massive global flows of capital, people, and culture, and neoliberal immigration policies like the Business Immigration Program, there is now an emergence of a new class of transcultural identities and subjectivities that are also challenging traditional readings of the ‘other’ in Canada. Based on her research of business migrants from Southern China and Hong Kong to Vancouver, Mitchell describes this class as new “transmigrant elites” who have large amounts of social and financial capital to strategically choose desirable locations to work and live. What is central to this discussion of these well-educated, multilingual, wealthy entrepreneurs and executives is the agency and choice with which they are able to move in transcultural contexts. Ong refers to this as a “flexible citizenship”:

Among transnational Chinese subjects, those most able to benefit from their participation in global capitalism celebrate flexibility and mobility, which give rise to such figures are the multiple-passport holder; the multicultural manager with “flexible capital”; the “astronaut,” shuttling across borders on business; “parachute kids,” who can be dropped off in another country by parents on the trans-Pacific business commute; and so on. Thus, while mobility and flexibility have long been part of the repertoire of human behavior, under transnationality the new links between flexibility and the logics of displacement, on the one hand, and the capital accumulation, on the other, have given new valence to such strategies of maneuvering and positioning. Flexibility, migration, and relocations, instead of being coerced or resisted, have become practices to strive for rather than stability. (Ong, 1999, p. 19)

For both Mitchell and Ong the concept of the new wealthy, educated, multilingual, and multiple passport carrying managerial elite challenges essentialist and racialized notions of Asian
immigrants in the past. It complicates and changes the assumption of the immigrant labourer ‘other’ from the ‘third world’ desiring ‘first world’ citizenship to a category of culturally savvy citizens who strategically mediate and benefit from a myriad of choices to work and live. While Mitchell and Ong’s focus on the Chinese and Hong Kong transnational experience in their discussion of ‘Asian’ transmigrant elites is useful to contextualize the global movement of Chinese diaspora, it tends, as a result, to be specific to a Chinese ‘Asian’ discussion.

Although there are similarities between the Koreans who entered Canada during the 1980s and 1990s under the Business Immigration Program and Chinese migrants, there are important and specific differences between the two ‘Asian’ groups as well. While also being educated, multilingual, entrepreneurial, and possessing large amounts of financial capital, South Korean nationals were not able to carry dual or multi citizenships like their multi-passport carrying Chinese and Hong Kong transnational counterparts. For Korean nationals who would have to forfeit their citizenship in order to become Canadian, their distinct ‘Asian’ experience has meant limited choices in terms of mobility, investment and citizenship. As well as obscuring ‘ethnic’ differences, this notion of ‘Asian’ elite is also gendered in its heteronormative assumption of Chinese businessmen and their families. Ong (1999) notes it is critical to see how gender shapes these transnational identities and communities as “family regimes that generally valorize mobile masculininity and localized femininity shape strategies of flexible citizenship, gender division of labor, and relocation in different sites” (p. 20). It is also important to note that the characterization of Chinese people as wealthy elite is racialized and has historically been associated with notions of the “model minority” (i.e. non-religious, non-confrontational, and passive) in relation to other immigrant groups. Reconfiguring the discussion of transmigrant elites to include a comparison between Korean and Chinese identities enriches our discussion and adds texture and nuance to our interrogations of neoliberal, nationalist, and multicultural
discourses in Canada. Situating ‘ Asianness ’ allows us to frame and challenge how multiple histories, identities (e.g., gender, class, sexuality), diasporas, and narratives have been subsumed under the essentializing construct of ‘Asian’ within discourses that informed the creation of the Canadian nation. Much scholarship focuses on the umbrella discourse of ‘Asians’, which conflates and homogenizes this category with Chinese identities, thereby silencing other ‘Asian’ ethnicities, migrations patterns, histories, and experiences. While this has to date excluded discussions of Korean experiences, a more nuanced analysis of ‘Asian’ discourses provides a conceptual framework to understand how these discursive racial categories frame Korean identities, communities, and spaces in Metro Vancouver and within the larger Canadian imaginary and its localized anxieties.
Chapter 3: Methodological Frameworks

This research utilizes multiple interdisciplinary feminist methods to interrogate discourse and textual data and assess how they inform practices and social relations within the place making of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver. This chapter is organized into the following three sections: 1) Feminist Methodology; 2) Methods of Data Collection; and 3) Reflections on Personal Boundaries. Section one examines the concept of discourse and methods of discourse analysis in text and talk while also highlighting applications within feminist frameworks. Section two provides a description of the methods used to collect and analyze data, including a discussion of the limitations of using text as data. Lastly, section three includes personal reflections on the dilemmas of negotiating complex and often tenuous boundaries of being a partial ‘insider/outsider’ to the community in this study.

3.1 Feminist Methodology: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

This research primarily examines text and speech from primary sources using concepts of discourse, methods of discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, and feminist discourse analysis. The concept of discourse has become commonly used in many disciplines and as such, has multiple meanings and usages. Sara Mills (2004) broadly classifies usages of the term into three categories: cultural theory, linguistics, and critical discourse analysis. According to Mills, cultural theory examines discourse as a grouping of statements produced and reproduced by power relations in the public domain. Linguists are concerned with discourse as structured occurrences and utterances within texts. A combination of the two defines discourse used in critical discourse analysis to analyze power relations that influence and produce particular utterances, speech, and text (p. 7-9). It is this third category of discourse within critical discourse analysis that is utilized in this research. Largely attributed to the works of Michel Foucault, the
concept of discourse assumes that all knowledge and truth is a production or representation of power relations and struggles. He states,

[discourses] are always themselves reflexive categories, principles of classification, normative rules, institutionalized types: they, in turn, are facts of discourse that deserve to be analysed beside others; of course, they also have complex relations with each other, but they are not intrinsic, autochthonous, and universally recognizable characteristics. (Foucault, 1972, p. 22)

For Foucault, the concept of discourse is never neutral, static, or descriptive, but rather a complex and dialectic process of relations.

To analyze the relational elements of discourse, this thesis applies discourse analysis as a tool to engage with complex power relations influencing utterances in text and speech. Contrary to traditional linguists who emphasize and focus on sentence structure in text, discourse analysts tend to focus on larger structures and meanings embedded within and through the text. Mills describes this as “the desire to analyse these larger units and structures which are implicitly recognised by speakers and hearers at the level of discourses, rather than at the level of the sentence” (Mills, 2004, p. 120). This kind of analysis makes it possible to explore the relations of power that organize the rules and practices of text, often text with assumed or taken for granted meanings. Foucault (1972) argues that “in analysing discourses themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practices” (p. 49) that order social relations. This form of analysis involves unpacking and describing the often taken for granted meanings and nuances of discourse to draw out the “practices that systematically form the objects of what they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). Discourse analysis explores the power relations between the micro and macro levels embedded in discourse and how it is expressed through language and mediated through practices to organize everyday relations and interactions.
Critical discourse analysis (CDA), based on the works of linguists Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun van Dijk, uses Foucault’s concepts and elements of discourse analysis but concerns itself specifically with the concept of power and how it shapes discourse, in turn shaping social relations to (re)produce power. Central to this examination of power is how the elements of discourse produce or reproduce unequal power relations and social inequality. For van Dijk (2008), CDA is defined as “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk” (p. 85). For critical discourse analysts, the aim and consequence of CDA is to always challenge the relationship between discourse and social inequality. For van Dijk (2001), CDA specifically “focuses on the ways discursive structures enact, confirm legitimate, reproduce, or challenges relations of power and dominance in society” (p. 353). It involves the use of multidisciplinary and multimodal methods relevant to the aims of the research, with no fixed theoretical framework or approach involved. Recently, van Dijk (2008) has argued to adopt the alternative label of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) to account for the flexibility and multiplicity of approaches and methods. This multimodal approach has garnered criticism from theorists oriented toward more systematic, rigid and ‘rigorous’ methods of analysis that are committed to ‘objective’ a priori knowledge production. But as many theorists have argued, this approach enables more nuanced and complex levels of analyses to interpret discourse and its relation to social phenomena while unpacking elements of power embedded in singular disciplines or approaches. It is a demanding, self-critical, non-‘neutral’ methodology. Critical discourse analysts “are not only scientifically aware of their choice of topics and priorities of research, theories, methods or data, but also sociopolitically so” (van Dijk, 2008, p. 7).

Critical discourse analysis has benefited from feminist contributions to research which have criticized the problematics of power and authority in traditional ontological and
epistemological assumptions. Feminist scholars “work within, against, and across epistemologies, often combining elements from different perspectives, [and often] innovative methods are derived from successful efforts to reconcile differences and even from those efforts that conclude that certain epistemological differences are irreconcilable” (Fonow & Cook, 2005, p. 2213). This approach, combined with feminist commitments to examining social inequality around the intersections of social locations such as gender and race, lends itself well to the principles of a feminist critical discourse analysis. Lazar (2007), however, argues that an emphasis on critical views on gender and social inequality does not necessarily translate into a critical discourse analysis that is feminist. She argues for the need to develop a distinct feminist critical discourse analysis which is inherently politically invested and guided by feminist theory. Lazar (2007) states:

The aim of feminist critical discourse studies, therefore, is to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken for granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities. Such an interest is not merely an academic de-construction of texts and talk for its own sake, but comes from an acknowledgement that the issues dealt with (in view of effecting social change) have material and phenomenological consequences for groups of women and men in specific communities. A feminist CDA perspective is obviously interdisciplinary in nature. On the one hand, it contributes to (critical) language and discourse studies a perspective informed by feminist studies, and on the other hand, it suggests the usefulness of language and discourse studies for the investigation of feminist issues in gender and women’s studies. (p. 142)

Noting the critical interconnections between feminist scholarship and critical discourse analysis, Lazar highlights how they inform each other theoretically and methodologically. She defines five key elements for feminist discourse praxis: 1) feminist analytical activism; 2) gender as an ideological structure; 3) complexity of gender and power relations; 4) discourse in the (de)construction of gender; and 5) critical reflexivity as praxis. These elements clearly articulate feminist engagements and principles to research in practice, highlighting the need to problematize relations of power and how they are constituted by discourse.
This research incorporates these concepts of discourse and methods of feminist critical discourse analysis to frame a feminist methodology that involves intersectional analyses to understand the multiple dimensions of social relations and inequality. Intersectional analysis has become a central theme in feminist methodology and has been adopted in many disciplines engaging in critical analysis. Developed in the 1980s and 1990s in response to identity politics, black feminist scholars such as bell hooks (1984; 1989), Patricia Hill Collins (1993; 2008), and Kimberley Crenshaw (1989, 1991) argued against examinations of power and oppression as separate categories (e.g. race versus gender versus class), which did not represent the lived realities of women and were “firmly rooted in the either/or dichotomous thinking of Eurocentric, masculinist thought” (P. Collins, 2008, p. 225). Rather, they argued for paradigm shifts in feminist thought to recognize power and social relations as complex, intersecting and interconnecting (e.g. race and gender and class). This avoids the ranking of mutually exclusive analytical categories where “privilege becomes defined in relation to its other” (P. Collins, 2008, p. 225). As an alternative to “additive models of oppression”, Collins (2008) suggests examining power and oppression within a “matrix of domination” where categories of analysis are interlocking (e.g. race, gender, class as an interlocking system of oppression). Drawing on Sandra Harding’s work on gender oppression, she argues that this matrix of domination also occurs in the multiple levels of the institutional (e.g. school, government), symbolic (gender ideology), and the individual (personal biographies), all of which intersect with experiences and (re)articulations of privilege and oppression (P. H. Collins, 1993, pp. 29–36). This system of intersectional analysis creates the potential to see the multiple and complex ways that individuals are both oppressed and act as oppressors. Complicated additionally by the recognition of

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multiple histories, geographies, citizenship, colonialism, and global economic systems, this kind of feminist intersectional theorizing provides ways to analyze the multiple, fluid, and complex local and global dimensions of identity and power in everyday lived experiences. It recognizes that social locations are multiple and constitute each other while also highlighting how “resistance and power reside in many different locations and arrangements and that agency is always an ongoing, changing accomplishment” (Fonow & Cook, 2005, p. 2224). These elements of intersectionality, combined with a feminist critical discourse analysis, produce a feminist methodology that will become important to adequately analyze the discursive elements embedded in the (re)creating of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver, specifically by different actors situated by multiple social locations and immigration histories.

3.2 Methods of Data Collection

Several methods of data collection of primary sources of talk and text are incorporated into this study, including print media, published legal decisions, and qualitative interviews. The use of multiple sources expands analysis of events and attempts to represent a range of narratives. The following section will describe the texts collected for data, including discussions assessing the strengths and potential limitations of text as data, followed by a description of how the data was organized for analysis.

3.2.1 Print Media: Newspaper Articles, Editorials, Letters to the Editor

This research utilized different methods according to the type of textual data that was collected. Because the point of entry into this topic was originally based on my reading of the H-Mart incident in local newspapers in Metro Vancouver, I first began to collect print media coverage of the story. Data collection of English language print and online media sources was systematically based on any content related to the H-Mart incident and included any text with
keywords such as H-Mart, Korean(s), Koreatown, Hanintown, Hanahreum, Korean malls, Korean mall owners, leasing disputes and tenants. The intent was to collect as much media coverage of the issue of the H-Mart incident as possible. Data was not limited to a specific format, geographical area, or newspaper and therefore produced a number of data sources. These include feature articles, letters to the editor, and opinion pieces in local and national newspapers such as The Vancouver Sun, The Globe and Mail, The Langley Advance, The Edmonton Journal, The Prince George Citizen as well as special interest print media such as the Monday Report on Retailers and the Canadian Grocer. As the incident began to unfold and the dispute moved to the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal for resolution, the media coverage spanned over two months, from October 3, 2006 until November 9, 2006. A total of twenty-one media documents were collected and classified: 14 general news or feature articles, five letters to the editor, and two editorials or column pieces.

Media coverage is a critical primary source that provides a window into the local perspectives on Korean social and commercial spaces in the Metro Vancouver area. Despite competition from television and online sources, print media remains a relatively accessible source of communication, particularly for local issues and current events. This research includes only English language print media coverage of the H-Mart incident which presents some limitations for this paper. As someone not able to read Korean language media sources and due to resource limitations for translation, these sources were omitted from this study which inevitably silences valuable perspectives from a community that is being directly and indirectly implied and ‘spoken of’ in the coverage of the H-Mart incident. These ‘Korean’ perspectives and opinions expressed in Korean media sources may present a more nuanced analysis of the H-Mart incident as the audience and reception would differ from the ‘gaze’ and potential ‘backlash’ from non-Korean media sources. Despite this limitation of this study, the central rational for focussing
on English language media coverage was to highlight the non-Korean or dominant perspectives and reactions to the H-Mart incident. As a moment of conflict, it is a way to explore what social processes are disrupted and being contested. Although the data collected is limited to the specific views and biases of the English speaking contributors and editors, it provides a critical lens into ‘non-Korean’ local attitudes and perspectives about local Korean social and commercial spaces, multiculturalism, and nationhood in Canada. The response triggered by the H-Mart incident also provided insight into the relations of power and processes that are contesting meanings of inclusion and exclusion in local spaces in Metro Vancouver. In a sense, these locally produced texts became the data source to showcase ways in which institutional discourse is re(constituted) through social axioms of power. Media, is a powerful and pervasive space where discourse is (re)produced and embedded with influences of structural ideologies and by those invested in its influence, access, control, and production. As van Dijk (2008) notes:

The corporate embedding of most western media, especially newspapers, as well as the routine organization of news production, the reliance on readily available and credible sources and the general professional and ideological aspects of newsworthiness, all concur in social cognitions and text production that favour stories about the most powerful people, groups, or institutions in society (van Dijk, 1987b). In this way, instead of simply being a mouthpiece of the elite, the media also show that they are an inherent part of the societal power structure, of which they manage the symbolic dimension. (p. 55)

Therefore, the use of media sources in this research is less about objective truths and facts about the H-Mart incident. It deals instead with how the texts reveal discourses of power that organize social relationships and meanings around local Asian enclaves or Korean communities in Metro Vancouver. Specifically, this research is interested in the conflicts or tensions around particular discourses of ‘difference’, multiculturalism, and national belonging that the H-Mart incident triggered as a way to investigate how they inform the practices of individuals invested in the meaning of ‘Koreatown’.
3.2.2 Published Legal Decisions: British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal

According to newspaper coverage of the H-Mart incident, the tenants involved applied to the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal in an attempt to resolve the dispute that they felt involved a B.C. Human Rights Code violation, namely on the basis of race and in the areas of tenancy. All Tribunal proceedings are published and accessible to the public so the relevant proceedings and decisions specific to the case were also collected. This consisted of a total of three documents issued on January 26, April 5 and November 23, 2007. The joint complainants included Rose A. Farrell and Rose Farrell on behalf of Rose Farrell of Colour Tech Hair Studio, John Pook of Peter F. Pook Insurance Agencies Ltd., and Lynn Wallace of Frames West Gallery Ltd. The joint respondents included Hanahreum Mart Inc., Stanford Plaza Inc. and Canreal Management Corporation; the latter was later dropped as a respondent in the final decision.

The use of documents published by the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal has advantages and limitations for textual analysis. Practically, legal documentation from the Tribunal offered an alternative to newspaper coverage that could be used for comparison purposes. Because the Tribunal is an “independent, quasi-judicial body created by the B.C. Human Rights Code…responsible for accepting, screening, mediating and adjudicating human rights complaints” (Tribunal, 2007), the published decisions were based on sworn affidavits and accounts by legally represented complainants, respondents, and witnesses and was presided over by a Tribunal member practiced in human rights law and appointed by the Lieutenant Governor General in Council. Due to the legal weight that these decisions held in terms of outcomes of the H-Mart dispute, these documents contained very useful and specific details of events regarding the incident and focused less on issues of editorial opinion and more on facts and evidence relating to leasing agreements and discrimination on the basis of race as it pertains to Section 10
(1) of the British Columbia Human Rights Code, Discrimination of Tenancy Premises.

However, legal texts produced by legal governing bodies carry significant weight and influence as they are embedded with the axioms of power in ruling relations and structures. As van Dijk (2008) states, “More than in most institutional contexts, the enactment of power in court is systematically governed by explicitly formulated rules and procedures of dialogical interaction between the judge, the prosecution, defence counsel and the defendant” (p. 50). The published decisions represent specific accounts and decisions that conform to the legal requirements and regulations of the Tribunal. It is based on representations by lawyers, legal codes, intentions, and interests of the selected parties and witnesses, creating textual data that is embedded within multiple social relations of power. Despite this, the Tribunal’s decisions provided a useful source of textual data to examine how discourses of ‘Korean’ and ‘Asian’, race, and discrimination were contested in a legal context, specific to the H-Mart incident.

3.2.3 Qualitative Interviews

Lastly, this research also incorporates the use of interviews as part of data collection. After receiving ethical approval, initial contact letters were sent to a number of individuals associated with businesses and associations that were identified in the media coverage of the H-Mart incident or were assumed to have some knowledge of the people or events involved. Follow-up communication was conducted with contacts who responded and also led to additional names of potential interviewees. This ‘snowball’ method led to a total of five

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5 According to the Human Rights Code, R.S.B.C. 1996, c.210 and applicable sections of the Administrative Tribunals Act, S.B.C. 2004, C.45: Section 10 (1) A person must not (a) Deny to a person or class of persons the right to occupy, as a tenant, space that is represented as being available for occupancy by a tenant, or (b) Discriminate against a person or class of persons regarding a term or condition of the tenancy of the space, Because of the race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, age or lawful source of income of that person or class of persons, or of any other person or class of persons. For further information on the Human Rights Code visit the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal website at http://www.bcrt.gov.bc.ca/index.htm
subsequent interviews with six respondents. Interviewees were chosen based on their familiarity with the H-Mart incident, ‘Koreatown’, and the Korean business community in Metro Vancouver. Five semi-structured interviews were conducted in English between the dates of March 25, 2009 and April 21, 2009. Interviews were conducted with professionals and business owners operating in the area of ‘Koreatown’ as well as with representatives from Coquitlam City Hall who were involved with the local Business Improvement Association in the area. Interviewees included two representatives from the Planning and Development department at Coquitlam City Hall, a lawyer, a chartered accountant, a board member of the Business Improvement Association, and a local retail owner. Interviews ranged between 30 to 90 minutes and took place in a public location at the convenience of the interviewee. All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. Due to the limited sample size of interviewees and in order to ensure confidentiality, respondents were given pseudonyms in this study and limited relevant demographic information is provided as reference in this study (Table 1).
Table 1: Demographic Information of Interviewees (at the time of study).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Interviewee (pseudonym)</th>
<th>Age and Ethnicity (if disclosed)</th>
<th>Occupation and Other Relevant Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Kim</td>
<td>53 year old Korean</td>
<td>chartered accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>immigrated to Canada in 1972 from Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>living in Vancouver for 37 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Key developer of Korean commercial areas in Metro Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>working in ‘Koreatown’ area since 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>North Road Business Improvement Association board of director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Park</td>
<td>49 years old Korean</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Immigrated to Canada in 1972 from Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>living in Vancouver since 1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formed Hanin Development Society in 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Key developer of Korean commercial areas in Metro Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>North Road Business Improvement Association board of director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith</td>
<td>60 years old non-Korean/white</td>
<td>Intellectual property lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>North Road Business Improvement Association board of director/president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moved to Vancouver in 1990 from United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Hassan</td>
<td>64 years old Indian-Tanzanian</td>
<td>Optician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Immigrated from Tanzania in 1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Operator of optical store in ‘Koreatown’ for past 27 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Johnson</td>
<td>Age undisclosed non-Korean/white</td>
<td>Manager of City of Coquitlam Community Planning for past 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Costa</td>
<td>Age undisclosed non-Korean/non-white</td>
<td>Community Planner for City of Coquitlam for past 8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Networks with North Road Business Improvement Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As textual data, qualitative interviews provided insights into local narratives on specific issues and events related to ‘Koreatown’ from the unique perspectives and experiences of individuals in the community who may have otherwise been excluded from ‘traditional’ forms of social inquiry. Due to the specific nature of the H-Mart incident and the limited research available on Korean spaces and histories in Metro Vancouver, the use of qualitative interviews was a critical point of entry for “access to people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher” (Reinharz & Davidman, 1992, p. 19). As someone who is not directly involved in organized Korean community events or local Korean business associations, these interviews provided an invaluable way to contextualize the historical events, actors, and issues that led to the emergence of Korean spaces in Metro Vancouver that have not been documented elsewhere. Semi-structured and open-ended questions also created flexibility and space for oral narratives to emerge which were meaningful to the interviewees, particularly around migration histories and experiences of racism, struggle, and resistance in their daily lives. These counter-narratives or ‘marginal’ histories expressed the complex and intersectional social relationships between multiple levels of history, community, and subjectivity that occur within and through Korean spaces in Metro Vancouver.

Despite these strengths, the qualitative interviews included in this research also pose several limitations to this study, primarily because they are limited in number and only centre English speaking respondents. Familiar to the space of ‘Koreatown’ only as a frequent shopper, I was not familiar with the commercial network in the area and did not have primary contacts or a point of entry into the ‘Korean’ community. In addition, my Korean language skills were not proficient enough to conduct interviews with people who did not feel comfortable speaking primarily in English. These factors posed challenges in locating respondents willing to participate in this study and to speak on the H-Mart incident. However, as a second generation
Korean Canadian and having lived in Metro Vancouver for most of my childhood, I was able to make a connection through a family contact who agreed to be interviewed and also referred me to other potential interviewees. There was a specific intention to follow up on referrals of people who were working in or were familiar with the ‘Koreatown’ area located on North Road and Lougheed highway and who felt comfortable doing interviews in English. This snowball sampling was the primary method in obtaining interviewees in this research. This method, in addition to the limited sample size, introduces issues of representation of viewpoints within the community. However, the original intention of using interviews in the study was not to create generalizations about a particular community or incident, but rather to solicit particular narratives as an entry point to gain insight into broader discussions about the development of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver, its role as a commercial and social space, and constitution by social relations through multicultural discourses. Recognizing the strengths and limitations of interviews as data creates ways to frame and position this analysis in this research. In this way, the interviews can be seen to provide research that speaks to a specific moment in time that is historicized, gendered, and racialized. The attempt is to highlight and draw out intersectional and multidimensional experiences which centre narratives from local actors engaging in complex power relations in the constitution of ‘Koreatown’.

Drawing on methods from feminist critical discourse analysis requires a close examination of text and talk which is organized and classified into data. The interview data was manually coded based on initial pre-determined themes as well as emerging themes that became evident from language that was repetitive, overlapped or connected to other discourses. This kind of thematic coding included text referring to multiculturalism, space, ‘Koreatown’, Korean/Asian, inclusion and exclusion, race and racism, and discrimination. Applying a feminist critical discourse analysis, these themes could be further explored to examine how they were
understood in relation to structural social relations of power such as racialization, class, gender, hetero-normativity, Canadian citizenship and nationhood, community and belonging. The intent of this kind of analysis was to identify and explore how local actors discursively constitute and mediate social relations of power.

3.3 Personal Reflections: Mediating Boundaries of Identity and Space

Central to feminist practice in research is the commitment to intersectional frameworks to examine and challenge how power is (re)constituted in research and knowledge production. One way to engage in this critical interrogation of power is to exercise reflexivity which entails “varying attempts to unpack what knowledge is contingent upon, how the researcher is socially situated, and how the research agenda/process has been constituted” (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 118). This entails an ethical commitment to critically reflect on how our personal subjectivities, experiences, entitlements, and investments are entangled up with the questions we ask and the answers we seek. As “all researchers, however inexperienced, carry intellectual, emotional and political baggage with them” (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 148), this becomes a difficult and personally challenging process. As someone who is familiar with feminist ontological and epistemological debates, I was critically conscious of my personal interests and entry points but struggled as I proceeded further into my research and conducted interviews. These unforeseen moments were centred on my struggles negotiating my social location and subjectivity as well as the multiple social and material spaces I inhabited. The boundaries that separate my outsider/insider subjectivities as researcher, second generation English speaking Korean feminist woman at times became blurred challenging to negotiate. As I always embody and navigate through multiple subjectivities and spaces, making the boundaries between them is a precarious process. This requires a constant mediation of sometimes
irreconcilable multiplicities which is emotional and difficult work, bringing both strengths and challenges to this research.

My positions and experiences as a second generation Korean woman, feminist academic, and a partial insider/outsider of the Korean community in Metro Vancouver all influenced my relationship to the themes and spaces that were analyzed. As a partial insider to the Korean community with historical knowledge and experiences with Korean spaces in Metro Vancouver, I had an informed familiarity with the community and developments in ‘Koreatown’, and had familial networks that gave me privilege and access to enter and witness particular spaces and narratives. This familiarity also became an integral part of the interviewing process in areas of rapport, common understandings, and assumptions around Korean culture, norms, immigrant histories and experiences. This became most apparent during the interviews when interviewees would state, “You’re Korean, you [emphasis added] know what I mean” or when ‘they’ or ‘them’ would implicitly refer to non-Koreans in our discussions. There were also discussions “off the record” where interviewees would speak about experiences of racism or the strategic ways of working around and through racist social relations or institutions. These ‘hushed’ moments and discussions of ‘unpleasant things’ assumed a common experience of racism as a racialized subject. Sara Ahmed (2009) speaks to these ‘off the record’ moments in an interview she conducted for her research on diversity:

I am speaking to one of my interviewees about racism. We are talking of those little encounters, and their very big effects. It is ‘off tape’, we are just talking, recognising each other, as you do, in how we recognise racism in those everyday encounters you have with people who can’t handle it, the idea of it. (p. 47)

At the same time, these familiarities as a partial insider to the Korean community also presented challenges when references to ‘we’ and ‘us’ during the interviews began to assume a collective Korean identity. While I can relate to some experiences of Korean identity and migration histories, I am also excluded or situated outside many parts of the community. My position as a
partial outsider blurred the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’, forcing me to mediate these positions as a researcher while the interviewees continually assumed and drew the line. In addition to these challenges, “insiders are expected to conform to cultural norms that can restrict them as researchers” (Twine & Warren, 2000, p. 12). Korean culture is inherently patriarchal and hierarchal, in different ways from western cultures. Neo-Confucianism, honorific language, and cultural gender norms were difficult to negotiate and mediate as a Korean woman researcher. Identifying as a feminist researcher also inherently carries other connotations as being a challenge to cultural patriarchy. Despite all these complexities and challenges to personal boundaries, Collins notes that the “marginality that accompanies outsider-within status can be the source of both frustration and creativity.” (P. Collins, 2008, p. 233). While at times it seemed my entanglements with multiple subjectivities and spaces created boundaries, it was the recognition that these boundaries are precarious and should be mediated as an active interrogation of social processes that structure interactions as well as research. Having a feminist background and using a feminist methodology was essential to interrogate and navigate the problematic of identity and community, researcher and researcher, power and knowledge.
Chapter 4: The Place Making of Koreatown: Mediating the Politics of Multiculturalism

Conceptualizing ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver involves an understanding of place making as a complex and interlinked web of social processes, both global and local, which are continually (re)producing that space. As Massey notes, “some of these relations will be, as it were, contained within the place; others will stretch beyond it, tying any particular locality into wider relations and process in which other places are implicated too” (1994, p. 120). This chapter examines these social relations and their local and global links in ‘Koreatown’; a space rooted in identity of place and the politics of multiculturalism. Drawing from the controversial H-Mart leasing disagreement reported in local media, newspaper coverage of the incident, and qualitative interviews, the following chapter explores the place making of ‘Koreatown’. It looks at those who are invested in constituting the space and how and why the space becomes contested through practices informed by multiculturalism discourses. Data analyzed using a feminist critical discourse analysis suggests that ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver is not only an area embedded in processes of identity and belonging creating within multicultural discourses but also a complex social space with links to globalization, migration, and economics. These processes also seem to be filtered through notions of race, space, and nation, and mediated through discourses of multiculturalism in Canada.

4.1 Is this Koreatown?: Constituting ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver

One of the key starting points to examine the place making of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver is to identify what constitutes the spatial parameters that are understood to be ‘Koreatown’. Currently, Metro Vancouver does not officially designate or recognize a civic space referred to as ‘Koreatown’ in the same way it does for spaces such as Chinatown in downtown Vancouver. There are also no secondary works that critically examine this space as such. So the question emerges: Does ‘Koreatown’ exist in Vancouver? Despite the lack of
formal recognition of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver, there was local recognition of this social space on the internet. According to Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia, the entry for “Koreatown, Vancouver” was defined on October 17, 2006 as the following:

When used in Vancouver's Korean-language media, ‘Koreatown’ generally refers to the area around the intersection of North Road and Lougheed Highway on the Burnaby-Coquitlam border. The neighbourhood serves immigrants, new citizens, and longer-term residents - as opposed to the visiting students who congregate on Robson Street...and features a diversity of retail and service businesses catering to the Korean community. The area...is anchored by two large Korean-themed supermarkets: locally owned Hannam Supermarket, and an outlet of the Korean American Han Ah Reum chain. A string of Korean businesses extends north from those two stores along North and Clarke Roads to the Port Moody border. (“Koreatown, Vancouver”)

This entry suggests a ‘Koreatown’ in Vancouver exists in some sense as it describes a specific geographical area that is ‘catering’ to a Korean demographic. Wikipedia is often the first point of reference for individuals searching for information and can be seen as a culturally important site because of its prolific accessibility online and collaborative nature in allowing users to define its entries. Defined as a “collaboratively edited, multilingual, free internet encyclopedia” with over 30 million articles and over 500 million users a month (“Wikipedia, Wikipedia”), it can be seen as a significant portal facilitating locally and globally connected, interactive, and dynamic processes where individuals can participate in (re)defining meanings on an infinite level. As a cultural resource, it presents a key point of entry into the rapid and recent constitution of meanings in everyday knowledge production. With over 25,000 Wikipedia hits to the entry “Koreatown, Vancouver” in can be argued that there was some level of social recognition of a geographical space described as ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver.

At the same time, due to the rapid and collaborative nature of Wikipedia that allows “netizens” (Hauben & Hauben, 1996) to nominate and develop entries, it can simultaneously give users the power and potential to delete entries altogether. When an article is suggested for deletion, “Wikipedians” are allowed to discuss its relevance for a period of seven days, after
which a “community consensus” is made. In August 2008, the Wikipedia article for the entry “Koreatown, Vancouver” was nominated for deletion and led to an online debate over its relevance and existence on the site. According to the Wikipedia discussion log (“Articles for Deletion/Koreatown, Vancouver”), much of the debate centered on the lack of reliable sources recognizing the civic boundaries of the space or lack of historical profile compared to Vancouver’s Chinatown or Japantown. As the debate developed however, the discussion quickly focused on the issue of representation and motive of possible partisan interests in having a “Koreatown, Vancouver” entry. As one user, Skookum1, states:

Korean business promoters are always trying to launch a Koreatown in Greater Vancouver so they can have their own ethnic enclave; they’ve tried to make one on North Road, but efforts to re-name that area after buying it up/taking it over were blocked by remaining non-Korean merchants and also the largely non-Korean population of the same area; efforts to start another “Koreatown” in Surrey were stopped by the businesses the Korean developers wanted to evict in preference for Korean-only tenants, and the general resistance of the three otherwise-multicultural-friendly city councilors whose turf it is. Yes, there’s a desire to create a Koreatown (or two or three or four) in Vancouver, among certain Koreans that is, but nobody else has bought into the idea and there is no civic designation, or even anything vaguely resembling so much as an endorsement. (“Articles for Deletion/Koreatown, Vancouver”, August 16, 2008).

For Skookum1, the “Koreatown, Vancouver” article deserves a “Big Nasty Delete” because it “is bunk, put forward by people who want there to be a Koreatown and are trying to create one by ‘buzz’” (“Articles for Deletion/Koreatown, Vancouver”, August 16, 2008). Ultimately, the contributors to the deletion discussion agreed that the area was “notably a made up neighbourhood”, a “fantasy” area with a lack of ‘reliable’ sources and on August 19, 2008, “Koreatown, Vancouver” was deleted as an entry in Wikipedia, thereby erasing one of the few references to the existence of a ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver online.

6 For additional information on Wikipedia’s protocols for deleting articles see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Articles_for_deletion>
It is, ironically, in these moments of creation and erasure where we can see the idea of a ‘Koreatown’ being engaged with and negotiated. If in a multicultural society, some form of recognition is an important element for the survival of a community, what does it mean for this recognition to be contested? It can be argued that the discussion of the presence/non-presence of ‘Koreatown’ creates an opportunity to examine how identity of specific spaces are created and what attachment to meanings they have for people. Pursuant to a discussion of ‘Koreatown’ as a potential imagined community, Wikipedia case is significant for three reasons. The first is the article “Koreatown, Vancouver” originally recognized the particular space along North Road and Lougheed Highway with a ‘Koreatown’ identity. Second, the deletion log and eventual deletion of the article from Wikipedia signals a contestation or conflict over the meaning of the space as linked to identity and the politics of recognition. As mentioned in Chapter two, this is a key dimension of liberal multicultural discourses of ‘difference’ and ‘accommodation’. Third, the Wikipedia deletion log illustrates how the debate included a particular perspective that cited the local racial spatial tensions specific to the H-Mart incident in Metro Vancouver. All these factors strongly emphasize the dimension of contestation over a particular space and its attached meanings of identity. Whether or not ‘Koreatown’ has civic boundaries or is or is not deleted from Wikipedia becomes less relevant to the overall analysis in this research as the aim is to critically emphasize and examine the contesting interactions and social processes that are producing meanings over a particular space. These processes are engaging in what Massey refers to as the place making of ‘Koreatown’, whereby the constitution of the space and its meaning is continually produced through social conflict and contestation. In this way, the Wikipedia debate can illustrate that there are social processes engaging in the place making of ‘Koreatown’ in Vancouver and are also constituting its existence. It also illustrates that it had to be already constituted spatially and socially prior to the Wikipedia debate in order for it to be initially
referenced as an entry, defined, challenged, and then subsequently deleted. This illustrates how tensions and conflict move the space from an abstract static geographical space to a process that is dynamically a sense of place as it is produced through social relations.

Rather than being defined in a static and descriptive sense, this paper aims to locate the social processes that are (re)defining the constitution of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver as a space engaging in processes of place making. In this way, space is recognized as always dynamic, always in existence, and in a constant state of what Massey (1994) refers to as *Beingness*, rather than entrenched in either the *Being* or *Becoming* of space (p. 119). In line with this approach, this paper also recognizes Massey’s position that there is “no authenticity of space” (Massey, 1994, p. 21), making the analysis of the space of ‘Koreatown’ an effort to emphasize the social formations and processes continually (re)constituting that space. As Massey notes, “the definition of any particular locality will therefore reflect the question at issue” (1994, p. 138) so the question posed to interviewees about the commercial space located along North Road and Lougheed Highway in Metro Vancouver was, “Is this ‘Koreatown’”? In this research, the responses to this question reflected the complex social relations and interactions continually constituting the place making of ‘Koreatown’. ‘Koreatown’ is not a descriptive location rooted in identity and belonging for some groups of people. Rather, it is a dynamic space of negotiations between global and national discourses interacting and mediating social relations in the local sphere, constantly (re)creating meanings of place. Massey (1994) argues, if “there are indeed multiple meanings of places, held by different social groups for instance, then the question of which identity is dominant will be the result of social negotiation and conflict” (p. 141). Therefore, the constitution of ‘Koreatown’ signals an entry point to explore the multiple relations of power between people and how they mediate tensions or conflicts in the process of forming meaning in attachment to spaces, rather than the descriptive specificity of the location of
‘Koreatown’ as a community. Interviewee responses to the question, “Is this ‘Koreatown’?” can be grouped into two categories to highlight the contestations of place making: the politics of location and the politics of naming to illustrate how the place making of ‘Koreatown’ is being constituted and contested geographically (materially) and socially (symbolically).

4.1.1 Locating ‘Koreatown’: “No Man’s Land” and the Politics of Location

When asked, “is this ‘Koreatown’?” in reference to the geographical area located along North Road and Lougheed Highway, Mr. Kim, a prominent Korean commercial developer and accountant working in the area, answered, “this is no man’s land.” This interesting statement prompted a need to examine concepts of land, ownership, and entitlement as a starting point to examine the space and place. If ‘Koreatown’ is referred to as ‘no man’s land’, a term that implies a lack of ownership or authority over a given area, why does there seem to be a concentrated group of Korean businesses operating in that location? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, ‘no man’s land’ is defined as the following:

1. (A piece of) waste or unowned land; an uninhabited or desolate area. Esp. in early use as a place name, often referring to a place on a boundary or between boundaries;
2. An imaginary or intermediate place. In later use also: an indeterminate state, a state of confusion or uncertainty.
3. a. The terrain between two opposing (usually entrenched) armies. Also: a stretch of disputed territory. b. A dangerous or forbidden place; a no-go area.

Drawing from this definition, we might ask whether ‘Koreatown’ is an ‘imaginary or indeterminate place’, or a ‘state of confusion or uncertainty between boundaries in a stretch of disputed territory’? The concept of ‘no man’s land’ recognizes that the space is contested, always in a state of formation. Analyzing the meaning and constitution of space “makes each and every place a potential contest about its power” (Massey, 2007, p. 10). This becomes a starting point to examine how and why ‘no man’s land’ becomes ‘someone’s land’, or in terms of this
research, how the politics of location constitutes a dominant notion of space that is recognized as the place of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver.

Despite lacking official civic recognition by Metro Vancouver, there was a consensus among all interviewees that the space along North Road and Lougheed Highway seem to consist of a concentration of commercial businesses that seem to cater to and were owned by ethnic Koreans. The interviewees in this research who consisted of Coquitlam City Hall community planning representatives, local business owners and operators, and a professional, all agreed that the space attracted a Korean demographic, both as commercial investors and cliental. This Korean ‘area’ seemed to form around a Korean identity or community and its needs, but as interviewee responses highlight, was in fact produced through local and global factors that informed the intentions of those invested in the original development in the place of ‘Koreatown’. With limited secondary sources on how ‘Koreatown’ emerged in Metro Vancouver, the interviews with Mr. Kim and Mr. Park, prominent Korean business owners and developers in Vancouver for over 30 years, provide valuable perspectives on the history, context, and motivations for the development of ‘Koreatown’ in its current location. Their narratives highlight how ‘Koreatown’, as a commercial and social centre was influenced by and mediated through factors such as Canada’s multicultural policies, global and economic trends, immigration policies, and the cost of real estate in the Metro Vancouver area. This combination of factors highlights how ‘Koreatown’ is “constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus” (Massey, 1994, p. 154).

Before ‘Koreatown’ developed along North Road, there were a number of smaller areas of Korean business in Vancouver, the original area being located on Broadway near Fraser Street in Vancouver. A larger and more notable concentration developed along the 1000 block of Kingsway in Vancouver which according to interviews, emerged as the first notable Korean
commercial area in Vancouver. It was developed in the mid 1980s by a small group of business investors who came to Canada during the first wave of *Ilse*, or first generation immigrants from Korea in the late 1960s and 1970s, at the height of multiculturalism policies and immigration in Canada. This group of Korean Canadian entrepreneurs, referred to in this research as the ‘Group of Four’, include a banker, a lawyer, a realtor, and an accountant who invested in commercial retail spaces that included professional offices, restaurants, Sharons Credit Union, and the Western Market Korean grocery store along the 1000 block of Kingsway (Figure 7). From the onset, these investors recognized the cultural and community needs to shop for Korean food and wanted to create a space that was accessible for Koreans living in Burnaby and East Vancouver.

According to Mr. Park:

[The] Korean community tended to centre around [the] needs of specialty food. So it was grocery stores that played a key role as a community gathering place. And this is pretty much the same with Greek community or any other ethnic community. Their commercial centre starts out with grocery store.

After that as we grew on Kingsway we were looking, ‘we’ meaning just sort of the general community, those who are aspiring to having visions for our community, we were looking at...expanding into Metrotown, Burnaby. Then in 1993, 92 or 93, people started to aspire to have a centre. So Sharons Credit certainly took the lead as a means of people to act collectively in organized fashion. Across the street from that was a building bought by several Koreans and that could be called [the] first Korean shopping centre.

This commercial area became known as the first concentrated Korean shopping area servicing Metro Vancouver. From the outset, this group of investors was interested in serving and capitalizing on the Korean Canadian diaspora community that migrated to Vancouver during the early 1970s and 1980s. Their cultural and entrepreneurial desires were to strategically organize and develop a space to build a Korean Canadian community and service this growing diaspora.

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7 *Ilse* is a Korean language term used to refer to the “first” generation of Korean immigrants or diaspora; similar to the use of *Issei* to describe first generation Japanese immigrants or diaspora.
In 1986, Canada made key changes to the Business Immigration Program which significantly shifted the demographic of immigrants arriving in Canada. These changes included the distinction of an “entrepreneur” and “investor” class which was geared to attract immigrants with significant financial capital to invest in the Canadian economy through business and employment opportunities. This class of immigrants were required to have a net worth of a minimum of C$500,000 and be willing to invest a minimum of half into a business for a set number of years. As Mitchell (2004) notes, these changes were mainly targeted to attract wealthy Hong Kong immigrants “who might be considering a move out of the colony in advance of the transition to Chinese control in 1997” (p. 58) but also marked how Canada was shifting its policies to situate itself within global markets. Changes to the Business Immigration program were successful in attracting these Hong Kong entrepreneurs and investors to Canada and in British Columbia in particular. She further notes, “The Business Immigration Program was part of a much broader federal-scale, neoliberal agenda in the 1980s that emphasized the liberalization of finance and the establishment of capital networks around the globe, particularly in the booming economic region of the Asia Pacific” (p. 60). Data from Citizenship and Immigration Canada from the years 1985-1996 note that permanent residents under the
entrepreneur and investor class with Hong Kong as their last permanent residence were the top source country for all years during this decade, with British Columbia being the foremost leading destination province in Canada for investors beginning in 1994 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada). While significant research has focused on this Hong Kong trend, little attention has been given to the increasing number of Korean entrepreneurs and investors who also entered Canada during this time. In the ten years between 1986-1996, South Korea was listed consistently in the top three countries of last permanent residence for all entrepreneurs and investors to Canada.

Foreseeing the economic potential in this new distinct second wave of Korean Canadian business immigrants arriving in Metro Vancouver, the ‘Group of Four’ created a limited partnership and purchased 2.5 acres along the 5000 block of Kingsway and Imperial Street near an area known as Metrotown in the city of Burnaby (Figure 8, Figure 9). According to Mr. Park, a strip mall was bought with plans to redevelop and “provide [an] investment vehicle for small businesses”, a way to attract these new Korean business immigrants who would only be required to invest $50,000. Combining desires for a Korean community with economic interests, Mr. Park stated that the aim of this development was to create a “decent Korean commercial centre in Metrotown”. He notes that the area was successful for a few years as “Koreans regarded Metrotown as the centre of the commercial area”. However, due to the 1997 Asian economic crisis and decline of global markets, the development of the area stalled as the anticipated numbers of Korean business immigrants expected to move or invest in the area decreased as they were impacted by the economic downturn.
By the late 1990s and early 2000s, global markets began to settle and Korean settlement in Metro Vancouver began to concentrate in Burnaby, Coquitlam, and Surrey. The Metrotown location was reaching capacity and two investors from the original ‘Group of Four’ wanted to invest in a more central, larger, and accessible location to develop a Korean commercial area. At the time, Vancouver was expanding its Skytrain, its urban rapid transit system, to link service from downtown Vancouver to Burnaby, Coquitlam, New Westminster, and Surrey. One of the key stations of this new Millennium Line was being developed near the corner of Lougheed
Highway and North Road, near a commercial area (now Lougheed Town Centre Station). Due to the accessibility inconveniences resulting from construction, the commercial sales in the area were negatively impacted and many businesses, including larger retail stores such as Canadian Tire, Swiss Chalet, and Fanny’s Fabric, declined to renew their leases and were moving out of the area. Two of the investors, a lawyer and an accountant, took advantage of the location and low cost of real estate and bought into the area on the west side of North Road. Similar to the Kingsway and Metrotown locations, this space also centred around a Korean grocery, Hannam Supermarket. As Mr. Park observed, investment was originally hesitant:

Mr. Park: A lot of Koreans were worried, “Why is it so cheap? I heard it’s [a] leaky building.” And there was problem with the building but when they saw that a lawyer and an accountant moved in they sort of went on blind faith that we must know what we are doing. [laughs]

Eventually, with the low real estate cost, accessible location, and knowledge that other Koreans were investing in the space along North Road, Mr. Park stated that “Korean businesses found [a] new home here”. The Skytrain officially opened January 6, 2006 and according to Mr. Kim, “we never looked back”. Instead, they looked across the street, to the east side of North Road where another commercial area was facing low tenancy as their main anchor store, London Drugs had moved to the larger Lougheed Mall on the Northwest corner of North Road. Due to the success of the west side, the investors were brought in and purchased the failing commercial building. Wanting to create what Mr. Kim referred to as a “synergy” of Korean businesses, he contacted the U.S. grocery chain, Hanahreum, also known as H-Mart, and secured them as their largest tenant. Like the Hannam Supermarket in the mall on the east side of North Road, H-Mart serves as an anchor to draw both Korean customers and Korean businesses to the area. According to Mr. Park, “people are drawn to it because they feel this is the most viable commercial area if you’re intending to cater to Koreans. There’s a centre there”. Representatives interviewed from Coquitlam City Hall, also agreed that there is an informal consensus that the area around the
North, West (Figure 10), and East (Figure 11) corners of the North Road and Lougheed Highway intersection is the largest concentration of Korean businesses in British Columbia (Figure 12).

Figure 10: North Road Plaza (2008)

Figure 11: H-Mart, Hanin Village (2008)
These narratives presented in this section that highlight the chronological emergence of the space of ‘Koreatown’ illustrate how those invested in the space are involved in the politics of location, the processes that are dependent on the social locations, interests, and ways in which larger structures and discourses are mediated within that space to create meaning. It is these social processes constituting the space that signals the interconnections of the place making of ‘Koreatown’, the multiple, alternative, and potential ways of knowing this place. Thus ‘Koreatown’ becomes more than a story about grocery stores, real estate, city transit, ethnicity, and community. ‘Koreatown’ becomes an active commercial space being produced by local actors engaging with the politics of space and where local and global markets, policies of immigration, cultural histories, and multicultural discourses are constantly engaging and being contested to assert spaces of home and nation. Notions of space as home, community, or identity are then understood within larger discourses which are defined in spaces contesting meanings of
national belonging. Within Canada, a country committed to a multicultural identity, these spaces then become contact zones for local struggles mediating through multicultural discourses.

4.1.2 Naming ‘Koreatown’: Identity and the Politics of Representation

In addition to the geographical or material location of space, a key element of conceptualizing the formation of an area is to understand its social or symbolic meaning attached to that space. Posing the question, “Is this ‘Koreatown’?” generated multiple responses and discussion about the naming of place. Interviewee responses included the following names to describe the space: Lougheed Neighbourhood, Lougheed Town Centre, Koreatown, Korean Shopping Centre, Hanintown, North Road, Heritage Road, Hannam, Hanin Village, and Hanahreum. These differing descriptions highlight a multiplicity of meanings, signaling a strong process and contestation over the social production of what is or is not ‘Koreatown’. These politics over the concept of identity and representation are not a neutral process; it is embedded in power relations and interests, historical narratives, and personal experiences. As Massey notes, “If it is now recognized that people have multiple identities then the same point can be made in relation to places. Moreover, such multiple identities can either be a source of richness or a source of conflict, or both” (1994, p. 153). What becomes apparent from these differences over the naming of ‘Koreatown’ is more than personal preference. It highlights complex struggles and tensions over the representation, inclusion, and exclusion of that space within the national imaginary, particularly by those invested in asserting particular meanings attached to that space. In other words, the politics of naming ‘Koreatown’ illustrates meaningful, sometimes strategic, and often cautious negotiation of anxieties around issues of race, space, and national belonging and its articulation through multicultural discourses in Canada.

According to interviews with two representatives from the City of Coquitlam Community Planning department, there seemed to be an ambivalence and hesitation in using the name
‘Koreatown’ to refer to the area along North Road and Lougheed Highway. Through their municipal role in overseeing commercial development and networking with the business community in the area, the community planners did acknowledge a Korean commercial concentration area around North Road and Lougheed Highway but were clear in stating that the City of Coquitlam did not make a distinction to recognize it or refer to it principally as ‘Koreatown’. Mr. Johnson, manager for the past five years in the Community Planning department states:

Mr. Johnson: We don’t refer to it as ‘Koreatown’. We recognize it as a natural commercial area that has a predominance of Korean businesses. And we do...it’s recognized on both sides [City of Burnaby, City of Coquitlam].

Mr. Johnson: I guess I would say that we don’t recognize it as Hannan [sic] or acknowledge as ‘Koreatown’ but a concentration at this stage...

This distinction was also mentioned by Ms. Costa, a community planner who had been working closely with the business community along North Road for the last eight years. She explains further the rational for this position:

Mr. Costa: We did look at...we do recognize there is a concentration of Korean businesses. We don’t have any substantive way of assessing their important in a sense in terms of scale. What we did look at is the business licence database and we looked at the number of people that were business owners with Korean names. Those are the only things we could do to kind of find a way to assess the magnitude there. I mean, it is visible that there is a concentration so we determined just through that basic analysis that 54% of business owners there were, had Korean names. So that’s the only kind of way to get at some kind of number. But that doesn’t speak...that just speaks to the number of business owners. It doesn’t speak to what they represent in terms of size of businesses or types of businesses or floor space or anything like that.

The community planners preferred to describe this area along North Road as the “Lougheed Neighbourhood” with specific emphasis on the ‘concentration’ of Korean businesses, rather than referring to the area as ‘Koreatown’:

Mr. Johnson: If we look at North Road, it stretches from the New West border, I guess from the freeway North up until the Coquitlam area. But I guess the concentration is around...what we call the Lougheed neighbourhood in Coquitlam.
Mr. Johnson: Oh yeah. Absolutely…we recognize it as a positive or strength in terms of recognizing the pro-economic development perspective, from a social perspective. There is a strength in that.

Ms. Costa: I mean, I definitely see it as a diverse space but I think that there is a concentration there which definitely provides opportunities to leverage, both for the Korean town itself, which is obvious from the comments you’re hearing that people will travel from North Van and from Surrey to go here and they’re very successful on their own, but also opportunities for the City as well to leverage that concentration.

This Lougheed Highway “concentration” is further described on the City of Coquitlam website as an emerging “speciality retail area for Korean products and services” in the area. However, referring to the area as Lougheed Neighbourhood tends to imply a neutral space identified by a geographical street marker which erases the interests of the municipality in the naming of ‘Koreatown’. From these statements, it seems that from the City’s Community Planning perspective the Lougheed Neighbourhood is recognized primarily as a space to “leverage” the economic generating potential and revenue for the City of Coquitlam. It also suggests that the concentration of “diversity” in the area is key to discussions of commercial development for the City. Recognizing that “Coquitlam also features a higher relative number of residents with Korean heritage”, the City was in the process of developing a multicultural strategy to incorporate “inclusive” strategies to capitalize on this business community and its link to global markets. According to Mr. Johnson:

  Mr. Johnson: Yeah, but we’re working on preparing an updated economic development strategy which among the main themes is recognizing the diversity of the population and the labour force and building on that.

  Mr. Johnson: So going back, actually it goes back to 1993, 1994 when council first adopted a multiculturalism policy which was very high level. So there’s been this evolution of reflecting and considering the diversity and the changes within the city as essentially respecting and recognizing it as a source of strength etc on a whole bunch of factors but also recognizing how we as a city in terms of our welcoming and as inclusive in terms of our systems and processes, etc.

  Mr. Johnson: That’s among the goals of the multicultural strategic plan… is how we’re delivering services to any, any group. We have that concentration. So we’re looking internally in terms of making sure that we’re open, welcoming, and inclusive in our
processes and how we do business. But also making sure…part of that process is also working with the community stakeholders specifically, sort of playing a bit of a coordinating role. There is, we recognize, the other thing is that…the uniqueness of the Korean community is recognized at the political level in terms of trying to establish some international links with South Korea.

The terms “diversity” and “inclusive” used by the City draws links between how the space is imagined and situated within broader multicultural discourses of ‘difference’ and ‘accommodation’. From the municipal perspective presented by Mr. Johnson, the decision to recognize the ‘Koreanness’ of the area instead of attaching the name ‘Koreatown’ highlights the social processes inherent in the limits of ‘cultural diversity’ within its economic and multicultural development strategies. It emphasizes the position of power the City has to welcome and include ‘differences’ (i.e. Koreans) based on specifically valued characteristics (i.e. commercial revenue). This practice of ‘accommodation’ illustrates elements of Hage’s logic of tolerance that “always presupposes that the object of tolerance is just that: an object of the will of the tolerator” (2000, p. 89). As Hage explains, this position of tolerator centres dominant interests, in this case of the governmental managers of the space, (i.e. the City of Coquitlam), who have the power to define or legitimize spaces (i.e. ‘Koreatown’). There are possibilities of reading these elements of multicultural rhetoric in Mr. Johnson’s statement above when he states, “in terms of making sure that we’re [emphasis added] open, welcoming, and inclusive in our [emphasis added] processes of how we [emphasis added] do business”. This position of “empowered spatiality”, as Hage refers to it, frames ‘Koreatown’ economic interests and who is legitimized within its municipal borders within municipal and national discourses of neoliberalism. Hesitation to name the space ‘Koreatown’ can be seen as a process of contestation by the City of Coquitlam, demonstrating their role as spatial managers to assert their defined valued in the politics of naming ‘Koreatown’ within their municipal boundaries.
In contrast to the City of Coquitlam’s position to resist the naming of ‘Koreatown’, other interviewees in this research who were also of non-Korean ethnicity felt the name was a positive description of the area. Mr. Hassan, who originally emigrated from Tanzania and worked as an optician in his optical store along North Road, felt the space should be described and advertised as ‘Koreatown’ to attract more customers:

Mr. Hassan: I would say yeah. Because over here there is a Korean place across the road and there is a small mall just a few blocks away so it’s all Korean. This is more of a Korean plaza now – ‘Koreatown’.
Mr. Hassan: They have to put signs and advertise more.

This was also supported by Ms. Smith, a lawyer practicing in the area and also a board member of the North Road Business Improvement Association. A woman of white ethnicity who originally came to Canada from the United States, she states her support for the name ‘Koreatown’:

Jane Lee: Ok...if you were to sort of think about ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver, would this be –

Ms. Smith: - This is it. So we’re trying to integrate that. We’re trying to...what we wanted to do was to make ‘Koreatown’ a destination. To bring in non-Koreans into the area. You know, to really make it - something like Chinatown. You know, where people really want to go. When you go to Chinatown, yes, there are a lot of people that appear to be of Chinese ancestry but there’s a lot of people that aren’t. It is a meeting place. It’s an exciting place to go, you know. And it is marketing itself. It’s not marketing itself inward but outward.

For both Mr. Hassan and Ms. Smith, the name of ‘Koreatown’ was a positive signifier of multiculturalism in Canada and also a way to encourage more business, particularly non-Korean customers, by drawing on the ‘diversity’ factor. Being aware of the ‘cultural capital’ of naming ethnic commercial spaces like Chinatown in downtown Vancouver created a historical context to imagine ‘Koreatown’ within a similar framework. However, the historical ‘baggage’ of these ethnic spaces was also noted by Ms. Smith:

Ms. Smith: And that’s what we were hoping to, to really encourage. To have ‘Koreatown’, right now it’s really insular, it looks inward. T&T Markets for instance, up
in...they advertise in the local papers. I have never seen an advertisement for Hanahreum in an English speaking paper, which is a shame because I like shopping there but there doesn’t seem to be...that’s why I say it’s immature in a sense that it is still insular and I think as immigrant communities grow, are longer in a particular area, they tend to look a little bit more outward and they see the possibilities of being outward and they’re more comfortable in the milieu around them.

This statement highlights that while welcoming the name ‘Koreatown’, there were concerns about how ‘Koreatown’ would be represented to non-Koreans. Ms. Smith was concerned that there was a lack of awareness of the issues related to inclusion or exclusion within the boundaries of ‘Koreatown’.

Interestingly, these issues of inclusion, exclusion, and representation seemed to be most recognized and acknowledged in the responses by the interviewees of Korean ethnicity, who were significantly involved in the area’s development and suggested that there was a strong acknowledgement of these issues of representation. Not only was there a keen awareness of these concerns, but both Korean interviewees expressed strong opposition to the name ‘Koreatown’ and had made strategic decisions to mediate these tensions when determining an alternate name to describe the area along North Road and Lougheed Highway. Their preference was to move toward a name that would be less of a ‘Korean’ signifier. Mr. Park, a Korean Canadian lawyer, expresses his preference to describe the space as “North Road”:

Mr. Park: Hanahreum, Hanin. Different [people] have different names I guess: Hannam or Hanahreum. Now, I started...I think I can take credit for using Hanin first because I didn’t want...I wanted to use a word that we understand but I didn’t want outside to think that this is just exclusive Korean. So I started using the word Hanin Development Society. I created a society called Hanin Development Society and then other people have used it for something else.

I just use it as North Road because if you look at North Road, this is the only commercial area. Here is Columbia Street and up here North Road is residential. So if you say North Road you think about area known, now known as Lougheed Town Centre.

For Mr. Kim, an accountant of Korean ethnicity with offices on North Road, he advocated for the name “Hanintown” to describe the area. He describes his rational for this preference:
Mr. Kim: They [Koreans] call it Hannam...Hanam/Hanahreum...I think that’s what they call it. But we want to unify that and call it Hanintown.

I mean I’d hate to see it or call it a “Little Seoul” or a “Koreatown.” I like to call it “Hanintown.” That’s why the mall itself, used to be “London Village” and now it’s called “Hanin Village”, right. So that was mostly my idea. Let’s not isolate the ah...alienate the ah...the mainstream people. Let’s call it something easy to pronounce and we know it and people get the...so that’s why Hanin, Han means...like we know it all and easy to pronounce and...it’s...a Caucasian friendly name.

That’s the thing. It’s something...you want to call it Second Korea but again...we want to call it Hanintown because...I mean I want all the Caucasians to know that ‘Hanin’ is Korea. Because ‘Koreatown’... I felt some stigma to it.

Mr. Kim’s desire to remove ‘Korean’ from the name ‘Koreatown’ is an attempt to make it less of a Korean signifier but his statements are dependent on the audience. What is ironic about the name “Hanintown” is that the root word, Han or Hanin is actually the Korean word for Korea or Korean and is not necessarily easy to understand, be recognized, or pronounced by non-native Korean speakers which would seem contrary to Mr. Kim’s intention for a “Caucasian friendly name”. Despite the name “Hanintown” being a hybrid English-Korean literal translation of ‘Koreatown’, and a reconstruction of the same name, both Mr. Kim and Mr. Park were resistant to call the area ‘Koreatown’. For Mr. Kim, the desire to use a name that did not “isolate and alienate the mainstream people” was a salient fear and anxiety of potential backlash from non-Koreans for creating a Korean space. There was a desire to create a term that was ‘inclusive’ and ‘friendly’ to non-Koreans. Resisting ‘Koreatown’ as a name signaled the attempts to avoid perceived tendencies to become insular and discourage ‘integration’ into Canadian life. These efforts were aimed to avoid multicultural anxieties of inclusion and exclusion which are often targeted toward the cultural differences of immigrant communities. Mr. Park further explains this desire to go against this perception of an insular Korean centred space:

Mr. Park: The intention was to support a Korean shopping centre that supports a Korean community but it doesn’t quite create a Korea town. We wanted to be supportive of people’s integration into Canadian life. We didn’t want to consume their life into
becoming a Korea town centre. [...] But the vision was to have convenience centres, not to create a Korea town.

The choice to adopt the name ‘Hanintown’ over ‘Koreatown’ with the intention to be inclusive of non-Koreans is actually a conflicting contradiction in that it actually tends to exclude them from understanding the meaning in its name. For those not able to access the Korean nuances of the name ‘Hanintown’, the name becomes just a descriptor of a locale. In a sense, it erases any connotation to a particular ethnic identity. For Koreans, on the other hand, it would suggest a name as a social signifier, attaching meaning to a space with a Korean identity in a subtle and symbolic way, only accessible and understood by Korean native speakers. This illustrates the social processes that are invested in asserting particular representations of a ‘Korean’ space through mediated practices. It also demonstrates how the politics in naming space are inherently linked to the politics of representation that are producing and negotiating how ‘Koreatown’ and ‘Koreans’ are recognized by particular audiences within larger social processes. This subtle and subversive negotiation of name reveals the tensions and mediation of concerns specific to multicultural tenants of diversity, tolerance, and inclusion. These politics of naming are not neutral but contested by those invested in the local arena, mediating perceived exclusion to non-Koreans while at the same time creating boundaries for inclusion.

Another factor mentioned in the interviews with Mr. Kim and Mr. Park highlights how also the naming of the ‘Koreatown’ area was influenced in its context to other ethnic enclaves and reactions to them. Comparisons were made between ‘Koreatown’ and Chinatown in downtown Vancouver, as well as with other Chinese enclaves in Richmond. Other connections were made with Koreatowns in Toronto and Los Angeles, California. According to the interviews with Mr. Kim, he felt ‘Koreatown’ was unique in its development and appearance compared to the other areas. He felt it was the largest concentration of Korean business in North America stating, “L.A. is stretched and it’s sort of inter-laced [while this] is probably the largest
concentration of Korean business in Canada and Toronto is also spread out’. For Mr. Kim, there was also an expressed interest in distinguishing ‘Hanintown’ from ‘Koreatown’ to mark its difference from other Koreatowns perceived to be less developed or less affluent. These negative connotations were based on his personal observations and experiences in other Koreatowns:

Jane Lee: And you think if you call it ‘Koreatown’ there will be a stigma?

Mr. Kim: That’s my personal experience. Because I grew up with it, right? When I go to Toronto...I mean like 70’s, it’s really dump. Probably it’s getting better now. LA, same thing. Now LA has gotten better. To me personally, there was a stigma to it. And also...the isolation...if you call it ‘Koreatown’. I feel...isolated. I feel ‘Getto’ (Laugh). Because...you know...when I came to Canada...you know...Koreans lived poorly compared to mainstream...in the 70’s, right? Maybe that’s my experience...I don’t know.

Mr. Kim: And they feel proud. That’s one of things I really want to do. With...other Koreatowns...it’s all dump, mostly. Well...LA is getting better but you know, over here...it’s not a first class mall economically, but at least it’s clean and it’s something you can be proud of. You know... “eh...this is Korean!” And also people from out of town...Koreans...people from Portland and Seattle... “Eh...look, come here...we are better than you!” (Laugh) So it’s a lot of things. I feel quite proud of it. I mean, I feel pride in it.

This perceived negative association with ‘ghettoized’ Koreatowns, as somewhere ‘poor’ or ‘dirty’, are references to racialized assumptions toward Koreatowns in Los Angeles and Toronto. There was a strong desire to avoid this stigma attached to the name ‘Koreatown’ in order to create a distinct representation of the area to better represent the growing affluent Korean commercial development and community in Metro Vancouver. For Mr. Kim, the name ‘Hanintown’ would better represent the ‘Koreatown’ area as something Koreans could feel a sense of pride in, an area cleaner and better than other Koreatowns in North America. The politics of naming in this sense reflects multicultural desires to be recognized and represented as a successful ‘model minority’ compared to other cities and immigrant communities. At the same time, it also reflects a keen awareness and strategic negotiation of the politics of representation within racialized multicultural discourses in Canada. This illustrates the constant contestation of the articulations of the space and how it is perceived by Koreans and non-Koreans.
The politics of location and the politics of naming that are inherent in the constitution of ‘Koreatown’ all signal the contestations of ‘others’ within the national imaginary. This place making of ‘Koreatown’ illustrates how the space is constituted through encounters between the ‘others’ and national subjects. For Ahmed, these ‘strange encounters’ are already familiar relationships because “the stranger is not any-body that we have failed to recognise, but some-body that we have already recognised as a stranger, as a ‘body out of place’” (2000, p. 55). For Koreans invested in the area along North Road and Lougheed highway, there is a constant awareness that they are positioned as the stranger through racialized and gendered discourses within national spaces. As Thobani notes, “in the case of the immigrant, contemporary encounters reopen older histories of preferred and non-preferred races, of the internments and racial hatreds expressed in the projects to build Canada as a ‘white man’s country’” (2007, p. 22). There is a desire to demonstrate Korean-Canadian ‘worthiness’ as a model minority and their contribution to national interests. It is within this context that the geographical and symbolic constitution of ‘Koreatown’ is mediated. ‘Otherness’ is cautiously and intentionally mediated, signaling how Koreans or Koreanness as ‘other’ is already positioned to demonstrate desirability within national discourses. According to Thobani, this is in contrast to ‘exalted subjects’, those already centred in the national imaginary, who internalize feelings of national entitlement and are not required to claim a space or identity unless, of course, they feel threatened by the other. For the place making of ‘Koreatown’, it is this process of mediating an identity and space that highlights the ways in which multiculturalism seeks in subtle ways to tokenize Koreanness. It is happy in moments to recognize a particular ‘sanctioned’ notion of the ‘Korean’, which as Ahmed suggests, is much less a passive act of looking and more a very active sort of gazing that is always creating the familiar. In this context, paradoxes can arise that are not all that paradoxical at all, such as the occurrence of a growing commercial district making
contributions to Canada’s economic development. The activation of efforts to establish the place making of ‘Koreatown’ already belies that it is part of the nation. Through the politics of location and the politics of naming, the place making of ‘Koreatown’ is always mediating its existence in the national imaginary.

4.2 Who are the ‘Stewards’ of ‘Koreatown’?: Embodying the Multicultural Nation

If the place making of ‘Koreatown’ is contested through politics of location and the politics of representation, then power relations are also mediated by people with different social locations within that space. Who are the people most invested in contesting and constituting the place and meaning of ‘Koreatown’? According to interviews, the place making of ‘Koreatown’ was the initiative of a group of Korean Canadian investors, a ‘Group of Four’ consisting of a lawyer, accountant, banker, and realtor, whose investments led to the current location along North Road and Lougheed Highway. But Mr. Park hesitates to acknowledge this recognition, preferring the term ‘stewards’ to describe their role:

Mr. Park: “We’re the stewards” of this heritage road. We’re not going to create ‘Koreatown’. North Road is already a heritage road. We’re just new stewards. Before us it was Italians and Greeks and everybody and immigrants.

And also because I think we started on the keel that this is not a ‘Koreatown’ but this is Heritage Road. This is the pride and banner that went up there was that this is the first road that was built by white settlers in Lower Mainland by Colonel Moody. That one is [a] fundamental truth that cannot be masked over by any ethnicity. If anybody tries to overshadow that with their own brand I think that would be a mistake.

The term ‘steward’ is an interesting term to describe their role in the place making of ‘Koreatown’ as it assumes a neutral or passive role in conducting the interests of others, minimizing or erasing any attachment to a Korean identity. According to the Oxford English Dictionary the term “steward” is defined as:

**Noun: 1. a.** An official who controls the domestic affairs of a household, supervising the service of his master's table, directing the domestics, and regulating household
expenditure; a major-domo. **1.b.** As the title of an officer of a royal household.

**Verb:** 2.a. To manage, administer. **2.b intr.** To do the duties of a steward.

Referencing the term ‘steward’ to describe the individuals and interests organizing the space of ‘Koreatown’ signals historical narratives of colonial entitlement and control over space. Both Mr. Park’s response and the OED’s definition of the term can be seen to do this by the use of the words ‘heritage’, ‘white settlers, ‘master’s table, and ‘royal household’. These terms highlight the processes of national entitlement and management by individuals over national spaces.

The question of who becomes the manager of local space can be defined by the location of the subject in relation to others within the nation. For those located outside of the white settler narratives and identities, this process can become enacted through the politics of belonging to situate themselves within its boundaries. Becoming a ‘steward’ of ‘Koreatown’ is not random in this sense; it is a process of mediating discourses of inclusion within white settler discourses. It is about the power struggles over who gains access to or desires ‘exalted subjectivities’ for spatial management within national discourses. Thobani states,

> The Canadian, as national subject, has come to experience the state as enabling power, providing it with as much coveted access to citizenship and its valued privileges. While this experience of nationality is tangible in its materiality, it also shapes an exalted subjectivity that facilitates the reproduction of the nation-state relationship. (2007, p. 28)

Hage expands this discussion and argues those who are without inherent whiteness or national entitlement, the role of spatial manager is legitimimized and possible through subjectivities that seem to possess ‘enough’ cultural capital and Canadian traits deemed acceptable by the nation:

> ...at the most basic level of its mode of operation, national belonging *tends* to be proportional to accumulated national capital. That is, there is a tendency for a national subject to be perceived as just as much of the national as the amount of national capital he or she has accumulated. (2000, p. 53)

Accumulation of the ‘right’ traits such as economic capital, national official language proficiency, and democratic principles of governance and organization enable individuals to
access increased feelings of entitlement and belonging to the nation compared to others without these traits. For the “stewards” of ‘Koreatown’, belonging is dependent on how their interests and identities are produced, legitimized, and mediated through their accumulation of desirable national traits. These traits include the accumulation of wealth and business savviness that aligns with neoliberalism, high levels of education and English proficiency, and knowledge and use of democratic municipal governance structures to organize. These traits become essential in invoking national entitlement and legitimization within national discourses for those racialized subjects outside of white settler identities.

4.2.1 The ‘Group of Four’

According to interviews, the ‘Group of Four’ seem to operate as the principle ‘stewards’ of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver, and as such, desire, possess, and maintain certain levels of accumulated national capital which enable their role as spatial managers. These four Korean Canadian businessmen are investing and producing the commercial space of ‘Koreatown’ through their accumulation of cultural capital that is contingent on social relations of power that are classed, racialized, and gendered within practices of national belonging. As Hage states, “In the daily life of the nation, there are nationals who, on the basis of their class or gender or ethnicity, for example, practically feel and are made to feel to be more or less nationals than others, without having to be denied, or feel they are denied, the right to be nationals as such” (2000, p. 52). As educated, articulate, English speaking, business entrepreneurs and professionals, the ‘Group of Four’ has high levels of socio-economic status which translates into higher levels of national belonging and power within their sphere of influence. However, this cultural capital is also contested, making the accumulation of national belonging in ‘Koreatown’ an internal struggle of whose power relations and interests are represented in the constitution of
that space. This contestation benefits those who are able to position themselves at the higher end of national accumulation while excluding others with limited or restricted access.

The ‘Group of Four’ is a specific group of individuals representing a wealthy, entrepreneurial class consistent with Canada’s neoliberal policies of immigration and economic development. Having immigrated to Canada in the 1970s, this group consisting of a lawyer, accountant, realtor, and banker are skilled in legal and financial transactions and have the social and economic capital and experience to develop global and local commerce, positioning them as key members driving the place making of ‘Koreatown’. As Hage notes, “[i]t obviously makes a difference whether one already possesses a certain amount of cultural capital by being born to a cultural group or a class (in the socioeconomic sense) that makes one already in possession of important elements of the dominant national capital” (2000, p. 54). As a group, these individuals own businesses and properties and are able to coordinate their efforts to increase their investments through global and local networks of social and economic capital.

Within the ‘Koreatown’ area, this affluent global network can be seen to be primarily occurring between the ‘Group of Four’, who are part of the first wave of Korean immigrants or Ilse generation, and the second wave of Korean immigrants or transmigrant business elites. Entering through newer immigrant categories emphasising professional and business classifications, this second wave of Korean immigrants arrive with significantly more social and economic capital to navigate their lives in Canada compared to past immigrants. Earlier immigration to Canada was perceived to supply ‘labour’ and immigrants had relatively less choice in terms of employment and purchasing power of property or businesses. Mitchell notes:

This is not the case for the transnational elite, however, who are often able to strategically manipulate or evade the regulatory systems of state borders and systems of governance, and who also are, more often than not, able to purchase citizenship in more than one locale. With this increased flexibility, the transnational elite can choose their site of investment and the site in which they intend to raise a family, get an education for their children, rest, receive medical care, and retire. (2004, p. 15)
While Mitchell’s concept of transmigrant elite is useful to describe Hong Kong and Chinese nationals and the residential ‘Monster House’ debates in Vancouver, the term applies differently in reference to Koreans and ‘Koreatown’ in Vancouver. The term is useful to recognize the ‘Asian’ immigration trends of ‘transmigrant elite’ as Koreans also enter within the Business Investor Program. However, only until as recently as 2011, Korean nationals were not eligible to possess dual citizenship like other Asian nationals. The implications for this distinction creates a less “flexible” and mobile category of citizen who may have different interests in residential or commercial investments or homing desires than the typical transmigrant Chinese national with multiple citizenships. While seeming to represent a class who has more economic capital to invest, it is actually the earlier first wave of Korean immigrants who capitalize specifically on this newer second wave of Korean business immigrants.

With some members having lived in Canada for over 35 years, the ‘Group of Four’ represents this earlier first wave of Korean immigrants to Canada who draw from migrant experiences and accumulation of local and Korean cultural knowledge to navigate and capitalize on the second wave of new Korean transmigrant elites ready to invest large amounts of investment capital in Canada. They had firsthand experience in understanding cultural “homing” desires centred around cultural food and services, how to navigate municipal business regulations and bylaws, and were aware of the nuances of multicultural discourses around race and space in relation to Asian spaces in Metro Vancouver. Recognizing and understanding the perspectives and needs of newer Korean immigrants, the ‘Group of Four’ drew on their Korean cultural capital and networks to develop a relevant social and economic space. They started investing in land and buildings to create a Korean area that would attract this second wave of immigrant investors. Originally moving to ‘Koreatown’ along North Road for cheaper rents and property, the ‘Group of Four’ later charged higher rents to new Korean transmigrant elites within
their buildings, knowing they would pay more for the Korean location. In some cases, Ms. Smith notes, that “the rents that are being charged to the Korean tenants are three to four times the rent that was charged before it had become Korean”. For the ‘Group of Four’, the place making of ‘Koreatown’ was essential to attracting the new wave of Korean immigrants and maximizing their profit margins. Mr. Kim explains:

Mr. Kim: “And one more thing is that...Koreans will pay more rent than Caucasians because Koreans are concentrated, right? Based on their experience here (‘Koreatown’/Hanintown).

You got to make money! I mean that’s my point! I’m a consultant...you know, people who put the money in, I want to maximize it.

For the ‘Group of Four’, their level of socio-economic status and capital enabled them to position and profit from individuals within the space of ‘Koreatown’ but also gave them social capital to organize and coordinate other business investors with similar interests and to move into positions of social and economic leadership within the community.

4.2.2 The North Road Business Improvement Association

The area along North Road and Lougheed Highway in Burnaby officially became recognized as the North Road Business Improvement Association in 2009. According to the Business Improvement Association of British Columbia’s (BIABC) website (www.bia.bc.ca) accessed on Sept 20, 2012, the goal of a Business Improvement Association (BIA) “is to demonstrate leadership that will champion strong, vibrant and successful downtowns, main streets, and commercial districts throughout British Columbia” (BIABC). As a recognized not for profit organization that networks and lobbies at the municipal level, the North Road BIA has a specific leadership role in community development in the area of ‘Koreatown’. While the BIABC notes, “a vibrant and thriving downtown commercial area is the barometer of a healthy community” (BIABC), each BIA’s primary concern is to ensure the economic and business
development of a particular local. As a membership-based organization its position of leadership is also contingent on the interests of its members in the community. The BIA represents the leadership of a particular group of individuals from socio-economic business class but also is a concentration of social networks that are mediated through race and gender and as such, both includes and excludes certain members of the community.

The North Road BIA plays a significant role in the place making of ‘Koreatown’ through social interests, power, and investments. As a business group, the ‘Group of Four’ organizes and mobilizes through the BIA to pool and coordinate similar investments and interests in the community. Consisting of about eighty property and business owners on North Road at the intersection of Lougheed Highway, whose membership requires a tax levy of $5 for every $1000 based on their assessed property value; this group represents a powerful economic voice to leverage their entitlement within the community. As a result, it tends to exclude or limit representation of businesses who choose to not be on the BIA or choose not to pay the tax levy. As a result, not all the perspectives and interests of the 300-400 businesses are represented.

Within the BIA, interests are also mediated through the interests of the Board of Directors and agreed upon by its members. As one of the founding members of the BIA, Mr. Park and others from the ‘Group of Four’ are part of the Board, and play a significant role in the representation and interests of the BIA. There is a strong commitment to presenting Korean commerce and ethnicity through the BIA. According to the North Road BIA home page on their website (www.burnabynorthroadbia.ca):

North Road is the oldest road in the lower mainland and as such it should be no surprise to find that is is [sic] part of a well established community which offers the daily convenience of first class grocery and drug stores, a signature liquor store and international banking facilities. The community enjoys neighbourhood public schools within walking distance, a Recreation Complex and Library offering comprehensive community programs for all ages, state of the art gyms and spas, walking trails and an exciting Korean District! The spirit of culinary adventure lives here on North Road. Walk around the world in one evening, taking in award winning Asian
restaurants, exotic Persian and vintage Western eateries. Or drive. You can still get car hop service at the landmark Whitespot!

The largest Korean shopping district in the lower mainland is located here. 'North Road Centre' is a major shopping destination for vast numbers of people who come from all areas of the lower mainland every day. Conveniently located at Lougheed Highway and North Road, it is the home of the Han Nam Market and is the place for Korean professional services; Doctors, Dentists, Accountants. With a wealth of enticing bakeries, house wares, novelty items and clothing shops, you can do your daily shopping here or experience something totally out of the ordinary - a public shark feeding! Island Pets is like an aquarium with huge display tanks and tons of interesting, colourful fish.

Half the Board of Directors is constituted by Koreans and therefore is able to ensure the interests of the Korean businesses and property owners along North Road while also highlighting their contribution and development in the area. The emphasis on economic development, culture, and community fit into the multicultural narratives for immigrant integration within the nation. However, these attributes are specific to certain kinds of accumulation of cultural capital that fit into the national discourses; it is a valuing of certain classed and racialized discourses within Canada. Advertising the area along North Road as a “first class’ Korean shopping district with “professional services”, an opportunity to “walk around the world in one evening” and experience a “culinary adventure” aims to target the affluent consumer interested in a ‘cultural’ experience. The ‘Koreanness’ of the area is couched in language that reassures the ‘multicultural’ consumer that their interests are still available, reminding them that “you can still get a car hop service at the landmark Whitespot!” Here, ‘Korean’ and ‘Koreatown’ representations can be located within broader local and national discourses of ‘Asian’ commercial spaces in Canada. Its representations are consistent with multicultural discourses of diversity which are contingent on the historical backdrop of how Chinatowns and Asian immigration to Canada is racialized as the ‘Asian model minority’ (i.e. industrious, entrepreneurs, relative ‘passivity’). Those in the BIA who influence the representations of ‘Koreatown’ are invested in its social capital for attracting the ‘multicultural tourist’, are banking
on advertising the space as inclusive and welcoming to non-Koreans in the same manner that Chinatowns have adapted to become tourist destinations in other cities in Canada. They aim to showcase a clean, affluent, professional, commercial area to make the entry of Korean concentrations into the national narratives more palatable and familiar than some other immigrants or racialized groups.

4.2.3 Gendered Business Relations

Within all social groups, there are differences in access to and accumulation of national capital, along lines of class, race, and gender. While the ‘Group of Four’ represents the interests of particular Korean-Canadian business class, they are also all ‘businessmen’ and express male business perspectives (re)constituted through gendered relations. As the primary spatial managers of ‘Koreatown’, they provide a gendered perspective on the commercial area. According to interviews and media coverage of the H-Mart incident, there were common references to “businessmen” when discussing the Korean commercial areas in Metro Vancouver but no references to “businesswomen”. It was only when asked where women were situated in the community that a few responses acknowledged the role of women within the constructs of family owned businesses:

Mr. Kim: Korean businesses...usually the family owns.

Mr. Park: I can’t say it’s one way skewed only one way or the other. There’s a lot of family businesses. Futon Furniture is an example, the whole family gets involved. [The] Health one, the whole family is involved. The ladies makeup stores, they’re run by ladies…

Mr. Park: Yes, husbands are instigators there. A lot of restaurants are men driven, men are centre. And it’s funny, most restaurants are men operated, operated by men and the wives don’t work there.

This discussion of ‘family’ and ‘family businesses’ is rooted in language that can be deconstructed to reflect the heteronormative and gendered discourses of Korean women’s role in
business compared to men. Korean women’s roles in business were constructed through the confines of the ‘traditional’ family and were only acknowledged through partnerships with husbands and other men. While ‘husbands may be the instigators’ of business, research observations of the area suggest that women were the primary consumers and retail labour represented. This seemed most evident by the number of hair and beauty salons, fashion and houseware boutiques, and large grocery stores that had only women servicing the cashiers. This feminization of labour suggests a contradiction around the kinds of gendered labour and family owned businesses and of who owns or services these businesses.

This secondary role or silence around women’s business activities was further extended to their lack of representation and participation in the North Road BIA as well as Korean women’s representation on the board of directors, despite being visibly present at meetings and representing businesses in the area. According to Ms. Smith,

Ms. Smith: You know...when we get...I’m just thinking. The meetings are mainly men. The women that we get out, we get politicians out. We get assistants to the manager when it’s a bigger company. And we have got a...we have got women. The person who owns the building where Church’s Fried Chicken is. The Church’s Fried Chicken owner and the building owner both came out to our last meeting and they were both women. I don’t think now that I’ve ever...if we go back to ‘Koreatown’...I don’t know that I’ve ever...met a woman who is a business...who’s been related to a business from the...on the North Road BIA from ‘Koreatown’.

She notes that although “there are a lot of women who are in the businesses”, very few from ‘Koreatown’ attended BIA Annual General Meetings and only white women were represented on the board. At the time of the interviews, Ms. Smith was the acting President of the BIA, another white woman, and two Korean men were elected as Board directors. This suggests only a particular group of ‘businesswomen’ and ‘businessmen’ were represented (or not represented) at the BIA decision making level. From the interviews, it becomes apparent that the commercial development of ‘Koreatown’ was primarily driven by the interests of Korean businessmen on the North Road BIA board. As Ms. Smith points out:
Ms. Smith: It’s ...Koreans who have actively, actively supported us and said we’re a hundred percent behind you, we’ll tell the Korean businesses what to do, you know because we’re leaders in the community and they [Koreans]...have been spear heading it [North Road Business Improvement Association].

Having this kind of Korean Canada representation produces, legitimizes, and invokes both racialized and gendered leadership positions in ‘Koreatown’ thereby defining who is included or excluded in articulating and organizing their interests in the space. In this case, the ‘stewards’ of ‘Koreatown’ are primarily a few affluent Korean Canadian businessmen who, with the help of a few professional white businesswomen, strategically organize their interests through the North Road Business Improvement Association, making it possible to legitimize and ensure their business interests. This group mediates their interests through national discourse of neo-liberal multiculturalism, but are also themselves constituted through classed, racialized, and gendered intersecting social relations. It is this group that positions itself as the leaders and benefactors in the place making of ‘Koreatown’. They are invested in its geographical and social constitution, economic commerce, and management of tensions that may occur. Alternatively, defining who is included in the processes of ‘stewardship’ of ‘Koreatown’ can also mark the boundaries of who is excluded from the power to articulate its spatial development in leadership positions. The relative absence of Korean women’s perspectives in this research as well as their limited representation on the North Road Business Improvement Association signals to a broader discussion of gendered dynamics within family owned businesses. Lastly, interviews with Mr. Hassan, a South Asian Canadian who emigrated from Tanzania, suggest that ‘stewardship’ of ‘Koreatown’ can also isolate and exclude those who are invested in the place making of ‘Koreatown’ but are not Korean, not White, and not invited to participate in the process:

Mr. Hassan: You are the first person who has ever come to me to ask my opinion. Nobody, not even the landlords. So that I could say something, I could help them [Koreans in North Road]. Nobody has ever come in 27 years. Nobody, no one. Only person probably I know is [Mr. Kim] because we are little bit friends, that’s all. But no
one has ever come approached me. I could give my views. I could give my experience, all these years and they could probably benefit from it.

Jane Lee: Interesting.

Mr. Hassan: My intention is good for everybody. But it’s up to them.

4.3 Mediating Multicultural Spaces: Negotiating Anxieties of National Entitlement

The previous sections in the this chapter highlight how the place making of ‘Koreatown’ is being produced by local actors who are informed by the local and global politics of multiculturalism and are mediating its discourses of ‘difference’, ‘inclusion’, and ‘exclusion’ to attach meaning to a particular space. These negotiations highlight the anxieties and precariousness inherent in the nature of ‘accommodating difference within multicultural narratives. These tensions become most apparent in moments of conflict and reveal what is most troubling or at stake. In the place making of ‘Koreatown’, these anxieties seem to centre on notions of multiculturalism but are specific to contestations about the inclusion and exclusion of ‘Asian’ concentrations. Returning to the H-Mart incident, this element of racial spatial anxiety is present in the print media coverage. The following excerpt illustrates this concern:

Besides, I think there’s a larger principle at stake here. I think in some ways it’s about what kind of society we want. Places like Chinatown represent our past prejudices as a society. That’s where the Chinese congregated because they weren’t wanted anywhere else. We’re trying to get away from that as a society. We don’t want these ethnic enclaves, at least we shouldn’t. And I think we need to fight anyone who wants to build them.” (Mason, October 16, 2006, p. A6)

Analysis of this text highlights the ways in which particular discourses are coded and deployed by a particular position or group to express resistance toward Korean concentrations. References to “society” are specific to assumptions of a “multicultural society” that is perceived to be threatened by ‘insular’ ‘Asian’ communities, spaces inferred by the mention of Chinatown. This text also makes clear a dialectic relationship between the active positions of who’s “society” is at “stake” and the passive Asian immigrant spaces which threaten the “larger principle”. The
reference to what’s at “stake” can be the crux to explore who or what is most triggered or threatened by these spaces. As Massey (1994) notes,

And the question must also be asked, Who is it who is so troubled by time-space compression and newly experienced fracturing of identity? Who is it really that is yearning after a notion of place as settled, a resting place? Who is it that is worrying about the breakdown of barriers supposedly containing an identity? (p. 122)

This research suggests that the tensions triggered by the H-Mart incident evoke broader anxieties that reside in those who possess inherent feelings of national entitlement (e.g. non-Asian or non-Korean). These subjects with an internalized right to the nation become most threatened when other subjects contradict their assumptions of whom and where national identity resides. These anxieties, therefore, become quickly embedded in racialized discourses of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ making apparent the precarious nature of multiculturalism within meanings of belonging. These underlying anxieties of national entitlement over spaces of belonging which were brought to the surface by the H-Mart incident were not unfamiliar to those invested in the space of ‘Koreatown’ along North Road. It fact, all interviewees in this research were well aware of the H-Mart incident, its media coverage, and the subsequent concerns expressed by the public. There was also a keen awareness of issues specific to multiculturalism, inclusion, exclusion, racism, and anxieties over ‘Asian concentrations; a familiarity common to those outside of the national white settler identity. Thobani (2007) explains,

Ironically, immigrants are acutely attuned to the heterogeneity that makes up the country’s population, perhaps even more so than are nationals. Immigrants are aware of their diversity, not only in relation to the dominant Euro-Canadian community but also in relation to other communities of colour. Indeed, having been made the embodiment of this diversity by the dominant culture, they live out this diversity in their daily lives and become acutely sensitive to the differences between themselves and the various other groups collapsed into the categories immigrant, refugee, and visible minorities. They are less ready to conflate these differences. (p. 161)

For the actors invested in the place making of ‘Koreatown’, these concerns led to a coordinated effort to promote and develop a ‘cohesive’ and ‘diverse’ community. According to interviewees,
the driving factor in these efforts was to encourage an ‘inclusive’ element in the community. Ironically, what becomes clear from interviewee responses is that the attempts to be inclusive were oriented towards making non-Koreans or “Caucasians” feel welcome in the space of ‘Koreatown’. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the attempts to constitute ‘Koreatown’ are embedded in complex negotiations of social and political relations, some of which are particularly racialized. This mediation of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ discourses of inclusion and exclusion are often characteristic of subjects who do not inherently possess feelings of national entitlement. For subjects positioned as non-white settlers identities (i.e. immigrants, First Nations, Aboriginals), there is a constant and conscious awareness of the precariousness and limits to belonging within the nation. As the H-Mart incident makes clear, the underlying anxieties of national entitlement are always present, ready to surface when the balance between ‘us’ and ‘them’ seems to be disrupted.

For those invested in the place making of ‘Koreatown’, the primary concern seemed to focus on the need to address the politics of belonging, to constantly negotiate the tenuous relationship between inclusion and exclusion that is so bound to discourses of multiculturalism in Canada. There is a conscious and cautious desire to manage any tensions that would be perceived as racialized exclusion within the space of ‘Koreatown’. This kind of management over the anxieties of national entitlement (of non-Koreans) is primarily mediated through discourses of multiculturalism, the language of inclusion and exclusion, the politics of representation, and legitimization of space. There are three examples discussed by the interviewees that highlight the complex process of how spatial managers mediate anxieties of national entitlement through discourses of multiculturalism in ‘Koreatown’: signage bylaws, images represented on the banners put up along North Road, and through the activities of the Business Improvement Association. These illustrate the mediation of multicultural anxieties but
also demonstrate alternative and active ways of contesting multicultural representations in ways that are more complex and outside of the politics of recognition.

4.3.1 Signage Bylaws: Mediating Multicultural Languages

In the early stages of the place making of ‘Koreatown’, the spatial managers placed significant emphasis on the regulation of signage of commercial businesses along North Road to avoid potential tensions and exclusion of non-Koreans. Mr. Park describes an incident where he came across a flyer he found disturbing:

Mr. Park: But one day I was motivated because I was walking down North Road and I saw this piece of paper and it’s sort of like an amateur neighbourhood news bulletin. It was meant for distribution but it was on a plain sheet and it said “Koreans are moving into this area.” And so that caused alarm. And I looked around and there was these Korean businesses that had Korean only signs, illegal signs. Just put it anywhere they want. And I became a little bit concerned about negative image.

According to Mr. Park’s statement, there was an acute awareness of the potential racial and spatial tensions. Deconstructing the language of “alarm” and “concern” over a “negative image” in this text can be read as fear or anxiety over being accused of being racially exclusive towards non-Koreans. To address these concerns, Mr. Kim, a property and business owner and president of the strata council along North Road, passed a signage bylaw to make signs accessible to a non-Korean audience. According to Mr. Kim:

Mr. Kim: So our bylaw of the strata says that our signs must be minimum...half must be in [one of] two of the official languages. Half of the whole size, half must be either English or French.

Jane Lee: Oh I see, and the other can be in something else?

Mr. Kim: Well, Korean mostly. Do whatever you want to do but let’s do it that way because that’s what’s within our bylaw.

From a bylaw perspective, the signs along North Road seem to comply with the linguistic regulations set out by Mr. Kim, although none had French content, many were posted in English only or had both Korean and English text (Figures 13, Figure 14, Figure 15).
Figure 13: Signage on North Road (East)

Figure 14: Signage on North Road (West)
These signs, however, represent a struggle over the politics of inclusion within multiculturalism discourses. Attempts to represent Korean businesses within Canada’s official bilingual framework symbolizes efforts to situate Koreans within the national narrative of multiculturalism; discourses and polices rooted in French and English contestations for national identity. But for immigrants and racialized subjects, these efforts only act to reiterate the dominance of white settler identities; there is a necessity to validate or manage their position within the nation. Thobani (2007) explains:

The policy’s inability to resolve the contradiction between the definition of the nation as bilingual and bicultural and the heterogeneous nature of the population, rendered it excessively ambiguous and internally contradictory. Anti-racist scholars have argued that despite the adoption of multiculturalism, the definition of the nation as primarily bilingual and bicultural reproduced the racialized constructs of the British and French as its real subjects. (p. 145)

In the context of official bilingualism, multicultural discourses become a contradictory entry point for racialized subjects to participate in the nation since they are always positioned outside the two dominant national white settler identities. For the spatial managers of ‘Koreatown’, the
attempt to represent Korean businesses within linguistic national identities of French or English through signage marks the attempts to mediate their ‘inclusion’ within multicultural spaces:

Mr. Kim: But some people do not listen and I say, “Take it down!” But they say, “I spend a couple thousand dollars, you know what I’m talking about, right? We try to include, we want to be inclusive than exclusive because we have seen the ‘Koreatown’ in LA, Toronto. We’ve seen the negative effect in Chinatown or the Richmond especially...it’s all Chinese. You don’t feel welcome sometimes.

What becomes clear from these statements is that the concern to be ‘inclusive’ signals the anxiety of being ‘excluded’. Making references to Los Angeles (i.e. L.A. riots of 1992 in Koreatown), Chinatown (i.e. 1907 race riots in Vancouver), and Richmond (i.e. resistance to Chinese centred malls such as the Aberdeen Centre) as being negative examples of being ‘exclusive’ implies a concern to ‘include’ non-Asians to avoid similar experiences of ‘exclusion’. To make a distinction and move away from these ‘Asian’ narratives, the spatial managers of ‘Koreatown’ use signs to signal attempts to integrate and work within the multicultural framework; to be ‘inclusive’ of white settler or non-Korean identities. Working through the bylaw, they manage the representation of other Korean businesses, even when there is resistance by Korean “newcomers” who do not comply. Mr. Kim explains:

Mr. Kim: But our aim or our goal was to be very, very inclusive of everybody. However, you know, the Koreans who - newcomers always want to do signs like that - just a Korean sign only. So we tried. We have our bylaw.

Really, the difference is that, you know...I mean I came here when I was 16, so I have a different perspective. My kids grew up, they was born here, grew up here probably like you. They have a different perspective. But we tried to be very very inclusive. Because we really guard against that. However, I mean...money talks right? (Laugh) So people of a... the late comers who came here when in their late 40’s, late 50’s or 30’s, and you know...they have a different fixation... “why do I have to put an English sign?”

The difference in national subjectivity between first wave Korean immigrants and the second wave immigrants is managed by the spatial managers in ‘Koreatown’. There is a constant desire to avoid racial tensions by managing the representation of new Koreans within the homogenous Korean-Canadian identity despite differences in the community. As Thobani (2007) notes:

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Many immigrants, echoing the politics of the dominant majority, also come to equate the prejudices held by people of colour towards each other with the racism of the dominant Euro-Canadian majority. As multiculturalism suppresses recognition of the relationship between power and racism, it therefore promotes definitions of such prejudices among immigrants to be equated with, or even eclipse, the racism of the dominant majority. The actuality that few people of colour have the power to impose their prejudices upon the groups against which these are directed does not hinder such equations. Thus, if immigrants question or reject the multiculturalist frame, its discursive moves can be mobilized against them to accuse them of not respecting diversity and difference and of being racist themselves. (p. 161)

It is this first wave of Korean immigrants, the spatial managers, who in turn impose their own desires to represent their identity within national narratives. As knowledgeable subjects on the effects of racialized discourses of multiculturalism, inclusion, and exclusion, they are more invested in mediating their position of belonging.

4.3.2 Business Improvement Associations: Mediating the Multicultural Stranger

Following the signage bylaws, the formation of the North Road Business Improvement Association also became a site through which the spatial managers in ‘Koreatown’ mediated multicultural tensions. This was demonstrated through the BIA’s first initiative to “support the creation of a new positive image and safer and more vibrant community” (www.burnabynorthroadbia.ca). According to the North Road BIA’s website:

As with any burgeoning community, we are involved in crime prevention and security (ICBC Bike Patrol and involvement with CPAC), cleanliness and beautification (graffiti prevention, banners, street furniture, lighting, planters, holiday decorations) and transportation (working with BC Transit on the Evergreen line). We strive to maintain mutually beneficial community partnerships with the City of Burnaby, Cameron Rec. Complex and local schools, often pooling resources which contribute to our thriving community. (Burnaby North Road.)

The BIA’s emphasis on “cleaning up” the city is linked to safety and crime prevention. It created a common and accessible objective for the wider audience and interests along North Road. For Ms. Smith, these efforts were part of a “beautification” project for the area, but for Mr. Park it was also a conscious initiative to establish a community presence. According to Mr. Park:
Mr. Park: And that was 3 years of...of um...community development. It was very intentional. [...] We did an Adopt a Highway...BIA. We cleaned all the shoulder garbage and mowed. This was the mayor of Coquitlam and we did the garbage pickup day, national pitch day. We were visible out there, picking up garbage.

According to interviews with BIA Directors, this focus on “community development” also worked to address homelessness, drug trafficking, bike and auto theft. While appealing to the interests of the “community” along North Road, the BIA’s initiative also legitimized the role of its members to mark the bodies and subjects belonging in its space.

Drawing parallels to Ahmed’s example of the Neighbourhood Watch programs, the North Road BIA’s emphasis on crime prevention works to distinguish which subjects become included or excluded within community spaces. According to Ahmed (2000), this is configured around the concept of the “stranger” which enables the boundaries of belonging to be established. Ahmed (2000) states:

Neighbourhood Watch becomes definable as a mechanism for ensuring, not only that certain spaces maintain their (property) value, but that certain lives becomes valued over other lives. The recognition of strangers within the neighbourhood does not mean that anybody can be a stranger, depending on her or his location in the world: rather, some-bodies are more recognisable as strangers than other-bodies precisely because they are already read and valued in the demarcation of social space. (p. 30)

For the spatial managers invested in the place making of ‘Koreatown’, the BIA becomes a site to legitimize their articulation of unwanted “strangers” (i.e. thieves, homeless residents) within discourses of crime prevention but in fact re-positions their own “strangerness” into the Canadian national subject. By inhabiting this managerial gaze over crime, the Korean “stranger” embodies national values, which “involves the production of a model of ‘good citizenship’” (Ahmed, 2000, p. 30). For immigrants or racialized subjects, this characteristic of “good citizenship” is the translation into a “model minority” within Canadian multicultural discourses. Ahmed (2000) expands Foucault’s work to explain:

Certainly in post-Foucauldian work on surveillance, the emphasis is on the shift from public forms of monitoring – where the subject is watched by an anonymous and partially
unseen and partially seen Other – to self-monitoring, when *the subject adopts the gaze of the other* (Foucault 1975). [...] In other words, ‘the good citizen’ is one who watches (out for) suspicious persons and strangers, and who in that very act, becomes aligned, not only with the police (and hence the Law), but with the imagined community itself whose boundaries are protected *in the very labour of his look*. (p. 30)

By enacting the managerial gaze through the initiatives of the BIA, the Korean spatial managers align their investments and articulations through common national and multicultural values. The BIA’s concern with crime and safety then positions the Korean “stranger” as part of the national subject working to protect its national spaces. Ahmed (2000) further argues:

> What is significant about Neighbourhood Watch is precisely the way in which it links the formation of community with safety and the detection of crime: such links produce the figure of the stranger as a *visible danger* to the ‘we’ of the community, and hence the necessary condition for making what ‘we’ have in common. (p. 32)

However, (re)producing the threat of the criminal “stranger” in ‘Koreatown’ through the BIA still highlights the anxiety over who belongs within national spaces. It illustrates the need for subjects/strangers desiring inclusion to adopt the discourses of the nation to justify and validate their sense of belonging in communities. Although (re)constituting the “stranger” in the space of ‘Koreatown’, the Korean spatial manager still maintains the position of the “other” in multicultural discourses and national spaces. The process of mediating the “stranger” still signals the precarious nature of the kinds of multicultural subjects legitimized in national spaces.

**4.3.3 Banners: Mediating Multicultural Representations**

The banners put up on the light poles along both sides of North Road also became a site where the spatial managers of ‘Koreatown’ mediated multicultural discourses through the negotiations of images to be represented on the banners. Originally an idea of Mr. Park, the goal of the banners was to promote the developing Korean business area along North Road. Mr. Park reflects on his intentions:

> Mr. Park: So, this is the vision that I had about North Road. We showed them [Burnaby City Hall] what it looks like now and first thing when you do or set a vision...I wanted to
beautify and put up banners first. You know when you go to war the flags go up front, right? So that’s why the banners are there.

Mr. Park’s reference to “war flags” is an interesting analogy to describe the intention of putting up banners and highlights the contestations that followed to determine its image content. It implies that the banners marked the commencement of a conflict. In this case, there is a desire to claim a space or signify a Korean place in Metro Vancouver. This conflict would get played out in the politics of representation in the space of ‘Koreatown’. The politics of inclusion and exclusion would be symbolized on the banners.

The first banner image put up along North Road was decided by a group of business investors and professionals (who later would form the North Road BIA Board of Directors) who agreed upon a red and blue image divided by a white line (Figure 16). This visual image incorporated the colours of the South Korean national flag (Figure 17) and also represented a symbol of North Road, the municipal border between Burnaby and Coquitlam. Mr. Park describes how the idea of the image was first introduced:

Mr. Park: And so the one lady said, “Why don’t we do something Korean?” And so I quickly, on a piece of napkin, I said this is a road and the Korean flag this way, right? The Korean flag colours. But I said this is North Road and this is Burnaby and this is Coquitlam. So here is the heritage road with Burnaby and Coquitlam side by side. Now if Koreans look at it, we feel warm because wow we feel proud because that’s Korean flag colours and it reminds us of that. Non-Koreans look at it, they look at it as North Road and divided by two cities [Burnaby and Coquitlam]. So it was non-offensive, it was inclusive.
The Korean symbolism in the banner image was an important element of cultural pride for Mr. Park. He expressed “That was my proudest day...coming down North Road. My design, my dream, my vision...it was there!” For Mr. Park, the banners signalled an accomplishment, a milestone to mark a Korean identity along North Road, but it was a negotiated objective. There was a conscious attempt to be “non-offensive” to non-Koreans. For immigrants and racialized subjects, this celebration of ‘diversity’ within multiculturalism is always within limits; it is always contingent on negotiating the anxieties of those with national entitlement. The banners symbolize this mediation through its image. Seeming to represent a simple visual representation of two sides separated by a line to non-Koreans, the image in fact clearly resonates for Koreans...
as it is a direct symbolic reference to the blue and red “taegeuk” or “yinyang” image on the South Korean national flag. For those who are non-Korean and not familiar with the Korean flag, this image would not be overtly ‘cultural’ or ‘exclusive’. This subtle negotiation of the banner images was a subversive way to mediate the contradictions in multicultural discourses to position Koreans within the representation of the space along North Road.

When these original banners became worn and required replacement, the newly formed North Road BIA’s Board of Directors agreed upon a new banner image that was also originally suggested by Mr. Park. The new banner consisted of a red, yellow, and blue image with the following text: “Restaurants, Shops, Services. Welcome to North Road” (Figure 18). They were hung on the light poles along both the east and west sides of North Road (Figure 19). This image was originally based on the colours of a hand fan (Figure 20) that Mr. Park had brought to the Board of Directors banner discussion.

**Figure 18: North Road Banners (2007)**
The Board members liked the vibrant red, yellow, and blue colours of the fan and asked the City of Burnaby to design a few images based on the fan to vote on. Ms. Smith, member of the Board and president of the BIA at that time, explains,

Ms. Smith: And we said...whoa...we like the colours. Because the banners before had faded, the colours weren't quite right. And we really liked the colours and so we said...well, the swirl design in primary colours would be really good. And so, Burnaby has um... a very...has been extremely supportive of us...all the time. Coquitlam...now, but Burnaby throughout the process. But they have a lot of in-house services so they said, Ok, fine...what wording do you want on it and we’ll take it to our designers.” And then they did four or five variations. And then they came back and we had an annual meeting and they showed them and then we voted and we chose the ones we that we chose.
At the time, there was an agreement on the vibrant colour and design from the fan that would work for the banner. For non-Korean members of the Board, the choice of image was based on pragmatic concerns, to use an image with colours that would not fade. Ms. Smith explains:

Ms. Smith: [T]he reason they’re more red than blue is because I said blue’s going to fade and blue does fade. The dye in blue fabric fades quicker than any other colour so that’s why they predominately are red and yellow because they’re more stable colours and they’ve been up there now for two years. So it was a good choice and this - primary colours I think are really, they’re not wimpy, you know. They’re there! And when you’re going down the street you can see them. So, primary colours are very good and that’s a real thing.

But this focus on colour overlooked the indistinguishable similarity with a Korean design. For Koreans seeing the banner, the similarities and intentions were clear. As Mr. Kim states:

Mr. Kim: But you know...I mean, he tried to put a lot of Korean into it, you know, without really saying it’s Korea, right? That was his idea [Mr. Park]. Well I like that, but I don’t like the design itself. (Laugh) Anyway, but I like the banner. I like to put Korea in without being...I want to be really discrete. You know what I’m talking about, right?

This cultural connection only became apparent to a few BIA Board members when a local resident called the BIA Board of Directors to complain about the banner’s overtly “Korean” content, revealing the tensions around identity and belonging in the North Road area.

According to Mr. Park, the second banner image was a development on the first banner, an image that reflected the growing Korean business community along North Road. He explains:

Mr. Park: And when these banners were worn down and we had to do another one, by then it was pretty much clear that Korean identity and culture was celebrated here. The Koreans helped to revitalize the commerce in this area and real estate prices were going up. Nobody opposed the idea of having colourful things.

So I had a colourful fan, Korean fan with yellow thing and I just gave that to the Burnaby City and said, “Can you do something with these colours?” And it’s the Burnaby city designer that came up with the current design.

Mr. Park is quick to position the development of the banner image with the designer at the City of Burnaby after he heard about the complaint. The effort was to separate the banner’s design from a Korean perspective to make it a ‘neutral’ decision, rather than a cultural one:
Mr. Park: Now we had one complaint after these banners went up. A lady said, “Now this is not Korea, Korea? Why so many Korean...Korean things are here? Who designed this?”

And you know we were innocent because it’s the City of Burnaby staff who designed this not us. So we had to defend it.

The position of defending assumes a perspective of protecting or guarding something or someone. Mr. Park’s position here is to guard a Korean identity or protect a ‘backlash’ against Koreans in the space of ‘Koreatown’. To do this, he justifies the banner image within multicultural discourses of diversity:

This one [banner] was out of a fan, a Korean fan. And it symbolized the primary colours and the diversity coming together. So he thought it was an appropriate design. We always, I always publicly promoted this area as the most vibrant, multicultural business district.

Ms. Smith also tried to reiterate that the banner was not just a Korean decision but rather one that the entire Board (including the non-Koreans) agreed on to acknowledge the “multicultural” contribution of the Korean business community:

It was the only Korean there, who made the decision was Mr. Park. So it appealed to the non-Korean. So in some senses this North Road BIA is a wonderful melting. It’s a real opportunity for a melting. We’re always aware of the Korean businesses and their contributions, potential contributions. Yeah, that’s basically how those banners came up.

In fact, Ms. Smith goes on further to make it a point that there was no original intent to make the banner a Korean image. She and others on the Board were unaware of its link to Korean imagery:

Ms. Smith: And it’s funny, other than [Mr. Park] who had the fan, I don’t think any of us really thought of it as Korean. Until a person called. I can’t remember...one of the board of directors and said, “You’re making all North Road Korean! That’s the Korean flag!” Korean flag, excuse me? You know...where’s the Korean flag in that? So we were completely unaware that anyone would take it as a Korean looking flag. Although you know, we just thought it was a great kind of swirl with primary colours that happened to come from a Korean fan and it’s funny that others made that connection that we didn’t.

These comments highlight attempts to position the banners within a multicultural context and depoliticize the banners by making them less “cultural”. Members of the BIA highlight the
desire to manage the anxieties of inclusion and exclusion so apparent in the space of ‘Koreatown’ by reference to multicultural discourses.

In ‘Koreatown’, the anxieties of entitlement are substantial and precarious but also differentiated by subject positions. For Ms. Smith, a white woman, the tensions along North Road are specific to issues of “integration” which she feels can be mediated through the BIA:

Ms. Smith: If I was going to say there was a tension, it is... as North Road BIA, we wanted to represent the whole North Road, which was the Korean end and the area that wasn’t primarily Korean. [...] That’s what we were hoping to do. We were hoping not for the H-Mart as much but we were hoping to encourage an integration [emphasis added] into the larger business community. And also to...maybe to moderate the feeling of the other businesses who weren’t Korean. Especially the ones which are quite adjacent, to make them feel included that there wasn’t this divide. I mean it’s almost like a literal divide. To make that divide not there. You know, to integrate the businesses. That’s what we were hoping to do and we thought it would be to the benefit of everybody.

Indeed, the desire for inclusion is an important element of the lives of racialized subjects in Canada, and plays a significant role for the spatial managers of ‘Koreatown’. As Thobani states:

The ‘leaders’ of immigrant communities have largely stressed the positive aspects of multiculturalism, which are those directly linked to recognition of cultural heterogeneity and diversity. They also value the economic opportunities that they feel they can access – and more importantly, those that their children can access – through the official accommodation of their difference. Their strong attraction to multiculturalism speaks to the impulse of multiculturalism from below, shaped by a deep desire for inclusion. Multiculturalism has indeed, promoted the advancement of certain classes of ethnic and racial professionals up the corporate ladder as Canadian and international firms have sought to maximize their cultural assets in the global market in order to promote their own interests abroad. (2007, pp. 161-162)

However, For Mr. Park, a Korean businessman, these issues of “integration” in ‘Koreatown’ are far more serious, highlighting his personal investment in its articulations of anxiety and potential for conflict. Mr. Park states:

Mr. Park: We live in pockets of ethnic divide and I think it was the Smith Institute...no Fraser Institute that came out with opinion long ago that Vancouver is one of the most racially charged city [emphasis added]. We don’t see it. We see it as racially multicultural and harmonious but if you study your history in 1911 there was riots. Japanese stores were vandalized. If there is an incident, ethnically motivated incident
against East Indians, against Chinese, against Japanese…we have very heavy duty, heavy clusters that can erupt into something very big. So it’s a delicate balancing act [emphasis added].

This statement makes clear that the consensus over a banner image in ‘Koreatown’ is far more complicated and carries a heavy burden for those who are Korean. The banner images are actually an articulation of a conflict that is brewing in the space of ‘Koreatown’, a tension that is clearly being mediated by those who are far more concerned over issues of diversity, inclusion, exclusion, or celebrating cultural pride. For immigrants and racialized subjects, it is a real and present fear of discrimination, conflict, and violence; all of which have been a part of Canada’s history. It is a history not forgotten by racialized subjects in Canada. This “delicate balancing act” is a clear process of mediating the ever present danger of racial and spatial violence that can erupt within national spaces. Mediating multicultural discourses is a daily contest for belonging for racialized subjects that must navigate national anxieties of entitlement in Canada.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

This thesis maps the development of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver, a concentration of Korean commercial businesses located on North Road and Lougheed Highway, both spatially and socially within larger discussions of multiculturalism in Canada. State sanctioned multiculturalism in Canada is understood within principles of inclusion and tolerance of diversity, differing from “melting pot” models deployed in the United States and other countries. However, the ways in which multiculturalism as a practice is articulated at the local level, in the contact zone of individuals and communities, reveals contradictions and anxieties inherent in the theoretical foundations of Canada’s multicultural mosaic.

This research suggests that ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver has established itself geographically and socially through a series of complex contestations over space despite lacking municipal recognition. It also illustrates through the case study analyses of the H-Mart leasing incident and Wikipedia debate presented in this research that ‘Koreatown’ evokes tensions and anxieties over spatial entitlement thereby already embedding and constituting its existence within social processes of place making. These contestations are rooted in the multicultural language, of inclusion and exclusion, thereby signaling the inherent contradictions and problematic of multiculturalism, particularly in how it is invoked to define who and how we live and work in the spaces we call home.

This research sets out to examine these multicultural anxieties by looking at the place making of ‘Koreatown’ in the urban context of Metro Vancouver to answer who, how, and why these tensions play out through the following research questions:

1. Who are the actors involved or excluded in the place making process of ‘Koreatown’ and what are their forms of investments (e.g. social, moral, financial, political, etc)?

2. How are the place making practices of ‘Koreatown’ racialized, gendered, and/or classed?
3. What tensions or anxieties emerge in relation to the place making of ‘Koreatown’ and why?

4. How does the place making of ‘Koreatown’ complement or contest Canada’s national commitment to multiculturalism?

If, Mr. Park pointedly notes, “you get the answers by the questions you ask,” then these research questions aim to understand the highly complex and contested place making processes of ‘Koreatown.’ Further, they seek to provide some answers to why the space invokes multicultural anxieties in Metro Vancouver and by whom and how these tensions become mediated to create spaces of community and belonging.

5.1 Summary of the Research Study

This research draws on theoretical and methodological frameworks that facilitate critical discussions of the social construction of space and the intersecting dynamics of race, space, and multiculturalism. Theories that acknowledge the process of place making as constituted through relations of power are used to highlight how ‘Koreatown’ is situated within the historical context of racialized ‘Asian’ spaces in Metro Vancouver and neoliberal policies of multiculturalism. Using feminist methodologies and methods of critical discourse analysis, this research emphasizes the use of text as data to analyze newspaper articles and editorials discussing a controversial leasing disagreement, and five qualitative interviews with participants working or invested in the place making of ‘Koreatown’. The experiences and perspectives expressed by the people interviewed in this research are the primary narratives that map and define the place making practices of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver.

5.1.1 Constituting ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver

This research argues that ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver is constituted and continually mediated through a politics of space that is racialized, classed, gendered, and contradictory in its
global and local articulations. According to interviews, the development of the current commercial area referred to as ‘Koreatown’ in this research, was due to a number of complex factors, or politics of location, that led to its site along North Road and Lougheed Highway. Originally, there were a number of Korean businesses located in Metro Vancouver servicing the needs of Korean Canadian who immigrated during the 1970s and 1980s. During the 1990s, a larger commercial area developed near the shopping area known as Metrotown to attract investments from the growing number of affluent Korean entrepreneurs and investors entering under Canada’s Business Immigration Program. After the Asian economic crisis in 1997, there was a desire to create a larger and more central commercial area along North Road and Lougheed Highway to anchor and service a Metro Vancouver Korean diaspora. This research examines how the development of this ‘Koreatown’ was constituted through desires to create a community space, a diaspora space that had a different geographical trajectory than other ‘Asian’ concentrations and communities in British Columbia in the past. There was a distinct desire to create a Korean commercial space that capitalized on the migration trends and investments from neoliberal global markets.

Based on the interviews, this research also highlights that the naming of ‘Koreatown’ is contested and engaging in the complex politics of representation within multicultural discourses. The range of responses and debate over the name of ‘Koreatown’ signaled a contestation over how the space would be defined and by whom the space would be recognized. At the municipal level, Coquitlam City Hall recognized a ‘distinct’ Korean business concentration in the “Lougheed Neighbourhood” with opportunities to capitalize on this ‘diverse’ business community for economic generating potential. For some, particularly non-Koreans, the name ‘Koreatown’ was perceived as a welcoming multicultural signifier to attract non-Koreans to the area. Contrary to this perspective, the Korean Canadian investors who initiated the development
of the area were resistant to using the name ‘Koreatown’, feeling it would gesture toward Toronto and Los Angeles Koreatowns they felt had negative connotations. Instead, they were interested in creating a newer, cleaner, professional space that would be a Korean centre for cultural pride. ‘Koreatown’ was also thought to be excluding of non-Koreans, a sentiment that was compared to the ways in which other racialized Asian spaces in Metro Vancouver had been perceived. Preferring to use a name that was less identity based and more inclusive and welcoming to non-Koreans, the Korean Canadians in this research argued instead for the name ‘Hanintown’. Ironically, this name is a Korean and English hybridization that translates to “Koreatown” and would only be recognizable and have cultural significance to native Koreans. While attempting to be ‘inclusive’ of non-Koreans, this subversive interplay of language demonstrates strategic desires by Korean Canadians to avoid drawing attention for being ‘too inclusive’ or ‘too inward’ to avoid the backlash that other racialized ‘Asian’ communities, like Chinatown, had experienced in the past. This research suggests that this careful and deliberate negotiation of language demonstrates the engagement with the politics of representation, the contestation of the tensions and anxieties of multicultural belonging.

5.1.2 The Stewards of ‘Koreatown’

This research suggests that the ‘stewards’ invested in the place making of ‘Koreatown’ are primarily a group of affluent Korean Canadian businessmen driven by social and economic interests to develop a Korean commercial centre. This ‘Group of Four’ had key business skills to develop real estate property to cater to the growing Korean community in Metro Vancouver as well as capitalize on the new wealthy entrepreneurial and investor class of Koreans entering Canada through the Business Immigration Program of the 1990s. Highly educated, proficient in English, business savvy, familiar with governmental structures, and familiar with the needs and services of a Korean Canadian community, this Ilse of first generation Korean immigrants from
the 1970s were successful in capitalizing on the wealthy second wave of Korean immigrants arriving in the 1990s who were interested in starting family owned businesses. These Korean Canadian businessmen were also familiar enough with governmental structures to strategically coordinate municipal business networks, such as the Business Improvement Association, to position themselves and their interests as the spatial managers of ‘Koreatown’.

Although this research highlights the narratives of a few particular actors engaging in place making of ‘Koreatown’ that limits the scope of this study, there are some general points that can lead to larger discussions about the gendered nature of the business community in the area. Based on research interviews and personal observations of the area, it can be suggested that Korean women are less represented in the place making practices of ‘Koreatown’, specifically in positions of leadership on the Business Improvement Association and in owner or managerial roles in businesses. Besides the Korean Canadian men on the Business Improvement Association Board of Directors, the only women elected were white women, one of which was the president. Korean women were under represented at the Business Improvement Association meetings and on the Board of Directors while being overrepresented as retail labour and clientele within the businesses. Korean women were mentioned only in relation to family owned businesses.

5.1.3 Mediated Multicultural Spaces

Lastly, this research discusses how the spatial managers of ‘Koreatown’ mediate multicultural tensions and anxieties that are invoked by the place making of ‘Asian’ spaces in Metro Vancouver, primarily through benevolent articulations of multiculturalism by those who possess and internalize most the feelings of national entitlement to space. Most often, feelings of national entitlement or the embodiment of exalted subjectivities, originate from positions that require racialized subjects and communities to adhere to their ways of recognition within the rhetoric of multiculturalism. The actors invested and engaging with the place making of
‘Koreatown’ are keen to these contradictory and precarious processes of multiculturalism and the limits to how far racialized ‘Asian’ spaces are tolerated. Rather than desiring or waiting for recognition as a distinct or Korean community, they are strategically negotiating their representation to actively resist the problematic of multiculturalism. The examples of the signage bylaws and the carefully chosen symbol on the banners strongly suggest that the representation of community in ‘Koreatown’ is not ambiguous or ambivalent but rather active and strategic processes of mediating multicultural discourses and representations by Korean Canadians defining community and belonging on their own terms.

5.2 Research Implications

This research contributes to a growing discussion of the intersections of race, space, gender, and multiculturalism present within ‘Asian’ spaces in Metro Vancouver. Specifically, this research has implications for understanding racialized spaces within contradictory discourses of multiculturalism. What needs to be emphasized here is that the ways in which real actors mediate national anxieties to create sites of survival and belonging is often times marginalized in the celebratory language of multiculturalism. This research proposes a number of theoretical, methodological, and substantive findings that may contribute to further critical discussions of complex social and political processes engaging in the place making of ‘Koreatown’.

This research contributes to theoretical discussions of social space theory, multiculturalism, and nation building in terms of how they are articulated at the local level. Specifically, the ways in which the place making of ‘Koreatown’ is a dynamic space that is constituted through multiple social relations while also negotiating tensions that are invoked by ‘Asian’ spaces within the rhetoric of multiculturalism in Canada. By exploring how actors invested in ‘Koreatown’ strategically negotiate these national anxieties, this research highlights the process of mediated multiculturalism to describe how racialized subjects constitute spaces of
survival and belonging. This research also challenges and complicates ‘Asian’ scholarship that has tended to emphasize Chinese and Hong Kong narratives by noting the particularities of Korean Canadian experiences.

There are two methodological implications of this research that enhance discussions of how to unpack the nuances of themes related to experiences of racism, resistance, and struggle. The first methodological implication this research proposes is the use of feminist critical discourse analysis as a key way to address the difficulty of exploring sensitive, experiential, controversial, and potentially traumatic themes of racism, exclusion, and politics of belonging. Critical discourse analysis provides ways to centre the narratives and experiences of the interviewees in this research while also framing ways to deconstruct and interrogate the subtext of multicultural discourses and concepts such as ‘inclusion’, ‘exclusion’ and ‘belonging’. This was key to draw out how anxieties of race and space were embedded in the rhetoric while also allowing for an analysis that would shed light on the ways actors in ‘Koreatown’ were subverting and resisting these processes.

The second methodological implication of this research relates to the use of feminist intersectional frameworks to reflexively and critically interrogate relations of power throughout the research process. This research suggests that the ‘partial insider/partial outsider’ dichotomy and dilemma insufficiently captures the nuances of conducting and interrogating research of this kind. Rather, the position of the researcher should embody ways to reflexively engage with how one mediates personal boundaries of identity and space at all stages of the research process as all social relations are produced. Within this framework it was possible to see how multiplicities of my subjectivity as Korean Canadian, woman, feminist, etc were negotiating interactions with interviewees, the research, and space of ‘Koreatown’. Examples of this were felt when I had to navigate age and gender hierarchies as well as cultural norms during interviews.
The substantive implications of this research are the contributions towards mapping a Korean Canadian history and space in Metro Vancouver within discussions of spaces of resistance. Rather than presenting a counter narrative to white settler histories in Canada, the aim is to present research that is less descriptive and historical but rather concerned more with how Korean Canadians and Korean spaces are sites of agency, existence, and dynamic maneuvering for survival and belonging in the national imaginary. As a relatively ‘invisible minority’ within ‘Asian’ scholarship, Korean Canadians are able to mediate these processes outside traditional narratives of ‘Asian’ exclusion and historical baggage to deliberately create and define spaces of potential resistance. In this sense, this research presents the place making of ‘Koreatown’ as a space where Korean Canadians are resisting the anxieties and contradictions of multiculturalism by (re)producing and (re)defining spaces of identity, and belonging.

This thesis frames a number of considerations to expand the depth of analysis and scope of themes highlighted for future research. Foremost is the discussion of how ‘Koreatown’ can open up debates about the potential for mediated multicultural spaces as sites for both problematizing and resisting the contradictions inherent in Canadian Multiculturalism, particularly for those positioned outside the national narrative of belonging. This creates a framework to examine multiple sites across geographies and time in ways that can link the act of place making by the actors who are invested in the spaces they call home. Further research might examine how the process of place making ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver resembles and differs from those of Koreatowns in Toronto or Los Angeles. To further develop discussions of who mediates these multicultural space of ‘Koreatown’, future research can explore the relationship and narratives between Ilse, ‘first wave’ or first generation Korean Canadian and the ‘second wave’ of Korean Canadians in terms of differing perceptions and meanings around a ‘Korean’ identity and community as well as the class and gendered politics of who become
spatial managers. This can include more narratives from a range of participants that are actively engaged in representing the space but who are also sustaining the *beingness* of ‘Koreatown’ through their everyday encounters. This attention to place making could contribute to further discussions of the potentiality of spaces for citizens to resist and (re)imagine sites for belonging.
Bibliography


Appendices
Dear Sir/Madam:

This letter is to inform you of an important research study I am conducting as part of my Master’s thesis at the Centre for Women’s & Gender Studies, University of British Columbia. The purpose of this study is to better understand the Korean Canadian community, Korean business development, and how ideas of ‘Koreatown’ provide insight into aspects of multiculturalism in Canada.

I would like to invite you to take part in this study given your position in the community, personal knowledge, and professional expertise. Your opinions regarding ‘Koreatown’ and on the October h-Mart incident in Langley would be invaluable to this study.

Participation would involve a 30-60 minute interview in English at a location where it is most convenient for you (a public location or your home). A potential benefit to participants is the opportunity to contribute to learning on Koreans and ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver. An 8-10 page summary of findings will also be provided for you when the study is complete.

If you would like to participate in this study, I would like to request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to provide you with more details. Your participation would be voluntary and you would be free to withdraw from the study any time.

Feel free to contact me by phone [phone number] or by email (hwajoo@hotmail.com). You may also contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Gillian Creese by phone (604-822-9175) or by email creese@interchange.ubc.ca) if you have further questions about this study.

I hope that you find this study interesting and will agree to participate in this research. I look forward to your response at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jane Hwajoo Lee, MA Candidate
Centre for Women’s and Gender Studies,
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.
Appendix B: Letter of Consent and Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Centre for Women’s and Gender Studies (CWAGS)
1896 East Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1
Tel: (604) 822-917 Fax: (604) 822-9169

Consent Form

Vancouver’s ‘Koreatown’:
Discourses of Race, Space, and Nation in Multicultural Canada

Principal Investigator:
Dr. Gillian Creese, Centre for Women’s & Gender Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC. (Tel: 604-822-9175)

Co-Investigator:
Jane Hwajoo Lee, Masters Student. Centre for Women’s & Gender Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC. (Tel: 604-880-3132)

Purpose:
This research study is being conducted as part of Jane Lee’s Master’s thesis at the Centre for Women’s & Gender Studies, University of British Columbia. It is being conducted to better understand the Korean Canadian community, Korean business development, and how ideas of ‘Koreatown’ provide insight into aspects of multiculturalism in Canada.

You have been selected to take part in this study because of your position in the community, personal knowledge, and professional expertise to share your knowledge and opinions regarding the role of ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver and on the October 2006 H-Mart incident in Langley discussed in local newspapers.

Study Procedures:
Participation in this study will involve an interview that will take no longer than one hour. This interview will be conducted in English and will take place where it is most convenient for you (a public location or your home). The interview will be audio-tape recorded and transcribed.

Potential Risks:
There no known risks to individuals for this research study. However, there is a minimal risk that data could potentially contribute to demographic stereotyping or stigmatization of the Korean community. This risk will be minimized by ensuring that only necessary data on demographic features will be collected and will not be analyzed in such a way that unfair stereotypes will be drawn.
In addition, any potential risks to the participant will be minimized by ensuring the confidentiality of the participants in this research.

Benefits:
Participation in this study will provide the opportunity for you to contribute to learning on Korean Canadians and ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver. A short 8-10 page summary of research findings will also be provided to you when the study is complete.

Confidentiality:
Any identifiable information resulting from this meeting will be kept strictly confidential. Transcripts will be prepared with pseudonyms (false names) in all cases unless you express a desire to have your comments attributed. Final reports or publications resulting from the data collection will not contain any identifying information unless given prior consent.

Only the Co-investigator (Jane Lee) and the Principal Investigator (Dr. Gillian Creese) will have direct access to the original transcripts. All records will be kept in a locked drawer at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC. The information will be kept for 5 years after which it will be destroyed.

Contact Information about the study:
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, please contact Dr. Gillian Creese by phone (604-822-9175) or email creese@interchange.ubc.ca or feel free to contact Jane Lee by phone (phone number) or email hwajoo@hotmail.com.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca.

Consent:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without risk or difficulty.

You are of the age of majority (19 years) and have had the chance to read the consent form and ask questions about your participation.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in this study and have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Participant Name (Please Print)

Consent Form: December 15, 2008
Appendix C: Interview Schedule

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Centre for Women’s and Gender Studies
(CWAGS)
1896 East Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1
Tel: (604) 822-917 Fax: (604) 822-9169

Interview Script

Title of Research Study: Vancouver’s ‘Koreatown’:
Discourses of Race, Space, and Nation in Multicultural Canada

Semi Structured Interview Conducted by:

Jane Hwajoo Lee
MA Candidate
Centre for Women’s and Gender Studies
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.
Tel: [phone number] Email: hwajoo@hotmail.com

Length of Interview: Approximately one hour or less.

1. Introduction:
   - Introductions
   - Consent Form: Review, Discussion, Questions
   - Consent Form: Obtain written consent before proceeding.

2. Demographic Information:
   - Name
   - Age
   - Occupation
   - Where do you currently live?
   - How long have you been living in Metro Vancouver?
   - Do you often have the opportunity to go back to Korea? How often and why?

3. ‘Koreatown’:
   - Space
     - Do you feel there is a ‘Koreatown’ in Metro Vancouver?
     - Where do you feel Koreatown is located?
     - What makes it ‘Koreatown’ in your opinion?
     - Are there other names that ‘Koreatown’ is referred to as?
     - Why do you think ‘Koreatown’ is located where it is and not in another area?
• **Who frequents the space?**
  - Do you frequent this space? If so how often and for what reason?
  - Who do you feel frequents this space and why?
  - Who do you feel does not frequent this space and why?
  - Do you feel younger or older people frequent this space and why?
  - Do you feel more men or women frequent this space and why?
  - In your opinion, do you feel that more Korean or non-Korean people frequent this space and why?
  - In your opinion, do you feel that ‘Koreatown’ caters to a diverse group of people, regardless of income?

• **Business and Activity**
  - What kind of businesses or activities do you think is available in ‘Koreatown’?
  - Who do you think these businesses and activities tend to cater to? Why?
  - Who do you think owns these businesses or organizes the activities?
  - Is it difficult to own and operate a business in ‘Koreatown’?
  - Why do you feel they are located in ‘Koreatown’ and not in other areas?
  - What kind of business do you have?
  - Who do you cater to?
  - In your opinion, do you feel more men or women own businesses in ‘Koreatown’?
  - Who do you feel works as employees in these businesses and why? (young, old, men, women?)
  - Are there many non-Koreans that own and operate businesses in ‘Koreatown’? Why do you think this is so?

• **Inclusion/Exclusion**
  - Do you feel the municipal government supports a space of ‘Koreatown’? Why or why not?
  - Do you think that ‘Koreatown’ is a positive or negative space and why?
  - Have you ever felt pressure to cater to a wider or diverse community? From who and why?
  - Have you or others ever experienced racism in ‘Koreatown’? Why do you think it occurred?
  - What is your opinion of multiculturalism...how do you define it? Do you think it is a positive or negative thing?
  - Do you feel Canada is a multicultural country? What about Vancouver? What about ‘Koreatown’? Why or why not?

4. **October 2006 H-Mart Incident:**
  - Are you aware of this incident? (If not...describe the incident to the participant)
  - What are your thoughts about this incident?
  - Do you think it was neutral coverage of the incident?
  - Did you feel that there were negative consequences from the coverage? Why or why not?

5. **Responses to the Articles and Letter to the Editors:**
  - Are you aware of some of the responses from the public on the incident?
  - What is your opinion of the responses that were printed in the newspapers?
  - Did you discuss the incident with other people?
Do you think it was a fair and accurate coverage of the incident?
Do agree or disagree with the claim made in the newspapers that this issue was linked to racism or ‘reverse’ racism? Why or why not?
Do you think this is an issue related to multiculturalism in Canada? Why or why not?

6. Relevance to ‘Koreatown’
Do you think the same situation could have or has the potential to happen in ‘Koreatown’? Why or why not?
In your opinion, do you think that there are ways to avoid this kind of incident in the future?

7. Conclusion:
Are there any other comments you would like to add?
Wrap up and address any questions or concerns
Remind participant that an 8-10 page summary will be available