

**A Narrative Inquiry into Cultural Identity Construction of
Young Korean Canadians: "My cultural identity is a
production I create from different cultural pieces"**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how young Korean Canadians construct and re-construct their cultural identity through cross-cultural experiences as they interact with and negotiate cultural differences. My interest in this study was triggered by conversations with some young Korean Canadians. Prior to these conversations, I assumed that they would be more Canadian than Korean in terms of culture. It was a surprise to learn that they were becoming more interested in Korean culture as they grew up and gained a sense of their identity as Korean Canadian. I was especially surprised when I considered their having grown up in Canadian contexts where they speak English fluently and are exposed to Canadian culture most of the time.

In this study, I conducted a narrative inquiry which enabled me to uncover unrecognized and unspoken experiences associated with the cross-cultural experiences of young Korean Canadians and understand identity construction as a temporally and relationally multi-layered process. The analysis presented in this study was drawn from twenty-six open-ended interviews with young Korean Canadians living in Vancouver, British Columbia.

My findings showed that the young Korean Canadians were not indefinitely torn between cultures nor did they remain victims of unending identity crisis, although during the initial stage of adaptation, they went through uncertainties, tensions, and anxieties about not being wholly one identity or the other. While crossing cultural boundaries and re-configuring different cultures from inside-out and outside-in perspectives, they became more able to

assess which elements of each culture they wanted to embrace in their own identity construction. As they transformed their approach from “fitting in one place” to “mixing and matching different cultural elements,” they were awakened to the possibilities of having a multicultural identity. Identifying multiple cultural elements, they re-constructed their own emergent form of identity beyond the limited boundary of Korean culture or Canadian culture.

This study invites educators to revision cultural identity of immigrants, fabricated by cross-cultural living, as productive tensions and generative possibilities rather than problems to be adjusted and resolved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Table of contents	iv
List of tables	viii
Acknowledgements	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
What this study is about	1
Autobiographical prologue: Framing the research question	4
Navigating this dissertation	10
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS	14
Grounding perspectives	15
Hybrid and multiple forms	18
A constant translation: A third space	21
Cultural identity within a pendulum of “being” and “becoming”	23
Narrative construction	26
Using narrative inquiry in this dissertation	29
Understanding narrative inquiry	30
Narrative is a historical understanding of the self	30
Narrative is a repetitive performance of living, telling, retelling, and reliving	31
Narrative gives fragmentary experiences a tentative coherence	32

Narrative is a collaborative quilt between the inquirer and the inquired	33
Collecting data	34
Analyzing data and constructing narrative accounts	39
Responding to issues surrounding reliability and validity in narrative inquiry	45

CHAPTER 3: FROM PAN-KOREAN IDENTITY TO MULTICULTURAL IDENTITY:

RECENT IMMIGRANT YOUNG ADULT'S STORY	49
Leaving Korea: A difficult adjustment	51
Attachment to the Korean culture	54
Adjusting in Canadian school	56
Conflicting with parents	59
Drug addiction	61
Work experience	64
Navigating cultural differences	67
Becoming a "multicultural citizen"	75
A reflecting moment	73

CHAPTER 4: THE (UN)HARMONIOUS STORIES OF TWO YOUNG KOREAN

CANADIAN GIRLS	76
Leaving Korea	79
First steps in a new land	80
Assimilation and acculturation	86
Re-connecting to both cultures	96

A spinning growth as Korean Canadian	99
CHAPTER 5: THE STORY OF RE-SEARCHING KOREAN CANADIAN IDENTITY	107
Learning a new culture and language	108
Getting more interested and involved in social activism	118
The role of a cultural and language translator	120
Racism	124
Living in-between cultures and languages.....	127
The emerging identity of the Korean Canadian	134
CHAPTER 6: THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY: THE STORIES OF TWO SECOND GENERATION KOREAN CANADIANS	141
Childhood stories	143
Living in two different worlds: Inside and outside the home	148
Problems and conflicts	153
Everyday consequences of being Korean Canadian	173
Embracing both identities	185
CHAPTER 7: THEORETICAL INSIGHTS AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS	201
The trajectory of identity construction	202
Disruption and rupture between different experiential realities	202
Border-crossing and re-configuring	205
(Re)constructing cultural identity as Korean Canadians	207

Cultural identity in fluid movement: Identity as a narrative construction	209
Findings and educational implications	211
Are young Korean Canadians capable of becoming who they are?	211
How do young Korean Canadians experience the Korean culture outside of Korea?	214
What affects the identity construction of young Korean Canadians?	216
What will multicultural education look like within a culturally responsive curricular landscape?	218
The politics of recognition	221
The responsibility to others	224
Multiple identities within in-between spaces	227
Identity construction as a community practice	230
(In)conclusive closure 1: Lingering thoughts	232
(In)conclusive closure 2: An autobiographical returning	235
BIBLIOGRAPHY	247

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1. The story schemas	41
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*(This dissertation is dedicated to
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What this study is about

My interest in this study was triggered by conversations with some young Korean Canadians. Prior to these conversations, I assumed that they would be more Canadian than Korean in terms of culture. It was a surprise to find them more interested in Korean culture, considering their having grown up in a Canadian context where they speak English very fluently and they are exposed to Canadian culture most of the time. What gives them a sense of connectedness to the Korean culture? Is their cultural identity located in a Korean culture? In a Canadian culture? In a properly harmonized mixture of both? What does cultural boundary mean to these cultural nomads? In a complex entanglement of cultural differences, what motivates them to maintain or give up the Korean culture? What does it mean to live in a Korean culture in Canada? Furthermore, I have been puzzled by the fact that young Korean Canadians in Vancouver, considered as marginalized immigrants, have tried to find and occupy their own territory in a new land in spite of the lack of material, mental and emotional support. From this observation, I sensed that they were trying to fabricate their own identity, be it marginal and fragmented.

Conflicts between Korean parents and young Korean Canadians, mostly concerning the young generation's sense of identity and major interests, are ineluctable. The parents' generation constantly reclaims and searches for the lost Korean culture although they are uprooted from the homeland and transplanted into a foreign land. They immigrate to Canada with all of their Korean beliefs, values, and traditions. But the young Korean Canadians are different. They are already forming and reforming their own ways of surviving and living in the new culture wherein the new forms of identity emerge from a disconnection with the heritage culture. They re-interpret, re-construct, and re-appropriate

Korean culture in some ways by intermingling with other cultures. Their cultural identity is no longer being framed and determined solely by a connection with the cultural roots of their parents. Therefore, it is problematic to disregard that young Korean Canadians are actively participating in an attempt to configure and transfigure their own identity.

Moreover, the cultural identity of young Korean Canadians is constructed in a highly ambiguous relationship between the host culture and the heritage culture. This is because of a lack of strong Korean roots and a lack of understanding of the mainstream Canadian culture. They are expected to speak English perfectly and behave like other native Canadians in order to succeed in the host country. At the same time, Korean parents constantly try to transmit Korean culture and language to young Korean Canadians for fear of a cultural disconnection with the Korean culture. Young Korean Canadians consider themselves strangers in both cultures. The question of “who am I?” is not about an exotic biography. Rather, it is about the manifestation of contradictions and complexities provoked by a polarity between belonging and not belonging. An examination of their partial and contingent belonging and ambiguous assimilation in a more detailed and comprehensive way is very necessary. It may be wrong to think of their cultural identity as destined to end up in one place or another. It is also problematic to transmit Korean culture by freezing it into a timeless zone, a reified concoction that defies the dynamic changes of Korean culture. Their cultural identity construction is neither returning to its roots nor disappearing by assimilation and homogenization. The question of “What is the ‘real’ identity of this person?” would be a wrong question to ask because ‘essential identity’ is difficult to qualify and quantify — a concern that triggered this study in the first place.

This study aims to look at how young Korean Canadians define, negotiate, and (re)create the contested and conflicting identity of being neither wholly one thing nor the other as they interact with and negotiate through cultural differences. I also explore the transformative process of identity construction through cross-cultural experiences. Based on the lived experiences of six young Korean Canadians, I analyze how young Korean Canadians first encounter another culture and come to mature into a multicultural citizen.

Given the ambivalent situations they face in the process of their identity construction, one part of this study focuses on the confusions, conflicts, frustrations provoked by the lack of self-confidence from cultural uncertainty and anxiety. Another imperative part explores the generative and transformative possibilities of cross-cultural lives, paralleling the notion of "identity failure" or "identity crisis." I challenge the perspectives that view immigrants exclusively as a problem, thus, leading to the oversimplification and dismissal of their complex experiences. This study examines this double-edged process, one that is troublesome and simultaneously enriching.

The basic premise behind the conventional assimilation model is that immigrants will move naturally from one culture to another over time. In contrast, this study tries to portray how young Korean Canadians challenge and contest socially and culturally constructed categories: the Korean, the Canadian, and the Korean Canadian. I describe their emerging identity by reconstructing and reconfiguring the ideas of culture and identity. Their stories are deeply related to what it means to be a "Korean" outside of Korea, to be a "Canadian" with a Korean cultural background, to be a "Korean Canadian" inhabiting a space representative of the complex and diverse identity compositions. Instead of viewing their stories as a causal story, I attempt to capture and evoke the complex, paradoxical, and mysterious quality of cross-cultural living. It is not my intention to render the experiences of Korean Canadians as transparent. Rather, I intend to create a space for sharing the experiences of a heterogeneous group of young Korean Canadians inclusive of the common elements of their pains, struggles, and uncertainties.

My motivation for this study stems from dual frustrations: the theoretical and the practical. Of the considerable literature on cultural identity of immigrant students, there is little research that deals with Korean immigrant students in comparison to research with other ethnic groups. Korean Canadians are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in Canada. Although Asian Canadians share many similar cultural characteristics, Koreans are unique in terms of their strong ethnic attachment and the burgeoning emergence of the *il-chom-o-*

*se*¹ generation phenomenon from the recent wave of immigrants. Historically, Korean Canadians have a short immigration history. Thus, they have scarce resources to rely on to guide younger generations in building a healthy cultural identity. Furthermore, when young Korean Canadians are faced with struggles and dilemmas in school, there seems to be little response to their particular needs. Not being recognized easily pushes young Korean Canadians to become passive and unreflective about their ambiguous circumstances.

My study hopes to provide a deeper understanding of the emerging identity of young Korean Canadians who cannot locate themselves securely within a cultural, national, and racial boundary. Given that many Korean immigrants are recently flocking to Canada, my study will be very timely and immediately applicable.

Autobiographical prologue: Framing the research question

The initial motivation for this study evolved from my own life experiences. As an international student from Korea who has been here for four years, I have gone through similar experiences as other Korean immigrant students. I vividly remember how my inadequate cultural knowledge often times led to frustration and discomfort. When I left Korea to come to Canada, on the one hand, I brought curiosity and enthusiasm for my new life, while on the other hand, much anxiety and fear. My first transitional process was not as easy as I supposed.

¹ *Il-chom-o-se* is "coined in the Korean [American] community around 1980" (Hurh, 1998, p.164). *Il-se* means the first generation immigrant and *i-se* means the second generation of Korean Americans born in America. *Il-chom-o-se* refers to Koreans who come to America before completing high school. While Korean is the language of *il-se* who usually reads Korean newspapers, watches Korean television, rents videotapes about Korean soap operas, reality shows, talk shows, entertainment, etc., and attends the Korean service in Korean churches, the predominant language of the *i-se* is English. *Il-chom-o-se* speaks both Korean and English languages with varying degrees of fluency. Hurh (1998) describes the distinctive characteristics of the 1.5 generation of Korean immigrants: (1) the large proportion of adolescent Korean immigrants, (2) their parents' high socioeconomic background, which facilitated the attainment of functional bilingualism and biculturalism, (3) the centripetal (moving toward the center) nature of the Korean American community despite the residential scattering to suburbs, and (4) the adhesive mode of adaptation among first-generation Korean immigrants. (p. 164)

Upon arrival at the Vancouver airport, I realized how naively I looked at things. Looking back, the heavy baggage on my shoulders foreshadowed that my life in this new world would not go well as expected. My miserable plight began at the customs and immigration section where I anxiously stood waiting in a long line. Since it was my first time ever to talk with English-speaking people, I felt very nervous. I practiced what I want to say again and again in my mind. But when I stood up in front of a custom's officer, I was frozen and forgot what to say. The officer, with an expressionless face, treated me in an official and stiff manner. Her questions, "Why did you come here?" and "How long are you staying?" made me feel like a captive in an enemy camp. My first impression of Canada was that of hostility rather than hospitality. I acknowledged that even if the world talked about a global village, the boundary between nations was still kept tightly closed.

My first roommate was from Africa, but she was used to the western culture. Use of the bathroom created a tension between us. In Korea, bathrooms have a drainage hole on the tiled floor so we were never concerned about splashing water all over the sink. I did not know about the western practice of keeping the sink dry. I accidentally made the same mistake of splashing water around the sink continuously. After three days, I found a paper with the message taped to the mirror, "It is nice to keep the sink neat. After using the sink, clean it up with a cloth under the sink. ..." Even though I admitted my fault, my roommate's way of dealing with the situation hurt me so much. I felt I was treated disrespectfully. In our Korean culture, it would be better to talk face to face with a smile rather than with a written message. I felt insulted. Her way of communication pushed me to feel very uncomfortable when I was with her.

In my vulnerability, I just pretended to understand and accept whatever she said or required me to do. What came to mind at the time was, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." I constantly said to myself, "You have to be familiar with the western culture because you are living in Canada. You should be prepared to behave like a Canadian." As I recall my early experiences in Vancouver, I realize that I should have spoken rather than simply accept things in silence. This painful experience challenged my naïve expectation of compassionate and benevolent openness towards cultural difference. I learned how difficult it was to create a bridge between people of different cultures in a respectful way. I came to acknowledge that naïve romantic tolerance would bring us only shallow understanding of each other and continue the pain of the culturally marginalized. Tolerance can limit us to benign indifference and remote respect instead of listening to the cry of people in pain, thereby leaving us separate and impermeable.

My academic life also did not start very smoothly. I struggled to fit into life at a Canadian university. One story I choose to share here is related to the culture of discussion. I have been brought up in a culture that emphasizes listening rather than talking. To butt in a conversation is taken as so impolite that I have to be careful when I share my opinions. As a person with this cultural value embedded, I always allowed others to finish what they were saying before opening my mouth. While I patiently waited for an opportunity to speak, other persons already started talking so that when I finally got a turn the topic had changed. Furthermore, the massive linguistic terminologies I never heard in Korea were overwhelming. I was incapable of keeping up with any notes. There were times when I got really stimulated and I had some ideas to share but it took me a long time to figure out how to express what I wanted to say. The moment I was able to figure out a way my opportunity was already gone. I never dared to speak in class so that I ended up losing my voice and feeling more frustrated than ever.

Furthermore, my excessive fear of my spoken English made me shy, embarrassed, and nervous to speak. Sometimes, my feeling of uncertainty of what people discussed in class kept me quiet. Because I learned English words mostly through books, I could not make sense of colloquial idioms and expressions. This psychological fear held me back. Every time I spoke, I always tried to find out how the process evolved. The visible and invisible signs from the native-speakers such as, "What are you talking about?" or "I can't catch you exactly..." immediately took my courage away. In a western academic environment, participating in discussions seemed to be a crucial proof of my knowledge and my presence. If I did not say anything, my voice would not be heard and I would simply settle in the dark shadows. My presence would not be even acknowledged. "Speaking out," "Sharing your ideas," "Engaging in an interactive conversation and dialogue"... Not fitting in this talking culture constantly drove me into hiding. My inability to take part in the discussion made me feel suffocated, and I started missing the Korean cultural value of silence. I was tired of the never-ending talk, talk, and talk... lots of words... In my culture, silence at intervals was important. But in this culture, I realized that there was no room for silence. I felt my spiritual self was suffering from what I took as meaningless noise floating through the air. I shouted inward, "Don't interrupt my silence!"

After two years, I went home for a visit. During the flight I was so excited and elated. When a flight attendant announced that we were almost arriving, my heart beat very fast. I felt as if I just woke up from a long nightmare. I said to myself, "Thank God for this hopeful morning!" While I was flying over the Pacific Ocean, I threw into the deep ocean all the nightmares I had experienced as a foreigner in a strange land. In the process of confronting my oppressive and fearful experiences in a foreign land, my thirsty soul really needed some rejuvenating water. I was always seeking a sense of "home" and

"belongingness."

When I went through customs at the Korean airport nobody asked me, "Why are you coming to this country?" I laughed at myself, recalling my embarrassment and discomfort from that same question at the Vancouver airport two years ago. Unlike the experience at the Vancouver airport, I was accepted and welcomed back in my country.

As soon as I got out of the Korean airport I took a deep breath to inhale the air of Korea. But my body demonstrated that I was not the same person as I had been before. It was not comforting to breathe in a high percentage of humidity and feel the hot temperature. Although I realized that it was the usual Korean summer weather that I missed in Vancouver, my skin was tightening and my body sent me the signals of unfamiliarity and uneasiness. My body was not used to the kind of humidity and temperature any more. This initial feeling of being home after two years of absence made me reflect how much I had been transformed over time. Everything seemed different. In this big city of Seoul, I found myself in-between spaces of familiarity and unfamiliarity.

When I arrived home, my favorite Korean food, the hot pot of "Kim-chi" which has the unique taste of Korean spices, was waiting for me. As much as I really enjoyed the dish, my stomach reacted differently during the night. It seemed that I could not take this kind of spicy food anymore. I was already adjusted to eating dishes that were not as spicy or cooked with different kinds of spices. My meals in Vancouver varied: Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian, Italian, and western. Whenever I ate exotic food in Vancouver I thought about Kim-chi; eating greasy food without Kim-chi was incomplete. But the variety of food I got used to in Vancouver gradually transformed my taste; as well, my digestion appeared to have lost its adaptability to Korean-style spicy food. My changed taste for Korean food represented one piece of the process of cultural osmosis. I did not

want to be totally disconnected from the Korean culture. Yet I allowed another culture into my body and I had been gradually transformed unconsciously.

A funny experience occurred a few days after my arrival. I went shopping with my mom at Costco. We were at the cashier's counter to pay when my mom realized she forgot to get some detergent. She went back while I waited for her in the line. She did not come back when it was our turn to pay, so I told the person behind me to go ahead and pay. He just passed by me without even saying, "Thank you." When I complained to my mom about it she burst into laughter. I could read what her laughter meant. She acknowledged how much I had become westernized. I knew I would not have reacted sensitively had it happened before I went to Canada where "Thank you" was used all the time. I did not see things the way they used to be anymore. That gave me a weird feeling: to be different in my own country.

Interestingly, when I first came to Canada a Korean Canadian friend often pointed out my lack of saying "Thanks." Since then I have consciously tried to say that word. Korean culture is less expressive so that we do not use the word "Thanks" or "Please" habitually. For example, if somebody holds a door for me, instead of saying, "Thanks," I will give that person a smile in return. We are told that some tourists, especially westerners, complain that Koreans do not smile and that we are rude. Koreans have a different way of expressing politeness, gratitude, and respect. We thought that westerners often use those words habitually without really meaning them. We do not use these words until we really feel a deep sense of gratitude that comes from the heart. From my experiences of both cultures, I can understand both sides. I do not want to judge these cultural differences in a dichotomous way. My experience with living in a foreign country has developed my own cultural sensitivity.

My story is about the difficulties, uncertainties, and complexities that I have gone through in very confused and frustrating ways by living in-between cultures. Being pushed and pulled in-between cultures, I have modified my multi-layered selves. These multi-selves are not merely whimsical, but rather are constantly conjugated and reconfigured in new relationships. My becoming is all about tracing in-between lines of multiple selves. I am constantly reaching out to an unknown world. Becoming is not being something. It is the active and bustling moments beyond my own limits. My cross-cultural experience let me continue to move, change, renew, and grow. I learn how to play with the fluid interplay of the known self and the unknown self. It has taken a long time to understand and accept a different culture, a different language, different people, different ways of knowing, different ways of thinking, or different ways of teaching and learning. Through this journey, as the Earth constantly rotates without any instant stop, I keep moving inside and outside myself. Stepping backward, forward, backward, forward. . . . Through my performance in-between cultures, I come to see the world through different eyes.

Navigating this dissertation

Each of the following chapters, except for Chapters 2 and 7, portrays the generative and transformative process of identity construction of six young Korean Canadians. Talking with them, I acknowledged the inner struggles and the generative growth they have experienced in creating their own cultural identity. Although the young Korean Canadians considered themselves to be Canadian in their childhood and adolescence, they increasingly adopted both cultural aspects within their evolving cultural identity. When they shared stories about these kinds of changes, I sensed the different ways they had taken while living out common historical experiences in Canada. Each of them devoted different levels of energy in dealing with similar issues. I encouraged each of them to address particular issues

that were personally significant to their life experiences as Korean Canadians. In writing their stories, I carefully attempted to capture the trajectory of shifts in their identity construction.

The first chapter is an introduction to my dissertation. In this section, I discussed the triggers to this study and its purpose. In the autobiographical section, I described where I am coming from, where I am situated in this study, and the new questions emerging in the process.

In Chapter 2, I introduce the seminal theoretical considerations and the different perspectives that have informed and guided this study. These insightful ideas helped me to explore identity as basically being constituted, performed, and transformed rather than being fixed and pre-given. Then I discuss narrative inquiry, the methodology used for collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data. The latter part of the chapter is a description of the conduct of this study and the process of analyzing, interpreting, and writing the stories shared by the young Korean Canadians. Lastly, I present the conflicting dilemmas around the issues of reliability and validity when using a narrative approach.

The different stories of the young Korean Canadians are contained in four succeeding chapters. In Chapter 3, I examine the story of one recent young immigrant, Brian who went through the most difficult process of adjustment among the participants of this study. His story vividly describes the painful experiences of alienation and segregation caused by language and cultural barriers. Brian exclusively socialized with Korean students, feeling apathetic toward learning English and Canadian culture. His story is an illustration of a misfit with Canadian schooling that drove him to disengagement from school, involvement with drugs, and illicit behaviors. This chapter shows how those troubled past experiences

are re-interpreted in the present in his attempts to cultivate a multicultural identity.²

Chapter 4 is a narrative about two young Korean Canadian girls, Teresa and Jenny, who immigrated to Canada at the same age. Although they have taken different paths in adapting to Canadian culture, their stories reveal the process of creating and re-creating their identity as they struggle to maintain certain aspects of Korean culture and eventually accept certain Canadian cultural practices. In this chapter, I expose the identity shifts of Teresa and Jenny: from “acting and being white Canadian” to “being appreciative of the Korean culture,” and from “a strong attachment to Korean culture” to “an affirmation of life experience in Canada.” As I compare the similarities and differences between their stories, I represent their acquisition of a strong bicultural or multicultural orientation and identity.

Chapter 5 tells about another story of identity construction. David seems to have adapted to the new cultural context comparatively well, having come to Canada at an early age. His story represents how he re-imagined, re-interpreted, and re-invented a Korean culture as a lived, remembered, and imagined community. In particular, his story is a disclosure of how his cultural identity has been shaped and reshaped through cross-cultural experiences. He described his identity as a hodgepodge of Korean, Canadian, and other cultural influences. His story reminded me of my own experiences in Canada, which gave me some inspiration to rethink about the issues of culture and identity. David’s narrative is intertwined with my stories, reflections, and theoretical insights. My continuously running commentaries are woven together with his story.

In chapter 6, I explore the stories of Anthony and Lily. These two second-generation Korean Canadians went through severe inner conflicts between the doubling pressures of

² The term multicultural identity is employed to refer to an identity constructed by crossing cultural boundaries. It neither refers to a juxtaposition of different cultural elements nor a synthesis of different cultural fragments into a symphonic unity. Rather it indicates a textured identity always in flux, an identity of multiple possibilities in a shifting web of differences. Unlike the notion of multicultural identities grounded in the metaphysics of presence that any identity is preexistent presence, this term emphasizes an emerging form of identity which is neither the identity of the dominant culture nor the identity of ethnic heritage, but one that grows in the middle.

“Canadianization” and “ethnicization.” In their early adolescence, assimilation of the Canadian culture was considered the most significant key in adapting to the host country, since their Korean cultural background was, for the most part, disregarded. In a new country, home culture did not matter. Anthony and Lily acted like other white peers and tried to hide their Korean identity. But a shift in their thinking and behavior was very noticeable as they grew older and learned to accept physical and cultural differences. Their stories demonstrate the painful, unsettling, complex, and distressing ambiguity in identity construction. I use two columns to tell Anthony’s and Lily’s stories. My reflections, questions, comments, and interpretations that emerged while listening to their stories are juxtaposed on the right column with their stories on the left column. This narrative form allows me to create a complex polyphonic text which derives the meanings of their stories from the resonance of different perspectives and ideas entwined by these two young Korean Canadians and myself.

The final chapter is an analysis and further discussion of how the cultural identity of the young Korean Canadians has formed and transformed over time. From the different experiences of the young Korean Canadians who participated in my study, I situate the identity formative process within three stages: disruption and rupture between cultures, border-crossing and re-configuring cultural boundaries, and re-constructing their cultural identity as Korean Canadians. Based on the findings of this study, I identify implications for education and suggest ways for developing a curriculum to address the needs of multicultural students in the Canadian school system.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Extensive studies of cross-cultural experiences have addressed such salient anthropological and sociological concepts such as acculturation, assimilation, adjustment, and marginality. For instance, there have been many psychological studies that focus on psychological dislocation and a sense of loss that cause feelings of inadequacy and frustration in a new culture (Anderson, 1994; Chan & Lam, 1987). As well, some conventional sociological studies emphasize differences concerning attitudes and behaviors between two different cultures and measure the lack of assimilation (Richmond, 1974; Watson, 1977; Khan, 1979; Sandhu, 1999). These studies simply assume that immigrants are alienated and stranded between two cultures and the goal of immigrants is to assimilate to the dominant culture. Such conventional work tends to concentrate on the problematic nature of cross-cultural experiences, but remains seemingly insensitive to the creative possibility of emerging forms of identity. If we simply adhere to the models of assimilation and acculturation grounded in conventional perspectives, we will miss seeing the complex and dynamic processes of identity construction amongst immigrants and generative potentials of cross-cultural experiences. We should therefore shift our questions from “How much do immigrants assimilate?” and “Do the immigrants acculturate?” to “How do immigrants change over time? What is the nature of this change?” and “What emerging identity is created and recreated in the process of crossing cultural boundaries?”

Frankly, I am not interested in researching in the paradigm of assimilation and acculturation, for I do not share the presumption that the “job” of immigrants is to assimilate to the new culture. I’m more interested in finding out the transformative processes of young Korean Canadians by cross-cultural living. This study considers cross-cultural living as an emergent learning process. To date, no major empirical study has focused on Korean Canadians. Of the available comprehensive studies dealing with immigrants in North

America who experienced cross-cultural living, there are many personal narratives dealing with identity transformation (Hoffman, 1989; O'Hearn, 1998; Minh-ha 1991). Those studies reflect cross-cultural living as opportunities for new learning and growth. Research influenced by these innovative narratives moves its focus away from the perspective of the inevitability of assimilation towards an emerging form of identity through cross-cultural living. In particular, research in a number of ethnic studies which draw on the constructivist view³ stresses the fluid, situational, and dynamic characteristics of identity construction (Isajiw, 1975; McKay, 1980; Nagel, 1994). Not surprisingly, these studies draw out their fundamental presuppositions from the concepts and vocabularies derived from poststructuralism. Poststructuralist work on identity offers comprehensive theoretical backgrounds and insights to serve as the grounding perspectives for this research. In the section that follows, I will investigate some seminal work on identity construction influenced by poststructuralism which informs the critical revision of the questions surrounding identity.

Grounding perspectives

The question of *identity* has been a burning issue in both philosophical and psychological discourses. There are many approaches to the understanding of identity. A tension between essentialist perspectives and non-essentialist perspectives underpins the discussion of identity. An essentialist definition of identity is based on the Cartesian subject *cogito ergo sum*, "I think therefore I am." The Cartesian idea of subject postulates that the individual subject is constituted by its capacity to think and reason, which leads to the assumption that the self as autonomous, unitary, self-sufficient, and self-transparent. The Cartesian *cogito*, therefore, makes us believe that identity exists within a clear boundary, to be completely achieved through a deliberate reflection, and to be fully known through self-disclosure and

³ The constructivist view emphasizes the socially constructed aspects of culture and identity, in other words, the ways in which the boundaries of identity and culture are continuously defined, produced, and negotiated through social interactions within groups as well as outside. Research drawn on this perspective has shown the ideas of culture and identity to be situational and changeable (Cohen, 1985; McKay, 1980; Thai, 1999), and focuses on the construction of boundaries and the production of meaning through social and symbolic mechanisms.

self-representation. In other words, Cartesian philosophy takes self-identity as essential, fixed, or unified.

In recent years, there has been a conceptual move across a variety of fields from the perspective of identity as fixed, essential, pre-given to one of a contradictory, fragmented, and shifting identification. In particular, the widespread shift to poststructuralist discourse rejects the essentialist notion of identity as a fixed, unitary, and authentic core that remains hidden to one's consciousness, but ready for disclosure upon cogito. The poststructural work provides an underpinning for anti-essentialism which looks at identity as a contingent and provisional construction. Emphasis is placed on the process of identity construction which is spun and interwoven through and by multiple layers.

My approaches to looking at cultural identity are influenced by the poststructuralist theories, in particular, those of Trinh T. Minh-ha, Homi Bhabha, and Stuart Hall whose theoretical backgrounds adhere to poststructuralism and psychoanalysis. They turn attention from the being orientation towards becoming orientation; in other words they take notice of the enunciative space of inscribing or writing identity. They see identity, not as mirrored in what already exists within the self, but as constructed in a regime of representation through which identity is invented, inscribed, and enunciated in certain kinds of forms. Their focus is on the constitutive and formative role of symbolic systems through which identity is constructed. Identity is no longer viewed as static, coherent, unified, cohesive, and unchanging; instead, it is invented, constructed, and articulated through symbolic systems.

Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989a, 1989b, 1991), a Vietnamese writer and filmmaker, inspires me to think of identity as destabilized and multiplied. She dismantles a binary way of thinking where the self is stabilized by being paired with its binary opposite other. In view of binary thinking, being a self requires a boundary between the self and the other. "A" must be "A" and "A" must not be "B." "A" maintains a boundary by casting itself as not "B." But Minh-ha rethinks this interlocking question of identity and difference in a new way beyond a binary opposition. According to her, difference constantly arises not only between outsider

and insider as two entities, but also within the outsider or the insider as a single entity. It is in Minh-ha's work that I ground my perspective that identity is not given as a stable totality but as constantly multiplied and hybridized in multiple layers with which differences constantly arise. Her idea challenges me to see how the cultural identity of the young Korean Canadians is multiplied and hybridized by a constant play of difference and identity.

My perspective is also grounded in the theory of Homi Bhabha (1990, 1994). Bhabha acknowledges that identity is always split and ambivalent between "which one is" and "which is the other." He pays his attention to the fundamental ambivalence and oscillation within identity construction which uncovers the myth of supposedly homogeneous, innate, and continuous identity. Bhabha is interested in exploring the incommensurability of cultural differences and its constant negotiations. I have learned from his influential work how cross-cultural translation engages the young Korean Canadians in creating an emerging identity through negotiations between incommensurable cultural differences and the ambivalent process of identification.

I bring in Stuart Hall (1987, 1990, 1991, 1992) who thinks about the question of identity as something that is open to the constant play of meaning. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's notion of difference⁴, Hall acknowledges that identity is differently positioned at different times and in different places. He reformulates identity in terms of 'positionality' rather than 'essential core,' which invites me to look at identity as positioned differently according to the contingencies of situations. It is through this insightful recognition of identity that I perceive cultural identity of young Korean Canadians as composed of multiple positions where different identities constantly move through different meanings without any guarantee of authenticity. Moreover, his insightful understanding of identity as located in-between 'being' and 'becoming' incites me to turn my focus to what the young Korean

⁴ Christopher Norris (1982) explains the Derridian notion of difference as something that "remains *suspended between the two French verbs 'to differ' and 'to defer,' both of which contribute to its textual force but neither of which can fully capture its meaning. Language depends on difference, as Saussure showed ... the structure of distinctive propositions which make up its basic economy. Where Derrida breaks new ground ... is in the extent to which 'differ' shades into 'defer' ... the idea that meaning is always deferred, perhaps to this point of an endless supplementarity, by the play of signification.*" (p. 32)

Canadians are 'becoming' rather than something that is supposed to be within themselves. When young Korean Canadians think about their cultural identity; they recognize they come from Korea, they are Koreans, they speak Korean, they are Asians, and simultaneously they realize that they are Canadians and they speak English. Their identity as Korean Canadians represents and embraces all these positions. They do not want to exclude any one of them.

These poststructuralists, such as Minh-ha, Bhabha, and Hall, displace the unitary identity and put forward a new perspective that identity is constituted, performed, hybridized, and enunciated through a set of multiple and contradictory positions. But they do not adequately explain how we experience continuity with multiple identities which are seemingly contradictory and conflicting. The notion of a narrative coherence enables me to understand how multiplied, fragmented and contradictory identities are embraced and incorporated in creating an emerging identity rather than pulling the self apart. More specifically, the narrative construction of identity invites me to explore how the emergent cultural identity of the young Korean Canadians in this study has been transformed over time rather than searching for a ready-made Korean identity within themselves or an assimilated Canadian identity.

Hybrid and multiple forms

Trapped in the paradigm of the essentialism of identity, many previous studies have overlooked an infinite interplay of differences in identity and obscured the new forms of hybrid identity with multiplicity. However, the shifting perspectives make it possible to validate complexity and multiplicity in identity construction, a process which constantly produces identity itself anew. According to Minh-ha (1989a), a dividing line between outside and inside always gets melted down because it is situational and positional rather than essential. Its blurred boundary always leads to constant transient and shifting positions, and thus there is no homogeneous insider or outsider. In other words, identity is constantly hybridized and multiplied through intermediate positions that do not fall within an existing

category. "There is no real [identity] to return to ... there are instead diverse recognitions of [identity] through difference" (Minh-ha, 1991, p. 73).

Attentive to multiple subject positions, Minh-ha (1989b) posits and rewrites "I" as composed of "infinite layers," partially approachable through typographical conventions as I, i, or I/i. She remarks:

A critical difference from myself means that I am not i, am within and without i. I/i can be I or i, you and me both involved. We (with capital W) sometimes include(s), other times exclude(s) me. You and I are close, we intertwine; you may stand on the other side of the hill once in a while, but you may also be me, while remaining what you are and what I am not. ... Not One, not two either. "I" is, therefore, not a unified subject, a fixed identity, or that solid mass covered with layers of superficialities one has gradually to peel off before one can see its true face. "I" is, itself, infinite layers. ... Whether I accept it or not, the natures of I, i, you, s/he, We, we, they, and wo/man constantly overlap. They all display a necessary ambivalence, for the line dividing I and Not-I, us and them, or him and her is not (cannot) always (be) as clear as we would like it to be. Despite our desperate, eternal attempt to separate, contain, and mend, categories always leak. (pp.90-94)

The construction of identity is a journey into the multi-layers of different selves. Identity is constantly articulated and re-articulated through inward and outward movements. There is no final and perfect closure except for a tangible closure. Each closure is an opening onto another that generates another start. A contingent closure should be perceived as an impetus to letting identity move rather than to sealing it off. Therefore, identity is taken not as an end point but a point of re-departure. Minh-ha expresses it very eloquently in the following quote:

... a way of re-departure, the return to different pauses, different arrivals because it is always doubled, tripled, multiplied across time (generations) and space (cultures) when differences keep on blooming within despite the rejections from

without... .. every place [we] went / they pushed [us] to the other side / and that other side pushed [us] to the other side / of the other side of the other side / Kept in the shadows of other. (cited in Minh-ha, 1991, p. 14)

Minh-ha's profound insight acknowledges that identity is constantly multiplied and hybridized through the fluid negotiations of differences as well as the interconnections of partial and fragmented differences. The multiplicity of identity does not necessarily add up to a totality; rather it is more than a simple mixture of several different identities. The generative and creative sources of hybridity and multiplicity of identity is not in a simple combination, accumulation, fusion, or synthesis of various compositions, but in an ongoing process in which other elements encounter and transform each other. Salman Rushdie strongly invokes a creative and positive power of hybridity:

Standing at the center of the novel is a group of characters most of whom are British Muslims, or not particularly religious persons of Muslim background, struggling with sort of great problems that have arisen to surround the book, problems of hybridization and ghettoization, of reconciling the old and the new. Those who oppose the novel most vociferously today are of the opinion that intermingling with different cultures will inevitably weaken and ruin their own. I am of the opposite opinion. The Satanic Verses [his novel] celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, culture, ideas, politics, movies, and songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. Melange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. The Satanic Verses is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love-song to our mongrel selves. (1991, p. 394, cited in Hall, 1992, p. 311)

Rushdie demonstrates how cross-cultural living constantly produces the emerging form of identity beyond cultural purity and absolutism. The exposure to other cultures disrupts the previous models of being and provokes new ways of becoming. The space of hybrid

identity is what Minh-ha (1989b) calls an undetermined threshold of the “not quite the same, not quite the other” (p.74). The identity of culturally displaced people is inevitably hybridized through a dialectical relationship between different cultures.

A constant cultural translation: A third space

A famous postcolonial scholar, Homi Bhabha, turns our attention away from the idea of pre-given identity towards an ambivalent identification. What he wants to emphasize by *identification* drawn from psychoanalysis is a process of identifying with and through the other at which identity is constructed through splitting between that which one is and that which the other is. Otherwise put, identity is constructed by ambivalent doubling where the shadow of the other always falls upon the self since the very question of identification entails the process of differentiating the otherness and difference. It is by the traces of differences that identity is visible and recognizable.

From within this perspective, Bhabha suggests that cultural identity is constructed and articulated by and through an act of translation between different cultures. According to him, cultural difference does not simply represent oppositional or antagonistic cultural values. Cultural difference always opens to cultural translation that entails the negotiations of discursive elements which are incommensurable without properly fitting in. The act of translation brings up discontinuity and disruption between different cultures whereby identity is to be continuously mobilized in an in-between space in which each cultural meaning continuously flows through each other, sets the original in motion, and a new meaning comes into being. Bhabha (1990) provides a succinct interpretation of cultural translation:

*By translation I first of all mean a process by which, in order to objectify cultural meaning, there always has to be a process of alienation and of secondariness **in relation to itself**. In that sense there is no ‘in itself’ and ‘for itself’ within cultures because they are always subject to intrinsic forms of translation. ... Translation is*

*also a way of imitating, but in a mischievous, displacing sense — imitating an original in such a way that the priority of the original is not reinforced but by the very fact that it **can** be simulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum and so on: the 'original' is never finished or complete in itself. The 'originary' is always open to translation so that it can never be said to have a totalized prior moment of being or meaning — an essence. (p. 210, original emphasis)*

Translation is not returning to the 'original' but going beyond it. It is concerned with 'transformed' rather than the 'original' as an ongoing renewal process. Cultural translation can never be simply an act of integrating different cultures, neither simply tracing two original meanings from which a new meaning emerges, nor harmoniously adding together different cultural contents or contexts. This is an intercultural dynamics in which cultural differences continually oscillate through two interconnecting parties. Without being merely determined, the act of cultural translation brings another meaning into being through a mutual voyage across cultural boundaries.

Bhabha calls this productive space a 'third space,' a site of constant interactions leading to mutual transformations. A third space renews and re-configures the previous identity beyond an antagonistic binary system through a dynamic tension between cultural differences where a particular identity is constantly interrupted and innovated. From an interstitial passage between cultures arises the complex combination of resistance and negotiation where cultural differences are no longer imposed on a hierarchical model. It implies that cultural identity neither presupposes the original nor does it impose a fixed meaning. Identity construction through cultural differences is an act of "adding to" rather than "adding up." Bhabha states, "we must always keep open a supplementary space for the articulation of cultural knowledge that are adjacent and adjunct but not necessarily accumulative" (p. 163). It is from this creative third space that the emerging form of identity is constructed in ambiguous assimilation and partial belonging. Applying this notion to young Korean Canadians, their identity construction means neither the addition of

Canadian culture on a prior Korean culture nor the simple declaration of the two constitutive parts. Rather, the identity of young Korean Canadians emerges through the conjunction and juxtaposition of both cultures. When young Korean Canadians pick up some cultural forms, whether the dominant Canadian culture or Korean culture, they significantly transform its meaning in the process of cultural translation.

Taken together, cultural translation is neither a negative result of a partial definition nor a positive synthesis of opposites. It enables identity to be reinterpreted, rearticulated, and reconstructed across cultural boundaries, which leads to an eternal parody of *becoming*. Cultural translation is not mimetic or mimicked but transformative and interrogative as a site of navigating cultural differences. Rather than simply a domain of sharing and commonality, it is a site of contestation of differences, and simultaneously an enriching ground of an emerging form of identity.

Cultural identity within a pendulum of “being” and “becoming”

Stuart Hall (1990) considers identity as basically being constituted, invented, and transformed. He reformulates the concept of identity in two different ways. First, he defines cultural identity in terms of “one, shared culture, a sort of collective one true [identity].” Cultural identity is proclaimed by reference to authenticity and purity by reclaiming the past. Hall states that:

... cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide [them], as ‘one people,’ with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of [their] actual history. This ‘oneness,’ underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence, of [people’s] experience. (p. 223)

This closed concept of identity aims to unify people into one cultural identity and to represent all of them as belonging to the same group by imposing the pre-given identity. It

is an act of imaginative (re)discovery of the past which refers to what Said calls "imaginative geography and history," which "helps the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the difference between what is close to it and what is far away" (Said, 1985, p. 55, cited in Hall, 1990, p.232). Benedict Anderson (1983) uses the term "imagined community" to describe national identity in this sense. He argues that since it would be impossible to know all those who share the national identity, people just imagine a shared idea of what it constitutes. The differences between national identities, therefore, lie in different ways in which they are imagined. This idea of imagined community is what Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) refer to "the invented tradition which [means] a set of practices ... of a ritual or symbolic nature which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviors by repetition which automatically implies continuity with a suitable historical past" (p.1). From within these perspectives, the certainty of the past and shared identity is nothing more than part of an imagined and invented community.

Hall does not deny that identity is constructed out of the past. What he wants to point out is that in the process of (re)telling the past, identity is recreated and reconstructed, not recouping the already-made entity from the past. He goes on to say that "we bear the traces of a past, the connections of the past. ... but it is never a return of direct and literal kind" (1991, p. 58). Hall reminds us that the original identity is not the simple 'recovery' of the past because the past is not waiting for us back there to recoup original identity; rather the past is always retold, rediscovered, reinvented through narrative. Therefore, it is impossible to assume identity as unchanging and emanating from a unique origination that has to be traced back.

Furthermore, acknowledging ruptures and discontinuities in what constitutes the 'uniqueness' and 'oneness,' Hall notices the critical differences between "what we really are" and "what we have become." Such recognition stimulates a more open concept of identity defined as "a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being.'" He shares his understanding of the less closed sense of cultural identity:

Cultural identity ... is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. ... But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (p. 225)

Capturing this open sense of identity, Hall highlights that identity is always within representation and inscription in and through difference. Identity is not a thing that we are born with; rather it is formed and transformed within and in relation to representation. He succinctly explains the impossibility of identity in its fully unified meaning based on Derrida's notion of *differance*. Derrida's notion of differance means that one signifier still retains one meaning while it is encapsulating another with endless sliding. Nothing can fully capture a signifier's meaning as meaning depends on a contingent and arbitrary closure. The traces of other meanings set the word in motion and generate new meanings. The infinite postponement of the final meaning puts identity in an unfinished process, not fully unified.

In this sense, what we call identity is no more than an unfinished, contingent, and arbitrary closure. There always happen internal interstices and ruptures which lead to multiple identities, not of one (Hall, 1987). From within this perspective, Hall recognizes that identity is not something that already pre-exists out there; rather it is open, multifaceted, is always under construction, and stretches across a variety of positions. Identity is seen as "not an essence but a positioning" (1990, p. 226). Identity is constructed and reconstructed in a complex manner depending on how we position ourselves. Identity is seen as something constantly positioned and repositioned through an ongoing interplay of representational regimes such as history, culture, and power (Hall, 1990).

Taken together, cultural identity is grounded in an attempt to search for a shared root, to recover the lost histories imagined to have existed before, and to make a connection of the present with the broken past. The idea of a unique origin and a unified identity is nothing more than an imaginary and fantasized search for some certainties because any idea of a literal return to a true and unchanged origin can be hardly sustained. The case of Korean Canadians is an example. The original 'Korean culture' no longer exists out there; it cannot be merely recovered in any simple sense. What remains has already been transformed but never in its original form since any rediscovery opens to a reformulation. The idea of 'Korean culture' is no more than an 'imaginary community.' Korean Canadians only know what it is to be a 'Korean' or 'Canadian' through the way 'Korean-ness' or 'Canadian-ness' is represented as a set of meanings.

Narrative construction

Studies informed by poststructuralism see identity as complex, situational, fragmented, nonunitary, nonlinear, noncoherent, and constantly in flux. I agree with these poststructuralist ideas of nonlinear and incoherent identity to a certain degree. However, the following questions arise for me:

- How can fragmented identities be involved in new forms of identity?
- Is there any stability at all?
- How do we weave together different positions into the provisional construction of identity?

What attracts me to the narrative view of identity is that it enables me to think about identity beyond a dichotomy between the essentialist and the poststructuralist perspectives. Jane Flax (1990) discloses a dialectic tension between the self as rational and self-contained and the self as fragmented and unintegrated. Drawing on her psychotherapy orientation, she recognizes that her patients make efforts to establish self-cohesion, however tenuous, contingent, and partial the process might be. She comments, "Those who celebrate or call

for a decentered self seem self-deceptively naïve and unaware of the basic cohesion within themselves that makes the fragmentation of experiences something other than a terrifying slide into psychosis” (Flax, 1990, p. 218). According to her, identity is neither something definitely given nor infinitely inaccessible or irrevocable. She expresses it more vividly in the following quote:

The task of therapy cannot be the discovery (or construction) of a solid, unitary, pristine, and undistorted self lying somewhere down deep inside. If this is our definition, patients are bound to be disappointed and feel inadequate and defeated. Subjectivity is not an illusion, but the subject is a shifting and always changing intersection of complex, contradictory, and unfinished processes. ... Experience is constantly reworked in conscious and unconscious ways as our cognitive and linguistic skills and intra-inter-subjective worlds and purposes change. Meanings of our experience are partially determined by the questions we and others pose. They are also shaped by the interventions and efforts of outer social structures and bodily changes that occur while we are reconstructing our narratives..
(pp. 107-108)

Identity is a *narrative construction* which is narrativized by diverse aspects and influences. Narrative as a vehicle of identity construction is noteworthy in significant ways. Narrative configuration provides the sense of a self-produced continuity for discontinuous experiences. Although we think we have a unified identity, it is nothing more than a ‘narrativized’ construction about the self, a contingent closure of identity, not identity as substance. It is through narrative configuration that we attain a contingent closure of identity assumed as a unified and coherent identity.

If narrative coherence is an imaginarily and provisionarily coherent structure, not a comprehensive viewpoint or an integrated conclusion, then identity may be seen as a partial, contextual, and relative construction constantly shifting. There may never be comprehensive or integrated identity as fixed and unchanging. Different understandings and interpretations are always possible and required when further experiences are incorporated

into identity construction. The notion of identity as a narrative construction invites us to understand how conflicting multiple identities from diverse influences are simultaneously inhabited and negotiated without sustaining any single pure or authentic closed identity.

The narrative approach also serves to understand identity in “temporal and spatial relationships,” not in a singular isolated phenomenon. Narrative is the “constellations of relationships embedded in time and place, constructed by emplotment,” a process that shapes the sequences of disconnected events into a unified story with a theme (Somer & Gibson, 1994, p. 62). Somer and Gibson argue that the narrative understanding of identity perceives its construction in the internal and external relations of *time* and *place* and *power* that are constantly in flux. Somer and Gibson give a clear description of narrative identity:

Narrative identities are constituted by a person's temporally and spatially variable “place” in culturally constructed stories comprised of (breakable) rules, (variable) practices, binding (and unbinding) institutions, and the multiple plots of family, nation, or economic life. Most important, however, narratives are not incorporated into the self in any direct way; rather they are mediated through the enormous spectrum of social and political relations that constitute our social world. People's experiences ...were inextricably interconnected with the larger matrix of relations that shaped their lives ... as well as the particular stories ... used to account for the events happening to them. (p. 67, parentheses in the original)

Narrative configuration brings together the factors of time, space, and relationality, each of which is excluded from categorical or essentialist approaches. Whereas essentialism looks at identity as internally stable, the narrative approach embeds identity within relationships which shift over time and space. Viewing identity as a narrative construction helps to see the temporal and developmental dimension of identity construction.

Using narrative inquiry in this dissertation

In this study, I used a qualitative methodology of narrative inquiry. The narrative is deemed the best approach to do this study for several reasons. First, unlike the conventional perspectives that abstract human experiences into general categories, this approach understands a particular experience in the dynamics of other experiences over time beyond the myth of totality. Also this approach underscores how we re-construct and re-interpret the past experience in reconciliation with the present perspective. In this sense, narrative inquiry enabled me to uncover unspoken and unrecognized experiences associated with the cross-cultural transition process of young Korean Canadians, to understand the meaning of those experiences, and see identity construction as a temporally and relationally multi-layered process.

Another important reason for using narrative inquiry is its support for an intimate relationship between the inquirer and the inquired. Narrative inquiry engages the inquirer and inquired collaboratively together to interweave the meaning and significance of experiences. This approach takes embodiment and emotionality as legitimate and significant ways of understanding human experiences (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Ellis (1995) manifests the ethical, empathic, and sympathetic aspects of storytelling:

In [telling] my stories ... what I have hoped for is insight, companionship, and comfort during my grief. ... The process of [telling the stories]... has provided that. ... I hope you ... would identify with my plight and gain a heightened emotional sense of what it felt like to live this experience. ... In return, I have wanted to offer comfort and companionship when your time for personal tragedy comes. ... and provide a point of comparison for your life and story. (pp. 334-335, cited in Bochner, 2001, p. 149)

A sympathetic engagement and emotional sharing makes it possible that both experiences of the inquired and the inquirer are situated and lived out together on a storied landscape.

Indeed, in the study process, the dialogical relationship between the young Korean Canadians and myself provoked and evoked our enthusiastic engagement. The narrative approach let me tune in to the particular stories of the young Korean Canadians and constantly directed me to identify, empathize, and resonate with their experiences resonating with their stories.

Understanding narrative inquiry

What is behind my deep attraction to narrative inquiry? What is narrative inquiry? Where am I situated in my study? Who am I in the narrative text I create? How can I responsibly and enthusiastically engage and interact with the lived and storied experiences of human beings without undermining and exploiting them? With these questions in mind, I will explore an understanding of the narrative approach informed by my readings in what follows.

Narrative is a historical understanding of the self

Narrative is a primary way through which human experience is organized into temporally meaningful episodes (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1). The narrative approach understands human experience not in a mere temporal sequence but in a complex structure of temporal configuration in which the past, present, and future are intertwined and interrelated to create meaning. In other words, human experiences are understood in a continuum where the past, present, and future are seen as living parts of the total constellation of time zones, not in a linear time line. In telling a story, the past reverberates in the present and the present retrospectively illuminates new meanings of the past experience. Without a recollection of the past, it is impossible to understand the present or move towards the future.

Recollecting the past is always directed towards the future because we appropriate the past in terms of our interest and concern for the future. We can no more conceive of the

expected future without the recollected past than we can understand the present experience. Understanding the present experience and constructing the meaning is forged out of the retention of the past and the protention of the future. An act of telling a story consists of taking together the past, present and future horizons which human consciousness spans. When we tell a story, it is fairly obvious that we understand the experience in both a retrospective and prospective mode. Narrative understanding of human experiences moves through the flashing backwards and forwards of time. Crites (1986) makes this point clear:

To become a self is to appropriate the past, and that takes digging. ... I cannot begin afresh by forgetting my past, but by recollecting it. ... this archaeological project of recollection and avowal is necessarily directed to the future ... With respect to the past the artful act is to reshape what has been. With respect to the future there is the possibility, nourished precisely by possibility, of running toward the open arms of the widest horizon, which dissolves all things and makes all things new, including the self. The present that answers to the indeterminacy of the future is hope. Hope is precisely that openness of the present toward the boundless horizon of possibility. (pp. 164-166)

The act of narration is inextricably tied to the process of historical understanding the self by integrating the recollection of the past, the projection of the present, and the anticipation of the future. It is through this dialectical movement of time that we arrive at a profound and enriching understanding of human being.

Narrative is a repetitive performance of living, telling, retelling, and reliving

In a realistic perspective on narrative, stories are turned into analyzable documents about which scientific truth can be said. Conventional social scientists have overwhelmingly narrowed down the idea of narrative to the representation of social and historical knowledge or the inert transmission of the dead past. Yet, recent alternative perspectives reject this idea of narrative as a mirror of events recorded by disinterested observers. Instead, the potential influence of telling a story is elucidated in its capacity to be

continually re-imagined, recounted, and re-invented.

A story can be created and recreated differently according to new experiences and perspectives. Some stories that are told, no matter their importance, may become trivial while other stories may emerge from obscurity into central importance. In other words, the meaning and significance of stories are incomplete, tentative, and revisable; they depend on the contingencies of life circumstances from which they are narrated. A different telling makes it possible to bring further untold stories, and thus a story constantly grows into another story with added aspects of experience.

Storytelling is not an imitative but a creative act. The construction of narrative engages us in a dialectical and spiral movement among living a storied life, telling it, retelling it, and reliving it. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) comment confirms this:

[An] important task in narrative is the retelling of stories that allow for growth and change. We imagine, therefore, that in the construction of narratives of experience, there is a reflective relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story. (p. 418)

Telling a story provokes and entices us to invigorate, illuminate, relive, and retell the unrecognized experience. When we engage in a story we are taken to relive the experience, reconfigure the meaning, and enlarge our understanding. In this sense, narrative inquiry allows different meanings to emerge through constant living, telling, retelling, and reliving, and therein adds to a new understanding of the experience.

Narrative gives fragmentary experiences a tentative coherence.

Freeman (1997) argues that the narrative approach is fundamentally interpretive and hermeneutic. This approach involves two distinct dimensions that Ricoeur (1980) refers to as the *episodic* — the diverse events that happened in the past and *configurational* — the

constitutive process of putting those events scattered across and through time together in making a story and constellating meaning. Human experience at the moment of happening is lived as disorderly, discontinuous, and chaotic. It does not match a congruent story carefully crafted. The sense of coherence is not simply given at the moment of living nor is it simply “out there” waiting to be recognized by a disinterested observer. In other words, narrative coherence is not the imposition of a ready-made plot structure on an independent set of events but it is derived from the act of telling a story. In this sense, narrative coherence, as a contingent construction, can be revised and recreated when new understandings and interpretations emerge.

It is the narrative *configuration* that gives coherence to fragmentary experience that is inexplicable, chaotic, and even in turmoil in the flux of everyday experiences. Narrative configuration takes place through the process of *emplotment* (Ricoeur, 1984). Narrative brings concordance to the discordance of experience by the invention of a plot. The plot translates events that seem otherwise unrelated into intelligible episodes and connects them to a whole story that did not have prior existence. It is by making a plot that a tentative coherence is given to what is essentially formless and meaningless at the moment of experience. Emplotment makes it possible for incoherent experiences to be reorganized and incorporated into a coherent story as if the experiences originally possessed order and coherence.

Narrative is a collaborative quilt between the inquirer and the inquired

Narrative inquiry triggers a radical transformation in the position of the inquirer and the inquired. The inquirer is more than a recorder of stories, or a passive listener. The inquired is neither a mere respondent answering upon request nor an informant simply imparting information. Narrative approach emphasizes a dialogical relationship between the inquirer and the inquired. They actively participate and engage morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually together in interweaving the meanings of stories as co-participants, co-constructors, and co-creators (Bochner, 2001; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ellis & Bochner,

2000). Narrative engages both the inquirer and the inquired together in the storied experiences across each own boundary. A close collaborative interaction between the inquirer and the inquired brings unexpected insights and new interpretations. It is important for both of them to be willing to engage in a dialogue that challenges an already established understanding.

Narrative inquiry, as a particular kind of research pursuit, always engages in “understanding something.” Understanding is not a private and interior undertaking accomplished through a self-reflective, autonomous, and rational subject. As a practical-moral activity, its significant task is to listen and share what is barely guaranteed by pre-given standard or methodological procedure. When the inquirer and the inquired enter together into a shared matrix of evocative emotion, feeling, and spirituality of each other, they come to understand ambiguous and dynamic human conditions where human life is constantly echoing. This connectedness enables them to reach out to an in-depth and manifold understanding of multi-layered experiences that cannot be understood by scientific or univocal terms.

Collecting data

To explore ways in which cultural identity is constructed and performed, I have deliberately chosen to work with a diverse group of young Korean Canadians in terms of age, gender, attachment to Korean culture, and the period of immigration to Canada. I also tried to place them on a continuum of Canadian culture and Korean culture to determine how much of the Korean and/or Canadian cultural values and practices were retained, assimilated, or lost. I positioned Brian on the Korean end of the spectrum, Anthony and Lily on the other end, Jenny and Teresa in between, and David in the middle of Anthony and Teresa. Although this categorizing seemed over-simplistic, I attempted to look at a wide range of cultural identity in my analysis.

There was something unique in each of these young Korean Canadians that attracted me. Anthony's increasing interest to learn the Korean language and culture was intriguing for me. I wondered what motivated him to reconnect with his Korean roots. With Lily, I wanted to understand her ambivalent positioning where she placed herself in both cultures. I tried to make sense of David's cross-cultural experiences and adjusting processes. I sensed that he seemed to cross cultural boundaries with ease and optimism as compared to other young Korean Canadians in this study. Teresa and Jenny were of the same age when they immigrated to Canada. I wondered about differences and similarities in their identity construction. While Teresa moved her position from the westernized Canadian culture-based assimilation to the recognition of her being Korean, Jenny took on the opposite direction. Brian's pride of being Korean and keeping in touch with Korean contemporary culture on the other side of the globe fascinated me. I was also interested in his dramatic shift from a pan-Korean identity to a multicultural identity.

I met Brian, David, Teresa, Jenny, Anthony, and Lily⁵ between May and October of 2003. I advertised my research plan to the local Korean communities in Vancouver, especially through Korean churches and my Korean Canadian friends. And I invited interested persons to contact me. The young Korean Canadians in this study volunteered to join this study with an engaging willingness despite their busy schedules. Being aware of the scarce resources they could rely on when they had confronted struggles, dilemmas, and disturbance in cross-cultural experiences, they were pleased that they could make a contribution to help younger Korean Canadian generations who have gone through similar experiences. With an acknowledgement of sharing their stories as opportunities to provide appropriate parental guidelines for younger generations and to get over the absence of recognition for their unique situation, they were willing to devote themselves to this study as a co-constructor of this narrative inquiry with me.

Every two weeks I conducted individual interviews where I listened to their narratives of cross-cultural experiences. Each audio-recorded interview took about one to one and a half

⁵ All names that follow are pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

hours. All interviews were done in either Korean or English depending on their preference and bilingual proficiency. In particular, the interview with Brian was completely done in Korean because he was much more proficient in Korean than in English. Also it was more natural for us to converse in Korean being a native speaker of Korean myself. Here is a brief biographical background of each participant.

Brian was the person who had gone through the most difficult time in his adjustment. He came to Canada at Grade 11. The language barrier was the major obstacle to his adaptation. He exclusively socialized with Korean students and rarely tried to intermingle with Canadians as compared to the other students in this study. Even after immigration to Canada, he had kept in touch with his Korean friends in Korea and Korean pop culture prevalent among the youth group. Although he lived in Canada physically, he was confined in the Korean culture mentally. His difficulties in adjusting to Canadian schooling drew him to get into illicit behaviors that, in turn, led him to drop out of school. However, at the time of our interview, he was coming to grips with cultivating his multicultural identity.

Teresa and Jenny both started their new life in Canada as international students. During their adolescence, Teresa's strong desire for behaving like a white Canadian always provoked struggles and tensions with her parents. She fervently aspired to belong to the western youth culture. On the contrary, Jenny was not ashamed of her being different and felt more connected to Korean cultural values. She spent every vacation in Korea since her parents still lived there. This situation enabled her to develop a strong bond with Korean cultural values. It is interesting that both of them felt very proud of being Korean Canadians despite the differences they experienced with the assimilation process.

Demographically, David is a perfect 1.5 Korean Canadian generation. He immigrated when he was in Grade 5. He was in Grade 12 when we met. David seemed the most bilingual and multicultural person of all the participants. Although he indicated his "elementary level" with the Korean language, he seemed to be quite comfortable with Korean culture as well as speaking Korean. His experience of living as an immigrant student brought him an

interest in social justice issues, especially racism and bullying. He had been profoundly involved in anti-racism and anti-discrimination movements and other diverse social activities.

Anthony was born in Korea and immigrated to Canada in 1975 when he was only three years old. At that time there were very few Koreans living in Canada. He was raised in Toronto and is presently doing his master's degree in Vancouver. He easily assimilated into the Canadian culture partly because he came to Canada at such a young age that he had not fully absorbed the Korean culture. He has never gone back to Korea since one visit at five years old. Although he learned Korean language and culture from his grandmother before elementary school, he had lost most of them as he had grown up. He does not speak Korean well, and he is not knowledgeable about Korean culture right now. Anthony barely developed an attachment to Korean culture through his childhood and adolescent years. Interestingly, as a young adult, he has been feeling more connected to Korean culture and his being Korean is starting to reside inside him.

Lily is a second generation Korean Canadian born in Canada. During her childhood, a few Korean people lived in her neighborhood. Unfortunately, she had few opportunities to experience Korean culture and language except with her parents. Her parents were too busy to teach her the Korean culture and language in a meaningful way during her growing up; instead her dad pushed her to speak English all the time. Recently, her dad pressures her to learn Korean but she is not interested in doing that. Even two visits to Korea did not make her feel any connectedness to the Korean culture. She was the most critical of the Korean culture among the participants.

The interviews aimed to provide illustrations for understanding, identifying, and analyzing the complex and dynamic processes of identity construction as lived by the young Korean Canadians in the various spheres of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. I used an unstructured informal interview format with open-ended questions to encourage them to feel comfortable about telling their own stories. Initially, I asked participants to describe

their experiences of cross-cultural living. Follow-up questions helped to explore and clarify arising specific issues. My questions focused on the following issues: conflicts, tensions, and difficulties they had encountered living in different cultures, the way of navigating and negotiating cultural differences, the meaning of becoming Korean Canadians in a multicultural society of Canada, and the transformative process of identity construction over time. Although I prepared some specific and broad questions before the interview, the open-ended conversation allowed questions to emerge from the process as opposed to using a more structured set of questions where my intentions were explicit. I invited participants to tell their own stories in their own way in an attempt to establish intimate participatory relationships with them.

To motivate the participants to share their stories, I used my own personal experiences of living in a culturally and linguistically different world. Telling my story initiated an engaging dialogue and opened up a space of sharing our own stories together. The conversations were especially lively when we addressed our most difficult problems with cultural and language barriers. When we were mutually engaged in sharing our experiences and struggled to understand what those experiences meant, we laughed and lamented together. Working with the young Korean Canadians, I had tried to practice the significant premise of dialogically and collaboratively embodied narrative inquiry. Keeping this spirit of narrative inquiry in my mind, I attempted to facilitate and enhance an interactive and dialogical narrative inquiry from the beginning of the interview to an interpreting process as much as I could. I did not want my narrative inquiry to rely solely on my own interpretation on their lived experiences. Rather, I invited the participants to be involved in the interpretive process. Each time I finished an account of a participant I sent a copy of the draft for verification and feedback. I asked them to step out of the role of a narrator and step into a new role as an interpreter of the narrative text. This process gave them an opportunity to comment on my interpretations, add something more to their original statement, and elaborate their own understanding.

Before addressing how I analyzed the data, I will discuss how I transcribed the interview

data. In the first place, I transcribed verbatim everything told at the moment of interview as much as I could, and then I transformed it in a more formal written style in an attempt to preserve their original words. Little attention was given to portray the emotional aspects of conversation such as giggling, laughing, pausing, hesitating, and so on. Transcription was used for a continued dialogue in the next interview as well as for further analysis.

Analyzing data and constructing narrative accounts

I analyzed and interpreted the interview data using the approach of narrative inquiry. The analysis presented here was based on twenty-six open-ended interviews with six young Korean Canadians living in Vancouver. My analysis of the data focused solely on the content of the stories. Narrative analysis can be categorized into two different ways: textual analysis and discourse analysis. Textual analysis accounts for the temporal ordering of events and their representation in texts. The focus of discourse analysis is on the communicative functions of various features of speech in different social and interactional contexts. Given that narrative is a product of a particular interview situation through interactions between the particular inquirer and inquired at a particular moment, it is essential to be sensitive to how stories are constructed in conversations. Gee (1991) who is interested in how a story is told pays attention to pitch, pauses, and other features that punctuate speech. This approach focuses not only on the content analysis but also on other parts of the discourse such as pauses, breath intakes, non-lexical utterances (mm-hmm, uh-huh, etc), and nonverbal aspects of communication. The analysis of the interview situation and process is absolutely crucial in order to arrive at a more adequate and accurate interpretation. However, this study paid little attention to capture intonation, volume, pace, and other qualities of speech in the interpretive process in which the meaning is produced. This is one limitation of my data analysis.

I employed Gee's (1991) framework in creating thematically connected stories with less careful consideration of communicative functions. His framework facilitated sorting the interview data in a thematically related set of units from idea units to lines, stanzas,

strophes, and parts. Mishler (1995) explains Gee's notion of thematic analysis:

Both prosodic features and interpretation of content in terms of topics and themes are used to parse a stretch of speech into a hierarchically ordered set of units for Idea Units marked by a single intonation contour, to Lines, Stanzas, Strophes, and Parts, each thematically unified at successively higher levels of generality.
(p. 106)

A development of a story involved the recursive movement from the data to an emerging thematic plot. The emerging plot informed me of the elements that needed to be included in the final storied text from the gathered data. A story evolved through a hermeneutical circle in which parts of the text were understood in relation to the whole and the whole in relation to its parts. When certain strands of meanings emerged, they outlined a preliminary sense of the whole. This sense of the whole helped me refine and reconfigure a story more elaborately. In other words, the creation of a story involved a to and fro movement between the parts and the whole.

I also employed Strauss' (1970) "constant comparative method of analysis," a strategy for "making comparisons" and "asking questions" that continually serves as a template for the organization and analysis of data. Such a process of categorization, comparison, inductive analysis, and refinement of data allowed major themes and plot structures to unfold. Through those processes, I developed the story schemas of each participant which organize a wide range of experiences under a rubric of particular themes. These schemas enabled me to acknowledge the whole picture of their experiences, to notice the differences as well as similarities of each person's experience, and identify common patterns in their identity transformation. These story schemas are presented in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1. The story schemas

Brian	David	Teresa	Jenny	Anthony	Lily
<u>Language barrier</u>	<u>Initial stage of adjustment</u>	<u>Experiences of Canadian school</u>	<u>Adjustment process</u>	<u>Living in two different worlds: Home and outside home</u>	<u>Childhood and Adolescence</u>
- Useless ESL class	- Supportive assistance of an immigrant teacher	- Dissatisfaction with ESL class	- Anxiety about the new life	- Learn Korean at home and the Korean language school	- Lack of confidence in being Korean
- Lack of educational program and intervention for the new immigrant students	- Conflicts with Canadian students	- Difficulty of being a friend with native speakers	- Home-stay life	- Uselessness of Korean outside home	- Being shameful of her physical and cultural difference
- Lack of access to practice English	- Lack of English	- Limited opportunities to practice English	- Loneliness	- Priority English over Korean	- Disinterest in learning the Korean culture and language
<u>Socio-cultural barrier</u>	- Unsettling experiences with invisible racism and prejudice	- Trying hard to hang out with Canadian friends	- Lack of knowledge of Canadian social, cultural, political, and historical contexts	- Limited access to Korean culture	- A sense of being marginalized and stereotyped
- Difficulty in making friends	- Disorientation, insecurity, discomfort, and abandonment	- Being actively involved in many school activities	- Remind herself of being Korean	<u>Inner struggles in identity construction</u>	- Strenuous attempt of fitting-in
- Limited cultural competence	<u>Korean culture in everyday life</u>	- Trying to get over language barrier	- Doing well in school	- Socio-cultural & psychological pressure to be "Canadianized"	- Critical of Korean culture in a negative way
- Less participation in school activities	- Limited opportunities to experience Korean culture	- Strong desire to look and behave like white Canadians	- Keep in touch with the Korean youth culture by other new Korean students	- Lack of confidence in being Korean	<u>Conflicts with parents</u>
- Balkanized school environment	- Be informed of Korean culture by cousins, relatives, or Korean novels	<u>Drawn into Canadian culture</u>	<u>Social network</u>	- No help to deal with his confused situations	- Authoritarian dad
- Discriminatory treatment of teachers and principles for	<u>Conflicts with parents</u>	- Mystification of the Canadian life style	- Socializing Asian students, especially Chinese descent	- Lack of teachers' cultural sensitivity	- Hierarchical and patriarchal family structure
	- Late returning-home	- More experiencing the typical Canadian life	- More hanging out with new Korean immigrant and international students	- Embarrassment about his differences from other Canadians	- Lack of understanding of Korean culture
	- Slacked off study	- Dating a Caucasian	<u>Racism and Discrimination</u>	- Racist remarks from the ignorant white	- Overemphasized ideology of studying hard

Brian	David	Teresa	Jenny	Anthony	Lily
minority students - Unfamiliarity with the Canadian school system and rules - Truancy - Drop-out - Adjustment fatigue <u>Problems with parents</u> - Lack of communication - Lack of parents' understanding of his inner struggles and tensions - Involvement with drugs and other illicit behaviors <u>Strong attachment to Korean culture</u> - Exclusively socializing with Korean students - Creating "little Korea" inside him - Keep in touch with Korean pop culture	- Spending more time in social movements and activities - Differently expected parental models <u>Living in-between world</u> - Not completely belonging to either cultures - Being biculturally uprooted - Awareness of his cultural difference - Living up to the Korean culture as a secret garden - Fluently but accented English <u>Join the PEACE group</u> - Raising consciousness of racism and discrimination - Establishing intra-cultural friendship with ethnically and culturally diverse groups of people - Cultivating cultural sensitivity and intercultural	guy <u>Conflicts with the parents</u> - Late returning-home - Parents' prohibition of party, drinking, camping, sleep-overs, and dating - Loss of Korean culture - Parents' concern about her exclusive involvement in Canadian youth culture <u>Visit to Korea</u> - Volunteer work for the World Cup in Korea - Reunion with Korean friends - Re-connected to Korean culture - Experiencing diverse sub Korean cultures - Looking at Korean culture in a more positive way <u>Identity transformation</u> - Demystification of Canadian culture - Taking more pride in being Korean	- Consciously sensitive to visible and invisible discrimination toward non-native speakers - Racism among Korean students <u>Supportive parents</u> - Encouraging her to experience Canadian culture - Very supportive of whatever she wants to do - Constantly reminding her of Korean cultural values and etiquettes <u>Visit to Korea</u> - Reverse culture shock - Experiential gap with Korean friends in Korea - Awareness of her Canadian identity - Reconnected to Korean culture - Misfit in Korean life style <u>Identity transformation</u> - Realizing Canadian identity as part of herself	Canadians - Missing out on something from both cultures - Dissonance and ambivalence towards both cultures <u>Conflicts with parents</u> - Parents' pressure to keep Korean culture - Overly forced parents' opinion - Lack of communication - Experiential gaps - Different expectations - Lack of understanding each other - Overemphasis of study <u>Identity transformation</u> - From embarrassment to confidence in having Korean culture - Re-appropriating the Korean culture - Accepting his cultural difference - More willingness to learn Korean culture	- Lack of communication and interaction with parents <u>Life in university</u> - More comfortable with other Asian Canadians - Joining the Korean undergraduate students association - Disconnected from other 1.5 generation Korean students <u>Visit to Korea</u> - Attendance in Korean language school - Limited cultural competencies - Lack of Korean language - Limited opportunities to experience diverse Korean sub culture - Negative impressions of Korean culture <u>Identity transformation</u> - Awareness of her non-white status - Taking Korean

Brian	David	Teresa	Jenny	Anthony	Lily
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disengagement in Canadian culture <u>Job experience</u> - Close relationship with culturally diverse coworkers - More opportunities to practice English and learn Canadian culture <u>Reshape of identity</u> - Willingness to cultivate cultural sensitivity and open-mindedness - Re-imagining himself as a multicultural citizen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consciousness <u>Identity</u> <u>construction of Korean Canadian</u> - Understanding linguistic and cultural difference in a positive way - Embracing different cultural influences in creating own identity - Recognizing the potential learning experiences of cross-cultural living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More profoundly understanding parents' perspectives - Keeping in touch with Korean pop culture - Re-positioning herself as a "Canadianized Korean" - Appropriating both cultures in her identity construction - Gaining biculturality or multiculturality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blending in two cultures - Positioning herself in a multicultural context - Being appreciative of experiencing both cultures - Nourishing intercultural awareness - Capability of dealing with both cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and language - Gaining a deeper understanding of parents' perspectives - Being more comfortable with both cultures - Fostering a more flexible sense of identity - Embracing bicultural or multicultural background - Creating own identity from where he faces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> culture and language as economic capital - Acceptance of being Korean as part of herself - Appropriating both cultures in a positive way <u>Present issues in living as a Korean Canadian</u> - Glass ceiling - Interracial marriage issue with parents - Improving English up to a high class level - Lack of opportunities to experience Korean culture and speak Korean

In analyzing the data, I was aware that not all the stories of the participants followed the traditional narrative structure with a beginning, climax, and ending. In view of Riessman's distinction of narrative genres (1993),⁶ some parts of the interview data were not about events that really happened but events that they wanted to happen. Also, most data were topic-centered narratives concerning the specific experiences of cross-cultural living.

The participants did not tell the story of their lives in temporal order. Neither did they share their experience according to a unitary storyline and clear temporal markers. Because of the frequent shifting back and forth of storyline and time, it was problematic for me to directly extract and construct a narrative out of the interview data composed of disordered, fragmented, and unstructured pieces of experiences. Faced with this problem, I created a story by transposing episodes from the sequences in the telling and reassembling them into chronologically ordered series while looking through the data over and over. This process required the reconstruction of the order of stories from the telling.

Simultaneous with the data analysis was a concern for writing formats. I experimented with different discourses for each chapter to convey the dynamics and complexity of their lived experiences. The issues of representation and voice were considered as I struggled with narrative forms that would work for each story. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use the metaphor of a soup for narrative form: "Like a rich creamy soup filled with different chunks of ingredients, our narrative pots can be composed of different ways of describing and constructing stories" (p. 115). Inspired by this beautiful metaphor, I tried out different pots to construct different narrative texts. The narrative accounts I created in the following chapters will expose myself visibly and invisibly in diverse ways. Looking for alternative formats to create the narratives, I constantly asked how I put myself into the texts rather than silence and suppress my voices. It has been prevalent practice that a research text should be written almost as if there were no personal inquirer, no "I" in the process. Some

⁶ She categorizes three different narrative genres: "*habitual narratives* — which describes events that happen over and over and consequently there is no peak in the action, *hypothetical narratives* — which describes events that did not happen, and *topic-centered narratives* — which describes the snapshots of past events that are linked thematically." (p. 18)

would consider that it is wrong to inject the “I” of a researcher. However, I realized more and more that I could not ignore my presence in the whole process of data collection, analysis, and writing. I was attuned to Krieger who addresses that “when we discuss others, we are always talking about ourselves. Our images of ‘them’ are images of ‘us’” (1991, p. 5, cited in Denzin, 1994, p. 503). Thus I tried to show how I was involved in making the stories and searching for the meaning together with the young Korean Canadians, instead of pretending that I distanced myself out of the whole process of this study.

As a narrative inquirer, I attempted to situate myself not so much as an expert who was saying what things meant in terms of “data” but rather as a heartfelt listener who was opening up a sharing space to understand what these young Korean Canadians had undergone through cross-cultural living. My effort was made to bring forth the complexity and dynamism of identity construction that was not available to a totalizing explanation and grand narrative. While being engaged and embedded in the living stories of the young Korean Canadians, I tried to remain with the story with open-eyed wonder rather than to think about the story drawn. This emanates out of Frank’s (1995) suggestion:

The first lesson of thinking with stories is not to move on once the story has been heard, but to continue to live in the story, becoming in it, reflecting on who one is becoming, and gradually modifying the story. The problem is truly to listen to one’s own story, just as the problem is truly to listen to others’ stories. (p. 163)

I wanted to tell the stories of the young Korean Canadians in a way that would avoid dissolving the lived experience in impersonal concepts and abstract theoretical schemes.

Responding to issues surrounding reliability and validity in narrative inquiry

The prevailing concepts of reliability and validity rely on realist assumptions that are largely irrelevant to my understanding of narrative studies. Narrative should not be read as

an exact record of what happened nor is it a mirror of a reality “out there.” Indeed a story does not represent a separate objective reality because storytelling is necessarily selective and incomplete. When we tell our stories we have already selected some events to report and omitted others to project the images of ourselves as a certain kind of person. We also reframe stories to make them reasonably sensible and understandable. While embellishing a story, we are come upon something that bears further investigation, not the unambiguous reoccurrence of some phenomenon. Every story can be retold as a different version. As Schafer claims: “Each telling presents one possible version of the action in question. [Therefore] the idea of narrative [invokes] the inevitability of alternative description” (1992, xvi, cited in Riessman, 1993, p. 65). A story is a particular version of an analytic representation and interpretation of events which already happened in the past. Therefore, the narrative approach should be judged by different criteria other than the standardized notions of reliability and validity where judgment is based on an accurate representation of past experiences.

The main purpose of narrative inquiry is not to depict experiences exactly as they were lived. Neither is it to redeem or recover already constituted meanings before narrative telling. Its aim is to bring forward the ambiguous experiences we do not fully understand but somehow undeniably know, to search for language for obscure human lives however momentary and contingent they are, to extend the possible meaning and significance of those experiences, and to generate a vibrant narrative of which those experiences are an intimate part to which we belong. “It is not the ‘facts’ themselves that [we try] to redeem through narrative tellings. Rather, it is an articulation of the significance and meaning of one’s experiences” (Bochner, 2001, p.153). The significance and meaningfulness of a narrative account may be determined by the fact that it helps us get to communicate with other people and improve our understanding of human life.

Bochner (2001) explains that the narrative turn in the social sciences means something much more than the perspective of regarding stories as just another source of data. His idea resonates with my understanding of the issues around reliability and validity in narrative

inquiry. He considers narrative inquiry as a *turn away from* as well as a *turn toward*:

The narrative turn moves away from a singular, monolithic conception of social science toward a pluralism that promotes multiple forms of representation and research; away from facts and toward meanings; away from master narratives and toward local stories; away from idolizing categorical thought and abstracted theory and toward embracing the values of irony, emotionality, and activism; away from assuming the stance of the disinterested spectator and toward assuming the posture of feeling, embodied, and vulnerable observer; away from writing essays and toward telling stories. (pp.134-135)

In this sense, Lather's (1993) idea of validity enlightens an alternative way of approaching validity in narrative inquiry. Lather challenges the notion of "validity as correspondence" with a "validity of transgression." The key point of this perspective is whether research interrupts the existing way of knowing or corresponding to an external reality. She emphasizes the generation of "new locally determined norms of understanding," the proliferation of "open-ended and context-sensitive criteria," the supporting of "multiple openings, networks," the enactment of "practices of engagement and self-reflexivity," the embodiment of "situated, partial, and positioned, tentativeness," and the bringing of "ethics and epistemology together" (p. 685).

From my understanding of narrative inquiry, the judgment of narrative inquiry should be made by its capability to allow and encourage us to reach out to the in-depth and manifold understandings of multiple-layered human experiences which cannot be grasped through a grand narrative. The ultimate power of narrative inquiry is to enable us to dwell in-between spaces of each other, to let go of our limitations, and to extend our horizons. In this sense, the Personal Narrative Group (1989) echoes my position about narrative reliability and validity:

When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they are revealing truths. These truths

don't reveal the past "as it actually was," aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences. ... Unlike the reassuring Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them. Sometimes the truths we see in personal narratives jar us from our complacent security as interpreters "outside" the story and make us aware that our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation and shapes the meanings we derive from them. (p. 261)

Narrative validity may be said to "stand outside the hierarchical realm of facts" (Minh-ha, 1989b). The major focus of narrative is not so much concerned with being "factual" as being "truthful" as Minh-ha (1989b) asserts:

This is just a story. A story is a story. There was no need for clarification ... for there was no such thing as a blind acceptance of the story as literally true. Perhaps the story has become just a story when I have become adept at consuming truth as fact. Imagination is thus equated with falsification, ... (story) may be said to stand outside the hierarchical realm of facts. On the one hand, each society has its own politics of truth; on the other hand, being truthful is being in the in-between of all regimes of truth. (p. 121)

Taking all the above notions and perspectives together, I contend that narrative has something to do with evocative understanding and resonant interconnectedness rather than mere representation. The reliability and validity of narrative inquiry should be considered not in terms of whether it offers us effective theory with which we can explain and control the world; rather, whether it offers us the possibility of plausible insights which bring us to a more direct contact with human life.

CHAPTER 3

FROM PAN-KOREAN IDENTITY TO MULTICULTURAL IDENTITY: RECENT IMMIGRANT YOUNG ADULT'S STORY

I met Brian through a Korean friend. I interviewed him toward the end of collecting the data. Looking through the data, I had a feeling that the stories they represented seemed to be the so-called "typical successful Korean immigrant" stories. It dawned on me that I needed another person who underwent a different, more complex, or problematic assimilation in order to provide another perspective thereby enriching the portraiture of identity construction of Korean Canadians. After talking about the data, my Korean friend suggested that I talk with Brian. She told me that his story would depict another experience of a young adult Korean immigrant. Brian had gone through many difficult times due to maladjustment with living in Canada.

Prior to meeting Brian, I was a bit anxious about his willingness to disclose his experiences because young Korean men of his age group do not usually talk about themselves to recently introduced persons. I wondered about how much of his unpleasant experiences he would be willing to share with me. It was rather a surprise for me that my anxiety was uncalled for at the moment I started talking with him. I found Brian to be an open-minded person and a good storyteller. He not only shared his pleasant experiences but also spoke of his troubled adolescence, his disengagement from school, and his involvement with drugs and other illicit activities. He was a very polite young adult with a gentle soul.

He was a little bit late for our first meeting. He bowed down to me saying "*Ahn-Ryung-Ha-Se-Yeu*" which is a Korean greeting for seniors. He politely apologized for his lateness, demonstrating a Korean trait reflective of the traditional Korean culture. Every behavior he displayed adhered to the Korean etiquette. We conversed in the Korean language. His usual Korean intonation built a strong bond between us making it possible for me to better

understand him. Although translating was a great responsibility, I could detect the delicate nuances and subtle meanings implicit as well as explicit within his expression. Interviewing in my mother tongue was a distinctive experience that took our conversations to a very personal level.

Brian left an unforgettable episode for our last meeting. This meeting was scheduled on my birthday. Before leaving my place, I left a message in the voice mailbox of his cell phone. When he did not show up, I called him several times but no answer. I was so disappointed because I canceled a dinner appointment for my birthday in order to arrange for this last interview with him. I learned later that he was so sick that he could not even wake up. As much as he wanted to call me his cell phone battery was low. On top of that, he did not remember my phone number. So far, he is the first man who stood me up on my birthday.

This chapter juxtaposes two performances: one in Korean, the other in English. Our conversations were exclusively done in Korean. In trying to translate Korean into English, I became more aware of the impossibility of word-for-word translation and the ineffability of some expressions which entailed particular cultural contexts, the delicate nuances, particularly the Korean emotionality. For these reasons, I employ an alternative writing format of running parallel two performances in two columns. The left column displays my rewriting about Brian's story in English derived from listening to his experiences shared in Korean. In contrast, the right column unfolds the Korean version of Brian's story where I attempt to keep close to the original words of Brian although I am conscious that always there will be something left out of the transcription. The alignment of these two performances illuminates how I have rewritten and restored his story through my eyes. This narrative format shows how the same story is told differently by different people, in different languages, and within different cultural contexts.

Leaving Korea: A difficult adjustment

I came to Canada when Grade 10. I was placed in Grade 10. It was not easy to adapt myself to the new environment. The English skills I learned in Korea were not very useful. I could not understand what teachers said in class. And I could not express myself properly as well. My ESL class was not a great help for me to participate in school as well as improve my English. In the ESL class, I just learned some basic conversations, such as ordering in a restaurant, finding my way if lost, or asking for help.

Some subjects were offered only as regular courses. I attended the regular class for Math and Science. My teachers assumed that in the areas of Math and Science, Asian ESL students were excellent so that they could easily catch up with the white students. It so happened that I was a different kind of Asian. Even when I was in Korea, I was not a good student. I sat in that regular class staring into emptiness. It does not make sense to assume that I could understand in a class where only English was spoken.

한국에서 고등학교 1학년 중간까지 다니다가
캐나다로 이민 오게 됐어요, 그래서
10학년으로 다시 들어가게 됐죠, 처음부터
학교 생활에 적응이 안 되서 많이
힘들었어요, 한국에서 회화학원도 다니고
나름대로 준비했었는데, 막상 와서 보니까
선생님이 무슨 말 하는지 하나도 모르겠고
의사소통도 안 되고, 물론 처음에는 ESL에
있었지만 별로 크게 도움이 안 됐거든요,
그저 ESL에서 배우는 것은 간단한 생활
영어 수준이었으니까요, 식당에서 주문하는
거나, 길 잃어버렸을 때 어떻게 해야 하는지,
뭐 그런 기본적인 것들요,

ESL 학생이라도 ESL 수업만 듣는 것이
아니라, 수학이나 과학은 일반 수업에서
백인 애들하고 같이 들어요, 선생님들이
동양 애들은 일반적으로 수학이나 과학을 잘
하니까 영어가 안 되도 금방 따라잡을 수
있을 거라고 생각하지만, 저처럼 공부 안
하는 애는 예외죠, 한국에서도 공부하는 걸
별로 안 좋아했기 때문에 그렇게 기초가
튼튼한 편이 아니었거든요, 그런데 백인들
위주로 하는 일반 수업에서 이해를 못하는
것은 당연한 거죠, 그러다 보니까
수업시간에도 아무 생각 없이 가만히 앉아만
있는 거죠, 영어로 의사 소통도 잘 못 하는
애를 백인들이랑 같이 수업을 들으라고 하면
거기서 적응이 되겠어요? 말 자체가 안 되는
거죠,

Making friends was particularly hard in the process of my adaptation. My language problem did not allow me to be accepted by my peers, which made me feel alienated in school. In Korea, I was very outgoing and sociable so I had never been anxious about making friends. In Canada, my language problem hindered me from personally approaching the native English speakers. Peer groups that had already been tightly formed compounded my problems. It was definitely hard for a newcomer to get accepted into any group. My English-speaking classmates got frustrated with my inability to talk with them. They tried to talk to me several times. But when I did not respond properly, they just turned away saying, "Oh, never mind" and then stopped carrying on conversations with me. When I was in Korea, after school I spent time with my friends a lot. But I did not have a friend with whom I could share my thoughts and feelings.

I knew that I had to have a lot of practice in order to improve my oral English. Although my teachers were supportive, it was my personal responsibility and commitment to

처음에 학교 생활에서 제일 힘들었던 것이 영어가 안 되는 것도 있었지만, 친구 사귀는 문제였어요. 영어를 못 하니까 먼저 가서 말을 걸 수도 없고, 그렇다고 애들이 먼저 와서 저한테 말을 시키는 것도 아니고, 처음에는 학교에서 늘 저 혼자였어요. 원래는 제가 사교적인 편이라 한국에서는 친구가 많은 편이었는데, 여기서는 많이 외로웠죠. 영어를 못 하니까 먼저 가서 아는 척을 할 수 없고, 또 여기 애들은 애들대로 이미 지네들끼리 그룹이 지어져 있으니까 새로운 사람이 어느 그룹에 끼기도 쉽지 않았어요. 더구나 제가 영어를 못 하니까 백인 애들도 저랑 말 안 하려고 했거든요, 어차피 못 알아 들으니까 기피하고 안 마주치려는 거죠. 처음에는 몇 번 말을 시키다가도 제가 못 알아 들으니까 그냥 무시하고, 한국에서는 학교 끝나면 친구들하고 어울려서 같이 어디 놀러도 가고 했었는데, 여기서는 마음을 터 놓고 지낼 친구가 한명도 없었으니까 많이 외로웠죠.

힘들어도 자꾸 영어로 말하려고 노력했어야 한다는 것은 알았지만, 그게 쉽지 않더라고요. 선생님들은 잘 해주시는 편이었지만, 알아서 적극적으로 챙겨주지는 않았어요. 영어에 관한 문제는 전적으로 제 책임인 거죠. 제가 알아서 노력해야 할

practice English. I could have developed my English skills sooner had I paid attention by listening really carefully. But unfortunately, I did not take advantage of every opportunity to practice speaking. Being surrounded by foreigners was enough to stress me out. I felt that they did not seem to care about me and I suspected that my English-speaking classmates did not wish to speak to me. Our mutual disinterest prevented me from initiating any conversation with them.

My frustration in relating with my English-speaking classmates brought me closer to the other ESL students who were on the same level of English. While the English-speakers did not attempt to understand my broken English, the ESL students and I made some efforts to understand each other. The Chinese and Japanese were the easiest group to be friends because we share some cultural values and attitudes. However, our communication was rather on the superficial level. Our usual exchange was basically asking each other about our homework. Having a best friend required a sharing of deeper emotional

문제지 선생님이 그런 것까지 신경 써주지는 않아요. 제가 영어를 못해도 좀 들으려고 옆에서 기웃거리면서 “뭐라고?” 하고 자꾸 물었으면 영어가 더 늘었을 지도 모른다는 생각이 들긴 해요. 그때는 영어를 늘리기 위해서 적극적으로 노력해야겠다는 의지가 별로 없었죠. 당시는 말도 안 통하지, 아는 애들도 없지, 그것만으로도 힘들었으니까요, 백인 애들도 나한테 관심 없으니까 나도 특별히 백인 애들한테 가서 말 걸면서 친한 척 하고 싶지 않았고요, 서로가 무관심하니까 서로 할 말도 없죠.

결국은 비슷한 영어 수준을 가진 ESL 애들하고 가까워졌어요. ESL 학생들끼리는 아는 영어 단어나 문법 수준이 비슷하니까 서로 이해하기 쉽거든요, 백인 애들은 내가 완벽한 영어를 구사하지 않으면 못 알아듣지만, ESL 애들끼리는 완벽한 문장이 아니라도 서로 이해하거든요, 일단은 서로 이해하려는 의지가 있으니까 눈치로라도 이해하는 거죠, 특히 상대적으로 중국이나 일본 애들하고는 친해지기가 쉬웠어요, 왜냐하면 문화가 서로 비슷하니까 서로 이해가 잘 되죠, 그래도 ESL 애들하고는 깊이 있게 친해지는 데는 한계가 있어요, 사실 친구 사이라면 단순히 의사 소통만 하면 되는 것이 아니라 깊은 속 이야기도 하고 그래야 하잖아요, 그런데 ESL 애들끼리 하는 이야기는 단순히 숙제가 뭔지 물어보는 수준이거든요, 의사 소통은 되지만

stuff. But our inability to put emotions and feelings into English words was getting in the way for us to understand what it takes to have a friendly relationship. It was not easy to develop a close friendship with ESL students. At the time I deeply missed Korea and my friends back home. All the time my mind kept going back to my previous good life in Korea with many friends, which made me feel so lonely.

영어로 깊은 감정을 전달할 수는 없으니까
마음을 터놓을 정도로 친해지기는 쉽지
않죠, 그 당시에 한국에 있는 친구들 생각이
참 많이 났어요, 같이 보냈던 좋은 추억들이
생각날 때면 더 외롭게 느껴졌었죠.

Attachment to the Korean culture

Usually many students were uninterested in communicating outside of their own ethnic group. They tended to socialize among themselves. In the school cafeteria, there was a clear territorial demarcation of ethnicity such as the "Chinese table," the "Korean table," or the "Caucasian table." Students seemed to not want to get to know each other. This seating arrangement appeared as if English speakers were not interested in the ESL students and vice versa. The teachers did not take this seating arrangement seriously. Nobody noticed the ethnocentric grouping happening in the cafeteria.

일반적으로 애들이 자기네 민족끼리만
어울리는 경향이 있어요, 중국 애들은 중국
애들끼리, 백인 애들은 백인 애들끼리, 한국
애들은 한국 애들끼리 어울려요, 카페테리아
가면 각 민족끼리 앉는 테이블이 따로 정해져
있어요, 한국 사람들은 한국 사람들끼리만
앉고, 백인들은 백인들끼리만, 그리고 중국
애들은 중국 애들끼리만 앉아요, 서로
친해지려고 하지도 않고, 서로 안 끼워주는
분위기예요, 더구나 ESL 애들하고 백인
애들은 같은 학교에 다니고 있어도 서로
인사도 안 해요, 그런 문제에 대해서
선생님들은 거의 무관심이죠, 거의 터치하지
않거든요.

One day, while smoking I got to know one Korean student who recently came to Canada. I approached him first because he looked a Korean. Our acquaintance saved me from my total isolation in school. Since knowing him, I had started to build my network only with Koreans. There were about 30 Korean students of the 1.5 generation or recent immigrant in our group. We helped each other. 1.5 generation Korean Canadians who lived here for a quite while wanted to know more about Korean culture. They liked the Korean way of drinking, cruising, partying they never experienced here. Drinking, *norae-bang* parties (*Korean ka-ra-o-ke*), or going out with girls provided them with new and enjoyable experiences. In turn, this group of 1.5 generation Korean Canadians helped us in many ways to adapt to school life. They advised us when we met with a counselor and arranged timetables. Of course, there were several second generation Korean Canadians who did not want to socialize with us because they could not speak Korean well and lacked exposure to the Korean culture.

어느 날 밖에서 담배 피다가 우연히 비슷할 때 이민 온 한국 친구를 알게 됐어요, 한국 사람처럼 보이길래 제가 가서 먼저 아는 척 했죠, 그 친구랑 친해지면서 한국 사람들을 많이 알게 됐고 그러면서 저의 외로움은 끝났죠, 제가 다니던 학교에 한국 친구들끼리만 어울리는 애들이 30명 정도 있었어요, 그 속에는 새로 이민 온 친구들만 있는 것이 아니라 이민 온 지 오래된 1.5세대들도 많았어요, 그 친구들은 한국 사람들이 노는 스타일이 재미있으니까 우리랑 어울리려고 했어요, 개네들도 한국 사람들이기 때문에 아무리 오래 여기서 살았어도 한국 사람 특유의 노는 스타일을 좋아하는 거죠, 술집 가서 술 마시고 노래방 가고, 다운타운 나가서 여자도 꼬시고... 그런 것 때문에 이민 온 지 꽤 된 친구들은 한국 사람들처럼 어울리려고 해요, 갓 이민 온 친구들은 말이 안 통하니까 한국 사람들하고만 어울리는 거죠, 그리고 1.5세대들이 영어랑 한국말을 잘 하니까 도움이 되거든요, 예를 들어 카운셀러 만나서 스케줄 조절하는 것도 영어가 안 되서 힘든데 그 친구들이 어떻게 말하라고 도와주거든요, 처음에는 영어를 잘 못하니까 그 친구들처럼 한국말과 영어를 잘 하는 사람의 도움이 필요하잖아요, 한국 사람들이랑 어울리기 싫어하는 이세들도 있기는 해요, 개네들은 완전히 여기 생각을 가지고 있고, 한국 말도 잘 못 하고, 한국 문화에도 익숙하지 않으니까 한국 애들하고 어울리려고 하지 않죠,

Through "MIRS," one of the most popular internet chat systems, I met Korean friends outside of school. Many Korean Canadians living around the Vancouver area connected through this chat room — once a very popular and strong networking. Metrotown became the major socializing space for Korean Canadians using the chat room. Through the internet, we got together for bubble-tea or snacks. For example, a message in the computer would appear, *"Today is Young-Chel's birthday. Do you want to join us?"* Even if I did not know that person, I went so that I could meet many other Koreans. On weekends about 80 to 90 young Koreans gathered. This networking allowed me to intermingle only with Koreans more and more.

Adjusting in Canadian school

Living in a different culture forced me to learn a different culture. If one does not recognize the other culture one could be treated unfavorably. Let me share one episode about this. In my high school, one wretched white guy passed by and made fun of me. Although I could not exactly understand his English I sensed that he was making a fool of me. I was furious

제가 여기 왔을 때 "MIRS" 라는 채팅룸이 있었는데 그걸 통해서 밴쿠버 근처에 사는 한국 친구들을 많이 알게 됐죠. 거기에 밴쿠버에 있는 한국 사람들만 모이는 방이 있었어요. 밴쿠버, 써리, 버나비, 심지어는 리치몬드, 랭리에서까지 한국 사람들이 다 들어오는 거예요. 그러니까 이쪽 저쪽으로 한국 사람들을 많이 알게 됐죠. 그 당시 그것이 크게 유행이었어요. 서로 만나자 하면 매트로나타운으로 다 모여서 버블티도 마시고 그냥 빵 같은 것 사먹고 그랬어요. 예를 들어 오늘 누구 생일이라 만나기로 했는데 올래? 하면, 그 사람을 몰라도 같이 모여요. 주말에는 80-90명 정도 모이기도 했어요. 그런 식으로 한국 애들하고만 어울리기 시작했죠.

다른 문화 안에서 살게 되면 그 문화를 배워야 하는 것은 당연한 것 같아요. 그렇지 않으면 불이익을 당하게 되거든요. 처음에 학교에서 백인 애하고 싸워서 황당하게 문제가 된 적이 있었어요. 백인들이 웃긴 게, 시비를 잘 걸어요. 저희 학교에 깔렁깔렁한 친구가 하나 있었는데, 제가 영어를 못한다 싶으니까 저를 되게 우습게 보는 거예요. 어느 날 그 친구가 제 옆을 지나가면서 영어로

outraged. I slightly pushed him and asked, "What did you say?" He responded with the same wording. I felt he looked down on me, but I could not express my feelings in English as competently as I would in Korean. I could not attack him verbally, which made me lose my temper. My powerlessness triggered me to hit him. I asked him again "What did you say?" He left just saying, "Sorry." He seemed to be very surprised by my getting offended unexpectedly. He must have assumed that I would not say anything given my limited English.

The "hitting" incident resulted in my being called to the vice-principal's office. The guy I hit told the vice-principal about the incident. When I explained the situation, the principal, instead of dealing with the student making a fool of me, blamed me for using physical violence. In Korea, many high school boys got closer together after a fight. Fighting does not necessarily require punishment, unless it inflicted serious harm on others. Then, I did not know that Canadian policies were different. I observed white people just attacking each other verbally or just faking to hit the other. My ignorance of that policy led me to act in a way I was

뭐라고 했어요, 무슨 말을 했는지 정확히 이해는 못 했어도 저를 비웃는 욕을 했다는 것은 느낌상 저도 알았어요, 화는 나는데 말이 안 되니까 더 화가 나는 거예요, 답답하니까, 나도 모르게 한번 밀쳤어요, 그리고는 "What did you say?" 했더니 막 뭐라고 해요, 분명히 저보고 욕했거든요, 그래서 한 대 치니까 미안하다고 하고 그냥 가더라고요, 자기도 놀란 거죠, 제가 영어를 못하니까 아무 반응도 안 할 줄 알았는데 세게 반응하니까,

그런데 조금 있다가 교감 선생님이 부르더라고요, 교감 선생님한테 가서 고자질한 거예요, 그 애가 먼저 욕을 해서 나를 화나게 한 건데도, 교감 선생님은 계속 주먹으로 치고 그러면 어떻게 하나 아무리 화가 나도 말로 해야지 하면서 저만 나무라는 거예요, 한국에서는 애들끼리 싸우고 서로 화해하면서 더 친해지고 그러잖아요, 심각한 것이 아니면 그런 일로 선생님한테 일일이 고자질하지는 않잖아요, 백인 애들은 싸우는 일이 있어도 거의 주먹질은 안 해요, 그러니까 약간 밀치면서 싸우면 아주 심각한 상황인 거죠, 여기는 주먹으로 한대 치면 엄청나게 큰 문제인 거예요, 백인 애들이 싸우는 방식은 말로 며들면서 때릴 듯한 시늉만 하는 거죠, 저는 그걸 몰랐던 거예요 결국은 그 사건 때문에 정학까지 당했어요,

used to in Korea. That incident caused my suspension from school.

Skipping classes became an escape in dealing with my difficulty with adjusting to school. Other Korean students facing the same concern stayed away from classes and got together in the school cafeteria. I lazed around with them more and more. Sometimes we got out of the school campus and hung around the shopping malls. Had I skipped classes in Korea, I would have been punished. But here I was free from that kind of disciplinary action. None of the teachers cared about my absence in class. Because I was used to the more strict and authoritarian system of education, a sudden freedom provoked me to misbehave. I wished at the time for teachers to impose more regulations for truancy.

A year and a half later, I decided to drop out of school because of my inability to adapt to the school environment. Physical presence in school did not seem to mean anything to me — something that rather seemed frivolous and a waste of time. My parents urged me to at least graduate

영어가 안 되니까 말도 안 통하고, 수업 시간에 들어가도 무슨 말인지 모르니까, 점점 수업에 들어가기 싫어졌어요. 그래서 자주 수업 빼먹고 한국 친구들과하고 카페테리아에 앉아서 수다나 떨거나 아니면 그냥 백화점 같은 데 돌아 다니면서 시간 때우는 일이 점점 잦아졌어요. 여기서는 수업 빼먹어도 선생님들이 아무 말도 안 하니까 처음에는 되게 좋더라구요. 한국에서는 땡땡이 치면 당장 집으로 연락이 오거나 그 다음 날 선생님한테 혼나거나 그렇게 재제가 가해지니까 수업은 빼먹지 않게 되잖아요. 그런데 여기는 그 모든 책임이 다 저한테 맡겨져 있어요. 선생님들은 제가 수업에 몇 번 안 들어가도 크게 신경 쓰지 않거든요. 아무도 상관 안 하니까 들어가기 싫으면 맘대로 수업 빼먹고 딴 짓 하기가 일수였죠. 그때 선생님들이 좀 더 뭐라고 했으면 그래도 그렇게까지 많이 수업을 빼먹지는 않았을 텐데 싶어요.

1년 반 정도 지나고 학교를 관뒀어요. 정말 못 다니겠더라구요. 그냥 학교에 가서 멍청히 앉아만 있는 것은 시간 낭비라는 생각이 들었어요. 그래서 부모님께 학교 생활에 도저히 적응이 안 되서 못 다니겠으니까 일단 관두고 싶다니까, 처음에는 많이 반대하셨죠. 고등학교는 졸업을 해야지 무슨 소리냐고. 저는 그런 식으로 무의미하게 시간

from high school, but I never felt the need to finish high school. Although I went back to school, failed so many subjects, and eventually I had to repeatedly register in the same courses. I was more determined to find work and earn money, instead of meaninglessly carrying my school bag back and forth from home to school. I got two jobs at a Korean bakery and a Korean ka-ra-o-ke pub. Two years later, I regretted quitting school and decided to attend a small high school close to my home. For the first six months, I tried to study very hard, but it was not easy to get back to studying after dropping out of school for a little while. I cut classes again. Finally, the school kicked me out.

낭비하면서 억지로 학교 다니는 일이 정말 의미라고 생각했거든요. 그래도 다시 다니려고 해봤지만, 수업 빼먹어서 낙제하고, 그래서 했던 코스 또 해야 하고, 그런 식으로 가방만 들고 왔다 갔다 하면서 시간 낭비하느니 돈이라도 버는 게 나을 것 같아서 학교를 관렸어요. 그리고 한남 빵집이나 노래방 같은 데서 아르바이트 하면서 2년을 지냈어요. 그런데 또 그것도 아니라는 생각이 들더라고요. 다른 애들은 다 학교에 다니는데, 난 이 나이에 학교도 안 다니고 뭐하나 싶어서 학교를 다시 다니기로 마음 먹었죠. 근처에 있는 작은 하이 스쿨에 등록해서 처음 6개월 동안은 열심히 다녔는데, 공부를 안 한 공백이 너무 크니까 다시 공부를 시작한다는 게 쉽지 않더군요. 거기서 또 새로운 한국 친구들 만나서 노느라 수업을 너무 안 들어가서 학교에서 잘렸어요.

Conflicts with parents

Conflicts with my parents triggered my misconduct. My dad was so strict and authoritarian. He could not understand the youth culture which was popular among the young Koreans in Burnaby — the high school hip hop culture, wearing baggy clothing, hair dying, wearing a necklace. Our style originally came from a Korean singer, "*Hee-Jun Moon*" who was the most popular star in Korea. We modified the Korean star's style to suit the

학교에서 적응 못 하는 것 말고도 또 힘들었던 점은 부모님과과의 갈등이었어요. 저희 아버님 자체가 너무 보수적인 분이래 저랑 마찰이 많았어요. 그래서 제가 더 밖으로 나돈 것도 있어요. 그 당시에 한참 힙합 패션이 유행이었는데, 아버지는 그걸 이해 못하시는 거예요. 바지가 그게 뭐냐, 머리는 왜 그러고 다니냐 하면서 잔소리를 많이 하셨죠. 그때 한참 머리 물들이고 바지 끝로 목걸이 달고 하는 것이 유행이었거든요. 한국 가수 중에 문희준이라고 있는데, 개가 한국에 힙합

local Koreans in Canada. Indeed, Korean style has more variety than those of the Canadians. Our style had a unique and a more colorful look. Even the white guys told us, "*You look so cool.*" Hip-hop Korean style was such a big hit that the Chinese youth group copied us. Many Chinese got more interested in the Korean pop culture and entertainers. They listened to Korean pop music, read Korean magazines, and imitated Korean-style clothing to the extent that at that time our area was called "Korean Burnaby."

My dad took this kind of hip-hop style as delinquent. Probably he wished that I studied hard because he sacrificed his life for me to have a better future. But I had never forced him to sacrifice his life for me. Immigrating to Canada was not my decision; it was his decision. Whenever we bumped into each other we severely argued. I spent most of my time outside the house to avoid conflicts with him. However much I can understand his motives now, still we do not have a very harmonious relationship.

Unlike dad, my mom was more concerned for me. She dealt with me

패션을 유행시켰는데 여기에 있는 한국 애들도 그거 보고 따라 했거든요, 그 당시 코리언 캐네디언들 사이에서 유행한 패션이 캐네디언 스타일에 맞게 약간 변형된 한국식 패션이었어요, 한국 애들이 멋을 잘 내잖아요, 스타일도 멋있고, 일단 튀잖아요, 백인 애들도 우리 보고 "cool" 하다고 했어요, 한때 중국 애들도 한참 우리를 따라 했어요, 그래서 중국 애들도 한국 음악도 많이 듣고, 한국 잡지 보면서 한국 연예인들 패션을 따라 했거든요, 이 동네가 "Korean Burnaby" 라고 불릴 정도였어요.

저희 아버지는 공부 못 하는 껄렁한 애들이나 그러고 다니는 거라고 싫어하셨어요, 아버지 입장에서 저희들에게 좀 더 나은 환경을 조성해주려고 여기로 이민 왔으니까 제가 열심히 공부만 하기를 바라셨겠죠, 하지만 이리로 이민 온 것은 제 결정이 아니었어요, 제가 이민 가지고 한 적은 한번도 없어요, 그건 아버지의 결정이었다구요, 아버지랑 부딪히기만 하면 잔소리를 들어야 하니까 집에 들어오는 것도 싫어했죠, 지금은 그래도 그때보다 아버지 입장을 더 이해하지만 여전히 사이는 별로 좋지 않아요.

그래도 어머니하고는 비교적 사이가 괜찮은 편이에요, 제가 약을 한 이후로 어머니는

much better than my dad. She tried to understand me after my drug-induced destructive activities. But in some ways she also holds on to the stereotyped notions of the older Korean generation. For example, my mom does not want me to go dating. She always tells me, *"If you have time to date, why not spend time reading books?"* She considers dating as time-consuming to which I have a different perspective. I am sure that I can develop my understanding of other human beings through the dating experience and learn how to win the girl I could really love. Finding and approaching a girl needs some techniques. Books cannot provide me with that kind of wisdom, but more from actual living experiences. I never tell my mom about my girlfriends. Although a wider communication has developed between my parents and me, I never talk about what is happening in my life because I do not want to cause any troubles and conflicts with them.

Drug addiction

I resorted to the use of drugs at a time I was struggling to adjust. New adolescent Korean immigrants are vulnerable to

그래도 저를 좀 더 이해하려고 노력하세요, 그래도 역시 어머니도 구세대세요, 아버지보다 좀 편안하다 싶어서 제가 생각하는 것을 이야기하면, 그렇게 하면 안 된다고 그래요, 제가 생각하기에 그렇게 안 될 것도 없는 문제거든요, 예를 들어, 저희 어머니는 제가 여자 친구 사귀는 걸 별로 탐탐해하지 않으세요, 여자 너무 밝히지 말라고 하시거든요, "여자 만날 시간 있으면 그 시간에 책이라도 한 장 더 읽어라," 하시거든요, 그런데 제 생각은 달라요, 여자 친구 사귀는 것도 작은 대인 관계고 그 속에서 뭔가를 배우거든요, 나중에 정말 맘에 드는 여자를 만났을 때도 확실히 내 여자로 만들려면 여자도 만나봐야 하거든요, 저는 책 읽는 것보다 여자 친구 사귀는 게, 더 제 인생에 도움이 된다고 생각해요, 그런데 그런 이야기를 하면 자꾸 서로 부딪히니까 아예 말을 안 꺼내게 되죠, 여자 친구가 있어도 어머니한테는 말 안 하죠, 말씀 안 드리면 그냥 넘어 갈 문제인데 괜히 이야기해서 불화를 일으킬 필요 없잖아요, 지금은 예전에 비해서 어머니하고는 관계가 많이 좋아진 편인데도 이야기해서 문제 될 것 같은 것은 아예 말씀 안 드려요,

제가 한 때는 힘든 것을 마약에 의지했어요, 밴쿠버에서는 마약을 접하기 쉽잖아요,

drug use here. There are even "rave parties" where people dance while taking drugs such as ecstasy, heroin, and marijuana. We do not have access to drugs in Korea, but here in Canada we can buy drugs at a very cheap price. At first, I did not know how dangerous it could be. Out of curiosity I experimented with it, not knowing how much dangerous it would be later on. I took heroin with some Korean friends working in the same workplace. Chinese and Vietnamese dealers provided us with drugs any time we had the money. I gradually succumbed to addiction and spent what I earned on it. I could not eat well or did not have any appetite. Whenever I ate something I threw up. I lost 20 kg. I felt like I was a living dead person. There was so much mental as well as physical suffering in my life having gone beyond the initial enjoyment of experimenting on drugs. It was also a problem for me to quit since I experienced an intolerable ache all over my body with high fever soaking with sweat when I refrain from using drug. Several times I tried to quit, but I failed. I found myself in the muddle of uncertainty, helplessness, and uselessness. It was such a heavy blow to my life. "Have you ever been in a place

심지어는 rave parties라는 것도 있어요, 모여서 약을 먹고 하이퍼 상태에서 춤추는 거예요, 되게 기분이 좋아요, 여기 이민 온 청소년들한테 마약의 유혹은 정말 위험해요, 한국에서는 청소년들이 마약을 구하기 힘들지만 여기서는 상대적으로 쉽거든요, 저도 처음에는 그 위험성을 모르고, 단순한 호기심에서 시작했는데 저도 모르게 중독됐어요, 같이 일하는 데서 알게 된 친구들과 헤로인을 복용하기 시작했어요, 돈만 주면 중국 애들이나 베트남 애들을 통해서 쉽게 구할 수 있었거든요, 처음에 몇 번해 보니까 별 것 아닌 것 같아서 자주 하다가 보니까, 어느 순간 나도 모르는 사이에 이미 중독된 거예요, 중독되고는 남들은 상상도 못할 정도로 폐인처럼 생활했어요, 일해서 돈 벌면 약 사는데 다 쓰고, 거의 음식을 먹지도 못했을 뿐만 아니라 식욕도 전혀 없었어요, 먹어도 다 토하고, 그때 몸무게가 거의 20kg은 빠졌죠, 살아 있어도 숨만 쉬고 있는 거지 살아있는 게 아니었어요, 정신적으로나 육체적으로 고통스러웠죠, 그래서 끊어야겠다고 맘 먹었지만 그것도 쉽지가 않았어요, 한번 중독이 되니까 약을 안 하면 몸이 무지 아파요, 온몸이 불덩이 같고 식은땀으로 젖고, 얼마나 아픈 지 말로 다 설명할 수 없을 정도라니까요, 그러니까 끊으려고 마음 먹었다가도 몸이 너무 아프니까 하루 이틀 참다가 다시 하는 거죠, 정말 사람 미치는 거예요, 희망도 없고 살고 싶은 생각도 없고 정말 죽고만 싶었어요, 아무런 희망도 없이 그저 숨만 쉬고 있다는 게 어떤 건지 상상하기 힘들거예요,

where hope has vanished?"

Ultimately, my parents knew about this tragedy. Our conflicts grew deeper and worse. They blamed me without any attempt at understanding the difficulties and hardships I underwent in the process of adjusting to a new culture. They regretted migrating to Canada. They thought if we had stayed in Korea I would have never gone through this distressing experience. They were at a loss on what to do. Not having the knowledge and skills in dealing with the situation made the problem difficult to resolve. Moreover, they could not ask for help from Canadian institutions due to a language barrier.

One of our Korean neighbors introduced a doctor who was expert in drug-addicted patients. The doctor required me to stay in the hospital for a week. The doctor put me under a legal anesthetic and gradually decreased my intake. It took me almost a full year to completely quit. We were a group of ten friends using drugs together. Some of them were sent back to Korea where access to drugs was more limited. Those who stayed in Canada are still relying on drugs. Only

결국은 부모님도 아시게 됐고 처음에는 그것 때문에 부모님과도 사이가 더 멀어졌었죠, 처음에는 부모님들은 그 동안 제가 얼마나 힘들었는지는 이해하지 못하시고 저만 나무라셨거든요, 한국에 있으면 이런 일을 없었을 거라고 생각하셔서 이민 온 것을 많이 후회하셨어요, 한국에서는 마리화나만 해도 잡혀가는데 그것보다 더 심한 것을 했으니, 큰일 났다 하면서도 어떻게 해야 할 지 모르시니까 부모님도 당황하셨죠, 어떻게 대처해야 하는지에 대한 아무런 지식이 없으니까 걱정만 산더미 같았죠, 사실 여기는 마약 하는 사람들이 많으니까 그런 것을 상담해 주는 기관들이 많이 있지만 영어를 잘 못 하시니까 그런 데 의뢰할 수도 없었던 거죠,

그 때 마침 이웃에 살던 한국 사람이 마약 중독자들을 전문적으로 치료하는 전문의를 소개해줬어요, 처음에는 병원에 들어가서 일주일동안 갇혀 있기도 했어요, 의사의 처방 아래 강도가 약한 마약을 투여하면서 서서히 줄여나가는 식으로 끊었어요, 갑자기 끊으면 너무 몸에 무리가 가고 그러면 또 하게 되니까 조금씩 조금씩 강도를 줄여간 거죠, 병원에서 받아 먹는 약까지 완전히 끊는 데는 약 1년 정도 걸렸어요, 그때 같이 중독됐던 사람들이 10명 정도 있었는데, 몇 명은 끊으려고 한국에 갔어요, 한국에서는 구할 수 없으니까 끊을 수밖에 없잖아요, 나머지 사람들은 아직도 헤어나지 못하고 있죠, 결국 끊은 사람은 저하고

two of us, another friend and I, got out of this hellish situation. I really appreciated our Korean neighbors who prayed together and encouraged me to be better. Without their support, I could not have gotten out of that situation. That part of my life was a very significant experience that led me to reflect upon human life and myself. That tragedy also became a momentum for my parents and me to get closer to each other. I now have a more open communication with my mom.

다른 사람 한명밖에 없어요. 그 때 아는 분들이 많이 걱정해 주시고, 힘내라면서 토닥거리 주고 했던 것이 큰 힘이 됐어요. 제 스스로 꿈었다기보다 주위 사람들이 같이 기도하고 걱정해 준 덕분이죠, 만약에 주위에 아무도 없었으면 저 혼자서는 꿈꿀 수 없었을 것 같아요. 지금은 약 했던 것도 소중한 경험이었다고 생각해요. 제 자신에 대해서 많이 생각할 수 있었으니까요, 그 일로 인해서 오히려 지금은 부모님과 더 친해지고 서로를 좀 더 이해하게 된 것 같아요. 특히 어머니하고는 그 때 이후로 더 많이 가까워졌어요.

Work experience

When I almost quit drugs I started working in a Japanese restaurant operated by a Korean owner. I have worked there since I was 19 years old. The employer helped me get back to normal life in many ways. He shared many experiences he underwent throughout his life. He became my mentor and I felt more stabilized and more secure. My responsibility is to prepare sushi in the bar. I meet many people from diverse cultural backgrounds and practice English with native speakers because our major customers are white people. Asian food served by Asians is something

제가 거의 약을 끊어갈 때, 운 좋게 지금 일하고 있는 일본 식당에 들어가게 됐어요. 사장님이 한국 분이신데 참 좋은 분이세요. 제가 보기에 어쨌든 참 “난” 분이예요. 그 가게에서 19살 때부터 지금까지 일하고 있어요. 사장님이 제가 약을 끊는데 많이 배려도 해주시고 도움도 많이 주셨어요. 여러 가지 좋은 이야기도 많이 해주시고, 거기서 일하면서부터 정신 차린 거죠. 제가 하는 일은 수시바에서 직접 수시 만드는 거예요. 저희 가게는 애초에 한국 사람들을 타겟으로 한 것이 아니라, 백인들을 타겟으로 했기 때문에 거기서 일하면서 다양한 사람들도 많이 만나게 되고 영어로 말할 기회도 많아졌죠. 백인 손님들 눈에는 동양 음식이고 동양 사람이 만드니까 새롭게 느껴져서 저한테 이것저것 많이 물어봐요. 그러면

extraordinary for the white customers, so they have so many questions regarding the food. They often ask, *"What is it?"* or *"What it is made of?"* I naturally come to talk with native speakers. I am forced to look up words in the dictionary and observe how others explain things in order to prepare myself for explaining in English. I am more relieved from my anxiety about English and I am now able to speak English with much more confidence. As I become more acquainted with the native speaking customers, sometimes they invite me to their table when I am drinking beer by myself. I feel more comfortable and confident talking with native speakers now. When I go to the pub, I am more willing to speak to native speakers. Currently, I am getting used to taking over the conversation when Korean friends bring an English speaker to our gathering. Koreans do not talk to strangers but I develop the courage to do so. This is the story about my transformation.

At work I also have many opportunities to practice my English with my co-workers. My contacts extended to Canadian-born Chinese and Japanese and other nationalities who immigrated

설명을 해줘야 하니까 나름대로는 그것에 관련된 부분을 영어로 어떻게 표현하는지 공부하게 되잖아요, 다른 사람들 말하는 것 보고 배워서 그대로 설명하기도 하고, 사전을 찾아보기도 해요, 백인들하고 자주 영어로 말하다 보니까 영어에 대한 불안감도 줄어 들고 자신감이 생겼어요, 저희 가게 같은 경우는 단골손님이 많아서 손님들하고도 친하게 지내요, 제가 쉬는 날 앉아서 술 마시고 있으면 손님들이 저 보면 막 말 시키면서 맥주 한잔 같이 하자고 해요, 그런 식으로 자주 영어로 말하는 연습을 하다 보니까 영어가 많이 편안해지고 자신감도 생긴 것 같아요, 요즘은 가끔 팝에 같이 가면 거기서 처음 만난 백인들하고 이야기도 잘 해요, 한국 친구들이랑 같이 있을 때, 누군가 다른 외국 애를 데려오면 제가 앞장서서 먼저 영어를 하게 되요, 원래 한국 사람들은 처음 보는 사람들하고 말 잘 안 뿐만 아니라 영어로 말하는 걸 불편해 하잖아요, 저도 원래는 그랬는데, 일하면서 많이 변했어요,

같이 일하는 사람들하고도 영어로 말할 기회가 많아요, 같이 일하는 사람들 중에는 한국 사람만 있는 것이 아니라, 여기서 태어난 중국이나 일본 2세들, 이민 온지 7-8년 된 사람들도 많거든요, 다들 저보다 여기

to Canada 7-8 years ago. They speak English much better than me. Our acquaintance with each other represents a sealed relationship similar to that of a family. Oftentimes we hang around after work. I really enjoy our intimate talks and light jokes. My work place is really a supportive and friendly environment. Within this environment I am able to redeem myself from a painful past. The workplace has provided me a space to develop my self-confidence.

My ex-girlfriend, a Canada-born Japanese girl and I worked in the same restaurant. She enabled me to practice more my oral English skills. While we went dating, as much as we talked on the phone for almost three hours everyday. In spite of my limited vocabulary, I tried to express myself and to understand what she said as much as I could. She was very patient with my deficient English. If I did not understand something, she explained that very patiently. That was really a good oral practice. However, that did not necessarily mean that I had improved my vocabulary a lot nor mastered my grammar. Nevertheless, that facilitated my speaking English in a more natural

은 지 오래됐으니까 영어를 잘 하는 친구들이죠. 저희 가게는 일하는 분위기가 아주 가족적이에요. 일 끝나면 회식도 많이 하고, 일하면서 서로 농담도 자주 주고 받고, 서로 이런저런 이야기를 많이 하다 보니까 그 사람들하고는 말하는 것이 편해요. 그렇게 사람들하고 가깝게 지내면서 자주 영어로 말하다 보니까, 영어로 대화하는 것이 많이 편해졌어요. 거기서 일하면서부터는 과거의 악몽에서 벗어나서 사는 것처럼 살게 됐죠. 영어로 말하는 것도 그렇고 여러 가지로 자신감이 많이 생겼죠.

또 하나 중요한 계기는 가게에서 같이 일하던 일본 2세 여자 애하고 사귀면서 영어가 많이 늘었죠. 개가 한국 말을 못하니까 영어로밖에 의사 소통을 할 수 없잖아요. 그러니까 당연히 영어를 많이 쓰게 되잖아요. 그 게 정말 도움이 많이 됐어요. 일 끝나고 집에 가도 거의 3 시간씩 전화 통화를 했으니까요. 비록 제가 단어 수준은 짧았지만, 저 자신을 표현하려 했고, 그 애가 하는 말을 이해하려고 노력했죠. 좋아하니까 무슨 말을 하는지 알아 들어야 할 것 아니에요. 그 애도 제가 못 알아 들으면 다시 설명해줬고, 제 짧은 영어도 알아들으려고 했어요. 그렇게 이해하려고 노력하다 보니까 영어가 막 늘더라구요. 뭐 단어를 많이 알게 되거나 문법을 완벽하게 마스터해서가 아니라, 영어를 잘 하게 되었다는 것이 제가 아는 단어랑 문법 수준에서 좀 더 자연스럽게 표현할 수 있게 된 거죠. 영어로 말하는 것이 편안해지면서 외국 친구들하고 어울리는 데도

way. As my command of English gradually gets better and better, I am encouraged to become more confident in socializing with English-speaking people. Even after the break-up with my girlfriend, we have remained friends. I know it would be hard to understand from a Korean perspective, but it is a Canadian way of dealing with relationships. I like this kind of relationship.

더 자신감이 생겼어요, 지금은 그 친구랑 헤어졌지만, 서로 좋은 친구로 남았어요. 한국 사람 개념으로 생각하면, 어떻게 애인이 헤어진 후에 친구가 될 수 있냐고 하겠지만 가능하더라고요, 그게 캐네디언 식이죠, 어제까지 애인이었다가 오늘은 친구가 되는 것. 전 한국적인 것보다 그런 캐네디언 식이 더 편안하고 좋아요.

Navigating cultural differences

In school I could not mingle with the native English speakers. I always only socialized with Koreans. My cultural identity as a Korean was reflected very distinctly in my high school years. I never thought I had been 'Canadianized.' My school environment was not supportive and friendly enough to make me feel comfortable to talk with my classmates. It was not until I started working in an English-speaking environment that I got more and more accustomed to the Canadian culture. Recently I am intermingling more with Chinese and Japanese immigrants in my workplace. I now see that here is a really multicultural society, a place where some immigrants

처음 이민 와서 학교 다니는 동안에는 거의 캐네디언들이랑 어울려 본 적이 없었어요. 맨 날 한국 친구들과하고만 어울렸으니까, 그때는 당연히 제 문화적 정체성은 한국 문화가 지배적이었죠, 제가 캐나대로 이민 왔으니까 캐네디언화되어가고 있다고 생각해 본 적은 한번도 없어요, 학교는 제가 자연스럽게 배운 애들하고 영어로 말하면서 어울리고 영어를 늘릴 수 있는 우호적인 곳이 전혀 아니었거든요, 일하기 시작하면 영어로 말할 기회가 많아지고 캐네디언 문화도 실제로 경험하기 시작한 것 같아요, 이민 온 지 5년이 됐지만 저는 이제서야 캐네디언 문화를 경험하기 시작했고 조금씩 익숙해져 가고 있는 것 같아요, 지금 일하는 식당에서 중국 사람들이나 일본 사람들과하고도 함께 일하면서 어울리게 됐어요, 그러면서

from different cultures come to merge.

The need to learn about these diverse cultures became an urgent need in order for me to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds, although Korean culture is still strongly embedded in me. If I am not sensitive to cultural difference I will get into conflicts with other people. I had some experiences of conflicts and misunderstandings provoked by cultural differences. There is an episode. The manager of the restaurant I worked for was a Chinese from Hong Kong. I did not recall exactly the conflict I had with him. I remembered describing what happened between us to other Koreans who entirely agreed he was wrong. I discussed this conflict with the owner, my mentor. He responded differently. He said, "*Brian, what you said is your own interpretation. He might have a different interpretation. If he were Korean there would not be a problem. I am well aware that it is not easy to put yourself in his shoes. But don't judge him from a Korean perspective. Try to cultivate cultural sensitivity.*" His saying led me to realize that the problem was

캐나다가 다양한 문화에서 이민 온 이민자들로 이루어진 나라라는 것은 느끼기 시작했어요.

여기서는 다른 문화 사람들과 서로 어울리고 친해지려면 그 나라의 문화를 조금은 알아야 해요, 물론 여전히 한국 문화에 대한 비중이 크지만, 지금은 저도 다른 문화를 이해하려고 노력하고 있어요, 문화적 차이에 대한 이해가 없으면 다른 문화권 사람들과 같이 일할 때, 갈등이나 문제가 발생하기 쉽거든요, 지금은 정확히 무슨 일이었는지는 기억은 안 나지만, 저희 가게에 웨이트리스 매니저가 홍콩 사람인데 서로 문화가 달라서 힘들었던 적이 있었어요, 제가 생각하기에 그렇게 하면 일이 안 될 것 같았거든요, 그런데 그 사람이 계속 그렇게 하는 거예요, 그래서 같은 가게에 있던 한국 사람들한테 물어봤는데 모두들 그 사람이 잘못했다고 했어요, 한국 사람들이니까 저랑 생각이 비슷했던 거죠, 그래서 제가 사장님한테 상의 드렸는데, 사장님은 이렇게 말씀하시더라고요, "지금 그렇게 말하는 것은 영빈씨 생각이지만 저 사람은 다르게 생각할 수 있어요, 지금 영빈씨는 너무 자기 중심으로만 생각하고 있어요, 저 사람이 한국 사람이면 서로 부딪히지 않았겠지만 저 사람은 한국 사람이 아니에요, 영빈씨가 한국 사람 기준으로 판단하니까 그 사람이 이해가 안 되는 거죠, 물론 그 사람의 입장을 이해하는 것이 쉽지 않다는 것은 알지만, 한국 사람 기준으로 설불리 그 사람을 판단하지 말아요, 문화적 차이에 대한 감수성을

related to the cultural difference. Since then I have become more careful in responding to cultural differences and have learned how to navigate through these differences. My strategy is to be open-minded, avoid making any judgments, step back and listen to them, instead of holding on to my own opinion. I started having a better understanding of Chinese people through that experience.

가지고 상황을 보도록 하세요.” 그때 저는 문제가 문화적 차이에서 비롯되었다는 것을 깨달았어요, 그 후로는 문화적 차이에 대해서는 조심하게 됐죠, 사람들하고 부딪힐 때 좀 더 포용력을 갖고 내 생각이 맞다고 우기기보다 한 걸음 물러나서 그 사람 입장을 들으려고 하죠, 너무 한국식으로만 생각하지 않으려고 해요, 어쨌든 그 일을 계기로 중국 사람들에 대해서 더 이해하게 됐어요,

Becoming a “multicultural citizen”

Although I desire to learn more about the Canadian culture and to master speaking the English language, there still are some things in the Canadian culture that I do not like. For instance, I am disturbed by the obvious distinctions in their relationship for economic reasons. I have two customers who come to drink beer regularly. They tell me they have been best friends since their elementary school. It is so weird to me to watch them always pay separately. I do not know much about what friendship means in the Canadian culture, which might be very different from Korean culture. Koreans think best friends are people who provide for each other in non-calculating terms.

앞으로 여기서 살 거니까 백인들 문화도 좀 더 배우고 영어도 좀 더 잘했으면 하는 바람은 있지만, 백인들 문화를 전적으로 선호하지는 않아요. 예를 들면, 친구 사이에서도 백인들은 계산은 분명히 하는 것 같은데 저한테는 그런 게 별로 좋게 보이지 않아요, 저희 가게에 오는 단골 손님 중에, 어려서부터 친한 친구라면서 가끔씩 같이 술 마시러 오는 두 사람이 있어요, 서로 초등학교 때부터 친구라면서도 계산할 때 보면 각자 계산해 달라요, 제 눈에는 그게 너무 매정하게 보여요, 백인들이 생각하는 친구라는 개념이 어떤 건지는 모르겠지만, 한국 사람들이 생각하는 친구라는 개념만큼 가까운 것은 아닌 것 같아요, 한국 사람들한테는 친구 사이에서 자기가 먹은 것만 딱 따져서 계산하는 게 이상하잖아요, 같이 만나서 좋은 시간

Canadians usually equate their friendship on a fifty and fifty basis, which is a problem for me. In Korean culture, friendship means having a deep sense of emotional sharing and non-egalitarianism represented by "*Jeong*" in our Korean language. I cannot see any intimate tie in a Canadian friendship such as "*Jeong*." I still prefer the Korean type of friendship. I help my friends with their needs and whenever they need my support. If I do not have money, my friends will absolutely pay for me without expecting any return. There is no strict give and take rule to follow in our friendly relationships.

After my arrival in Canada, I have continuously kept my Korean culture. I am recently attempting to pick up many good things from different cultures. Having worked with people of different cultural backgrounds, I am learning different cultural values from the Chinese and Japanese, as well as the Caucasians. Every culture has both its worthiness and unworthiness. I am trying to move towards an ideal combination of different cultures. Living in a multicultural society means maintaining a balance between the varieties of cultures, not just being a monocultural person. I become better at

보내고 좋았는데 어떻게 돈 낼 때는 남남처럼 자기가 먹은 것만 딱 계산해서 낼 수 있는지 이해가 안 가요, 한국 사람들은 친구 사이에는 끈끈한 "정"이 있어야 한다고 생각하잖아요, 그게 있어야 진짜 친구고, 한국 문화에서 말하는 "정"이라는 것은 영어로는 번역이 안 되는 개념이라면서요, 내가 돈이 있으면 이번에는 내가 사고, 또 내가 돈이 없으면 친구가 살 수도 있고, 그런 것이 우리는 친구라고 생각하잖아요, 그런데 캐네디언 문화에서는 친구사이에서도 "기브 앤 테이크"가 확실한 것 같은데, 전 그런 게 맘에 안 들어요, 한 마디로 인정머리가 없잖아요,

처음 이민 와서는 완전히 한국적인 사고방식에만 젖어 있었는데, 요즘은 다양한 문화를 접하면서 각각의 문화에서 좋은 점들을 배우려고 해요, 다양한 문화 사람들과 함께 일하면서, 백인문화뿐만 아니라 중국문화나 일본문화도 배우고 있거든요, 모든 문화가 좋은 점과 나쁜 점을 다 동시에 가지고 있잖아요, 한국문화라고 다 좋은 것도 아니고 백인문화라고 다 좋은 것도 아니고, 저는 다른 문화들을 경험하면서 한국 문화에서 나쁜 점들은 버리고 다른 문화의 좋은 점들로 배우면서 제 문화를 만들어가려고 해요, 복합문화 속에서 살아가는 캐네디언으로서 한 문화에 치우치지 않고 다양한 문화들을 배우는 속에서 균형 있게 사는 법을 배우는 거죠, 다양한 문화를 경험하고 제 안에 좋은

balancing in navigating through different cultures. I think that is necessary in the process of becoming a multicultural citizen who respects the diversity of cultures while retaining one's own cultural heritage.

In spite of my exposure to the Canadian culture, I cannot totally distance myself from the Korean culture. I do not submit myself to the Canadian youth culture. I always prefer the Korean pop culture to the Canadians. I browse through Korean magazines, talk about Korean stars, and listen to Korean pop music. My friends download Korean soap operas, variety shows, movies from the internet, or we rent videotapes from the Korean stores. We can buy Korean magazines and best-selling novels at any Korean store in town. Keeping in touch with Korean stuff makes me feel emotionally connected to Korea beyond physical boundaries. Surely this feeling relieves me of anxiety over being out-of-date with the Korean youth group in Korea. I am missing out on what the Koreans in Korea are experiencing since I moved to Canada. I always feel that something is missing or something is lost in my life here in Canada. I come from Korea and I am a Korean. Therefore it is natural for me to crave about what is going on in

문화들을 심어가려고 해요, 그런 방향으로 나가는 것이 문화의 다양성을 존중하면서 자기 문화를 주장하는 복합문화 시민의 모습인 것 같아요,

제가 지금 아무리 캐네디언 문화에 익숙해지고 있어도 한국 문화에서 완전히 벗어날 수는 없다고 생각해요, 제 또래의 백인 애들 문화 속에 제가 속한다고 생각하지 않거든요, 예를 들면, 제 관심은 한국 대중문화지 제 또래의 백인 애들이 즐기는 대중 문화가 아니거든요, 아무리 여기에 살고 있어도 한국에서 진행 중인 드라마나 쇼 프로그램, 영화 등 한국에서 뜸다 하는 것들은 안 빼놓고 다 봐요, 제가 바빠서 못 보면 친구들이 인터넷에서 다운 받아 CD로 구워서 들려요, 그리고 한국 비디오 가게에 가면 다 구할 수 있거든요, 한국에서 유행하는 소셜책이나 잡지책같은 것도 다 한남 2층에 가면 살 수 있어요, 한국에서 현재 유행중인 대중문화를 접하면서, 아무리 이민 왔어도 한국과 폭 떨어져서 단절된 채 살아가는 것이 아니라 연결되어 있다는 느낌을 받아요, 그런 식으로라도 한국에 있는 제 또래의 다른 애들보다 시대에 뒤쳐져 있지 않다는 확신을 갖는 거죠, 캐나다에 살고 있으니까, 늘 제가 뭔가 한국에 있는 애들보다 뒤떨어져 있다는 느낌이 들거든요, 아무리 캐나다에 살고 있어도 한국 사람이니까 한국에서 유행하는 것에 특별히 관심이 가는 것은 당연하잖아요,

Korea, instead of just writing it off my mind.

I am very proud of being a Korean. I am proud of my Korean culture. I never think that Koreans are less worthy than Canadians. Although a better command of English and knowledge about the Canadian culture may make my life easier, I cannot just discard my Korean "roots." When I have my own children, I will not let them lose the Korean language and culture. I will religiously retain the Korean language, while continuing to perfect my English. In addition to maintaining the Korean language, I think learning a new language is a "bonus" that will lead to broaden my social networks and interactions. If I learn another language, I can interact with people speaking that language.

I am grateful to my parents for immigrating here. My experience with living overseas is responsible for my growth in maturity. I am aware that my language, cultural, and social limitations restrict my belonging to and coping with this society. The uncertainty and insecurity still makes me so anxious about the

제가 한국 사람이라는 것이 저는 자랑스러워요, 한국 문화에 대해서도 전 자긍심을 갖고 있어요, 한국 사람이 백인보다 못하다고 생각해 본 적은 한번도 없어요, 솔직히 영어를 잘 하면 여기서 살기에 여러 가지로 편안하니까 영어를 잘 했으면 하는 마음은 있지만, 한국을 잊어버리면 안 된다고 생각해요, 제 뿌리니까요, 전 나중에 자식을 낳아도 한국말과 문화를 잊어버리지 않도록 할 거예요, 학교에서 아무리 영어를 배워도 무조건 집에서는 한국말을 쓰게 할 거구요, 한국말을 할 줄 아는 것 이외에도 다른 나라 말을 할 수 있으면 다양한 문화 집단의 사람들과도 어울릴 수 있으니까 그만큼 대인 관계의 폭이 넓어질 수 있고 그런 것이 여서는 보너스가 되잖아요, 다른 나라 말을 배울 수 있으면 그렇게 하는 것도 좋을 것 같아요,

전 이리로 이민 온 부모님께 감사해요, 언어도 문화도 다른 나라에서 살면서, 제가 더 성숙하게 된 것 같아요, 물론 여기서 산다는 것이 언어적으로나 사회문화적으로 여러 가지 제약도 많고 미래도 불확실하니까 걱정도 배로 되죠, 의지할 곳도 마땅치 않으니까 모든 것을 제가 알아서 헤쳐나가야 하잖아요, 비빌 언덕이 없으니까 저 혼자 힘으로 여러 장벽을

future. I do not have many resources to depend on here in Canada where I have to live on my own. This situation pushes me to work through certain barriers, and to mature. Although I have not become the person my parents expected me to be, I am heartily thankful to them for giving me this opportunity to live in another world.

헤쳐가는 과정 속에서 제 자신이 많이
성숙해지고 있는 것 같아요. 제가 부모님이
바라시는 데로 되지는 않았지만, 제가
한국에서 벗어나 다른 세상에 와서 새로운
경험을 할 수 있도록 해주신 부모님께
진심으로 감사 드려요.

A reflecting moment

Most traditional research on the identity of culturally marginalized young adults emphasizes that the minority has a strong desire for assimilation into the dominant culture accompanied with shame about and rejection of their home culture when they arrive in a new country (Tse, 1999). However, Brian's story revealed that his identity construction had been more grounded in the Korean culture. Even after moving to Canada, he had never lost touch with the Korean youth culture and had been always connected to it in so many ways, simultaneous with his integration into the Canadian society. Korea was not just a nostalgic home to him as it had been to the past generation of Korean Canadians. Despite his several years of absence in Korea, his identity construction was deeply related to the Korean youth culture. Of course, to some extent, I suspect that the firm attachment to Korean culture was provoked by his difficulties of communicating in English and getting into the social network of the dominant society. Nevertheless, his strong attachment to the Korean culture sustained him through all the frustrations and insecurities of living in an English world, prevented him from falling into the trap of compulsive assimilation, and facilitated constructing a multicultural identity.

Brian's story portrayed a change from a monocultural and monolingual person towards one who became multicultural and bilingual. Within the initial three years in Canada, he created

“a little Korea” around him ignoring Canadian culture. Brian did not make any effort to fit into the Canadian society; instead he exclusively identified with Korean friends. His fear of being alienated was greater than his desire to practice English, and thus it caused him to remain isolated from his English-speaking friends. Even moving to a regular class provided him with less opportunity to speak English. Although native speakers physically surrounded him they had so little to do with him. His deep-seated insecurity about his English competence factored in the problem of making friends. As a result, he skipped classes, quit school, and finally was drawn into drug use. His story revealed the fact that his school did not play a major role in facilitating his integration in the school environment. He indicated how the school environment had Balkanized different cultural groups and violated the expectations of the integration of different cultures. For both in formal organization and informal socialization, students increasingly tended to stick to their own cultural group.

In contrast to the unfriendly school environment, his work provided him opportunities to speak English and to have contact with English speakers in spite of his linguistically and socially vulnerable position. Brian started to settle down through positive work experiences. In fact, he made a great deal of progress in his English. His story showed how his workplace offered him every chance to practice speaking English and to socialize with English-speaking people who made him very comfortable communicating in English. As a consequence, his work opened up greater possibilities for him for active social interactions with native speakers that he had not previously taken part in. As he felt more secure and confident in his self he came to overcome his past difficulties with a different perspective and reintroduce these experiences into his story in a more positive way.

He shared his inability to be completely assimilated into the Canadian culture. This means that his integration was only possible to a certain degree. He might not become a white “Canadian,” but he no longer felt marginalized. Rather, he was decisively selecting some aspects from both cultures based on the appropriateness to each situation he found himself in while he constantly modified his understanding of the Korean and Canadian cultures drawing on more complex and realistic images of both cultures. The critical and selective

investment in both cultures was his way of constructing a more balanced identity. His identity had been transformed from a polarization of two cultures towards a more balanced position. He really enjoyed the newly acquired bicultural or multicultural identity he never experienced in school. Brian's identity construction was different from the traditional theoretical perspective of the linear assimilation model which presumes that immigrants eventually abandon their own culture and assimilate into the host culture.

It is intriguing to learn of his integration vis-à-vis his strong ethnic attachment. He cultivated both integration and strong attachment to Korean culture. His integration did not necessarily mean giving up Korean culture or getting brainwashed. Any desire for "being white" did not surface in my conversations with him. Not once did he mention any desire to "look white" or "be white." He spoke more about his lack of proficiency in English as a hindrance to his integration. I could see him productively creating his own cultural identity while rectifying and converting both cultures to suit where he was at. Recently, he was more coming to terms with different cultures and enhancing his ability in deciding which part of the cultures to accept. He was coming to appreciate what Canada had offered him and was becoming more positive about his life.

Lastly, it would be interesting to see what kind of role Korean pop culture plays in the identity construction of young Korean Canadians. For Brian, constant contact with Korean culture diminished his anxiety about being distanced from Korea. His story depicted many young Korean Canadians with clothing and hairstyles of Korean pop stars. This reveals, in part, an impact that Korean popular culture has on the cultural identity of the young Korean immigrant generation. Recently, Korean pop culture has gradually permeated into other Asian Canadian groups such as the Chinese and Vietnamese. It does not have any significant impact on the mainstream in Canada, though. Nevertheless, for young Korean Canadians, Korean pop culture remains at a level of considerable connection to the Korean contemporary culture through visual recognition of a few stars and familiar faces without bringing together Korean cultural values and practices.

CHAPTER 4

THE (UN)HARMONIOUS STORIES OF TWO YOUNG KOREAN CANADIAN GIRLS

This chapter presents the stories of Teresa and Jenny whom I met in the Bible study group at a Korean church. Teresa showed much interest and willingness to share her experiences after I introduced myself and talked about my research. Her story revealed a dramatic shift of identity for the last two years. She attempted to describe her experience in detail as much as she could during the five interview sessions. Usually we spent almost two hours for each session, and she enjoyed telling her stories. I witnessed how she constructed and reconstructed the meaning of her past experiences in the present perspective.

At the time of the interview, Jenny was so busy that we only had three sessions lasting an average of an hour. She always played a contemporary Korean pop music when she drove me home. She reminded me of typical Korean girls of her age in Korea by the way she dressed and with the accessories she used. I learned that she either bought her clothes and accessories from Korea or her mom sent them to her. Somehow her appearance demonstrated a continuous connection to the Korean contemporary youth culture.

Teresa and Jenny moved to Canada when they were in junior high school. The stories of these two girls revealed how they began to re-assemble and re-evaluated experiences and feelings of ambiguity, tension, and difficulty in moving from adolescent years to adulthood. They had created and recreated their identity by maintaining certain Korean culture and eventually accepting certain Canadian culture. Teresa and Jenny hold a strong multicultural orientation and identity despite having taken different paths in the process of adapting to Canadian culture.

Coming to Canada first, Teresa assumed Canadian culture as glorifying and appealing. She

tried to have more contact with the white Canadians than the other Korean Canadians in this study. In her adolescence, Teresa persistently attempted to blend into the dominant Canadian culture as fast and as much as possible in the ways of dressing, in her language, and in her behavior. "Acting white" was a major theme that ran deep throughout her high school stories. Teresa severely had many struggles with her parents over her friendships with white Canadians. To her parents, this meant that she was losing her Korean cultural values. Her "acting and being white Canadian" were interlaced with her formation of the negative images of the Korean culture.

However, her visit to Korea became a significant moment in a shift of Teresa's identity from being exclusively a white Canadian to being appreciative of her Korean culture. It led her to reconnect with Korean culture and to observe critically the ways in which her Canadian peers subscribed to and practiced mainstream Canadian cultural values. Instead of continually identifying herself with the Canadian culture, Teresa began to form a strong Korean identity drawing upon Korean cultural values and practices. Her behavior of "acting and being white" gradually decreased as she accepted more Korean cultural values than Canadian's. She came to recapture the Korean cultural values she learned early while being critical about the mainstream Canadian cultural values. This process demystified the stereotyped and idealized images of both cultures from which Teresa developed, and enhanced her deeper understanding of both cultures. It also opened for her new ways of viewing both cultures which resulted in constructing and reconstructing her own cultural identity.

Jenny's identity shift is characterized by her moving away from a strong attachment to Korean culture to an affirmation of her being a Korean in Canada. She always tried not to forget being Korean; rather Jenny had more association with Korean Canadians or Korean international students who were of her age when they came to Canada. Her socializing network with those Korean friends who brought Korean contemporary youth culture with them provided the main source of her identity construction as a Korean, and thus this situation kept her from being totally alienated from the Korean culture. A community

emerged from this association that bonded her cultural identity with other Korean Canadians having experienced a similar upbringing process. Jenny and her Korean friends assumed that their experiences were something unique that could not be totally shared with either other Canadian students or Korean students in Korea. They shared what it meant to be a Korean living in Canada at this point in their lives.

Jenny neither gave special attention to fitting in the Canadian culture nor socialized with Canadians as she adapted to the new culture. One of the major reasons for her disinterest in engaging herself in the Canadian culture was partly because her stay in Canada was scheduled to be temporary. She did not feel the need to completely surrender to the Canadian culture because she thought she would go back to Korea after her graduation from high school. This awareness of impermanence kept her from entirely identifying with the new culture. Rather, Jenny was obsessed with the fact that she missed out on a significant part of the youth Korean culture because she had lived in Canada. She felt somewhat “deficient” as compared to the teenagers in Korea — an issue of concern for her. Therefore, she always tried to get updated on what was happening in Korea while in Canada. Yearly visits to Korea further encouraged her to retain the Korean cultural values and not to be too ‘Canadianized.’ This resulted in her adopting only what she perceived to be the desirable Canadian way of living instead of being completely absorbed into the Canadian culture. Her case rejects the traditional view that excessive exposure to ethnic culture would discourage immigrant students from learning English and from adapting to the new culture. Jenny’s attachment to and pride of being a Korean were positively correlated with her motivations to create a balanced cultural identity.

This chapter juxtaposes the narratives of two young Korean Canadians together to demonstrate their different experiences. I used each of their stories to elicit a bigger story on cross-cultural experiences. When I talked with Teresa I made better use of Jenny’s story, and vice versa. This process of using each other’s stories encouraged them to understand their own story in a different way. For example, when I shared Teresa’s experience to Jenny she demonstrated great empathy: “Yeah, that’s right. I had a similar experience and felt the

same way,” or “I didn’t think that way. I took a different turn.” Moreover, working through each other’s story allowed the emergence of a deeper and expansive meaning making, as well as a renewed understanding of each other’s cross-cultural experience. The writing format of interweaving their stories together illustrates this evocative process of how these two young Korean Canadians actively engaged in each other’s story.

Leaving Korea

Teresa

I had so much aspiration for the western life before I immigrated to Canada. One of my best favorite TV series entitled “*Saved by the Bell*” described the American high school life. This program was very popular among my age group in Korea. Regularly watching it made me long for the western life. In my fifth grade, I had the opportunity to practice my oral English with a native English-speaking teacher who made me order food in English when we went to a restaurant together. At the time I really wanted to visit English-speaking countries. That chance came when I visited my aunts and uncles in the United States. I had a quick stop over in Vancouver before going to New York, Los Angeles, and Boston. While on this trip, I looked around for universities. Since that time, my desire to live in North America increased and I constantly dreamed about a life described in “*Saved by the Bell*.” However, my total engagement in junior high school experiences in Korea diminished much of my strong aspirations for that life. My good performance in school made me very popular among several peer groups in Korea. Then I began to resent the thought of immigrating to Canada, especially when my mom talked about it. Nevertheless, here I am in Canada.

Jenny

I came to Canada as an international student. When I visited here as a Grade

6 student I was so impressed with Vancouver. The chance to really practice English in an English-speaking community was exciting. I had great moments when I could express myself and make native speakers understand me. It was so exciting to order food in English at a McDonald's restaurant. In particular, the difference between the systems in western high schools and Korean high schools heightened my interest to live here. My good impression of Vancouver triggered my decision to study here. My mom thought that it would be better for me to finish my schooling here considering the highly competitive Korean education system. She was worried that I could not endure the pressure of getting admitted to a good university in Korea. Personally, I came to Vancouver with curiosity and in wonder. I was expecting so much including an unfolding of my new life here.

First steps in a new land

Teresa

I did not have many expectations the first time I came to Vancouver. I arrived in May to go to a summer school. My mom, brother and I stayed downtown for two weeks before I moved into a home-stay situation in Langley. Although my uncle lived in Chilliwack he did not welcome us because he witnessed so many cases of Korean international students failing to adjust to the new culture that they ended up going home to Korea. In preparation to my coming to Canada, my mom came to Vancouver to look up some schools and assess the living environment. Since my mom was an English teacher she could communicate adequately in English, though not very fluently.

I vividly remember my disappointment over the living environment at my home-

stay in Langley. It was not even close to what I imagined — the beautiful scenery like a garden city described in *"Saved by the Bell."* Langley was in the remote countryside that looked totally different from the scenes in that TV series. I had an image of a residential area surrounded by big grass and covered with beautiful flowers and clean roads. That was the moment when my dream shattered. There was a stinky smell, no fresh air. It was indeed my first disappointment about the western life. During the drive to my home-stay, all I could see were fruit gardens, wide wilderness, a gas station, and several houses under construction. My home-stay family was a young couple whom I called "uncle" and "aunt". They were only 30 and 24 years old with a three-year old daughter and a two-year old son.

My brother's home-stay was much better than mine. The house was surrounded by green grass. The three children in the family were in the same school we attended — a daughter in Grade 8 and two sons in Grade 11 and Grade 12. My mom felt that it would be more helpful for us to live with native Canadians so she decided for us to be in home-stays. She lived for six months in a rented house close to my brother's home-stay. The three of us spent time together on weekends at my brother's home-stay which was only 20 minutes on foot from her rented place. She did not leave for Korea until she was assured that my brother and I had settled in.

Jenny

I panicked and got very nervous when I was left alone in my home-stay the first time. My home-stay aunt was a middle-aged woman who was not good at taking care of somebody. Most often she went out with her boyfriend and she just left skimmed milk and sugarless corn flakes for me. Later I learned that she was on a diet. My breakfast consisted of corn flakes with skimmed milk. I had lunch at the cafeteria in school. Watching the

television occupied most of my time at home since there was nobody around. Because I was home alone on my own, most of the time I started missing my parents so much. This resulted in phoning home so often each day that I paid five hundred dollars for my phone bill alone.

In comparison to the children of my father's friends, I had easily adapted well to my school life. I knew stories about some Korean international students who went to New Zealand to study English but did not adapt well. They went back to Korea after only a few months. Although I was missing my parents a lot, I had never said I wanted to go back to Korea. I started in Grade 8 in West Vancouver. Before the start of the term, I attended an orientation program for new international students. We were taken on a tour to some places around Vancouver. To facilitate socializing, we were grouped by fives. That tour was a good opportunity to experience the Canadian culture.

In the first term, I was placed in a regular class with Math, Art, Science, PE, and two extra ESL classes. When the school started, I was not frightened because I already experienced communicating with native speakers so I was sure I would get by with my English. However, once regular classes started I could not help but be embarrassed because I did not have enough vocabulary to express myself in everyday conversations. I was frozen each time any of my classmates asked me something. I could not say anything because I was so nervous. After trying to talk to me several times, they stopped talking to me, probably because I could not answer them back. At that time

I felt so stupid. Looking back, I regret those times for not trying to be friends with them. Then I was cocky and arrogant. This experience was the opposite of my school life in Korea where friends always surrounded me. Perhaps the reason why Canadian students were interested in me was because there were fewer Korean students in my school. They asked me some questions like "Where is Korea?" and "What kind of food do you eat?" Despite their curiosity and wanting to know about me, I felt so isolated. I was always alone for quite a long while after school. The language barrier factored in this situation. When I got home around 4:00 I did my homework within 1 or 2 hours. After which I had nothing more to do. It was in these moments when I felt so lonely — remembering my family and friends in Korea and missing them much more.

I socialized with other ESL students who happened to be in the same boat as me. In particular, Korean, Chinese or Japanese students were much easier to mingle together because we shared certain physical and cultural similarities. I felt very comfortable with them, which allowed a healthier relationship with them. My first group of friends came from Hong Kong. They welcomed me into their houses. We often went to the movies together. Later I had some Caucasian friends who were simply interested in me being different. All of sudden, the number of Korean students quickly increased in my school so I started hanging around with Koreans. In the process of frequently socializing solely with Korean students, I lost other friends from different cultural backgrounds, those from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan, as well as Canadians. Korean students in Canada tended to

exclusively group together thereby creating a feeling that Canadians seemed not to like them.

After a month, I decided to move out of my home-stay. My parents came here again to help me find another home-stay. My second home-stay aunt was so kind and very nice. She was 60 years old living with her daughter's friend and Susan who became my roommate. Susan was a Chinese girl who was a year older than I am. Even if my new aunt was a little bit strict she was like my grandmother. She always helped me with my homework. Every time I was depressed and frustrated, she gave me a big hug and cheered me up. I stayed in this home-stay until I entered university. To this day I am still keeping in touch with her, especially on her birthday, Mother's Day, and Christmas.

Regarding my studies, I struggled with Social Studies since I was not familiar with Canadian history, the country's social issues or political system. Math or Science was easy for me to understand. However, Social Studies needed a background in Canadian history and the mastery of new English terminologies. I was completely ignorant of the Canadian context as well as the terminologies. I always took with me an electronic English-Korean dictionary to help me look up new vocabulary. I got into the habit of looking up new words in a dictionary.

Additionally, the English phonetics that I learned in Korea sounded totally different from what I was hearing in class. I had one such experience when

we studied the painting of Michelangelo Buonarroti. I could not catch his name when a native English speaker mentioned it because of a different pronunciation. I wondered whether learning in Korea was useful, considering that I had to learn everything again and repeat some of my courses in Korea.

Writing an essay was another problem to deal with. I had never been taught how to write an essay in English. My home-stay aunt invested her time in assisting me to write my essays. We worked together after dinner from 8:00pm to 10:00pm. My home-stay aunt even encouraged me to speak English all the time, which was good in improving my oral English. She even suggested talking in English to my Korean friends. Because my home-stay aunt took care of me very well I did not feel very homesick, but still I missed my parents so much.

Teresa

Immediately after moving to a home-stay, I started a summer course for international students. Often my home-stay aunt picked me up from school very late. Many times I was alone waiting for her. Not having friends at the time, I just wandered around school. My brother was luckier than I. His home-stay aunt picked him up as soon as school was finished since their three children attended the same school.

Sometimes, my home-stay aunt usually took me grocery shopping after school. She took me to her parent's house, to the library and community center. It was good for me to experience a little Canadian culture. Going home late in the evening prevented me from feeling lonely. My home-stay aunt tried to provide me

with many opportunities to experience and live in a Canadian culture. On weekends I visited my brother's home-stay family and spent time with their children who were of my age. I considered myself lucky when I learned that other international Korean students hung out in the mall on weekends by themselves. I spent a lot of time with my brother's home-stay family.

All international and recent immigrant students took an English examination to determine their English level. I was assigned to be in an ESL class, which disappointed me. I expected to be with native speakers where I could practice my oral English. Unfortunately, most of my courses consisted of non-native speakers from India, Iran, and China. I could study with the native English speakers only in Physical Education and Art classes. I rarely had opportunities to practice English in my ESL classes. Students sat in groups — Chinese sat with Chinese, Koreans with Koreans, and other small ethnic groups were sat with themselves. ESL students hardly talked to each other. They did not intermingle with each other. They were completely compartmentalized and spoke in their own language with their own group in school. The teachers set up the rule of "Only English at school." Students speaking in a mother tongue got lower marks. There was an evident separation even among Koreans. The recent immigrant students were exclusively socializing with immigrant students from the other countries. Another group of Korean immigrant students born here in Canada mingled only with others who were born in Canada. The opportunity to practice English was indeed very limited for the recent Korean immigrant and international students.

Assimilation and acculturation

Teresa

Making friends during my first year was the most difficult issue. Canadian students neither approached me nor initiated any conversation. I strenuously

attempted speaking even with my 'broken' English. I copied the fashion and mimicked the behavior of the popular girls in school. They exclusively socialized among themselves. They sat together in the classroom and had lunch together. When I learned that they liked Asian products like stationery, colored pencils, and fancy dyestuff, I bought so many of these fancy things simply to draw their interest and get their attention. They got whatever they liked from any of my fancy stuff. In a way I was bribing them because I wanted to hang around with them with an expectation of my becoming white.

In the Physical Education class, two students were supposed to choose members for their teams. One student was from a popular group, the other from the not so popular group. I wished I were selected for the popular group. But, unfortunately both groups did not choose any of the ESL students. We were chosen only at the last moment, after all the white Canadians were on a team. I did my best to be noticed by the students in the popular group. My being good at sports helped me to belong to their team. However, we only communicated with each other during the games in PE. They never said "Hello" to me when they ran into me in the hallway. They never talked to me or even acknowledged my presence in the cafeteria. I tried very hard to get to be known by them, but they did not welcome me into their circle. My feeling alone confirmed my belonging to the minority. Inevitably, I decided to hang around with Korean or Chinese students in my ESL class.

A year later, I transferred to the regular class. Being there increased my wanting to make friends with the popular Canadian girls. For me, having the popular girls for my friends signified my becoming a normal Canadian. I really wanted to be like them. Jennifer, one of the popular girls in my class, was the first person who made me feel welcome. She happened to sit next to me. Whenever we met in the hallways, she always said "Hello Teresa." She was so funny, sometimes silly. She liked my fancy stationery so much that I gave her whatever she liked. We became

close to each other.

I aspired so much to become friends with Canadians to the extent of doing my best to draw their attention as much as I could. I tried to be active in a PE class in order to be around Caucasian girls. Later on Canadian students told me that the way for ESL students to befriend them was to actively participate in class. Usually most ESL students did not participate in the PE class. They just sat in the corner and talked among themselves. ESL students seemed not to care about Canadians. Some of my Canadian friends complained about the passivity of ESL students to explain why they excluded them. The passivity caused their being ostracized. Remembering those days, I realize that my strong desire for the friendship exclusively with white Canadians was such a childish and silly idea.

Here is a funny but embarrassing story when I was in Grade 10. My school had a big gym and another smaller gym with only one changing room for girls. We shared the same block with the Grade 8 girls so the changing room was very crowded. It really caused a lot of inconvenience so we tended to change in the washroom. For four months I followed the popular girls to the washroom. All that time they did not notice that I was there. They did not even say "Hi" to me. While in the changing room they always talked to themselves and never to me, although we were in the same soccer and basketball teams. I always changed in the corner with them listening to their conversations, but I was invisible to them. They talked about what they did on weekends. I knew everything they did — attending parties, going bowling, they did this and that. I got to know these "cool" girls and their close friends. From those little conversations, they started to notice me.

The popular girls always used deodorant after our gym activity. I got a Calvin Klein deodorant that nobody else had at the time. My mom gave that to me from Korea. I always carried it in my bag. One day in the washroom somebody said, "Oh that smell is so nice." All of them tried my deodorant on. I lent them the deodorant

and sometimes I lent extra shirts and socks. One of them offered, "Hey, if you want you can put your stuff in my locker." I started to share a locker with them after that incident. That changed things between us. I got close to them.

I shared this story to my best friend Mayan, one of the popular girls, when we became best friends. She told me that they never noticed that I was following them to the washroom to change for four months. She did not even remember what happened in the changing room. For them, that was an ordinary thing. She was just doing something that everybody did, but for me it was something special and significant because that started my belonging to her group.

Mayan was the first person to ask me to go bowling, "Hey Teresa, do you want to go bowling with us on Friday?" I ended up getting an opportunity to be friends with them. It took me a year and a half to be friends with them. Still, the other girls did not care about me. Kale, Mayan's best friend, befriended me. One day, she invited me for a sleep over at her house. I was all prepared for the sleep over. Unfortunately, Kale did not come to school that day. I did not know what I was supposed to do. My home-stay family already left so I was very worried. It was Mayan who rescued me. When she saw me outside she offered to walk me to Kale's house. On our way we talked about a lot of things. I talked about Korea, my friends, my impression of Canada, and many others. I felt that got us closer and better friends.

After the sleep over, I went home the next morning while they went out together again. At the time my home-stay family moved to White Rock. Residing in White Rock made it impossible for me to join them very often. The girls frequently talked to each other on the phone. My difficulty with English prevented me from having conversations with them by phone. I always turned on the answering machine even if I was at home because I was so embarrassed each time I talked on the phone. It was enough for me to hang out with them outside of the school.

At the time I had a crush on one of their friends. Although they asked me to tell him, I was nervous because I did not speak very good English. Speaking with native speakers always got me in trouble.

Despite having dinner and spending time with them, I still felt left out. All I did was listen, but I gradually felt more comfortable with them. Nevertheless, I still preferred not to eat in the cafeteria because they were always together by the back table. There were only five out of 30 people I know in the cafeteria. Once I courageously went to the cafeteria to have lunch and I shared my friends' table. They continued talking among themselves as if I was not there. I wanted to further develop a friendship that was just starting. But I was not able to go out with them all the time because my parents did not allow me to sleep over very often.

Mayan held parties a lot in her pretty house with a huge backyard. She invited me to her birthday party. During that party, I was left out because I felt that some people actually did not like me. Some guys said "Hi" to me and recognized me. They made fun of my Korean name because of the sound, but I did not care about it. On one hand, I liked it because that was just one way of making friends. When they made fun of my name and I felt noticed. At another party, I really got drunk. As I lay on the bench I heard someone said, "Oh, Teresa is sick." That sounded like they noticed me. It felt good to have people know that I was there. They were always talking about that night. "Yah, she was so sick," "She got so drunk," and "She did ..." I was not bothered at all by these comments because I got really close to them and became a better friend with them.

Initially, I always tried to do everything Canadians did to be accepted. But there were something I did not really want to do, like girls and boys sleeping over together in one room or sharing a tent. I knew it was absolutely impossible for this to happen in Korea. As an elementary student, I could sleep in the same

room with boys. But in high school, girls were not allowed to share rooms with boys in the Korean cultural context. I would not feel comfortable doing that. I thought Canadian culture was very different. Another episode when I felt so left out was in a swimming party in the summer. I was undecided because I did not really have much experience with swimming parties and I did not know how to swim. Canadians learn to swim at an early age. Most of my Canadian friends were really good swimmers. They went up to the booth and jumped in the pool. I never felt comfortable doing what they did. However strong I wanted to get involved in all these activities, I was emotionally unprepared.

As soon as I started building close friendships with them, I had to go back to Korea for two and half months. I could not be with them in the summer time even if I wanted to spend more time to get close to them. I was anxious whether they would remember me when I came back the following school year. When I came back, I brought so many presents for them. I got pencils, pencil case, waterproof notes, erasers, and many others. Since I had not hung out with them for the long summer, I felt awkward when I came back. They did not talk to me until after I gave them the presents I brought from Korea. They loved my presents. We renewed our friendship.

A year later, my parents immigrated to Vancouver. We moved to a new house very close to Kale's. It took two seconds to run to her house. Our being neighbors strengthened our friendship and with her other friends. Kale and Mayan became my best friends. We are still friends and keep in touch with each other.

Jenny

Although I struggled with English I performed very well in Math. My classmates complimented me for my being good at it, which gave me self-confidence. Getting higher marks always gave me happiness. The freedom I

enjoyed to choose classes I was interested in and to speak my mind in class added to my satisfaction. Compared to the Korean educational system, the Canadian system allowed much more self-governance to students. I really liked that. The most significant learning for me in Canada was being more independent. At home, my mom always did everything for me. Coming here I had to do everything for myself. Finding myself in this situation made me more independent and self-confident.

One thing that bothered me though was the arrival of the weekends. Sometimes I was envious of my Canadian friends spending time together with their parents. Korean international students without families here in Canada usually went downtown to get Korean food. As I continued to hang around with Korean friends, I started being more interested in Korean pop culture, current Korean music or movies. In Grade 8 and Grade 9, I never knew Korean pop culture. The Korean international students coming in my school introduced me to Korean pop culture. They borrowed Korean CDs and talked about them. When I shared Korean music with my Canadian friends they found it funny. I spent more time with Korean friends who shared a similar background with me. Gradually, most of my close friends became Koreans. If I needed somebody to talk about my problems and struggles I always turned to my Korean friends. It was not because of my language barrier but because of what we had in common. I started socializing more frequently with Korean students in Grade 11. They came over to my home-stay; we talked on the phone for a long time at night.

Never have I imagined having a Caucasian boyfriend although some Korean female students preferred to date a Caucasian guy. When I thought about dating a Caucasian guy, a certain discomfort and awkwardness emerged. I was surprised that I was feeling this way considering some kind of illusions about Caucasian guys I had before I came. I thought Caucasian guys were handsome, kind, and in a good manner. From my experience living here I was disappointed. Now I realize that Asian guys like Koreans or Hong-Kong Chinese looked more "cool" to me. The Caucasian guy looked cute, but I considered him just as a friend, somebody with whom I sometimes hung out with on the weekends. One of my concerns about dating a Caucasian guy originated from a stereotyped notion that Caucasian guys probably wanted to enjoy dating in a more liberated way which would not be acceptable in the Korean culture. This cultural difference scared me. My first boyfriend was a Korean guy who came here the same time as I did. We knew which behavior was allowed or not allowed for our age. Dating a Korean was more comfortable because we shared implicit cultural values.

There were only three Korean students in my school in my first year. I was close to one of them, as well as with my other Hong Kong, Chinese, and Canadian friends. We stayed as friends until Grade 9. When I got to Grade 8, most of my friends were Canadians. I did not have any new Canadian friends since then. Many Canadian students in my school came from wealthy families. They stereotyped Korea as a developing small country as presented through the media. It was terribly devastating for me. I tried to

show a different Korea from the one they had seen on TV. I was forced to brag about being rich in Korea in order to socialize with them.

Canadians tended to make fun of ESL students because they could not understand English very well. Although they never commented on our physical differences, we felt discriminated. Some of them frankly asked me, "Why are Asians unable to speak English?" I was so upset that I answered back, "Why can't you speak Korean? Can you imagine how much difficult it is for us to live with a language barrier?" They finally said, "But, anyway, you are living in Canada now, so you have to speak English." Since they had never experienced living in a different language and culture, they could not understand the struggles of non-native speakers. They assumed that it was not upsetting to make fools of people who did not have a good command of English. They simply expected us to speak English since we were in Canada.

I think that racism was strong in my school. One day my Korean friends and I spoke Korean in the bus. Some Grade 5 Canadian students sat behind us. They mimicked Korean sounds and said, "They must be unable to speak English. Their language sounds stupid and silly..." I was so mad that I told them, "I can understand English" They just froze, then one said to me, "We were not talking about you. We were talking about your friends." I answered back, "They can also speak English." They apologized by saying, "We were just playing." I advised them not to make fools of non-native speakers. I said, "Don't make fun of Asians. They can understand

English." Several times I experienced this discriminating situation. From these terrible experiences, we began to take a hostile attitude towards Canadians. They considered Canadians to be racist because they saw non-native speakers as inferior and stupid.

Male Canadian students did not make fun of male Koreans who looked physically strong although they could not speak English fluently. There were two Korean male students in my school. One was in good shape physically, and the other was small. Both of them could not speak English well. One day, the small Korean student made a mistake in a soccer game during PE and his team lost. One of members on his team blamed him and attacked him verbally and physically. When he grabbed his neck, the other Korean student came and said, "He is my friend. Everybody can make a mistake, but you are too mean to him." The Canadian guy did not say anything back to this tall Korean guy. After that incident, none of the Canadian guys made fun of these two Korean students. On the contrary, among female students, physical appearance was much more important. For me, the giving of that fancy stationery was a good means of drawing their attention. During my vacation in Korea, I always bought a variety of fancy stationery to give to Canadian female students. They liked it so much. Through my presents I was accepted.

Reconnecting to both cultures

Teresa

Within the first few years of migrating to Canada, I really wanted to be a part of its culture. I attempted so hard to make friends with Canadians. There was a shift after high school when I was branded 'not being Korean anymore.' I stopped socializing with a lot of my Canadian friends. When I went to the college in Langley I had a couple of high school friends in my college, but I only socialized with them in school, never outside of school. We saw each other in the library and studied together. No plans were ever made for after school. Most of the time I hung out with my ex-boyfriend or I worked at the mall. I did not try hard to be their friends any more. I did not care whether I did not have Canadians for my friends. I was not interested in them any more.

After I decided not to be friends with Canadians I started talking with my Korean friends in Korea on the Internet. I was not on the computer as much when I used to spend time with Canadian friends. I did not think about my Korean friends at home. The moment I got started on the Internet, I was touched by the Korean culture more and experienced it more often by talking with my Korean friends. I knew that when I first came here I was obviously going to miss Korea and my friends. The more I spent time with my Canadian friends, my interest in Korean culture decreased. At some point I did not care about what was going on in Korea because I much more strongly wanted to be a part of Canadian society. My brother's case was so different from mine. He was drawn into Korean culture even though he had many Canadian and Chinese friends. He always knew what Korean songs were new and what trends were popular in Korea. He was always listening to Korean music and had more Korean friends, too. I was watching some Korean movies with him and his Korean friends. It made me get to know Korean stuff although I did not intend to find out. Through him my feelings about

being 'Canadian' gradually changed.

The critical turning point of my transformation occurred when I was supposed to go to Korea to work as a volunteer for the World Cup in the beginning of May in 2002. Four or five months before leaving, I wanted to know about what was going on in Korea to avoid being left out when I went there for the World Cup. I wanted to be part of Korean culture because I was a Korean and I assumed that Koreans were going to expect me to act like authentic Koreans. I was still hanging out with my Canadian boyfriend and Kale, but at the same time I started talking to my Korean friends very often through e-mails. I became more interested in Korean pop culture including music and other entertainment. The Internet provided me access to Korean pop culture such as Korean music, drama, and reality shows. Also, creating communities on virtual space was very active at the time. Through this virtual community I communicated with other Koreans. We posted our pictures and wrote about our hobbies, favorite music, and journals. Each time I wanted to hear some news about Korea I surfed the Internet.

Any Korean who went to Korea during the World Cup season probably became so proud of being Korean. I learned something about my Korean culture. I was never proud of my country before the World Cup and I did not really care about Korean culture or my being a Korean. However, when I worked as a volunteer I took a strong pride in Korea. That visit also provided me the opportunity to meet all of my Korean friends again. It was fun and enlightening to share each other's experiences. When I was in Canada I never wanted to go back to Korea. But, while I hung out with my old Korean friends I felt I wanted to come home more often and learn more about Korea.

I have a lot to thank my dad for that experience because he suggested to me to volunteer for the World Cup. I realized that my dad always wanted the best for me. Now I can more understand his perspective and I have a lot of respect for him

although we often got into a big fight over cultural differences. My visit to Korea helped me to realize what it meant to be a Korean and to know that my parents would always be for my good. Presently, I am more willing to do anything that my parents tell me. I know that I have not changed myself fully but I am trying to be a good daughter to them.

Jenny

During the first three years of my high school in Vancouver, I visited my parents in Korea twice a year. Since Grade 11, I went home only once a year. I had always reminded myself that I was a Korean. I did not understand why I did it although there was no reason to forget it. I tried to catch up with all the new Korean pop songs, music, and movies. I wanted to know both the Korean and Canadian cultures so that I could keep a balance between them. It seemed to be more worthy that I was able to speak English, and at the same time speak Korean perfectly. I came to Canada when I was young and I did not have any problems with the English language. Nevertheless, I still feel more comfortable relating with Koreans than Canadians.

There were so many Korean students who came to my school in Grade 11. Teachers required me to help the new Korean student so Korean students were always around me. After I started getting to know more Korean friends I naturally stopped socializing with Canadian friends. It was not easy to intermingle Korean friends with Canadian friends because of the cultural differences and the language barrier. They felt uncomfortable with each other. It was difficult to find commonalities between the two groups.

For example, when Canadian friends shared jokes, my Korean friends were unable to understand for the lack of cultural knowledge as well as their insufficient vocabulary. Koreans only talked about Korea and Canadian friends only talked about Canada. There was a communication gap. Koreans and Canadians wanted to do different things during leisure time. Korean immigrant students who come from wealthy families usually spend a lot of money. Korean parents usually provide financial support to their children until they finish the university. Canadian students spend money sparingly. Canadian students have to find a job in the summer time to finance their studies.

A spinning growth as Korean Canadian

Teresa

When people leave one place and move somewhere to a totally different environment people change a lot. If I lived by myself completely isolated from the Korean culture and socialized only with Canadian friends, I would behave differently now. Because I have lived with my parents who always guide me, I do not totally lose the Korean culture. My parents have been a significant factor for me to keep the Korean culture. I think my maintaining the Korean culture, despite embracing some of the Canadian practices, has a lot to do with living with my parents who live the Korean culture. I am introduced to some Korean practices that I personally think are more appropriate to me even if I am in Canada. For example, I believe I have to be loyal to and respectful of my parents. I feel bad when I see Canadian children behave disrespectfully to their parents. Our Korean language has two different uses: one for the elders and the other for the young. I realized that English does not have that linguistic characteristic. I heard that

some second generation Korean Canadians do not know this distinction. But I want to make this obvious because when I go back to Korea I do not want Koreans to think that I am a white person and not Korean any more. The possibility of going back to Korea requires that I keep my Korean culture. I think that if I do not retain my culture I will have a hard time adjusting when I visit Korea.

I am aware that I have lost some of the Korean culture since I have lived here for a long time. But, at the same time I get more used to the different cultures like Chinese and Vietnamese through relationships with friends from these different cultures. I still want to learn about other cultures. I think I create my cultural identity from where I am. Recently, I am more often hanging out with Koreans, Chinese, or other Asians because there are so many Asians around. In my neighborhood in Richmond and even at work there are more Chinese than white people. When I hang out with them I feel a stronger bonding because we look similar physically and we share similar cultural values. At the same time I do not have any problem spending time with white Canadians though. I assume that if I were solely surrounded with white Canadians and hang out with them, I would definitely become a different person. I distance myself from some part of Canadian culture now because my parents do not allow me to go to clubs, drink a lot, or live with a boyfriend before marriage. I do not really care much about fitting into the Canadian culture any more as much as I used to. Right now, I would not exclusively want to immerse myself into Canadian culture. It is a blessing that I know both cultures very well. Whether I am hanging out with white people or Korean people I would feel comfortable and be able to be more flexible. Personally, both cultures co-exist within myself. I have no preference for either one.

There is a saying that when people live in another country for a while they try to learn the new culture. But when they get older they want to return to their home

culture. I think that is true. In high school for five years, I hung out with all white Canadians and tried hard to experience their culture. After high school, I started getting more interested in the Korean culture. I meet many new Korean immigrant students who want to experience the Canadian culture. I am sure that once they experience it, change will happen.

All of us, as immigrants, try to live within the Canadian culture. We try to accept almost everything we observe, which sometimes provokes us to live within two conflicting cultures. I would like to suggest to recent immigrant Korean students to select what aspects of the new culture to embrace, instead of accepting everything of the new culture. They might not be aware that something of the Canadian culture is not applicable to the Korean culture. There will always be a conflict. Living in two cultures is not going to be smooth. A barrier between these two cultures may exist. Canadian students should also understand the Korean culture if they want to be friends with Korean students. Unless Canadians and Koreans understand both cultures, there will always be problems with their relationships. For Korean high school students, it is very difficult to develop a balanced cultural identity when they are not yet mature enough to critically look at both cultures. The first time I came to Canada, it was necessary to know the new culture strategically. It took me several years to intensively learn and experience the new culture, but in the end it slowly faded. Canadian culture was not as I thought it would be. Looking back right now, I realize that in spite of my strenuous attempt to be assimilated, I was holding on to Korean culture without my knowing it.

Jenny

People always brand me as half Korean and half Canadian. Canadians do not look at me as a full Canadian. They see me as an Asian because I am socializing more with Koreans and speaking Korean. But even if I was born

here in Canada and could not speak Korean at all, Canadians still would not see me as a true Canadian. I know that I will never be considered as a full Canadian because of my Asian physical features and the different culture.

When I go to Korea, Koreans think of me as a westernized Korean, which means that I am not a pure Korean. Koreans would consider me as half-Korean and Canadians see me as 100% Korean. I am a foreigner in Korea, and I am a Korean in Canada. I am so confused of who I am really. I disliked this ambiguous position in my high school. I could not situate myself — Am I a Canadian or a Korean? My cultural identity is neither wholly Korean nor wholly Canadian. But I came to appreciate more possibilities I have earned by living in both cultures. As I become more comfortable with both cultures I take my living in-between cultures as a privilege and an advantage. Of course, sometimes I feel something missing inside me. For example, in the English literature class at university I strongly feel a lack of social, cultural, and historical backgrounds to understand western literature. Then I feel left behind in contemporary Korean youth culture because I have been away from Korea for a long time. But, right now I learn to value more of what I have gained rather than what I have lost by living in a different culture.

If I were to define my cultural identity, I would say that I am 75% Korean because I have been taught Korean cultural etiquette and values and have an opportunity to practice them whenever I visit Korea each year. My

parents always remind me to behave properly in a Korean cultural context, and correct me if I do something wrong. I still have so much Korean culture inside me. At the same time, I am getting more used to the Canadian culture since I have already been here for eight years. Despite socializing with Korean friends and speaking Korean more frequently, I have unconsciously adapted more to the Canadian culture. Each time I visited Korea I felt that I did not belong there any more. I felt that my elementary school friends and I were not spiritually connected. Certainly, I was glad to see them. However, being with them for three days, I lost my enthusiasm to the point of feeling uncomfortable when we were together. Somehow there were experiential and spiritual gaps. I found it very difficult to bridge our gaps — my friends who stayed in Korea and myself who experienced living in another culture. Finally, I spent more time with Korean Canadian friends I met in Canada. We share similar experiences as students in Vancouver. These experiences connect us in some ways. Although I am fluent in the Korean language, there is something that I cannot share with 'pure' Koreans.

I think my experiences of identity construction take a different turn from the second generation Korean Canadians. The difference I could think of between the other second generation Korean Canadians and me lies in my having a strong Korean identity before immigrating to Canada. In case of second generation Korean Canadians, as they have matured they begin to understand their parents, recognize what they have been through, and strenuously attempt to seek their roots. But I already let those things go.

My focus is presently more on becoming bicultural or multicultural and bilingual rather than just being monocultural and monolingual. I do not want to be a Korean Canadian who is an only Korean physically but mentally Canadian. I want to adapt to Canadian culture with a pride for being a Korean maintaining my Korean cultural background.

When I first came here as an international student, I was just supposed to study here only for six years until I gained proficiency in the English language and be prepared to go to a university in Korea. Simultaneous with learning English and the Canadian culture, I often reminded myself that I was a Korean who would be going back. I always assumed that I would be going back to Korea when I finished high school. The purpose of my coming to Canada was just to learn English. Korea was always my home in my mind although I enjoyed learning the new culture and language and meeting new friends here. I never thought that I would live here forever. I never felt a need to be fully Canadian and be ignorant of the Korean culture. I always thought that I needed to learn more about my culture rather than the Canadian culture. Throughout my high school I had lots of Canadian friends, but never strongly desired to be westernized. I have totally tried to hold on to my Korean background. Now I am an immigrant and have gotten more westernized. I begin to question myself, "Why should I only be committed to the Korean culture?" "Why should I be only a Korean?" I have lived here for seven years and been exposed to the Canadian way of life as well. When it comes down to the shift in my identity, I can say that I have shifted from being an authentic Korean to

being more comfortable with having both identities — I am a Korean and a Canadian.

Teresa

Presently, I am respectful of both cultures although I do not like some of practices in the Korean culture. There are also some practices that I do not like in the Canadian culture. Thus, from both cultures there is some that I like and I do not like although I cannot specifically tell what they are. I do not want to lose both cultures. I am always looking for a job in a Canadian company or even American company because I want to keep some Canadian practices I like. While working in a Canadian company I will meet many people from different cultures as well as Canadians. There might be Chinese, Vietnamese, or different ethnic groups. Lots of them have been here for longer than I have. Most of them might have even been born here and they are very "Canadianized." If I am just surrounded by Koreans I will lose the Canadian cultural characteristics I have developed. But I want to continue doing what I used to do and to learn more about the Canadian culture. I am trying not to lose my Korean culture, and at the same time I am also trying not to lose the Canadian culture. I want to select the good practices from both cultures. It will lead me to be proud as a Canadian, as a Korean, and a Korean Canadian.

I am Canadianized, but I have Korean characteristics. People may remark, "Oh, she is a Canadian but she has a Korean background." I would say *"I am Canadianized, but I am not Canadian because I have a lot of Korean characteristics that do not fit in with the Canadian culture."* Someone will probably say that I am neither Korean nor Canadian because I have characteristics from both cultures. Rather, I would refer to myself as a Korean Canadian, a definition that includes my becoming a Canadian. When it comes down to my cultural identity, I do not want to refer to it as a complete one. Instead,

I want to emphasize the process of shaping my identity. My Canadian friends always say that I am very Canadianized. But I am not 100% Canadian. I do not think I can be 100% Canadian because of my Korean background. I do not want to lose my culture. I still want to keep the Korean culture inside me, but at the same time be a Canadian. I do not want to think that I am neither Canadian nor Korean because it means I have no nationality, no culture. It sounds that I am nothing. But "Canadianized" means that I am someone else. I am becoming a Canadian having Korean characteristics as a cultural background. Therefore, I am a Canadian with a Korean background.

I think 1.5 generation Korean Canadians like me differ from the second generation who have already lost the Korean culture. The second generation Korean Canadians who are either born here or came here at a very early age are too Canadianized. They do not know about the Korean culture. They have totally lost touch with the Korean culture. They do not even speak Korean. They prefer to only socialize with Canadian friends and they are not willing to learn about the Korean culture and language any more. They cannot have both cultures. They only have one. But, as a 1.5 generation Korean Canadian, I have both the Korean and Canadian cultures. I am so proud of that.

CHAPTER 5

THE STORY OF RE-SEARCHING KOREAN CANADIAN IDENTITY

I first met David in February 2002 when he came to UBC to present with other members of his social activism group named "PEACE (People Educating Accept Celebrating Everyone)." He was in high school at the time and one of my colleagues, their teacher, organized the presentation. The PEACE group was created by students and operated as student-centered activism. The presentation was about bullying, discrimination, and racism occurring everyday in school. The first time I saw David I was certain he was Korean, but I did not have a chance to meet with him after the presentation. I was able to speak with his teacher about my interest in interviewing him. He gave me David's e-mail address. My attempts to contact him through email became fruitful after one month. It was quite surprising to learn that he rarely used the Internet given that his contemporaries spent most of their time surfing the Internet.

It was almost a year later that I was ready to interview him. When I tried to get back to him through e-mail there was difficulty in contacting him to arrange our meeting. His email bounced back. Again, I spoke to his teacher who facilitated getting his parents' consent for me since David was under 18 at the time. I was able to talk with his dad who was very supportive and expressed his interest in my research. During that phone call his dad shared with me his fear of David losing the Korean culture and language. Finally, David and I met almost a year after his presentation.

David willingly agreed to be interviewed and suggested to use either Korean or English, or both. His bilingual and bicultural ability gave me a wonderful chance to experience the cross-cultural and cross-lingual research process. During our first meeting I explained the research topic and talked about my own experiences of living in-between cultures. He

chose to talk in Korean when I asked about his life in Korea, his parents, relatives, and Korean friends; and the first stage of his adjustment in Canada. He switched to English when he talked about his present life, schooling, Canadian friends, and engagement in diverse group activities. He expressed his personal and deep emotions in Korean; his analytic and logical thoughts and perspectives were offered in English.

This chapter is an intertwining collage of David's stories, my stories, and our collaborative reflections. Unlike teenagers in Korea who generally focused only on preparing for the entrance examination to the university, David was more interested and engaged in political and social issues. We talked a lot about issues around racism, discrimination, bullying, as well as cultural differences. Together we reexamined Korean and Canadian cultures through different lenses. His stories of adjustment and integration resonated a lot with my own experiences. When I shared my own experiences of cross-cultural living, he expressed deep sympathy with what I had gone through, and then shared similar stories of his cousin, his sister, and his own. In this chapter, I occasionally intersperse applicable theories and emergent reflections based upon my interpretations emanating from my conversations with David. This narrative format shows how David's story enters my story and how in turn my academic and subjective voices become integrated with those stories. I deliberately choose to write in this way for two reasons: first, to demonstrate how my reflexive self is engaged in writing the story of a young Korean Canadian; and second, to inform the reader how I place myself in both the inquiring and writing processes.

Learning a new culture and language

David

My dad was a journalist in Korea. He immigrated to Canada because he got sick of corrupt practices in the publishing company he worked for. His awareness of these practices did not work in his favor. He resigned when he was assigned to tasks he did not want. My mom, who was initially interested in living abroad and

experiencing a new life, persistently encouraged my dad to immigrate to Canada. I think my parents did not necessarily come to Canada for the same reasons as typical recent Korean immigrants have done.

During our trip to Vancouver I was so sick on a flight because of a terrible cold. My uncle met my family at the airport. His house was only a half-hour drive from the airport, but it took two hours to arrive at his place because on the way to his house, he showed us around and, despite my being sick, we looked at houses for rent. When we arrived at his place I went to bed immediately. I was so sick and exhausted. When he came into the room he thought I was crying over my friends and other cousins in Korea. At first I was not feeling sad but after his question I suddenly became sad. As a matter of fact, I was totally out of focus at the moment. My parents immediately found a new house, bought a car, and registered in an ESL class at the Douglas College. Everything was moving so fast. My mind was somewhere else. I felt so confused.

Minjeong

Very often people would ask me, "How do you like Vancouver?" My usual reply was, "This is a great city with a fabulously beautiful natural scenery. Most Canadians are so kind and nice. I like Vancouver very much." Publicly, I said that Vancouver was the most beautiful city in the world, but deep in my heart I did not love this spectacular foreign place which did not belong to me because I did not belong to it. Even if the sun was shining, this place looked gloomy to me. I struggled with the everyday reality of alienation and strangeness compounded by my Asian face and accented English. My sense of loss, frustration and disconnection cracked my illusion towards Canada and Canadians.

David

I repeated Grade five here after already finishing that grade in Korea. My parents thought that going back to the same grade would give me more time to adapt myself to the new environment. The first school I attended in Coquitlam was a very small school. There were only four Koreans including myself. Everything was strange and unfamiliar. Although I was curious about and interested in the new life in a new school, my life was completely out of focus. I had very limited English and had no idea of Canadian school life. Six months later, I went to a middle school where there were many Korean immigrant students. The school provided an ESL class for immigrants. I took ESL class for English and Social Studies, and I was in regular class for Physical Education, Math, and Art. Because I could not speak English fluently I only socialized with Korean students.

It was indeed difficult to mingle with native speaking students. My strategy to make friends was to do my best in sports. Playing basketball, rugby, and baseball provided me with a chance to socialize with Canadians. I got close to them and spent time together in sports. In Korea I was popular among students for being eloquent and expressive. The language barrier turned me into a shy and less expressive person, which made me always feel depressed and lonely.

Minjeong

I could empathize with David's emotional loneliness and psychological estrangement. I remembered how much I hated break times in the first term when Canadian students talked with each other about their routines, research topics, or TV programs. I could not join in their conversation. I silently stood next to them listening to the beating of my heart and feeling my loneliness. I

felt as if I was invisible like a ghost whose presence no one cared about. Nobody could imagine what I was feeling at the time. Such a poor worthless being!

I had nightmares where I found myself abandoned in the middle of a deep ocean and nobody cared about me shouting for help. Always I woke up with a prolonged scream, and suddenly realized what it would be like to be marooned in a moor. Fear was stronger than anything I had ever felt. This primal scream of my birth into a new world filled me with a kind of negative feeling. The fragments of fear anchored tightly into my unconscious and forcibly intruded into my psyche. Some ignorant Canadian might say, "It will go away as you become more used to the Canadian culture." They could not understand what it would be like to live in a disconnection and alienation from one's home.

David

One memorable incident that stayed in my mind was about fighting with a wretched white guy. He cursed when we bumped against each other lightly, and I nearly attacked him. Looking back, at that vulnerable time I overreacted and felt that it was the only way to express myself defiantly and defensively. As I could not communicate with language I spontaneously acted physically.

I also had a big fight when I was in Grade 6. My mom learned about it from my teacher who called her, but she never referred to that fight until a couple of years later. When we were driving somewhere, she told me about fighting with my classmates. It was the first time that I spoke to my parents about my emotions and the struggles I was going through at the time. The issue just popped up. I found it much easier to talk about it because I got over it at the

time.

In my earlier school days, I always overacted for every tiny thing when some students made fun of me. I was oversensitive over trivial affairs and got so easily depressed. I regret that I did not deal with the situation the way a grown-up person would. Others did not seriously take my rebellious action. I was also not sure whether they would have stopped had I not responded. Keeping my silence would surely make me look stupid. At the time I had no idea how to react in an appropriate way.

I met a great teacher with a warm heart in Grade 6 although I did not have any friends. She understood my struggles to adapt to a new country. She was an old Indo Canadian with a British accent who went through similar experiences as an immigrant. One day she noticed that I was looking pale and unwell. When I said that I was not sleeping well and was very worried, she listened to me. Her listening to me helped me relieve some of my anxiety and unease. The unfamiliar and new environment caused my sense of depression and disturbance. I felt I was wasting my time and not doing anything productive. My life seemed meaningless and worthless. These negative feelings led me to feel left behind other students. That was a really frustrating and depressing situation.

Minjeong

My difficulties with fitting into this new world constantly evoked unfamiliar feelings in me. I felt like a “golden-fish” temporarily existing in an artificial bowl. I wanted to be accepted as a normal person as any other native English-speakers; and I was sick of feeling fearful and paranoid while pushing myself to fit in a new environment in order to be safe and comfortable. Vulnerability in front of unfamiliarity and abnormality was not what I wanted. My inner

struggles were embellished with embarrassment, unhappiness, and unknowing. What was I supposed to do? Was I supposed to publicly declare and insist my presence and existence? Or was I simply and quietly supposed to put on a mask of being a Canadian?

David

Eleven months later we moved to White Rock when my parents got a small convenience store there. Very few Koreans lived in our neighborhood. I attended a very small school with only 10 students in one classroom. I was the only one who could not speak English well. The sad part of it was there was no ESL class for new immigrants. Worse still, my new school did not offer me an opportunity to make friends as I was determined to do. Circles of friends were already firmly established, which made it more difficult for a newcomer to belong. Most of the students went to the same elementary school, and they had been friends since childhood.

I tried to socialize with both Korean and white Canadian friends. Hanging out with Korean friends was very enjoyable because we shared common interests. All the while I tried to play with white Canadians who did not seem to care much about my broken English. Some were curious about me because I was the only Asian. I invited some of them over to my house and I also went to their house. They took some interest in strange and exotic Korean home decorations.

I did not exactly remember events in White Rock but some images and feelings stuck in my memory. We lived in a very old two-story house. My room had a big window through which the bright sunshine came. Very often I was left alone at home because my parents were busy running the convenience store and I did not have many friends. Most of the time I lay on the bed and thought. It was relaxing but very boring for me.

Minjeong

I had the opportunity to observe an elementary school in east Vancouver. I met Max, an immigrant who had just arrived a week earlier from Mainland China. The teacher seated Max next to another Chinese child and let him figure out how the western school system operated differently from Chinese schooling. Max carefully and silently watched the other children, and copied what they were doing. Nobody paid any special attention to him despite his difficulty of socializing with other children. Max caught my attention because I could totally sympathize with his emotional loneliness and psychological estrangement he might feel as a newcomer.

There were six other Chinese children in the same classroom, but none of them spoke to Max although all of them could speak Chinese. Why didn't Chinese children speak to Max in Chinese? Why didn't the teacher encourage the other Chinese children to communicate to Max in their mother tongue? Having been in the same boat as Max, I completely empathized with him to the point of getting furious about the lack of concern and nurturing for a newcomer who could not speak even one English word.

Max looked fine judging from the outward behavior he displayed. However, if one observed him for longer one would realize that Max was always alone. During recess Max wandered around other students, but none of them approached or spoke to him. One time I saw him kick a soccer ball with all his strength that had rolled in front of him. He looked very happy running along with the ball. I imagined that he must have been an outgoing and a very sociable boy in China although he

looked very shy and quiet in Canada. It reminded me of myself. My English-speaking friends might think that I was shy and quiet while my Korean friends would think otherwise. My estrangement and psychological fear led me to become passive — I was therefore looked upon as shy and quiet. None of my Canadian friends seemed interested in who I was.

David

I never had any experience of learning English in Korea. English grammar and vocabulary were all new to me. Practicing English everyday is the simplest and most effective way of learning English. Just as a baby learns a language, I have learned English without any conscious effort. At the first time, it took me three hours to get my homework done when it took just half an hour for others. I had to frequently look up the meaning of words in a dictionary before I could do my homework. Somebody recommended an English-English dictionary rather than Korean-English version. Using an English-English dictionary was more problematic. There were so many new words with more meanings I did not understand. I had to browse through the dictionary many times to get one meaning.

During the early months of studying in Canada, I really wanted to gain mastery of the English language. It was important that I taught myself English to adjust to a new culture. I needed to express myself in an eloquent way so that I could establish a good relationship with English speaking people. From conversations with native speakers, I tried to pick up some words and use them. I made the same mistakes several times. There were times when I spoke one thing and people interpreted them as something else. For example, I used to ask, "If you have the time, do you want to go for a movie?" My friends thought I was asking whether they have a watch. I learned later that I could ask instead, "Do you have

time?" I used to make the same mistake very often. Also the phone conversations always got very awkward. I preferred talking in person to on the phone because my gestures or eye-to-eye contact made up for my lack of English expressions, unlike the phone conversations where people might understand what I said just by listening.

In order to improve my vocabulary, I spent most of my time reading. Sometimes I took out a dictionary, scanned the pages, picked out words, and just tried to use those words consciously for them to become a part of my vocabulary. There were always words I did not know. I find it so interesting to look back and trace how I developed my oral English skills. When I transferred from Coquitlam to White Rock, I was really the new kid in school who did not have many friends. With fewer Korean students in school I was more exposed to an English-speaking environment. Improving my oral speaking skills turned out to be an obsession that ended with me getting more fluent in English. I was even able to retaliate verbally when someone treated me badly. My speaking progressed from short chats to longer conversations. However, I could not participate in the actual conversations that needed to describe my deep thoughts and feelings in English. It was not until Grade 10 that I found myself expressing comfortably and eloquently in English. I was very shy to assert myself in English before I got involved in the PEACE group in Grade 10. After all my struggles, presently I started speaking some complicated and more intellectual English and I am now able to analyze situations in a much more sophisticated level.

My sister's struggle with English was a totally different experience. She focused more on learning grammatical structure and vocabulary but did not develop the skills of expressing herself more refinely and eloquently. Her plan to go to medical school pushes her to speak English like native speakers. There is a typical story of some Koreans who study very hard, go to medical school, and become a doctor or dentist. They end up having only Koreans for clients. My

parents worried that my sister would not be accepted as a competent doctor in this society and that she would be left behind. So my parents have encouraged her to enhance her speaking skill as much as possible.

Minjeong

A deficiency in English is still most problematic for me. It is not as easy to improve my oral English as I supposed. As a graduate student, I have mostly invested my time in reading or writing rather than practicing speaking. My Canadian friends often advise me to try to think in English, instead of thinking in Korean and translating it into English. But thinking in English blocks the spontaneous flow of my inner thoughts. Nothing natural and uninterrupted would come in the language of English. English can neither appropriately describe my feelings and emotions nor explain my thinking. My English words are not evoked from my heart. They break down my whole thinking process into flattened fragmentary pieces.

I always feel something missing in my English expressions. Much of what I intended to say does not take proper shape because of my limited vocabulary and incorrect grammar. Moreover, my vocabulary is mainly formal and technical because I have learned most English words from books. My cramped terms abstract my living experiences to impersonal things. My emotional anguish is reduced to an analytic anguish because I am unable to describe properly what I feel. This gap is the source of my sense of estrangement and disconnection from the world.

English vocabulary neither evokes nor hooks onto what I intend to express. English is not a reliable instrument for me to communicate. It betrays and

buckles me because it does not penetrate into the deep layers of my thinking. Even a simple word brings confusion to insert it into the flow of my perception and conception. English words do not represent things in the same way they do in Korean. English always infiltrates and interlaces with the Korean language. I am caught in a conflicting battle between two languages. Meaning always floats and flows in an uncertain space of in-between languages.

Getting more interested and involved in social activism

David

I struggled with a lot of problems between Grade 9 and Grade 10. I talked to a counselor about my confusion of self-identity and misfit. That was a very confusing and difficult time for me. I have never talked about my problems with my parents. As I grew up, I came to understand more the sacrifice that my parents made for me. I did not want them to worry in any way and wanted to assure them that everything was going well with me.

Joining the PEACE group in Grade 10 was the best thing that happened to me. We were given more opportunities to listen to and speak about issues around racism and bullying, issues ignored in another schools. Sometimes I would let it go, and sometimes I would hold on and share the personal experiences of discrimination. I tried not to patronize or minimize terribly discriminatory things and tried to be more sensitive about those issues with an open mind. I had learned so many things from the PEACE group and conferences to the extent that information became overloaded. I needed to know the truth firsthand.

Since then I started developing my political and social consciousness. I was in charge of the Friday presentation of the PEACE group. I shared fictional stories

to some Grade 8 students, and talked about real stories to Grade 9 students. After getting engaged in the PEACE group, I became very busy doing so many things. I attended different conferences, performances, went camping, and expanded human relationships and social networks with people from diverse cultures and areas. I loved investing effort in doing that. I realized there must be more important things for me to do rather than doing well in school and I thought that raising awareness about these issues was very important. Instead of just focusing on study, I put more effort into thinking about social problems. Last year I attended "Outward Bound," a leadership camping program. In that week I learned many things. This year I participated in the conference hosted by the BCTF that dealt with issues around commercialization and globalization. These activities have provided me a sharing space with other people.

I come to be more aware of how we easily discriminate against others. Some students make fun of people by simply saying, "He is homosexual." I consider that to be very childish. They loosely use the terms "gay" or "homosexual" without attaching any special meaning to them. When a teacher gives them too much homework they would say, "He is gay." It is their way of complaining about the homework. I have never participated in conferences about homosexuality but I have heard stories about the difficulties of accepting different sexual dispositions and learning to live as a homosexual. Considering their sufferings and frustrations, I think it is wrong to use the term "homosexual" in naughty jokes that have nothing to do with its meaning.

Minjeong

The PEACE group served as significant scaffolding for David. It became a turning point in his growing up. Most importantly, it had provided him with a sharing space where he was made to feel interconnected to other students who had gone through similar experiences. Being bonded together emotionally,

empathically, and sympathetically he learned to have a voice in a marginalized and oppressed situation.

Listening to the untold stories enables us to reach out to a multiple and wide-ranging variety of voices in a more inclusive way. In this sense, Canadian schools need to listen to the stories of immigrant students in order to create a safe and sustainable school environment to bridge distances and differences between students of different backgrounds. Teachers should be responsible listeners who pay attention to the silenced voices of students. New immigrant students tend to keep silent because of language and cultural obstacles. Consequently, instead of taking their silence as a sign of shyness or a lack of intelligence, teachers should try to make an effort to understand what is going on within this silence. This is what Taylor (1994) refers to as a “constructive multicultural context” that “expands the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual horizons of all individuals, enriching our world by exposing us to differing cultural and intellectual perspectives, and thereby increasing our possibilities for intellectual and spiritual growth, exploration, and enlightenment” (p. 34).

The role of a cultural and language translator

David

With the coming of more Korean immigrant students to my school, I take on the role of translator when they have a conflict with Canadian students. The principal and vice-principal ask me to mediate these conflicting situations. I suspect that having someone who speaks and understands both cultures and languages could help very much in these situations. Korean students tend to be

defensive because they cannot communicate very well with the English-speaking students. They are restricted not only in understanding what the other students have said but also in defending themselves. Most Canadian students tend to warmly accept students from other ethnic backgrounds. But there are always some students who are insensitive and indifferent to the new immigrants students. In the face of insulting attacks by some insensitive Canadian students, Korean students are apt to take offense to Canadian students who know their English deficiency and their lack of cultural competence. It is a really uncomfortable situation. Anybody can feel insecure when one cannot communicate very well, does not have as many friends as other students do, or is not accepted by other students because he/she is new. So the quick reaction tends to be physical defense. But that approach always makes the situation worse and unfavorable because physical violence is generally taken as very serious here. Any physical act results in a suspension for a couple of days, or if the case is serious it may last a whole year.

Administrators have different ways of dealing with involving conflict. When the female vice-principal in my school deals with students' conflicts, first of all, she usually calls me and gives me freedom to mediate. The second step is for me to talk with the two students in the conflict alone because the students are intimidated and afraid of the vice-principal's presence. And plus the presence of an administrator easily turns the situation into supervision rather than understanding the conflicting situation. Usually in mediating both sides, I have to translate Korean into English and vice versa. Most often Korean students say something impossible to translate because some Korean terms do not really correspond to the English language. I have to modify and reorder as best as I can. I try to make sure that I translate them in a respectful way.

I heard about the prejudices of administrators through the media as well as friends from other schools in Vancouver. The majority of students in my school

are white Canadians. In contrast, Vancouver schools have lots of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This diversity is more conducive to increased student conflicts, especially between recent immigrants and Canadian students. I heard from my friends how their administrators blamed students from minor ethnic groups. An Afro-Canadian friend of mine from Somalia is the only black guy in his school. He gets the blame for every single act of violence in school. It turns out for him to believe that administrators always target a particular ethnic group. I assume that the major reason for this is a prejudice against immigrant students who are stereotyped as drug addicted and poorly behaved. Any generalization or taking an extreme bias is very dangerous because it hinders looking at the phenomenon fairly. Administrators and teachers should try to find a respectful and logical way of dealing with this situation. I think many teachers are willing to listen to immigrant students who need counseling. However, this is not articulated very well. Teachers should give priority to immigrant students who barely speak any English and are new to the school. A simple "Hello" could lead the way to build a close relationship between immigrant students and teachers.

Adapting to a new environment differs between individuals. Some of the immigrant students could adapt really well, but some of them don't. In my school, there is a group of 10 to 12 Korean boys who hang out together and always speak Korean to each other. Poor English skills prevent them from interacting with native Canadian students. I can understand that very well. It totally makes sense. Being new to an environment, it is natural to hang out with those who you share a common culture or interest. One unfortunate drawback is that it creates a barrier between new immigrant students and other Canadian students. Every immigrant student should take responsibility for his/her own actions, and should try to belong without jeopardizing the heritage culture in favor of the new culture. Generally speaking, the adaptation process tends to be easier for the students who are not shy and do not hold themselves captive in

their own space. When they are willing to go out, play, and talk with English-speaking students with whatever English language skills they possess, they obviously adapt to the host culture faster and more smoothly.

The major problem during adolescence, both for Canadians and immigrants, is making friends. Some students are very popular, but others are not. They are divided into some groups with funny-sounding names, "the cool group" or "the geek group." This phenomenon is much more severe here than in Korea. The students from the cool group sometimes make fun of the students in the geek group. This situation is particularly played out during the Physical Education class. When teams are formed, English-speaking students do not tend to choose immigrant students who cannot speak English well. Hence, the new immigrant students are usually left out by the end of the selection. For the immigrant students, it is very difficult to belong to any pre-established circles of friends. Whereas Canadians like hockey, new immigrant students do not know anything about it. If Canadian students rarely welcome the new immigrant students, the immigrant students cannot feel comfortable with Canadian students because the feeling is mutual.

Minjeong

It is a very difficult situation to be pumped with a totally different cultural knowledge. I vividly remember that my inadequate cultural knowledge provoked discomfort many times. I felt distanced from everything. Can you imagine what it looks like to live outside the ordinary standards of behavior?

My Canadian friends share so many cultural assumptions that are quite invisible to them because these are naturally shared. But my deficient knowledge of Canadian culture always makes me feel unsure of my behaviors.

I listen to the winds of sameness and difference blowing around me and touching the bottom of human existence. I enter into the textures, tastes, touches, and flavors of the vastly different world. I am traveling and transgressing beyond my border; however, I cannot completely strip myself of the Korean culture going through my spiritual and body memory. My everyday life is a translating process with a special caution. Being and living in-between cultures itself is a sort of location. I am lingering between connectedness and disconnectedness. I have learned to hold myself within my border so that I am not totally submerged into the new culture. At the same time, I am called upon to transgress beyond my horizon and to go beyond myself. This is a kind of cross-cultural space where my being and transforming is carefully performed.

Racism

David

I think racism generally can be seen from both sides, not just from the Caucasian students but also from students from minority backgrounds who live in a Caucasian dominant area. Racism is not only manifested through direct insult such as calling names, saying racial comments, or discriminating somebody for being different. Racism happens in indirect ways, too. You may not really see it happening, but you can feel it. Racism involves many tiny things and can happen in many everyday situations. Racism is such a tricky concept to define, to understand, and to deal with.

The first time I dealt with a racist issue by retaliating. I was really emotional about the issue and I reacted at a very emotional level. When my family immigrated we lived in an ethnically and culturally diversified community. At the time I was too young to figure out racism and I was more engrossed with

adapting to my new school. It was when we moved to White Rock where I found myself the only Asian student in school. I remembered winning in a rugby practice and a student whom I did not like very much had a stupid joke about an Asian trait. The sad thing was this student was a second generation Korean. Everybody laughed and laughed as he stereotyped Asians. I started yelling, "This is racism!" Indeed racism can happen on a daily basis.

When I got to Grade 9 I just kept my thoughts to myself. I learned that I did not necessarily have to react in a retaliatory way. It would be much better to talk about racism in a calm and rational way. My friends and I had spoken about this issue since then. We used to go to my friend's house, sit down and talk about it. But sometimes I felt depressed and disappointed because talking about racism was not enough. I sensed the need to express our positive thoughts in action.

Minjeong

Little research has been done about the racism experiences of Korean students. Studies on racism in Canada mostly deal with young black people or First Nations people. I never come across studies involving young Koreans. Young Korean students seem to downplay racism or to pretend that it does not exist. Indeed, when I initiated a conversation about racism, the young Korean Canadians in my study did not have very much to say about it at all.

David was the only person who was very interested in the issue of racism and shared his experiences and ideas of racism profoundly. Other participants only mentioned their own experiences in passing. David's story shows the lack of resources for young Korean students to confront racism. Without any appropriate help or useful tools, they just respond in an individual and private way, or avoid talking about it. There are very few supportive spaces to help

them articulate their own experiences around racism and to prepare themselves to cope with the issue appropriately. They do not get proper support of schools, parents, and even Korean communities. Most Korean parents neither have English language skills to use Canadian public services for help nor time to deal with the problem. In turn, young Korean Canadians feel so isolated in dealing with racism.

Young Korean students often employ a physical response as a common way of coping with racial slurs and discriminations in school. I heard so many times this kind of story among Korean male students who use physical violence in front of their inability to express themselves fluently and articulately. Unlike male students, many female Korean students tend to try very hard to fit in and be accepted through screening off their being Korean in the privacy of their homes and with Korean friends.

The form of racism has changed as I sensed through my conversations with young Korean Canadians. Contemporary racism puts on the mask of tolerance and acquiescence, not an openly articulated form. As David clearly speaks, *"It (racism) is not so much done by direct insult like calling names, calling racial insults, or making a fool of somebody for being different. But it is happening more in an indirect way."* The refined and equivocal form of racism blinds Canadians to racism that is invisibly anchored in Canada. Although there seems to be no evident and noticeable manifestation of racism, racial discrimination is still implicated within and through cultural or symbolic systems. David appropriately pointed it out when he mentioned that if somebody felt alienated and separated from others even without any direct racial slurs, it could be racism. The atmosphere of being alienated generates physical and

psychological separation as much as direct racial labels or naming calling. This kind of invisible racism permeated in the minds of some Canadians consciously and unconsciously induces the continual cultural climate of racism.

If Canadians want to say, "Canada is a country without any racial problems," Canada should be a place where everybody feels "at home" with a sense of belongingness without any visible or invisible discrimination. How can we say there is no racism in Canada if immigrants feel "othered" due to their differences? Antagonism, antipathy, and unfriendliness towards people from different racial and cultural groups would continuously make it impossible to erase the designation of a racialized country. Even if everyone wears the same clothes, goes to the same schools, and lives in the same neighborhoods, people of different cultures cannot feel safe in Canada as long as the dominant society continues to see them as alien, as different, and as others.

Living in-between cultures and languages

David

There is one question a lot of my friends have asked me. It is funny that they all at one point seem to wonder whether I think in Korean or in English. I can never seem to answer this kind of question because I do not really know if I am thinking in Korean or in English. Sometimes I would realize I am thinking in English. For example when I am writing an essay in my English class I am definitely thinking in English about what I want to write about on a piece of paper so that I can get a mark. When I talk with my parents, I do recognize that I am thinking in Korean. But in terms of spontaneous thoughts that pop out, maybe in a shower, I cannot really think about which language I am thinking in. I just think.

I live in a bicultural and bilingual world. I do not think I am living in a dichotomous world, being in a Canadian culture or being in a Korean culture, juggling between two cultures. Rather, it is more about subconscious events happening on a daily basis. I do not really know what Canadian culture means, and I do not really know what Korean culture means either. For I have never lived in Korea long enough to be fully absorbed into its culture. I have not experienced what it would be like to be part of a Korean culture around the age of 17 to 18. As well, I have experienced Canadian culture in a very limited time. In particular, Canadian culture works in a dynamic way and hinges upon its diversity. Canadian culture is a big massive blend of different cultures from diverse cultural backgrounds and is in the process of comprehending what exactly Canadian culture is. In addition, since cultural experiences depend on the perceptions of individuals, it is not quite easy to define what Canadian culture is or what Korean culture is. The way I perceive Canadian culture is probably different from the way my friends do. Each one of us thinks of the Canadian culture in so many different ways.

Minjeong

David taught me to realize how much we “essentialize” and “label” the concept of culture as a certain entity. For him, culture is not seen as a set of traditions, group mentalities, or collective worldviews. His cross-cultural experiences have problematized the conventional notion of culture as a shared system of customs, values, practices, beliefs, symbols, and meanings. This closed concept of culture seems to ensure the idea of “being normal” within the culture and accelerates a boundary dividing the normal and deviant. The discursive production of any culture as a shared thing necessitates the demeaning, isolation, or repression of some people who do not fit within an

internal boundary. Culture, as shared things, refers to an imaginary bounded community and is imagining the boundary itself. In this sense, the idea of culture as oneness is a process of 'othering.' This is a generally known concept of culture.

But this assumption of culture as being the same for all members is something of a naïve fiction: any two people who are from the same culture may perceive it very differently. For example, my perception of being Korean could be different from other Koreans' perceptions. It is impossible to envision people simply as a member of a homogeneous, unified cultural group. Although people in a certain cultural group may have some kind of shared meanings, those meanings are partially shared because they understand and interpret them in individually different ways. I would say culture is both shared and idiosyncratic. The notion of culture should be seen in a much more flexible way. Strauss and Quinn (1997) describe culture as a "fuzzy concept," an unbounded phenomenon. They contend that culture is "not some free-floating abstract entity." Rather, it should be seen as regular occurrences in the humanly created world, in the schemas people share as a result of ... the interactions between these schemas and the world" (p. 7).

Culture is performatively created and recreated when exercised by individual people. It is evident when we look at how bicultural or multicultural people improvise different cultures contingent upon different situations. This bicultural or multicultural space is performatively co-constructed and co-created on the spot through interactional processes, what Pratt (1991) calls "contact zones" — "the social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of power" (p. 34). The

performance of each culture is flexibly adaptive rather than rigidly repetitive. This enables cultural knowledge to be constantly reconstructed and envisioned when it is realized, exercised, and appropriated. The imaginary boundary of a pre-given bond is broken down and cultural hybridity comes into existence.

David vigorously demonstrated what happened when he encountered with two different cultures. It was unlikely that two different cultures bumped into each other and crashed. Where was the Korean culture in this process?

Where was the Canadian culture? Could we say his cultural identity was developed on a linear continuum? David said, *"I have not experienced what it would be like to be part of Korean culture around the age of 17 or 18. And also I have not lived in Canada before the age of 11. I have experienced Canadian culture in a very limited time."* His cultural identity has been constructed within a discontinuous experiential reality generated by cultural displacement. The disjunctive juxtapositions of different moments enabled him to figure out a way to put non-synchronous cultural pieces together, and as a result, hybrid and transitional identity emerged. Bhabha (1994) explains well how cultural identity of immigrant people becomes an open question instead of being specified by its fixed identity:

Hybrid hyphenations emphasize the incommensurable elements — the stubborn chunks — as the basis of cultural identifications. What is at issue is the performative nature and differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, contingently, 'opening out,' remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference — be it class, gender, or race. Such assignations of social differences — where difference is neither One nor the Other but something

else besides, in-between — find their agency in a form of the 'future' where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory. It is, if I may stretch a point, an interstitial future, that emerges in-between the claims of the past and the needs of the present. (p. 219, original emphasis)

The experience of living in-between cultures is not only a “transitional process” but also a “translational process” which cultural identity is represented and articulated by and through negotiating between different cultural meanings (Bhabha, 1990). The act of translation of cultural differences generates the emerging form of identity through a supplementary residue that does not pass neatly from one culture to another. This residual space is not just an incomplete stage; instead, it is a creative impetus to initiate the new form of identity to emerge. According to Bhabha (1994), it is through a dynamic tension between cultural differences that an emerging identity emerges beyond an antagonistic binary system. Cultural translation allows multiple inscriptions to be generated without simple assimilation. In this sense, the cultural identity of “Korean Canadian” implies something tainted with the impossibility of completely fitting in one culture. It is through a metonymic and interstitial moment of cultural translation that Korean Canadian identity is articulated and performed.

David's case is an example. Once David left Korea he had a strong link with Korean culture but simultaneously he was obliged to come to terms with the new culture he inhabited. His translational process between different cultural meanings was neither simply being assimilated into the Canadian culture nor completely losing the Korean culture. Currently he still bears the Korean culture, tradition, language, and history by which he was shaped before coming

to Canada. But those Korean aspects have been continuously interlocked and intertwined with the influences of Canadian culture. His Korean culture is a trace rather than unchanged original one.

David

My friend told me about the conversation he had with his professor about Korean girls in his college. The professor told him that Korean students did not tend to do their work by themselves and they were always doing the work with other Korean friends. The professor traveled to China, Japan, and Korea, so he was comparatively familiar with Asian cultures. He commented about the group-centered disposition of Asian students. Korean students tend to get together and discuss their work, which results in doing similar work instead of creative work.

I understood very well the professor's point. I could possibly provide an explanation that culturally Koreans working as a group is more important than individual work. It comes so naturally for Koreans to sacrifice the self for the group. My friend seemed to understand my explanation, but I knew it was not the level of understanding I expected him to acquire. I was aware of the discrepancy between my friend and me because we had been grown up in a different culture.

Minjeong

This story is very intriguing in terms of cross-cultural understanding. We understand and interpret the world through cultural lenses by which we have been raised, educated, and trained. Different cultural skeletons provide different conceptual frameworks, different situational knowledge, and

adequate behavior expectations. The different cultural lenses keep people of different cultures from accounting for symbolic behaviors of without any biased interpretations. We are more apt to judge other cultures from our own cultural values instead of from a cross-cultural understanding. Therefore, some of the western cultural values may seem irrelevant or inapplicable to Korean culture, and vice versa. Some western ideological presuppositions may be alien to the Korean ethos. Those cultural differences easily give rise to a misunderstanding or a distorted understanding of each other. For example, “asserting oneself,” one of the common western cultural values, is not appropriate in Korean culture which emphasizes more harmonizing with others in a given environment rather than standing out. In the Korean culture, it is not acceptable to present one’s feelings to others or to strongly assert oneself. Korean culture considers the maintenance of group harmony as more important than self-disclosure. Being more sensitive towards others and adjusting oneself to others is more highly valued in Korean culture. The story of David’s friend represents an incompatible cultural difference between collective-based Korean culture and individual-based western culture. This story also discloses how cultural difference gets in the way of cross-cultural understanding despite without any discriminatory and prejudicial intention.

It seems impossible or counterproductive that cultural differences congruously coexist. Although we easily accept different food or customs, it is not easy to deal with conflicting cultural values and perceptions. Given this fact, it is a very naïve assumption that cross-cultural understanding is nourished and fulfilled by somehow teaching a piece of knowledge of other cultures as an enclosed substance. Cross-cultural understanding comes about through what Bhabha (1994) refers to as a “third space.” In this generative

third space, cultural difference no longer simply represents conflicting and oppositional cultural values and traditions; instead it invites each culture to be articulated and interpreted through the negotiations of incommensurably floating meanings.

The emerging identity of the Korean Canadian

David

When I think about my cultural identity I hardly specify how different I am from other people. I can feel difference and I am aware of it when the difference becomes visible. I know it is happening. But I do not know how it happens, what happens, and why it happens. Things just happen. This is going to happen for the rest of my life. I am aware that I could never be like other Canadians. This means that I always have my own secret place that I can never quite represent to my friends. It is a significant aspect which makes me stand out among the rest of my friends. In my daily life it is impossible to detach myself from the Korean culture partly because I am a native Korean rather than a native Canadian. There was an awakening experience which lead me realize this. I performed a monologue, in an acting class, about a 30-year old man whose wife has cancer. This character professed how he felt about this situation and how enigmatic human life looked. I had to pretend that I was the real typical Canadian husband figure. Suddenly I realized that I could not put myself into the role because I did not have enough experience of a typical Canadian life style and cultural value.

However, my parents are concerned about me losing the Korean culture and emotional tie with Koreans. My memory of Korea is gradually fading away and my Korean culture is getting hazy. What I learned and experienced in Korea has blurred in my memory. I have forgotten the children's songs I sung often in my

childhood, the Korean proverbs, and the fairy tales that most Koreans had read. I never imagined that I would lose the Korean language and what I had done in Korea before coming to Canada. Recently, I tend to switch Korean with English words when speaking in Korean with my parents. I am slowly losing my Korean culture and language! I only speak very limited Korean with my parents, a representation of how much I have moved away from being a Korean to becoming a Canadian. I am concerned about losing most of my Korean culture and language. I want to maintain my heritage culture inside me throughout the future.

Minjeong

Once I have transformed from being haunted by normalcy to accepting the status of an exotic stranger, my difference turns out to be neither a disadvantage nor a handicap. I do not know exactly what I am going to become, but I am sure that I am becoming someone who I have not been so far. I do not make a vain effort to master a new culture. Nor do I stick to my own culture any more. What is important to me is not how much I keep myself unchanging, but how much I have grown up from my new experience. Interminably created new beings inside me have allowed me see the world through prismatic colors and create own cultural identity based on my particular experiences.

David

My Indo Canadian teacher in Grade 6 said that she did not want to designate Korean culture, Canadian culture, Indian culture, etc in a separate and exclusive way. Indeed, in reality it is impossible to clearly classify cultures. Instead, I would say, "This person has this kind of particular characteristic and

that person has that kind of particular characteristic." The questions around what Korean culture is or what Canadian culture is do not have any right answer. It is more significant for me to grow up as a more mature human being in continuous reflection of these questions rather than restricting myself to a specific cultural cage. Getting to know many friends from different cultural backgrounds, I pick up good exemplary cultural values and practices. To me, it is not important who I am in terms of how I act or behave. Regardless of Canadian culture or Korean culture, I have developed my own identity as a human being by learning good virtues from different cultures.

Minjeong

David does not represent his journey of leaving Korea and settling in Canada as a linear passage. There is no destination he should head for. He continues to create new possibilities where he is no longer what he once was. David is unable to be simply assumed as a Korean because he has been reborn as a Korean Canadian by virtue of cross-cultural experience. His situation is not solely considered as a threat of losing his original identity; instead, it should be seen as a critical resource to re-articulate the very idea of cultural identity.

Identification through cross-cultural living is not a simple reproductive activity; rather, it is a creative performativity which brings the emerging identity into being. For example, when young Korean Canadians embody the Korean culture, it is not always the same. Re-reading Korean culture through a crisscross of cultural borders enables them to perform the Korean culture in different ways.

David

I proudly expressed of being a Korean as revealed by my physical as well as cultural differences. Some recent Korean immigrant students like having their hair dyed. I feel this is a disguise. Every Korean had the monotone black hair. I always felt much pride in my almost bluish black hair because it differentiates me from Caucasian Canadians. Another example is having an accent. Despite becoming fluent with the English language, I still have the Korean accent. There are words I cannot pronounce well to this time. Although it is something outside of my limits, initially a source of pressure for me, currently I do not resent my accent and mispronunciation any more. I would actually like to have it for the rest of my life.

I am getting more used to the Canadian English and I am learning to pronounce words much better, not by will but by natural adoption. I am more and more able to speak English that sounds legitimate and knowledgeable. There are still many students in my school who have limited vocabulary and cannot use eloquent words to describe a phenomenon. I am so proud that I can express myself in English, which makes me become more Canadian. But my becoming Canadian will always be based on my Korean culture because of my origin. I do not have the same sort of fundamental substratum as native Canadians. I think it is something to feel dignified about.

My attachment to Korean culture is instinctive. My other friends of the third or fourth generation want to trace their roots. One of my friends is third generation Irish on his dad's side. He is very curious about the Irish culture and he always cheers the Irish team when he watches soccer games. We are instinctively inclined to belong somewhere, which is one way of expressing the self. In my case, I am really interested to learn about the Korean culture because I came from Korea; I have some experiences and memories of Korea. I brought the

Korean culture inside me when I immigrated here. I appreciate and acknowledge the richness and depth of the Korean culture that cannot be understood nor explained without living in Korea. I remember our relatives gathering together having great fun during holidays. I am missing those experiences and feel nostalgic recalling events. Though the details of my remembrances escape me, some feelings and memories have been deeply embedded within me. Unfortunately, these memories are slowly fading away, which is very sad and distressing. With very limited resources to learn more about Korea except for my parents or cousins, what I imagine of Korea is what it was before my immigration.

Some of my mom's friends sometimes bring some Korean books when they come for a visit. I read one book that described Korean youth culture based on interviews with people on "Dae-Hak-Ro." The book was filled with so much fun and exciting performances, plays, and concerts of young Koreans. Reading that book brought back my own experiences in Korea. When we lived in Korea, my mom brought me to there. I liked the place very much. It would be great if I get to visit Korea as a young adult. Sometimes I wonder how I would feel the next time I visit Korea. I do not know whether I will like it or not. I think I might not fit anymore because I have been away from Korea for quite long time. I just want to visit Korea for a while, but not live there for long.

I think I have been so lucky to live in two countries and so fortunate to grow up in Canada. The obstacles and difficulties along the way have changed my philosophy and outlook of the world and human life and led me to become more mature. Had I stayed in Korea I would have been stuck to one culture and have a narrow perspective. I do not want to get attached to one culture. I want to explore more possibilities. Going through a transitional process from one to another culture has provided me with an incredible learning experience. Reflecting on crossing boundaries of the two cultures, I acknowledge that I

come to embrace both cultures with a critical perspective while I try to fit myself into the new environment and blend my old culture with the new culture. In my growing up, creating my own identity from experiencing different cultures is more important than searching for who I am from a specific cultural standpoint.

When my family decided to immigrate here I often heard some typical stories about Korean immigrants. "Young students your age can more easily adapt and master English fast. It should not take more than six months for you to speak English. There won't be any problems." This statement does not correspond to the reality. I have never seen the Korean who speaks perfect English only after six months. I see the gap between the ideal and the real. As a youth, I have learned how much I idealized the reality. From my lived experiences of understanding the difficulty of learning English, I have learned how to live realistically and practically. I am able to juxtapose the ideal life with reality in a more balanced way. Also I come to divest myself of limited restrictions. If I were raised only in the Korean culture I would have internalized only the Korean culture and be restricted within the limited framework of the Korean culture. The different cultural influences have helped me develop different perspectives and expand my understanding of human life. I try, as best as I can, to acquire a balanced view of both cultures by not only looking at the differences but also the similarities.

Minjeong

At the cost of leaving home, I have learned to let go of my limited self and to build a space where my existence invites other existences by interactions and interrelations with each other. I escape from such a binary opposition of the self and the other and move towards a productive synthesis where every bit of difference is conjoint and conjunctive. I am enabled to unfold, re-enter,

and enlarge myself by letting go of my stubborn holdings.

There is a Korean proverb — the frog in the well — which means that the frog in the well does not know the ocean. For him, the world delimited within the well is everything. He is unable to imagine the existence of other worlds. My living with cultural differences takes me out of the confined well of Korea and leads me to see the multiple colors of human lives. A cultural dialogue beyond a certain polarity, “A” and “Anti-A,” resolves the antithesis with a capacious synthesis. I am becoming more and more a hybrid creature with lots of colors in a constant dialectical stitching. I cannot describe specifically what has been happening inside myself, but my body remembers tumbling upheavals having run through my life. I have grown to bring myself into bigger challenges and changes and to let myself be soaked by them rather than being overwhelmed by the wild wind from the alien world. Once I begin to lose my childish fears, I pick up the attributions of fearlessness, courage, willingness, receptivity, and openness.

CHAPTER 6

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY: THE STORIES OF TWO SECOND GENERATION KOREAN CANADIANS

The second generation of immigrants generally represents a high point of tension and struggle with the double pressure of 'Canadianization' and 'ethnicization.' They are living in-between cultures — one inside the home, the other outside — in which they are not quite comfortable in either one. Their cultural identity as Korean Canadians is constructed and reconstructed as they negotiate within these doubling positions. This chapter explores the double-faced aspects of the cultural identity of two second-generation Korean Canadians. Marginality, cultural clashes, alienation are often the main themes of experiences in classic immigrant stories. Admittedly, these themes emerge in the growing-up experiences of the second generation Korean Canadians I interviewed, Anthony and Lily. If the classic immigrant story focuses on conflicts and problems stemming from cultural clashes, then my focus is on the emerging identity of Korean Canadians. I seek to understand the processes in which they have interweaved their cultural identity on the margins of two cultures.

Anthony is the first person I listened to. When I was looking for young adult Korean Canadians who were willing to share their experiences, Anthony showed great interest. When I invited him to participate in my research project, he expressed concern about how he was supposed to act or behave in relationship with me because he did not know what it would be like to have a Korean friend of the same age. But he wanted to have Korean friends to teach him Korean culture, language, history, geography, etc. Doing a narrative inquiry for the first time made me quite nervous and anxious about the research process. I had no idea on how to elicit stories and facilitate the interview process. I was very curious

about Anthony's reaction after our first conversation. He was so supportive of my inquiry and offered an encouraging comment, "It is much more than my own self-discovery. I really enjoyed this process." It gave me confidence in how narrative inquiry would work. Having further conversations with him provided me with great challenges in terms of intercultural understanding and cross-cultural awareness. I was quite anxious about the cultural and language obstacles, but we gradually created a safe and comfortable environment where we could share our stories and build a depth of understanding of each other. When I talked about my experiences of difficulties and conflicts I had gone through in this new cultural environment, he listened to my stories with a sympathetic mind. It was so refreshing and soothing for both of us to share different stories of our growing up in Korea and in Canada. These evocative stories of each other enabled us to fabricate an intercultural friendship that has allowed us to continue these cross-cultural conversations.

Lily and I met through my Korean friend who was teaching her Korean. We are both about the same age. Interestingly, Lily had slightly different feelings and attitudes towards Korean culture compared to Anthony despite the similar experience of growing up in-between cultures. While listening to her stories, what drew my interest was the fact that she appeared to be culturally Korean in some ways although she emphasized a dislike for Korean food. Moreover, she did not have much interest in learning about Korean culture or the language. She seemed to be a much more decent and obedient daughter when compared to the contemporary Korean girls in Korea. I could sense her resisting conflicts against very traditional cultural values from her father who had strongly impacted on her identity construction. Recently, Lily's father felt a strong urge for his daughter to learn the Korean language, leading him to force her to take lessons. This pressure actually hindered Lily's positive identity construction as Korean. It reminds me of a need to be careful of how to nourish and nurture commitment and attachment to the Korean culture to the second generation who have already gone through a comparative assimilation process.

Anthony and Lily were the eldest participants in this study and both of them had post-secondary education. This meant that I shared a significant amount about academic

discourses and my own positions around this study itself with them compared to the other participants. During the interview, my head was filled with interpretive comments, ideas, and questions. This chapter is the multilayered text interlaced with Anthony's stories, Lily's stories, my monologues, emergent understandings, and scholarly discourses. I divided each page into two columns. The left side is braided with the stories of Anthony and Lily. The right side is crafted with the multifaceted understandings and interpretations of the stories, all of which are interspersed with my emotional and intellectual responses, as well as emergent questions and critical comments that arose while listening to their stories. This experimental writing form, cracking open a mono-voiced representation, allows me to weave polyphonous voices together from the interstices of experiential and theoretical groundings in understanding identity construction through cross-cultural living.

Childhood stories

Coming to Canada

Anthony:

When my father was five years old, my grandmother escaped from North Korea and went to Seoul in South Korea. Because my grandmother, uncles, and my father escaped to South Korea, my grandfather was murdered by the army in North Korea. One of my uncles immigrated to Toronto first. Like other immigrants, other family members began to immigrate to Canada, too. My family and my other uncle's family immigrated

These two Korean families immigrated to Canada in the early 1970s because the Korean economic situation was terribly devastating after the Korean War. At the time Koreans had been taught that the label "Made in USA" automatically meant a superior product. In other words, they had negative images of themselves.

to Toronto with an expectation to have a better life in North America.

When we immigrated in 1974, I was one year old and my brother was three. My father worked so hard throughout his entire life to support the family and provide good opportunities for us. Because of his hard work, I was able to go to school and have a good life. And right now, I do not have to work as hard as my dad.

Lily:

My parents came over to Canada after they were married in 1972, a year before I was born. Prior to their coming, my dad served in the military service in Vietnam for three years. After the Vietnam war, he worked in various military operations for the American military for another seven years. Then he went traveling for a year looking for a place to immigrate to avoid going back to his poor family in Korea. My dad came from a very poor farmer's family. When he was in Vietnam he sent money back home to support two older brothers and an older sister.

At the time when he decided to immigrate, Canada was more economically progressive

In the first wave of immigration, Koreans flocked to North America to escape poverty in an expectation of the "American dream." North America was seen as a land of opportunity where everything could be obtained by working very hard. They left behind Korea, the only country they ever knew, a country of three thousand years of history and tradition, for Canada, the land of opportunity. When they came here they gave up very respectable positions and privileges they had in Korea.

But the situation waiting for them was not as great as they expected. All their experiences in Korea had been rendered absolutely useless in this so-called "land of opportunity." They were generally disadvantaged in the Canadian labor market due to the language barrier and cultural unfamiliarity. They had to open grocery stores, laundromats, and restaurants where the hours were

than the United States. The economy of Canada was really blooming. My dad told me that once people arrived they were offered jobs at the airport. He then decided to immigrate to Canada.

Childhood life

Anthony:

My parents' generation thought of Canada as the land of opportunity. They saw moving to Canada as making something new for themselves and a better future for their children. They came to Canada to escape the poverty in Korea. But their life was always so busy in working hard to survive and support their family in this new land.

When I was growing up I remember never having new clothes. I always had my brother's used clothing. When I got new shoes once a year it was like a special event. I do not remember having a new bicycle. My dad assembled my bicycle from used bicycles. We had a small car and a nice tiny house with a small yard. We were never starving. But we never went out to eat every weekend and never attended parties.

long. Since they were recent immigrants, learning the Canadian way of life and fitting into the Canadian society were still problematic. They were treated as inferior because of their different race, culture, and accents. They suffered the "humiliation of immigrants." They suppressed their ethnicity in the name of pragmatism and opportunism. To be successful in their new world, they had to actively assimilate making their cultural background less conspicuous.

Yet, they had their reasons for immigrating. No amount of sacrifice was too much for the sake of their children. Nothing in their lives meant more to them than the best hope for their children. When they underwent all kinds of hardships to survive, they believed their children's success would reward all their sacrifices. It was necessary for them to push their children to study hard.

Lily:

When I was growing up my parents operated a small grocery store. They were so busy that they did not have time to spend with me.

They were at the grocery store from 8:00 am in the morning until 11: 00 pm at night.

There was not enough time to prepare food so that I had fast food, frozen food, or take-out Cantonese food very often.

I spent most of my time with my English friends or in front of an English satellite TV which was all about Canadian culture, not much Korean culture at all. The only Korean things that I related to were Korean food and the Korean church service on Sundays. The Korean church provided Korean lessons, but my attendance was irregular. I just learned the basic level of Korean, such as writing my

name, saying "사과" which means apple, something like that. I mostly forgot what I had learned there when I stopped attending church. Now I have to learn again how to read and write in Korean from a very basic level.

As I grew up, there were very few Korean people around me and I did not have a lot of Korean friends. I was the only Asian student

Many Korean immigrants attend the Korean churches for practical as well as religious purposes. Korean immigrant churches serve several practical functions which are indispensable to the new immigrants' adjustment. These churches are major places for socializing with fellow Koreans as well as sharing resources and information. They provide a space for Koreans to interact with each other. Also the churches take a significant role in reinforcing ethnic attachment by preserving Korean cultural traditions in some ways. The Korean culture and language are more openly practiced here than in other places. For the second generation, Korean churches become the primary route to experience the Korean culture.

The Saturday Korean language school is another major space for learning the Korean culture and

in my elementary school. I worked with a speech teacher when I was in Grade 3 or 4 because I could not pronounce "s" properly. I had to practice reading and writing words starting with the "s" sound. Once a week I had a session with a speech teacher and. She would teach me exactly how to place my tongue in my mouth and how to pronounce other words. I had problems with some other words too, but the most difficult was the "s" sound.

Even in my junior high school, I grew up in a very white environment where I was the only Asian face. There were some Koreans in my high school, all of who were ESL students.

Anthony:

My parents are very religious people. Every Sunday I went to church until age 18 when I left my family for university. During elementary school and junior high school, I was also very religious. I was the president of the youth group and played the role of a religion instructor for five years. In my childhood, all my friends came from the Korean church. They were second generation Korean Canadians like me. My best friend was a Korean. We had been

language in Canada. Indeed, most second generation Korean Canadians have experienced the Korean language school at least a short period of time.

These two institutions, the Korean church and the language school, take on the significant role of teaching and transmitting the Korean culture and language. Since the second generations have very limited access to Korean mass media because of language deficiency, the images and ideas of Korean culture represented by these two institutions may have directly or indirectly influenced their identity construction of being Korean.

Anthony and Lily professed to have grown up in a home where "being Korean" was not greatly emphasized, at least not through a more open and conscious way of passing on the Korean culture and language. The

friends since we were little kids. We shared very similar experiences as second generation Koreans and we valued the same things. When I stopped going to the Korean church I lost touch with Koreans who were associated with the church. Particularly when I moved from the place with a lot of minorities like Koreans, Indians, and Chinese to a very white dominant area, I lost all my Korean friends and started socializing with all white people. Since then things have changed. I began seeing my religious life differently and becoming flexible with my religious practice.

parents did not have enough time to teach them how to be Korean in Canada. Neither did they seriously think about the consequences and cost of taking up the track of "fitting in." Their parents rarely advised them about ethnic consciousness or pride, particularly when they were faced with living in-between cultures. Rather than having an explicit Korean identity based on what their parents wanted, Anthony and Lily held on to having a more tacit version.

Living in two different worlds: Inside and outside the home

Learning both Korean and English languages

Anthony:

I naturally learned Korean from my parents just by listening although I did not speak Korean too much at home. Usually my mom spoke Korean to me, but my dad spoke English to me. In both cases, I responded in English. I do not quite remember how frequently I used Korean.

The second generation Korean Canadians usually learn the Korean language from their parents. They speak Korean before they enter the elementary school. As soon as they start learning English they spend more time in an English-speaking environment, and consequently they gradually lose their Korean language.

Since I was a very little child I started learning English through TV. My brother and I sat and watched cartoons and all the kids' shows. After going to school we would learn and practice English more and more. And then even at home we were just talking to each other in English. I did not try to practice Korean because it was of no use for my survival. I always spoke in English with other friends, my brother, and my father. My dad spoke English very well because he had worked in a place where English was spoken so he practiced English all the time. My dad always wanted us to speak English because he thought that the mastery of the English language was very necessary to be successful in this white dominant society. So we always spoke English with my dad. Even if I answered in Korean he responded to me in English. As I became older, I gradually lost the Korean language. As a young kid I did not feel the need to know Korean as a preparation for my future life. At present I can understand Korean but I cannot speak it very well. I can speak only some words, some very childish stuff. I can write a little. I learned some Korean at the Korean language school in the Korean church in my

There are many stories about the dilemma immigrant parents face. Parents want their children to be fluent in English as much as they want their children not to lose the mother tongue. They are torn between letting their children speak English or Korean at home. Korean parents are resigned to having their children master English at the potential cost of losing Korean in order to be on an equal footing with white Canadians.

Hurh (1998) states that the cultural assimilation of Korean Americans does not necessarily mean their social assimilation. According to him, cultural assimilation refers to the immigrants' acculturation to the host culture. Social assimilation refers to their access and entrance to the social networks of the host

elementary years. I just learned Korean vowels and consonants. I was not taught Korean history and culture. I quit after three years because I found it so boring and I considered it useless at that time.

The priority of learning English over Korean

Lily:

I naturally learned English from watching TV. I was left home alone a lot because my parents were always busy. My brother and I grew up alone quite a bit and we watched TV all the time. My parents told me that they took me to Korea a few times when I was young. But I do not remember ever going to Korea until I was 12 or 14. When I visited to Korea at an early age, some people wondered how I could count in French from 1 to 10. I learned it from watching TV because we lived in Ontario at the time.

My parents never forced me to speak Korean. Rather, we spoke English at home. But when they scolded me, it would be in Korean. More interestingly, when I yelled at my younger brother it was done in Korean although I normally spoke to him in English. Praying was another moment when I spoke

society. Cultural assimilation can be successfully done when they learn the American way of living such as language, customs, values, and beliefs, etc. But cultural assimilation does not automatically guarantee social assimilation. Much research shows that while cultural assimilation of the minorities is practiced to a considerable degree in America, their social assimilation has not been far-reaching yet. It reveals how difficult it can be for Korean immigrants to be completely accepted in the dominant society. Considering the reality, it is not easy for them to feel a sense of home in this new land.

In a lack of awareness and understanding of prejudice towards their children from the dominant society, the *work hard* ideology is a general strategy that Korean parents employ to protect

Korean. My family did not really go to church every Sunday, but we would have bible study sessions at home together. My mom always liked it. At present I always wake up at about 6:00 o'clock each morning without an alarm because my parents start their prayers. It is so loud that it wakes me up by 6:30 and I have to listen to it for half an hour. It is a moment for me to listen to Korean. As a family we always pray together in Korean. When I pray I think in Korean and then translate it into English. I am more comfortable praying in Korean because I am more used to Korean terms of prayer phrases and hymns.

The emphasis on hard work

Anthony:

My dad always reminded me that I was a Korean in a Canadian culture. I was not a Canadian. It meant that I had to work hard and I had to achieve. He told me if I did not do well, it would be difficult for me to be accepted in this society. He reminded me that I had to prove myself. My brother and I grew up as hard workers. I studied very hard to be

themselves from the reality of discrimination. They deal with the issues very privately without seeking collective and political allegiance. They naïvely think that fluency with speaking English and high education would lead to a future with financial security and no discrimination. Unsurprisingly, the children never dismiss it outright. But I would like to raise the questions, "How much can education help them get over their status as a minority?" "Does education hold promise for the success they expect?" Success in school should not be a major key to empower them in face of the discriminating reality.

These stories of two Korean Canadians make me realize that there is a lack of familial teaching for the young generation to better understand and respond to their sense of marginality and alienation

successful because I knew I was different. Even though there were a lot of Korean immigrants who came in the 1970s, we were still a minority. That always reminded me to work hard to survive. My parents never told me directly, "Be proud of being Korean" or "Be proud of our Korean culture." They just emphasized that I had to work hard being a member of a minority. I wish my parents had said that I had to be proud of being a Korean. If I was acknowledged that I should have been more proud of my Korean culture and language regardless of how different I was, I would have been confident in sharing my Korean heritage and being Korean among my white friends. My parents never took being a Korean seriously. Rather, they were more concerned about being successful in this white dominant society.

No interest in Korean customs and cuisine

Lily:

I remembered we had a special Korean dish during the Korean Harvest Day and the Chinese New Year's Day. In the Chinese New

caused by cultural and racial differences. For racial minority groups, the family is expected to take on an important role in teaching the young generation how to deal with issues around cultural difference and racism. African Americans show that families have given particular attention to teach the younger generation a sense of pride and identification with black history and traditions (Billingsley, 1992; Hill, 1999). In contrast, Korean parents' teaching remains very narrow in some cultural traditions and customs. Rather, they leave young Korean Canadians to deal with discrimination or racism issues on their own.

There is not much support the Korean community can provide to equip young Korean Canadians to deal with the schizophrenic kind of existence — between home life

Year, I had to bow to my parents as a sign of respect. Sometimes cousins came over to our house and paid respect to my parents. Then my parents gave them money in return. That was not interesting to me. It did not mean anything to me, but I just did it to please my parents.

My dad was very concerned about my 'fitting in.' We ate less Korean food than other Korean families. I had grown up usually with the western food such as some kinds of sandwiches. We did not eat Korean food very much. Until now I cannot eat spicy Korean food and do not like it very much. Just lately my family started eating Korean food at home. As my dad gets older, he just becomes more homesick. He wants to have Korean dishes so my mom makes Korean food these days. It is recently that I have Korean food quite often. But I am still not used to Korean food because I did not grow up with it.

and another life outside of the home. The parents are at a loss about how to rectify the situation where young Korean Canadians who have already assimilated into the new culture do not seem to care about their cultural origins. How can they teach the young generation to take advantage of their living in two different cultures in a more positive way? How can they convert the negative sentiments of young Korean Canadians into positive self-affirming aspects of their identity?

Problems and conflicts

Different cultural values

Anthony:

My becoming more adapted to the Canadian

The ethnic context of the family is very influential in how the second generation experiences and

culture was always a source of conflict with my parents. They valued Korean culture, but I wanted to live by the Canadian cultural values. These different cultural values did not mix well and instigated many problems between my parents and myself. Moving out to live with my girlfriend, going camping with my friends, traveling, partying, and drinking too much were examples that triggered conflicts with my parents. I wanted to be free. I think that one of the big differences between the two cultures is that parents tend to be overvalued in the Korean culture. If my parents tell me to do something I have to obey them. I am aware of the Korean cultural value of respecting parents. I absolutely respect my parents but in a different way, not like the traditional way. I want to make my own choices like other Canadians do. I want to take on the Canadian cultural value of independence. For example, the practice of "making my own decisions."

The insufficient understanding of Korean culture

Lily:

There were always some conflicts and

understands Korean culture and takes pride in being Korean. Much research emphasizes that intergenerational relations in immigrant families are characterized by powerful cultural conflicts. These conflicts influence the identity construction of the young generation. Lily's and Anthony's stories include details of tensions, problems, and struggles with their parents who tried to impose their cultural values on them while Lily and Anthony were gradually becoming "Canadianized." The cultural clashes with parents clearly stand out in the childhood memories of these two people.

As Anthony and Lily were more and more assimilated into the Canadian culture, the cultural disjunction was accelerated between them and their parents.

difficulties caused by cultural differences. My Korean teacher Mrs. Cho told me about some aspects of Korean culture that I did not really understand until she actually articulated it a bit more. She said that Koreans tend to be too exaggerated. For example, they might say, "Oh I love you so much," "I'm going crazy..." This kind of exaggeration is part of Korean culture. For example my parents said to me, "If you don't do this I won't give you money." But in the end they gave money. Their saying "No" did not mean the "usual No" in English. My parents tended to use this kind of Korean style of expression. They said something that would not mean the same thing in English. I understand it now. But I was confused in my childhood because I could not understand them. I did not really know these practices were connected to Korean culture until Mrs. Cho explained it. It was then that I realized these misunderstandings were not psychological problems of my parents, but more out of a cultural domain.

This generated many struggles and conflicts because the two cultures interacted against each other. The cultural clashes Anthony and Lily experienced with their parents are distinctly marked by cultural incommensurability where cultural differences constantly flow through different meanings without being merely determined.

Lily's episode describes the kind of misunderstanding elicited by her lack of knowledge about the Korean culture. She could not quite grasp the subtle nuances and implicit meanings involved in the Korean way of expressing oneself because her only way of understanding Korean was through literal meaning. This episode represents how the differences in culture and language evoke a misunderstanding between immigrant parents and children.

A lack of communication between parents and children

Anthony:

Many conflicts with my parents were related to poor communication between us. In the Korean culture, there is less communication, especially in a relationship between fathers and sons. The children are just expected to listen to the parents. It creates a barrier between parents and children. The Korean parents do not know how to communicate with their children. I think if there is more open communication, there would be less conflicts and problems between us.

The authoritarian dad

Lily:

My dad tended to get angry very easily when I did something wrong. To me his anger seemed to be out of proportion compared to what I had done wrong. So I thought maybe my dad had an anger management problem and he should go for counseling. I always wondered why he over-reacted to something I had done. He did not have to yell. I mean, he could tell me in a different way. At the

Anthony indicated that his parents' imposition of certain rules and expectations from their cultural values was a major source of their conflicts. In the absence of any open communication, these expectations were usually embedded in traditional and undemocratic ways. Anthony strongly insisted that in order to reduce conflicts and struggles, parents should try to create a more open environment in the family and invest their time talking with the children.

It is interesting to see the general model of family life idealized by the second generation Korean Canadians. Interestingly, Anthony and Lily's general ideas of the Canadian family reflect the life

time I thought it was part of my dad's personality. But watching some Korean videos, I realize Koreans do have that kind of tendency. They just yell for no apparent reason as a way of expressing their anger. When Koreans are talking, it sounds very angry to outsiders. I think the Korean language sounds angry in terms of the tone of the language.

When I listened to my dad I had become more sensitive because here in the Canadian culture raising one's voice is a big deal. I had already accepted that for years. I could not change my dad and I also could not change what I felt. Consequently, all I could do was just accept it because my dad was very traditional. He was probably more traditional than people who come from Korea right now. When he got mad he did not listen to me. He just got angrier and angrier. His voice was just louder and louder... I had to give in and say, "Ok I'm sorry. Please calm down."

Different parental models

Anthony:

In Canadian culture, children need help to get their homework done and get good

style of upper-middle class Canadians which may not accurately describe a typical Canadian family model.

Pyke (2000) notes how the monolithic image of the "normal American family" is used as an interpretive framework in which young Asian Americans gauge their own family experiences.

According to Pyke, Korean Americans and Vietnamese Americans often feel that their relationships with parents are deficient, lacking in expressive of love and psychological support. Similarly, Anthony and Lily describe their families as not normal when compared with the generalized notion of the "Canadian family."

grades. But in Korean culture, parents are here and the children are there. The parents just want their children to show how well they are doing in school, but they never help. Looking back now, I can more understand why they could not help me a lot. First of all, because of the language; second of all, because of the different culture; and also because of the different upbringing. I wish my parents could have a relationship with me as friends, not just as parents and children. I think it is what Korean culture lacks. My parents never asked me "How are you feeling at school?" It is not something that I blame my parents for it is just the way it was.

Different expectations

Anthony:

Another big issue that I had in my adolescence was my parents' inability to understand what I was going through. They had their own expectations from their Korean point of view and I had my own expectations from my Canadian point of view about what parents should do. We had the different expectations of what each other was supposed to do and how we were supposed

The Korean parents seem to be unable to interact successfully with the young second generation because of the experiential, cultural, and linguistic barrier. Their children come home from school with questions they cannot answer. For parents, life in Canada is full of pitfalls. Being dislocated from their home and engaging in the adaptation process leads to many difficulties for them.

Many young Korean Canadians in this study complained of a lack of emotional support from their parents. They indicated that they did not tell their parents what they had gone through in school. The parents might be aware of the difficulties and struggles of the young generation even in an abstract and superficial way. But they simply responded with silence because they were unsure of how to

to act. It caused me much frustration and disappointment.

As a Korean Canadian, I had different kinds of parental models because I already saw and learned what Canadian parents did with their children. I mean they took their children to movies and they spent time doing sports together with them. But I had never gone to a movie with my parents. Moreover, I was not allowed to go out late, to sleep over with friends, or to watch TV for long. I fought so hard against those problems.

They just wanted me to prove that I was doing well in school and getting good grades. They wanted me to show respect for parents and to accomplish what they expected to be done. For example, if I did not do well in school I was punished because they thought that doing well in school was a key to success.

An overemphasis on study

Lily:

My parents always asked me whether I did well in school rather than what I did. They really paid attention to me when I brought home my report card. They counted how many As and Bs I received. If I did not get

respond and they could not quite enter into these conflicting situations. Furthermore, there were very few resources to rely on. The Korean parents were barely capable of guiding the younger generation in how to resolve conflicting problems in a diaspora. The younger generation might be ill advised, and hence tended to forget about their Korean cultural heritage.

This lack of guidance originated from the fact that the parents had not gone through similar experiences during their own childhoods. It was the disparity in these experiences and histories that the separation and alienation between these two generations accelerated.

good grades, they went searching for a tutor to make up for my deficiencies. They were pretty good about finding good tutors and paying for them.

When I was in Grade 5 I was not very good in my school. So my dad became really concerned about me. He started getting me a private tutor who was a substitute teacher. She came over to my house every Saturday and did two hours tutoring me in Math and Science. During the summer vacation before Grade 6, she came to my house every day and went through the entire Grade 6 Math curriculum over the summer. When I went to Grade 6 I was much more prepared than the other students and I got a very high grade. But I did not find school interesting at all. I felt class was boring. Anyway, my Grade 5 summer vacation was hell. No playing, just studying, studying, studying.

If I had a B it was fine with me, but my parents wanted all A's. I think for Grade 5 or 6 children, it is too early to be really concerned about study. There was no need to have tutoring everyday. But if I did not do that, my dad would have punished me.

In my junior high school, I hated Math. One day, my dad went to Parent-Teacher Day. It

Given this situation, it is important to facilitate bridging the experiential rupture between the first and second generations and to help each understand and accept the other. It is significant that the parents and the young generations empathize, understand, and appreciate each other's experiences. Better communication, openness, and understanding of each other will lead young Korean Canadians to create a healthy cultural identity.

How could these two generations respond to each other in a way that moves beyond their different experiences? The process requires more follow-up questions: How can parents emphasize the importance of learning about the Korean culture to progeny who show mostly apathy because of the pressures to assimilate? What does

was an opportunity for parents to talk to teachers and ask how their children were doing in the class. The parents went around to every teacher like the French teacher, English teacher, Math teacher, etc. When my dad talked to the Math teacher, there was a list of top ten students. My name was not on the list. My dad got so mad and I was scolded for 2 to 3 hours. After that I had to put more effort toward Math.

In senior high school, I was doing well in school. The major trouble that I had at the time was in Physics class. The teacher taught us at the level of University Physics. I remember that one day my parents and brother were having fun together watching TV on the weekend, but I had to study all weekend for a Physics test on Monday. I had to memorize all the formulas and scenarios. There were some different ways to get the same answers but I could only memorize one way to get the answer. Anyway, I was not allowed to watch TV over the weekend. I was always forced to study hard in my adolescence.

it mean to be "Korean" outside Korea? In what ways can the Korean culture be taught properly?

The over-emphasis on academic achievement is deeply embedded in these intergenerational cultural conflicts. Lily spoke disapprovingly of the psychological pressures her parents put on her around school performance. Anthony also spoke at length of his feelings about growing up in an atmosphere where education received such a high priority. While affirming its value, he resented the manner and means by which his parents emphasized doing well in school, an issue that conflicted with his ideas about how family relationships should be.

The social pressure of westernization

Anthony:

I never used to experience the real Canadian culture in my childhood. Canadians had parties during holidays or they went up to the cottage during vacations. All these were things that Korean families did not necessarily do. I did not go camping, or skiing, etc. My difficulty was not necessarily related to language but more to culture. I had never experienced "real" Canadian culture because I did not have access to it. I really wanted to do those things but I could not.

Coming to high school, I realized that in order to be accepted in the Canadian society, I had to speak English well, I had to dress suitable to the North American culture, and I had to act like other North American people, etc. There were so many social and cultural pressures. In high school, peer pressure was extremely important. I was supposed to drink, I was supposed to go out, I was supposed to trade drugs, and I was supposed to have sexual experiences, etc. All these unwritten things were what this Canadian culture was about. As a minority, I needed to participate in all this cultural stuff to be "cool" and

The emphasis on achievement and education is a frequent theme coming out of the narratives of the Asian immigrant students. For immigrant parents, "Doing well in school" is seen as an effective means of overcoming socio-cultural barriers and achieving socioeconomic status and rewards in a white-dominant society. It is taken as the only way to compensate for the disadvantage of being immigrants. This discourse is also closely related to the "American dream" that socioeconomic success is possible and open for all who strive for it.

These two stories do not show a monolithic pattern because they have maneuvered their cross-cultural living differently depending on the different situations they have gone through. In spite of the diversity, however,

accepted. But I was not allowed to do those things according to my Korean culture. These cultural issues led me to feel alienated from other Canadian friends.

Wanting to look "white"

Lily:

I recall that I was angry at the world a lot during my childhood and adolescence. I would think of myself as white, but I realized I was not white when I looked at myself in the mirror. I saw myself as completely different from other white friends. I had different skin color, body structure, hair color, and so on. I had grown up with little Barbie dolls which were represented as white, not Asian. It made me feel Asians were inferior to whites. I still have that feeling right now although I know it is not true, logically speaking. But at an emotional level, sometime I feel Asians are just second rate. It was what I found living in this white dominated culture.

Interestingly, when I went to Korea, people said to me, "You really don't look like a Korean. You look half Korean. Your eyelashes look like the ones white people

one common theme runs through their memories: a part of growing up as a Korean Canadian involves developing an awareness of their "non-whiteness."

They remember their childhood as an emerging consciousness of their differences from the white Canadians. When Anthony and Lily were growing up, there were not many Korean immigrants in Canada. The social landscape of their neighborhood was a predominantly white Canadian one. As children, they thought "looking Korean" would be a barrier to normalcy. In the white dominant social environment, being "normal" meant being "white." The absence of minorities in their living environment led them to establish the conception of 'normalcy' as being white.

have." I had lost the way back in because I was aware that if I was really compared with white people here I was nothing.

Just wanting to "fit in"

Lily:

In elementary school, I really wanted to fit in. I remember that there was one girl who came from Vietnam. She had just immigrated and she did not speak a lot of English. She ended up being my friend when it was just Grade 3. When she came to my house for breakfast, we ate Korean noodles using chopsticks. When she went to school she told other classmates that I had eaten with chopsticks. She said it in a way that made me feel bad. After that, I was not her friend any more. I felt betrayed because she let out something that I perceived to be very private. At the time, I was trying hard to be normal with the other Canadian students. I brought only sandwiches to school for my lunch just like the other Canadian students. I never had Korean food at school.

Despite having grown up as Canadians, their childhood memories are scarred by the powerful feelings of wanting to be 'white' because of always being marked by their differences. While they realized that they were physically and culturally different, subconsciously they did not want to be weird, different, or stand out. They just wanted to be as 'Canadianized' as they possibly could. They tried to convince themselves that they were "white," whatever that meant. It was not that they were the brunt of direct racial insults. Rather, it was more a matter of being different from most of the white children in school or the westerners they idealized as young children. The fear and anxiety of being different discouraged them from being Korean and developing their cultural identity as Korean.

Being ashamed of Korean culture

Anthony:

In my growing up years, I wanted to have nothing to do with Korean culture. I just wanted to do the same things as other Canadians. Not only eating the Canadian food but also doing everything. I was always nervous about bringing over Canadian friends because in my house there were always strange Korean smells, strange customs, clothes and decorations. I was so concerned about how they would react to those kinds of Korean things. I did not want to show my friends that I was different from them. I just wanted to live the Canadian life style. I remember that at my birthday party I said to my mom, "Mom, can we order pizza?" I did not want to share Korean dishes for my birthday with my Canadian friends because I wished I was not a Korean. At the time, I really wanted to become a Canadian, wear the same clothes, do the same things, as well as have the same food.

Unfortunately, Anthony and Lily have never been taught directly and publicly how to take being "different" in a positive way. The pressure of being "normal" did not allow them to practice and openly exercise their Korean background. They considered their Korean side was something that should be hidden from other Canadian friends and only enjoyed in the privacy of home. Indeed, Anthony and Lily confessed at various times that they felt ashamed of the Korean food in the refrigerator and the smell this food permeated through the house. It reflects the strenuous efforts they employed to erase their sense of difference. I also heard stories from other Korean Canadians who did not understand why they needed to learn about their roots. They just pretended that they were exactly like white people.

A patriarchal dad

Lily:

I had some conflicts with my dad because he was patriarchal. My dad would tell me "You go do this or that for me" like "Get some water," "Find me a pair of shoes," etc. I thought that those things were not necessarily what I should do. I did not want to do them. So we came into conflict that way. I felt other Korean Canadian girls also encountered these problems with their dads.

Confused cultural identity

Anthony:

In some cases I still feel I am neither part of here nor there. I am more here at one time, but I am more there other times. When I look at myself in the mirror and consider my history I am totally Korean. But looking at the inside of myself, I am not 100% Korean but maybe 20 to 30%. I have no doubt about my Canadian-ness. But it does not necessarily mean that I am not pleased with my Korean identity. I stand in somewhere there. I am part of both, even a little bit.

I think the second generation is the most

Obviously, assimilating pressures are continuously imposed on immigrant students as a hegemonic norm. This is the case even though multicultural education is part of federal policy in Canada. The immigrant students are struggling to reconcile these tensions. They try to figure out where they fit in a society that never seems to accept cultural hybridity as a possibility. This points to the need for multicultural education to consider how the psychological twists of young immigrant students often impedes upon their positive identity construction. It also indicates that public schooling in Canada subtly inculcates immigrant students from minority backgrounds with a value system that endures white privilege in Canada.

difficult generation. We have to fit together the fragmented little pieces of the puzzle that our parents give to us, our school gives to us, and society gives to us. We always have to satisfy all those different kinds of conflicting behaviors that we are supposed to have. As a second generation, I have to find out who I am in a very confused situation where I am not really Canadian, not really Korean. What am I supposed to do? I do not know. My parents have to let me figure it out because they also do not have any answers. Korean immigrants have not had the third generation or the fourth generation yet. All of my cousins and all of my friends are the second generation. The third generation may not necessarily be Korean. There could be frequent mixed marriages and mixed babies. How do we expect them to be Korean here in Canada, to just stay Korean? Here is not Korea! When I was growing up, nobody told me what it would be like to be a Korean Canadian, and what it would be like to grow up outside of Korea. I did not have any blueprint. I still do not know what I am going to be and what I am supposed to do. Am I supposed to go back to Korea and learn my roots? Or am I just supposed to live as a

The parental generation's desire is to attempt to make a continuity of here and there despite the discontinuity caused by their move and dislocation. For the assimilated generations, it is too easy to forget their culture and forfeit community in the western ideology of the "free individual," an ideology that leads the younger generations to indulge in individualized isolation from their cultural background. The assimilated generations hardly want to make any emotional commitment or attachment to Korean culture. How should we teach them Korean culture? We may be able to talk to them about certain aspects of Korean culture, but we will not be able to force them to make emotional attachments to Korean culture. What can be shared between these two generations seems only some knowledge of the Korean culture. It would be wrong to expect the assimilated younger generations to accept and understand Korean

Canadian here and forget about my Korean side? Am I supposed to marry a Korean girl and keep the Korean lineage according to my parents' wishes? My father did this, my uncle did that, and many other Korean immigrants did this. So should I follow in their footsteps? Yeah, I am so confused. There is no guideline.

In this sense, I am good for my sister. I have already gone through the same problems, the same feelings, and the same kind of troubles between Korean culture and Canadian culture she is undergoing now. I am so glad that I can be there for her and tell her "Don't worry. It's going to be ok. Just be respectful to mom and dad and then you will understand them later." That is my role and my responsibility to her. But I did not have any guide or help in my growing up. I did not have older Korean people who said that they understood what I was going through. My parents did not grasp what I was going through so I had to deal with those problems by myself. They just tried to put food on the table and thought that their responsibility was done.

culture in the same way that it is understood by the parents' generation. The Korean culture will likely have different meaning for the first generation and the second generation.

Unlike the parents' generation, for the second generation, "being an authentic Korean" naturally becomes impossible. If they were raised in Korea they could just be Korean. But being raised here, they are compelled to be Korean Canadian, not just Korean, nor just Canadian. The issue then is not about "being Korean" in some self-evident ways. The obsession with one's pure and authentic origin will lead the younger generations to feel discriminated against by other Koreans because they don't *look* pure Korean. Their situation of being raised in another culture already makes it impossible to

Culturally-insensitive teachers

Anthony:

When I was growing up, none of my teachers knew what to do with immigrant students. None of them said, "Celebrate your customs, traditions, cultures." All my friends were white Canadians and the school neither allowed me to celebrate my culture nor encouraged me to understand my culture and language. In this kind of environment how could I feel comfortable with my different culture? For Europeans, it seemed so much easier to adjust to the Canadian culture and to feel comfortable because they came from a similar cultural background. But Korean immigrant students could not help feeling embarrassed about their place in western culture. Not surprisingly, I came to consider my different culture as shameful and easily forgot in an insecure school environment where I could not feel confident and proud of my own cultural heritage.

Embarrassed by people's ignorance

Anthony:

I had never felt racism in high school. But in

assume an identity in terms of the country of their birth or their ancestors' country. It is therefore important to listen to how they define themselves. The parents should consider how young Korean Canadians figure out which cultural elements match rather than just hanging on to the Korean cultural tie in any kind of authentic way.

Some people might think Canada is an inclusive multicultural society. But the Anglo-centered cultural value system is still very much a dominant part of Canadian culture. As Anthony mentioned, the typical teachers' lack of understanding of immigrant students indicates that the Canadian school system has not taken enough of an active role in facilitating the creative construction of the cultural

university, I experienced some kind of racism. I got into a college outside Toronto where the people did not have many opportunities to see Asians. Toronto was a very diversified city so I could see lots of ethnicities in the city, eat different foods, and enjoy different cultural events. But the college where I entered was different from Toronto where I had grown up. There were few Asians. I encountered some embarrassing events. I do not think it was racial discrimination but more ignorance. I think ignorance is a different thing from racial discrimination. When people say something you may perceive it as racially uncomfortable. But it would not be discrimination. Rather it would come from ignorance. They just do not know that what they are saying might hurt you and could be perceived as a racial comment. I had two incidents in terms of such racial comments. I was sitting and watching TV in a student lounge of my college dormitory. One of the residents approached and asked me, "Isn't it hard to blink?" I said, "What do you mean?" and she said, "Because your eyelashes are so thin and short. Do they scratch them (eyes)? Do they poke them?" I was so embarrassed for her. I said, "You

identity of immigrant students. Teachers tend to wait for the students to adapt themselves. Their cultural ignorance and lack of attention lead immigrant students to the miserable experiences of alienation and separatism. Many immigrants just blame themselves for their unsuccessful integration.

The new influx of immigrants from different countries has accelerated the multicultural nature of Canadian society. With the slogan of multiculturalism, Canada is representing itself as a society embracing cultural differences. The official federal policy of multiculturalism was enacted in 1971. Many Canadians tend to believe that, because of this policy, racism is not part of Canada any more. It is the blindness of people who close their eyes to racism which is the most problematic. They have eyes but they can't see.

really think that? That's really too bad." And she was very hurt by my response, I think, because I was very aggressive towards her. At that moment I was very defensive. My friends who were sitting there were laughing at both her and me. They were laughing at her because her comment was so stupid. It was not very smart of her to ask that. I think it was not racial discrimination. It happened through her ignorance.

And another incident was when my friend and me were eating some Chinese food in the cafeteria. The guy who was in charge of taking care of residents in the dormitory came in and asked, "Oh, having rice again?" He was a residence assistant, which meant that he was supposed to be knowledgeable about cultural differences, but he was not, which was unfortunate. We were just shocked. How can he say that? We were very angry about it. Had I been in a position of the white person, I would have perceived and responded in a different way. I would have said, "Yes, I am having rice again" But we took it extremely defensively at the moment because we thought it was a stereotype towards Asians. I think he did not intend to hurt us. He just did not know what it meant

Anthony spoke about some embarrassing experiences with some people who were not attentive to cultural differences. He just interprets it as their ignorance, but we need to think about complexities around the issue of racism. Is it enough if we simply say, "Sorry, I didn't intend to hurt you" after we have affected somebody in a negative way emotionally, psychologically, or mentally? Where does this ignorance and narrow-mindedness come from? How is it related to racism? If we define racism only as direct racial slurs, it is such a naïve supposition.

There are several forms of racism. In comparison to the institutionalized racial discrimination of the old generation of Korean immigrants, Anthony's experience has been less constrained by segregation. Indeed,

by his stupid words. But my friend took it as a racial comment so he went and talked to him specifically, "What is your opinion? You can't say that to Asians because that is a kind of stereotype. We do not necessarily put on that stereotype." The guy ended up apologizing, "I didn't know that it might hurt your feelings."

Parental discouragement on interracial marriage

Lily:

One of my dad's friends has four daughters and three of them were married to white guys. All of them were very successful Korean Canadians. One is a doctor herself and she was married to another doctor, another daughter is a lawyer and she was also married to a white lawyer, and the other one is too. Although they invited my dad to their wedding, he did not go there because my dad considered it as dishonored. My dad just went to the one girl's wedding where both bride and groom were Koreans.

My dad keeps telling me, "You cannot marry non-Korean." But actually I do not like Korean men because I think Korean males are

contemporary forms of racism are not only based on skin colors. Racism no longer expresses itself as blatantly as it once did. Rather, it operates invisibly and implicitly. A superficial tolerance and acquiescence towards cultural diversity conceals the multi-layered reality of racism. The issue of racism should be interpreted in a broader context of the economic, political, social power relationships.

The parents' negative attitudes towards interracial marriage indicate their notion of "being Korean by blood." Most young Korean Canadians have the experience of confronting an interracial marriage issue with their parents. Lily and Anthony recalled vividly that their parents urged them to marry a Korean. This insistence reflects the desire of

very established by chauvinistic like characteristics "Get me this," "Make me dinner," kind of ordering to women. If most Korean guys are like my dad, I would not marry a Korean guy.

But my parents really want me to marry a Korean man. Lately, they tell me very often, "You have to pray to find someone who is a good match for you." When they talk about a good match for me, firstly they mean a Korean. But I just want to be open to meet anybody. My partner does not necessarily have to be a Korean. In terms of my future spouse, I would like a person who has intelligence, integrity, honesty and ambition. These kinds of things are not really about whether someone is racially white or Korean.

Korean parents to keep the Korean blood pure. While parents immigrated with hopes and dreams for a better future and strenuously tried to survive here, they failed to realize what could result from the Canadianization of their children. As they were working hard to provide a stable life for the family, their children were rapidly becoming assimilated. The parents should understand that young Korean Canadians, who grow up in this multicultural and multiracial environment, do not want to put on the artificial constraints of ethnicity and race when choosing a future spouse.

Everyday consequences of being Korean Canadian

Unconsciously internalized Korean culture

Lily:

When my younger brother calls me by my name "Lily" I get mad. I emphasize to him, "You should call me "Nu-na" which is a label

Lily's story shows how Korean culture has been involuntarily internalized. She has accepted certain parts of Korean culture, not so much the specifics of it. Anthony

for an elder sister in Korean, not my name." He usually calls me Nu-na instead of calling my name directly. When he uses my name I feel kind of strange. In addition, when my brother addresses me, his tone of voice should be respectful. These aspects represent certain Korean cultural values inside me.

Inseparable Korean culture

Anthony:

I have had the urge to be a part of my Korean culture, traditions, and customs. I always feel like I belong to something larger than myself, larger than Canadian culture, I belong to something with more tradition than what other Canadians have. I always feel I have special things inside me which my Canadian friends do not have.

Relationship to other Asian Canadians

Lily:

I thought of myself as a white. But coming to UBC, I started recognizing that "I am an Asian." UBC looked like Asian villages where there were many Asian faces. I was not standing out in the crowd any more. Coming

unconsciously acquired some sense of the Korean culture through the living example of his parents rather than through self-conscious verbal pronouncements or active efforts by either himself or his parents.

Anthony insists that although he has been through the assimilation process, there is somehow a re-connection to his being Korean and his Korean heritage. Korean culture is something inescapable from him and intrinsic within himself. This means that he cannot completely get whitewashed. Well accepted as a Canadian, he continuously wonders about his roots and wants to delve into the Korean culture and language. He wishes to remember his Korean culture. His sense of being a Korean is reappearing at the same time that some aspects are disappearing.

to University, I became more distanced from white people. In high school, I got along with white people very well. There were not any options because there were very few Asians. But the university environment was totally different. When I was in the science classes in my first year, there were a lot of Asian students. I can say in English 100 or Psychology 100 there would be 50% Asians, but in science classes there would be more like 60% or 75% Asians. At UBC, Asians were the majority.

Most classes for the first year students were so huge that it was difficult to make friends there. The first year was really tough because I did not know anybody at all. Most of the people I knew in my high school went to SFU. I did not find anyone else at UBC.

Personally, it is hard to make friends in a new environment. For a more outgoing person like my brother, it would be easier than me.

But I am a bit shy and quiet so it is more difficult for me to approach other people first. I tried to seek the people familiar to me.

I think it is natural that people tend to aggregate towards the people who are similar in terms of race and culture. I do not think it is racism. Rather, it is a natural human

Lily points out that it was with some Asian-origin persons rather than others that she had felt more comfortable socializing. Indeed, her social life at university was centered on a friendship network of Asian Canadians which, for the most part, was composed of students of Japanese or Chinese origins. Lily felt more connection with other second generation Asians who spoke English and had a cultural commonality with her. She really did not get along with the Korean student groups who spoke Korean fluently and were oriented more towards the Korean culture. She felt no sense of kinship with those Korean students. Rather, she felt alienated from them due to her limited Korean and cultural knowledge. This drew her to feel a greater sense of social ease and receptivity with other Asian Canadians who had a common growing-up experience. Creating a social circle with Canada-born Asians, she disconnected herself

tendency to gravitate towards the familiar. If you want to make friends from different cultural backgrounds or ethnic groups you have to make greater effort.

In my first year, I joined the KISS club (Korean Intercollegiate Student Society). But I could not get along with them. It just took my money and didn't do anything for the whole year. It was totally disorganized. The people drank so much that I thought everybody was an alcoholic. And plus they only spoke Korean but I could not speak Korean well. I was in a totally different boat from them. They had their own culture which was very different from what I knew. I did not really feel related to them, and at the same time I could hardly relate to white people. I found myself more related to other Asian groups. I would get along more with other Asians who had grown up here as I did and spoke English. In getting along with other Asian groups with a similar background to me, my lack of Korean did not really matter, and thus I felt completely comfortable with people from these groups.

from Korean students who came from a more Korean cultural background. It would be interesting to see how her cultural identity construction is related to other Asian Canadians. Perhaps future research can explore this process.

What does it mean to the second generation to assert "roots and origins"? Is it just for a kind of nostalgia? Is it a kind of superficial cloak to cover over their growing Canadian identity? Or, is it a basic immutable form of being that cannot be modified over movement, dislocation, and change?

Both of the two young Korean Canadians simultaneously experienced their identity as having been positioned and repositioned in the different situations they faced. Sometimes

Want to get my lost Korean culture back

Anthony:

When I was young, my family and my uncle's family got together in my grandmother's house on Korean holidays such as Korean Harvest Day and New Year's Day. We put on *Han-Bok* (Korean traditional custom), did *Se-Bae* (Korean traditional bow done on New Year's Day). After my grandmother died, we did not get together often. I miss those traditional customs and ceremonies so much now. I wish I had kept them going. As soon as I left them behind I naturally lost them completely. If I could live my life all over again, I would wish to be forced to speak Korean at home, not even reading and writing but just verbally, and to observe Korean cultural traditions.

Growing up, I did not want to be proud of my Korean culture because I did not know why I should be proud of it. As a young child, I just did not want to be different from other Canadian children. At this age, however, I feel so empty. I feel like there might be something more I should do with Korean culture. But when I was a little child I did not realize it. Getting older, I started having

they felt they were Canadian, sometimes they felt they were Korean, but they never became purely Canadian or Korean.

When they say "pure," it implies their complex sentiments of frustration and emotional anxiety invoked in front of the pressure of cultural purity and authenticity. This essentialist view of identity makes young Korean Canadians feel "not Korean enough" and "not Canadian enough." Thus it draws them to feel unfit anywhere.

Lily still has a far more compartmentalized sense of identity. Her being a Korean and being a Canadian is experienced separately. For her, Korean culture is still a very private part of her life while Canadian culture is experienced in public. Korean culture is held psychologically and unconsciously within her, but it is

respect for my Korean culture and being more confident with it.

My parents only emphasized that I had to compete with the white people to live like them. But I wish that my parents had encouraged me to appreciate my Korean heritage more. They would have taught me more about Korean culture, traditions, customs, and the language. I do not intend to blame my parents. It was not their fault. They could not afford to take it seriously because they were so busy themselves simply surviving here.

Going to a good university and being financially secure is what Korean parents mean by success. Usually Korean parents sacrifice everything to help their children accomplish it. For my parents' generation, their children's success meant compensation for their sacrifice and hard times. But, they did not know what they were really sacrificing. Pushing the children to be well adapted to Canadian society, they left out teaching children about their roots. They did not know what would result from their ignorance in not teaching Korean culture to their children.

I want the lost Korean culture back for my

not played out in her everyday interactions. She easily conforms to the dominant Canadian culture while her Korean culture exists as a segmented or compulsory burden.

In particular, her disinterest in Korean culture and her feeling of learning Korean as a burden reminds me of the idea of "symbolic ethnicity" which describes a type of ethnic attachment that has been observed among European third- and fourth-generations (Alba, 1990; Gans, 1979). This term refers to the tendency of maintaining ethnicity without practicing ethnic culture or participating in ethnic networks. This new kind of ethnic involvement relies on the use of ethnic symbols rather than the active participation in ethnic culture.

children. The previous generation did not have any exemplary model to inform and guide their children. I think my generation will do it more. I did not grow up with any examples of Korean Canadian experiences, but I want my children to benefit from my generation. I hope there will be a healthier balance in the next generation.

No interest in Korean culture and language

Lily:

For me, the Korean language and culture are a kind of extra burden. I am trying to learn Korean again now. Not because I really want to, but because it might be useful for me in business and because my parents are forcing me to learn it now. And plus if I look this way and cannot speak Korean, people would think something is wrong with me and ask why I cannot speak the language. That is why I am trying to learn Korean now. I do not have a lot of Korean friends and do not need to speak Korean much. In this situation, being forced to learn Korean is extra work that I do not want but have to do.

According to Gans (1979), most third or fourth generation Jewish and Catholic white ethnic groups achieve high levels of acculturation and social assimilation. In the process, they lose much of their ancestral cultural background. Yet, they continue to perceive themselves as ethnics and maintain their ethnic identity through major symbols such as ethnic food and festivals which does not require much effort and does not interfere with other aspects of their lives. Gans further hypothesizes that the third or fourth generations "are less and less interested in their ethnic cultures and organizations and instead more concerned with maintaining their ethnic identity, with the feeling of being Jewish, or Italian, or Polish, and with finding ways of feeling and expressing that identity in suitable ways" (p 7).

Missing out on aspects of both cultures

Anthony:

Living through two cultures, I can choose what I want from each culture. But at the same time I feel something is missing. I am in both worlds, but I am missing out on something from both cultures, as well. Living in the Canadian culture, I have gained so many things in terms of access to education and adaptability of entering into North American situations. I do not know what it would be like to have Korean friends, to go to Korean clubs, or how to approach and talk to people. I know Korean culture only in a Canadian context. I do not know what Korean culture is really like in a Korean context. I do not know Korean history and language well. What I know of Korean culture only comes from my parents, from my relatives, and from Korean church-related people here in Canada.

I am in-between cultures, but it is unfair to say that I possess two cultures equally. In terms of Canadian culture, I have not grown up with many Canadian experiences as compared to normal Canadian children. That is why I do not feel I am completely a part of Canadian

The old ethnic cultures serve no useful purpose in identity construction for the third or fourth generations who lack direct ties to the old country. Symbolic ethnicity is only centered on ethnic symbols which are highly subjective and intermittent. As emphasized by Alba (1990), it is characterized by a high degree of choice in terms of how and whether to identify with a particular ethnicity. In other words, individuals can be free to choose to identify or not, choose which elements of their ancestral culture fit with them, and decide how important ethnic identity should be for them. It is *their* choice how they manifest or express their ethnicity. This way of "being ethnic" provides a way to feel a distinctive ethnic identity without detracting from one's status and legitimacy as a member of the mainstream society.

culture. I do not feel I am 100% Canadian. I am Korean Canadian. That is never going to change in my life.

The model racial minority

Lily:

We can still see strong stereotypes towards Asians in a place where there are not a lot of Asians and there is little opportunity to see, meet, and work with Asians. But it is not a big deal here in Vancouver because we have so many Asians. I have heard of the "model racial minority" that Asians are hard workers. I think this stereotype is actually helpful in some ways as compared to stereotypes such as drug addicts, alcoholics, etc that probably go against us more.

I think Asians are really a minority group. There is definitely a hierarchy in terms of races; White, Spanish, Asian, and Black. I think probably Spanish is higher than Asian, Asian is higher than Black, and Black is at the very bottom. Asians are a kind of silent minority. The political parties likely care about Blacks as a minority, but they don't care much about Asians. In a sense, Asians are more a minority because they work very

Lily has the characteristic of symbolic ethnicity. She does not have a special interest in specific Korean cultural practices or forms, but she wants to keep her sense of being Korean in many ways. She wants to maintain her Korean culture as long as it keeps her status as Canadian and does not interfere with Canadian cultural norms and beliefs. Anthony also wants to keep some Korean cultural values as long as they are compatible with the culture of the dominant society. Talking about raising children, Anthony expresses his regret that he could not nourish and cultivate Korean cultural traditions and practices to his future children. But at the same time, he expresses his uncertainty about to what extent he should emphasize Korean culture to his children.

Anthony and Lily want to exercise Korean culture to an extent that it

hard but little attention is given to them.

Still Confused at where to go

Anthony:

I hope that my children speak Korean at home with my parents all the time. I want my children to really know about Korean culture. But I still do not know "How to do it" because I do not know Korean culture well and I am unable to speak Korean fluently. In addition, everything seems to be going towards the majority culture. In Canada, the culture of the majority is still the white culture because white people hold the power and they set all the power structures and systems to maintain privilege for their culture. Everyone has to adapt to the white culture to live in Canada. Considering this reality, I feel a little embarrassed about keeping my own culture.

Presumed foreignness

Lily:

People treat me differently and make some assumptions due to my differences like, "You do not know how to speak English" or "You

does not make it especially difficult for them to be accepted and to participate in the dominant society. The way they want to practice Korean culture is loosely related to specific cultural practices and traditions. Their practices of Korean culture are reminiscent of symbolic ethnicity. While there is more or less a salient Korean identity, not simply being Canadian, this Korean identity is likely to be more selective and less distinctive in its expression than it had been in the lives of their parents. Nevertheless, they want to keep in touch with a sense of being Korean.

The presumed foreignness encountered by Lily highlights her particular situation of looking Asian and speaking English. She was highly aware of the misidentification of her Canadian status in other peoples' eyes. When people complimented her on how

are an Asian who just recently immigrated." They just judge me based on how I look. In some cases, it was a humiliating experience. People really did not try to know who I really was inside.

Sometimes people just assume that I have a lack of knowledge about the mainstream Canadian culture and language just from my Asian appearance. I had some encounters where people immediately mistook me for someone who did not speak English. When I was in Saskatchewan, I was walking around the downtown area and a person came up to me and asked, "Do you speak English?" I was really kind of surprised and embarrassed. I was born here and my first language is English. I can barely say a few words of Korean. I mean, I should not be asked that question. Some people do not think of me as a normal Canadian.

Ethnic capital

Lily:

Whenever my dad change tires on his car he goes to a Korean mechanic. My dad said, "It's useful to know Korean people." He means that when Koreans want to buy a car and go

well she spoke English, she interpreted such compliments as an indication that she was not a native speaker which meant she was a different kind of Canadian differentiated from the white Canadians. No matter how much she tried, her fluent and unaccented English could not peel away her physical differences.

She seemed overly sensitive and overly reactive. However, this reflects her awareness of prejudice and discrimination towards Asian Canadians despite the fact that they are treated far more favorably than they were a few years ago. The insensitive remark in Lily's story, "Do you speak English?" represents that some white Canadians still assume that Asian Canadians do not fully belong to Canadian society. This unacknowledged treatment negatively affects the identity construction of the young Korean Canadian generation.

to Korean people, they can get a discount. It is one of the most important reasons that my dad forces me to learn to speak Korean more fluently. If I can speak Korean more fluently it would be beneficial to me.

My dad's friend's son is a doctor in East Vancouver. He speaks perfect English but he does not get along with English clients. He is forced to learn Korean just out of economic necessity because most of his clients are Koreans. Koreans want to go to a Korean doctor, Caucasians want a Caucasian doctor, and Chinese want a Chinese doctor, something like that. I think it is a human tendency to gravitate towards the familiar and to go with the same thing. In this sense, if I can speak Korean I can take advantage of the Korean community. That's why I am trying to learn Korean now even though I really do not want to. I can take advantage of my ability to speak another language in addition to English. For example, I can bring more customers to my business if I can speak Korean.

Lily views being Korean as strategically valuable because it endows her with a kind of "ethnic capital" that is of great value in this multicultural society. Her father, who exclusively encouraged her to have a command of English even several years ago, forces her to learn Korean and acquire some concrete or actual knowledge of Korean culture because he thinks it would be useful to both her career and her real life. Indeed, the attraction of being Korean to young Korean Canadians is reinforced by the fact that their being Korean would be a valuable source of ethnic capital. The Korean identity is not simply something to be shunned or dismissed, but something to be deliberately cultivated as a valuable resource.

Embracing both identities

From embarrassed to confident

Anthony:

I was always trying to fit my Korean culture into the Canadian culture. I wished I had brought my Korean self to the Canadian culture without many problems. I was so concerned about how other people looked at me because of my different language, culture, and race. That's why I tried to dress in a Canadian style and do the same things other Canadian children did as much as I could. But as I have matured, I have come to better understand that what was embarrassing for me has constructed who I am today. I cannot be separated from my Korean culture nor have it taken away although I did not like my childhood due to the cultural problems I had. Right now, I welcome my different cultures which have shaped who I am. I am in a place where I am confident to be who I am. I am very secure with myself and comfortable with the Korean culture and language which are nothing strange to me any more. I do not care about my differences any more. Even if I am the only Korean guy among thousands of

MIRROR MIRROR

*People keep asking me where I
come from*

says my son.

*Trouble is I'm American on the
inside*

*and oriental on the
outside*

No Doug

Turn that outside in

THIS is what America looks like.

*(Mitsuye Yamada, (cited in Minh-
ha, 1989, p 89)*

For Anthony, his increasing inner confidence became a starting point for open and connective identity construction. Although he could not specify what it meant, he had increasingly become aware of his sense of being Korean and started to embrace both cultures more. What is remarkable is that his primary

people I would not care. When I was teaching in South America, I was the only Korean guy in the entire school. I never met another Korean person in almost four years. But it did not matter to me.

Although I was ashamed of my Korean culture in my childhood, I later became more aware of my own culture and started being proud of it. When I was a child, I was so nervous to show Korean culture to my Canadian friends. But right now, I am not embarrassed about it any more and not worried about my differences any more either.

I can share everything about my Korean culture with my white friends. I bring my friends over to my house and say, "Do you want to try some Korean food?" rather than saying "Do you want a sandwich?" And they say, "Of course, let me try it. Oh, it's delicious. This is good." I feel so glad about it. I do not think I could be in a good relationship with someone who does not understand my Korean side which is so important to me. I do not necessarily agree with everything in Korean culture, but I am proud of having a Korean heritage. Indeed, there is a significant shift in thinking about my cultural identity.

source of being a Korean was nourished within himself rather than by anchoring his identity in specific cultural forms or in relation to his place of origins. His pride in being a Korean and the strength of his Korean identity had been developed through self-assertion within himself rather than actively excising Korean cultural values and practices.

It is particularly noteworthy that although Anthony not only felt comfortable in the company of accepting white people, he did not relinquish his Korean culture. It proves that the conventional assimilation model is not applicable to young Korean Canadians any more. An increasing acceptance of the Canadian culture and greater social relations with Canadians do not necessarily lead to the surrender of the Korean culture.

More comfortable with both cultures

Lily:

In elementary school, I always wanted to be a white and I did not want to be a Korean. But over the years I gradually came to realize that I was not white, I was Korean, and then I accepted it. Looking back, I had some feelings of not fitting in well with both cultures. When I was younger, I was really worried about being different. I wanted to be the same as all the other children. That was why I did not want to eat Korean dishes. I always brought sandwiches as my lunch. But right now I feel more comfortable in both cultures. I can straddle both cultures and I am pretty happy where I am now. I am not completely Korean and I am not completely Canadian. I would not be able to have the same background as Koreans who come from Korea or Canadians who have been raised only in the Canadian culture. But I have both cultures inside me.

Possessing characteristics from both cultures

Anthony:

Right now I am proud of my Korean roots

For both Anthony and Lily, despite their comparative cultural assimilation, the characteristics of the Korean culture were inseparably intertwined in their identity construction. As Philips (1975) has addressed, the relations between the ethnic culture and the host culture are more complex than what the assimilation model has generally assumed:

"Rather than simply exchanging their original culture for that of the host society, migrants may actually begin with a culture slightly different from that of the majority of their compatriots; may hesitate between competing versions of the host culture; and may find that their life situation leads them into developing a new culture, different alike from that of their origin, that of their hosts, and that to which they aspire" (Philips, 1975, p. 218, cited in Mckay, 1980, pp.58-59).

although I have little of it and I am distinct from other Koreans. I might be a very limited Korean in other Koreans' eyes. If I go to Korea, Korean people would automatically recognize that I am an incomplete Korean. But I have some connections to Korean culture in terms of the customs, the food, the family structure, the idea of certain family values, and a little bit of language, all of which are part of my Korean-ness. Somehow, I act and behave instantly in Korean ways. If I am with an elder person when I get out of the car, I will make sure to open the door for her and let her out. In this way, Korean culture naturally comes out. I have no idea why I act like that. Maybe I can guess that I am more Korean than I think I am. I am always connected to the Korean culture somehow. But at the same time, I think I am more Canadian than Korean. I can speak the language, understand the customs, and I know how to get things done in terms of social insurance, drivers license, etc. Also, I am proud of some parts of Canadian culture like the freedoms that I have, being able to speak English anywhere in the world, really having access to good education, etc. I appreciate my parents who provided me with a good

Although these two young Korean Canadians had grown up in two cultures they were not split in half; instead, there are two distinct beings inside them. If they were separated from one side, they would lose the sense of who they are. An inseparable link between these two worlds allowed them to constantly see themselves in a new way without any absolute or pure sense of identity.

Being and living in-between two cultural worlds was not simply a one-way process in which they affirmed their roots or completely assimilated to one culture. Embracing different cultures from different eyes, the Korean second generations are actually shaping and reshaping their Korean Canadian identity. Living in-between cultures provides

opportunity to live in Canada. I am not sure that if I was in Korea I could enjoy the same standard of living. Nevertheless, I do not think I am a 100% Canadian because I have too many Korean characteristics inside me which make me see and experience things in different ways from other Canadians.

The unavoidability of being Korean

Lily:

I need to cultivate my Korean identity more because it is part of my heritage. I mean there is no question that I have to know my culture and language. When I was in law school, I met someone who was half Chinese and half white. He did not speak Chinese at all although his mother was Chinese.

Apparently, he had grown up speaking English all the time. He was smart, intelligent, and spoke perfect English. But, in fact, he did not know anything about his culture and language. I thought his mother was wrong in not teaching him anything about the Chinese culture and language. I think I should learn the Korean culture and language more because I am Korean.

opportunities for them to extend their own boundaries.

In the previous section, Anthony and Lily described their complex situation in the childhood where they had to fit in to each puzzle molded by the Korean parents and the Canadian school. What occurred to them was a kind of fragmenting of multiple identities into Korean pieces and Canadian pieces. At moments these different elements were in a tension against one another rather than fitting together to form a coherent whole. But as they had matured, being partially identified with both cultures became constitutive of an open and fluid identity which was not traceable back to a single origin. The partial and incomplete identifications encouraged them to understand different layers of their own identity.

Flexible identity

Anthony:

My upbringing as a Korean Canadian makes it impossible that I become a 100% Canadian or 100% Korean. Maybe sometimes I would say I am a 60% Canadian and 40 % Korean, and the other times I would say I am a 30% Canadian and 70% Korean. When I was in college, I was purely Canadian almost 24 hours a day because the environment was dominated by white people. Maybe for one hour a day I might have lived one side of Korean-ness. It is impossible to be totally separated from either of the two cultural aspects. I don't think it is a disaster. Rather, it is a realistic situation I am in.

My Canadian friends would say, "You are a Korean Canadian" because I have a Korean side that they do not have and thus differentiated from them. But my Korean friends probably say, "You are a Canadian Korean" because they would think some of my values are more similar to those of Canadians. My cultural identity is pinned down differently depending on who is looking at me.

Anthony did not conceptualize his identity any more in terms of a binary split between being a Korean and being a Canadian. He did not see himself to be one or the other. Rather, he sees himself to be both. He says that sometimes he is a 70 % Canadian and a 30 % Korean, and other times vice versa. This means that his cultural identity is constructed by constant negotiations between his different cultural positions where both of his beings are related in some ways. The elements of both cultures are continuously repeated, echoed, and revealed in his identity construction.

Considering the voices from these second generation Koreans, an "either A or B approach" is not appropriate any more in defining their cultural identity. People might say that they cannot be a 100 % Korean or 100 % Canadian. But, I

Seeing both cultures in a larger context

Lily:

It is said that Korean parents support their children financially even after they are 18 years old. We think that is Korean culture, but I would say that this is a part of any good family. I see so many overlaps between these two cultures. I think some cultural values considered as Korean are applied to any good family. My brother went to St. John's high school where there were many rich families. His close friends, even the white ones, regularly had tutors. His best friend told him, "I have tutors so I can't go out with you on Saturday. I have to study." Some of the white Canadians actually work as hard as the Asians. I think the "working hard" ideology is also relevant to white families' cultural values. There might be more of a tendency in Korean culture, and not so much of one in western culture. But I see it as a common characteristic of human beings.

In terms of financial support, when one of my white friends, Joan, entered university in New York, her parents paid for her entire school and living costs. Until now she relies on her parents financially. I know most

would like to highlight that they can become *more than 100 %* Korean and 100 % Canadian.

Lily stated that she saw the two cultures sharing common human traits rather than seeing them as part of only one particular culture. This is a very interesting perspective because many young Korean Canadians make comparisons between the Korean culture and Canadian culture in sharp contrast instead of through similarity. She viewed both cultural aspects in a broader human context beyond considering them as a part of one specific culture.

Having matured, these two young Korean Canadians have come to understand more clearly the difficulties that they have gone through in their childhood. They have given new meaning to past

Korean parents completely support their children before they are financially secure. In my case, I got several jobs while in university. But my parents told me, "Don't waste your time. Just concentrate on your study." They were willing to support me financially. I was so lucky in that way. But I do not think it is only a Korean cultural value. Not only Korean parents, any good parents would do that regardless of their culture. Even white parents like Joan's parents.

A deeper understanding of parents

Anthony:

As I grew older, I gave more respect to my parents because I could understand the trials, hurts, and frustrations they had gone through by living in a new country. But as a young child, I did not understand their pains. Growing up I had so many issues around school, friends, speaking English and Korean, the different cultures, etc. It was a very confusing situation, especially in high school. But once I got to university, everything calmed down and then I began to have much more respect for my parents. I am very respectful of my parents now.

troubling experiences and appreciated their difficult childhood as an opportunity for growth. They come to interweave together their multiple identities which look fragmented but also are connected in some ways. It is a moment of healing where anger and angst within them can be re-interpreted and transformed into productive tensions and generative possibilities.

As a child who was devoid of a sense of his own history and background, Anthony failed to appreciate the sacrifices that his parents made and the values that they imparted. Anthony's increasing understanding of his parent's painful experiences was so moving and touching for me.

Ability to deal with two cultures

Anthony:

I feel comfortable in both cultures. Although my everyday life looks more driven by Canadian culture, I feel comfortable with the Korean culture instantly when I shift from the Canadian culture. If I go to a Korean restaurant I can enjoy some Korean food. If I visit a Korean person's house I would take off my shoes and say "*An-Yung-Ha-Se-Yu*" which is "Hello" in Korean. I feel comfortable doing all this Korean cultural stuff. It sounds like I put a coat on and walk into room A and change the coat and walk into room B. I can naturally switch from A culture to B culture, but it is indiscernible. I do not feel any big difference in myself whether I am in Korean culture or in Canadian culture because both are a part of me.

My definition of being a Korean Canadian is being able to feel comfortable with both cultures. I can choose which one is suitable to me depending on the situation. For example, Canadian culture is very much like "When you are eighteen years old, find your own way." But Korean culture is like "Stay with

The theories about the cultural identity of immigrants can be divided into two contrasting perspectives. There is the approach that emphasizes the commonalities of physical and cultural characteristics and historical experiences associated with the place of origin. In this perspective, cultural identity means a sense of belonging to a particular ancestry and origin. We are naturally inclined to seek out the affinity and familiar commonalities and feel more of an emotional bond with those people who share the same ancestry, physical affinity, language, and religion.

There is a contrasting perspective that rejects the assumption that cultural identity is determined largely by commonalities in physical and cultural characteristics and historical experiences shared by a group of members. This approach focuses on "emerging identity" created and recreated in the context

your family until you marry.” I think each culture has a very different ideology. Some Korean values do not work for me because I have been in two worlds and am able to choose which one I want.

Critical view of Korean culture

Lily:

I will be thirty-one years old soon. The main reason I am still single is that I was not allowed to date when I was growing up. My parents made me focus on studying. Although my parents want me to marry a Korean, I do not think I fit well with Korean guys. I think that most Korean guys have a very traditional Korean male view on marriage. This is true even among those who came here very young. They expect their wives to take care of the cooking and cleaning. It is because of their socialization. In a sense, Korean Canadian males maintain two standards. In the mainstream society, they present themselves as liberal, open-minded males. But when they are within their own community, in the house, at the church, or in community meetings, their traditional male-centered values come out. Korean

of adjustment in the new culture. These two different perspectives explain both types of cultural identity construction.

I would like to emphasize that we have to be careful about seeing “being a Korean” as essential or primordial, a matter of blood or shared descent from a common ancestor. From my working with Korean Canadians, it was obvious that when parents enforced Korean cultural values as kind of a pre-given set on their children, it only caused tremendous pain and suffering for their children. As well, the pressures and obligations to cultivate an authentic cultural identity caused parents not to notice that their children were creating their emerging cultural identity.

Canadian females resent that because they want to be treated as equals.

For that reason, I am so glad to live in Canada. I think Korean culture is such a patriarchal culture, but here in Canada I can have more freedom. I can aspire toward male oriented jobs, be more independent, and be able to think for myself. I think Korean girls are quieter and more passive. They usually do not speak up. But I am getting used to speaking out, which is better, I think. When I first started working in the law firm, I felt quite uncomfortable because I did not know what to say and what was considered as proper. After a while I tried to talk about anything to make rapport with my co-workers.

In Canadian culture, it is better to be yourself. But Korean culture is too respectful of authority, like not being able to talk back to your parents. I have been raised in that way, and sometimes it hinders me. Lawyers have to speak up more, but I do not feel comfortable with doing that because my parents usually have not allowed me to talk back to them. I recognize some Korean sides of myself disturb me in my work. I find it hard to argue with people in a higher

Anthony and Lily talked about a certain tension between the pressures of authentic Korean identity and their uncertainty of what it was exactly. They had gone through doubts and challenges as to how genuinely Korean they were. The notion of authentic identity caused them to be more ambivalent and confused in terms of thinking about their Korean Canadian identity because the meaning and significance of their identity as Korean Canadian was an ongoing process.

I am curious about where Lily's negative images of Korean culture come from. She criticizes Korean culture in terms of its conservative and chauvinistic aspects. Her negative image is closely related to the orientations and attitudes of her parents. The second generation is mainly involved in Korean culture

position. Usually I say nothing to make things smooth over.

Korean culture as an important part of who I am

Anthony:

Korean culture is an intrinsic part of myself. I cannot specifically explain what Korean culture has done for me to shape who I am, but it is really there. It directly impacts on how I approach life. For example, the way of treating elders, being respectful towards my parents, my responsibility for my sister, the idea of family life, and some Korean customs. Looking back right now, those things were very special to me. I do not get them enough now, but I am very proud of those cultural experiences which have shaped who I am today. I cannot really quantify to what extent Korean culture has affected who I am. But if I did not have Korean culture, I would be very different from who I am now. Or, if I grew up in a Canadian family, I would not be the same person as I am right now either.

through a mediation of the first generation of immigrants whose concept of Korean culture becomes reified at the time of their migration. The Korean culture imagined by the first generation is frozen over time. Thus, the Korean culture of the first generation is much more conservative than the one in contemporary Korea. While they have been distanced from the home country, they cultivate their own image of the home country with a nostalgic gaze or very critical perspective. The danger is that they may potentially impart to the younger generation a reified conception of Korean culture, one that has very little to do with the reality of contemporary Korea. They mistake that Korea has not changed over time since they left and increasingly idealize Korean culture in either a positive way or negative way.

Positioning myself in the multicultural context

Anthony:

My parents always want me to marry a Korean girl because they want to keep the Korean culture going. I understand them because if I am not married to a Korean girl, my Korean culture might die with me. But I cannot control it at all. If I live in Korea, of course, probably I would marry a Korean girl. But living in Canada, I have many opportunities to meet people from different cultural backgrounds and I can choose whomever I love. I do not necessarily need to marry a Korean girl. I can hang out with whomever I like. I want to marry the person who fits in my culture now, not my race. I do not necessarily think I have to marry by race or by culture. In this multicultural situation, everyone can have an interracial marriage. There would be more mixed races, mixed cultures and languages. And then it becomes a new cultural trend of Canada, and in the end it is going to be a unique Canadian culture. See how many people from Europe, Africa, and Asia coming to Canada intermarry such as Koreans and Whites, Koreans and Blacks, Koreans and Chinese,

These second generation Korean Canadians underwent serious confusion about not being able to be wholly one thing or the other. Yet, this is not just a pathological identity crisis. Anthony made it clear that however difficult his experiences were as an immigrant child, he was not indefinitely torn between two cultures nor had he completely lost his Korean culture. Neither was he the victim of an unending identity crisis. Rather, he insisted that despite his comparative integration into Canadian society, at a certain point, there was somehow a reconnection back to his sense of being Korean. The ambivalent and confused identity came to terms with the reconstruction of identity as a Korean Canadian. In this sense, it is important how to acknowledge, facilitate, and nourish this reconnection to being Korean.

and so on.

Embracing different ideas

Lily:

Living in Canada allows me to socialize with people from different cultural and racial backgrounds. Nevertheless, unfortunately my social circles are very limited. I do not know many white people, do not know East Indian people, and do not know any gay people. Not knowing people from various backgrounds makes my worldview very limited. If I am not exposed to different ideas I cannot become creative. Gaining access to diverse perspectives is the great benefit to living as a Korean Canadian. It enables me to live beyond the boundary of Korean culture.

Want to keep Korean culture

Anthony:

I hope my children will make more of an effort in learning the Korean language and culture. As a second generation, I had to learn all of the Canadian stuff by myself and find my place in this society because my parents did not know what to do and how to help me. But

Becoming a Korean Canadian is not simply conforming to the dominant Canadian culture or totally losing the Korean culture. Young Korean Canadians feel some connection to being a Korean even after the loss of some of their distinctive Korean customs and language. Their sense of being Canadian is also *affected* by the reconnection to being Korean. The re-interpretation and re-appropriation of Korean culture through Canadian eyes and vice versa offers them an opportunity to create an emerging and evolving identity, rather than restricting their identity to a single path. It is a significant moment in re-constructing their cultural identity as Korean Canadian along an uncharted path. This *crafting* process allows them to abandon the notion of a static identity and to reconfigure it in a dynamic process on an ongoing basis.

my children's generation will be different.

They may have more curiosity about being Korean. They will be able to afford to find out about Korean culture more than I did.

But I have some concerns about "how." In my case, if I visit my parents, Korean culture is over there and always available because my parents are Koreans and we always eat Korean food. But I am not sure that it is going to be available for my children. I do not know how to teach Korean culture to my children.

My culture is my production

Anthony:

If I marry a person from a different cultural background, my children may get the "wrong identity" as I did growing up. But I think intermarriage is a phenomenon that is almost impossible to stop here in Canada because different cultures are always intermingling with each other. There are Korean communities, Greek communities, Jewish communities, Chinese communities, etc. There is a lot of moving around and interactions between those communities. We cannot place a barrier between any inter-

In order to help young Korean Canadians find own way, where should we let them go? A world within the boundaries of authentic Korean culture? Or a world beyond cultural boundaries?

The transformative process of becoming Korean Canadian implies that young Korean Canadians constantly modify their understandings of both cultures. Therefore, they arrive at a more complex and realistic picture of a Korean Canadian identity. Their cultural identity should be taken as an inherent sum of who they are and what their experiences have been, instead of the fixed entity based on their ancestral origins. Let them recapitulate and re-discover the meaning of their internal conflicts and growth by cross-cultural

racial and intercultural relationships in Canada. If I say, "I'll only stay in the Korean community" or "I will marry only a Korean girl," it is almost cheating myself. I should find out with which culture I am most happy. It won't necessarily be only Korean culture. My cultural identity is a production I create from different cultural pieces.

experience. The stories of these second generation Korean Canadians indicate that as they have matured, they have come to better understand their troubling experiences in childhood and adolescence from another angle. This revision process is not an indication of failure but of growth.

CHAPTER 7

THEORETICAL INSIGHTS AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The young Korean Canadians who participated in this study have experienced the different paths of assimilating and constructing a multicultural identity. Every experience of defining and situating the self within Canadian society is unique for each one of them. Their emerging stories, demonstrated in the previous chapters, manifest a diversity of autobiographical experiences and certain conditions of existence, which indicates that Korean Canadians should not be seen as a homogeneous group. Their cross-cultural experiences are not stories about fitting in one place or another place. Instead, their stories illustrate the transformation of cultural identity at different times in various situations and the challenge of certain fixed ideas about culture and identity.

This final chapter investigates how their cultural identity has been constructed and reconstructed over time while crossing cultural boundaries and charting new ground. Looking at the struggles and conflicts that these young Korean Canadians faced in the initial transition, I learned that they assumed to have only a single cultural identity, either as a Canadian or a Korean. Yet, as they matured and became more engaged in cross-cultural experiences, they were awakened to the possibilities of having a multicultural identity. In this chapter, I will trace their identity transformation from possessing a monocultural identity towards embracing a multicultural identity. Coming to terms with cross-cultural living, the young Korean Canadians wove and interwove the parts of different cultures in constructing their own unique identity. They became conscious of how experiencing other cultures had a significant impact on their identity construction. I do not consider their incomplete and partial identification provoked by cross-cultural experiences as an evidence of an identity "crisis," although I acknowledge the problems they faced in the process. Rather, I assert their particular experiences of living in-between cultures in terms of

generative possibilities and creative tensions.

The trajectory of identity construction⁷

Disruption and rupture between different experiential realities

Most of the young Korean Canadians in this study described their childhood and adolescence as the periods of existential ambivalence and identity crisis filled with ambiguity, tension, and uncertainty. When they crossed out of their own cultural boundary and ventured into an unfamiliar territory, they lacked cultural competence and shared references used by other Canadians. The cultural identity was naturally shaped by a particular mixture of the familiar and unfamiliar. Their experiences bore testimony to the complex and ambivalent feelings of being “in-between cultures” where they no longer solely belonged to the Korean nor to the Canadian culture. This cultural rupture constantly led them to be vulnerable to emotional and psychical dismemberment caused by a split of experiential worlds.

Their inner conflicts were stimulated by internal and external pressures arising from the imposition of some Korean cultural values from parents and the social pressure of assimilation outside of the home. They were torn between two cultures: on one hand, the home environment where they spoke Korean, ate Korean food, and practiced Korean customs; and on the other hand, white dominant schools where they were drawn into assimilation of the mainstream Canadian culture. This doubling situation arose many problems with their parents while they grew up. Teresa disclosed that her desire to act and be like other white Canadians caused more serious conflicts with the parents. Her parents tried to impose traditional Korean values upon her, such as the family structure, her role play in the family, no late night parties, or no sleepovers. Furthermore, many of the young

⁷ I borrow this term from Wenger (1998) to describe identity construction as an ongoing process, not completely finished. This concept is used to emphasize the interactions of convergent and divergent movements among the trajectories of identity construction. It unfolds identity construction in a much more complex process than linear development.

Korean Canadians identified an experiential gap between the parents and themselves that provoked more serious struggles and conflicts. These two generations read different books, watched different movies, listened to different music, and cultivated different perspectives as well as spoke different languages. The parents were not well aware of the problems and struggles the young Korean Canadians had lived through as immigrant students. Most participants in this study talked about their depression and frustration emanated by a lack of understanding on the part of their parents and the scarcity of resources to get some help. Engulfed in confusion and ambiguity, they felt like their existence was compartmentalized into two disconnected different worlds.

A social and psychological pressure to be “normal” was another enormous tension to overcome. Wanting to be similar to other Canadian students was a dilemma the young Korean Canadians had to deal with. It resulted in their resistance to learn more about the Korean culture and language. At some point, a few of them instilled some negative self-images, as well. Anthony mentioned that he was ashamed of his Korean culture while he was growing up. Similarly, Lily expressed her frustration of not being white when she attended a predominantly white high school. In spite of her speaking perfect English and mastering of Canadian cultural etiquette, physically she was considered Korean than Canadian by other Canadians. Her “racially being different” status was a stigma that was more difficult to handle than the cultural and linguistic difference. The superiority of the white Canadians that resided in their subconscious was evident to the extent that they equated “being a Canadian” with “being a white.”

To be “normal” Canadians was also a common desire among the 1.5 generation Korean Canadians. They were forced to assimilate into the Canadian society either internally or externally. Otherwise they would be brought to social and cultural alienation. In a reactive strategy to cope with this estrangement, some of them most likely socialized only with Koreans. For example, Brian established his own “little Korea” with other Korean students after being excluded from Canadian groups in school. He still maintains a tangible tie with the contemporary Korean youth culture through the Internet. Others probably worked

strenuously to be accepted by Canadians. Teresa was always self-conscious about her English accent, her clothes, and her behavior. She strongly desired to behave and look like a white Canadian. She downplayed "being different" and wished to be "just normal."

A language barrier was an extremely serious problem in the transitional process for the recent immigrant Korean Canadians. Language fluency was a more significant factor for acceptance and recognition from Canadians than physical characteristics. Mastery of English was a formidable challenge inextricably related to identity construction. Brian strongly proved that he was more likely to be defined by his lack of English proficiency rather than who he really was. They needed access to opportunities where they could practice their oral skills with native English speakers, but usually native speakers did not seem to help them. To interact with English speakers, they should speak English well in the first place. A lack of opportunity to practice speaking hindered the enhancement of their spoken English. Trapped in this dilemma, some young Korean Canadians intentionally cut themselves off from non-native speakers and tried to engage more actively with native speaking peer groups. For example, Teresa disliked being dumped in the same group of ESL students and avoided socializing with them. Instead, no matter how arduous it was for her, she attempted to interact with native speakers. Unlike Teresa, Jenny was friendly with other ESL students coming from different countries. Brian gave up interacting with native speakers and chose to associate exclusively with Koreans when he got very limited access to be involved with native speakers. He was less concerned about his competence of English; instead, he was content to belong to a private sphere of Korean friends.

Racism is another significant issue experienced by the Korean students living in Canada. Most of the young Korean Canadians in this study agreed to the existence of subtle racial discrimination, although they were never the serious victims of verbal harassment or direct physical assaults. They strongly felt they did not completely belong to the Canadian school community because they were culturally and physically different. For the recent immigrants, a lack of English and cultural competence seemed a much more significant factor that led them to be discriminated than physical difference.

Border-crossing and re-configuring

The young Korean Canadians in this study expressed uncertainties, tensions, and anxieties about not being wholly one person or the other. But they were not indefinitely torn between two cultures nor did they solely remain victims of unending identity crisis. As they crossed and negotiated cultural boundaries, they came to look at both Korean culture and Canadian culture in a more critical and dialogical way. The case of Teresa is an example. She shifted from an exclusive assimilation of the Canadian culture to a deeper appreciation of the Korean culture. Initially Teresa stereotyped the Korean culture in favor of the Canadian culture and vigorously criticized the hierarchical and authoritarian Korean family structure and patriarchic Korean mentality. For instance, she found white Canadian boys more attractive than Koreans partly because of her stereotyped Korean culture of gender inequity. However, when she started reconfiguring both cultures she ended her desperate desire to enter into Canadian's social networks and developed a stronger attachment to Korean cultural values and social attitudes, particularly with respect to obedience to parents, preference for Korean churches, and maintenance of the Korean heritage. Recently she is more selective in adopting certain Canadian cultural values.

It is generally assumed that young Korean Canadians assimilate the Canadian culture at the cost of losing their Korean heritage. David talked about how living in Canada naturally deprived him of an opportunity to experience Korean culture, an experience he might have had if he had stayed in Korea. He said, *"I have never lived experiences that young Koreans at my age group have gone through."* Jenny shared David's awareness of missing the Korean adolescent experience. Although they seemed to miss out on sharing experiences of young Koreans in Korea by moving to Canada, it eventually turned out favorable when they considered the greater experiences of cross-cultural living that would never have been possible by only living in Korea. David felt blessed to have this cross-cultural experience: *"I am so lucky that I have grown up in Canada. Although there have been obstacles and difficulties along the way, I could change my philosophy and outlook and be more mature."* Even Brian who faced the most difficult struggles with his new life in Canada among the

participants in this study described that his experience of crossing cultural boundaries shifted his identity from a pan-Korean identity to a multicultural identity.

When crossing cultural boundaries and reconfiguring, the young Korean Canadians came to recognize sub-cultures within one culture and to explore the concept of culture and identity in a new way. They problematized the idea of culture as homogeneous and conceived of heterogeneity within the same cultural groups. Their perspective was shifted from a stereotyped notion of culture to a living dynamic culture. For instance, Teresa had some illusions about the Canadian culture when she first immigrated to Canada. Her experience with diverse sub-cultures within the Canadian culture awakened her to realize that a culture was not simply better or worse than others. David also learned to embrace the concept of culture in a broader and more profound way. He said, *"It is not very easy to define what Canadian culture is or what Korean culture is, especially considering that those kinds of cultural experiences depend on the perceptions of individuals."*

The process of crossing cultural boundaries brought to them a profound understanding not only of the new culture but also of the heritage culture. Adapting to a new culture was more than just survival; rather, it was a process of reinvention, transformation, growth, and reaching out beyond the boundaries of own existence rather than the sole abandonment of the former culture into which they were born. They dismantled a rigid distinction between two cultures and learned to become both a Korean and a Canadian. Although they wanted to badly fit into the Canadian culture in the beginning stage of adaptation, their identity construction changed from "fitting in one place" to "mixing and matching different cultural elements."

Crossing borders prepared the young Korean Canadians for fostering with a more open and flexible sense of identity. It was a profoundly transformative process. Of course, in some ways, they seemed to just reconfirm and strengthen the existing dominant Canadian cultural identity, or just maintain the Korean culture they brought with them when they immigrated. However, cross-cultural experiences not simply reproduced an existing identity but had a

formative effect on their identity construction. Indeed, while crossing cultural boundaries, the young Korean Canadians problematized what was usually taken for granted and positively transformed their identity. An important advantage of being “in the middle” occurred through crossing borders which was essential for enhancing a more sophisticated understanding of cross-cultural experience, as well as for developing a multicultural identity. They had learned to improvise the unpredictable and unfamiliar new culture and to transmute discomfort and bewilderment into generative possibilities and creative potentials. Their stories demonstrated that the dynamic complexities of struggling with cultural differences were an enriching process.

(Re)constructing cultural identity as Korean Canadian

When the young Korean Canadians reconfigure cultural boundaries, they started reconstructing their own identity of Korean Canadian beyond mere assimilation or imaginary cultural purity, an identity that neither solely represents “Korean” or “Canadian.” They resisted occupying a single culture and placed themselves in complex positioning, none of which are neatly encapsulated. For example, Teresa defined herself as a “*Canadianized person with Korean characteristics*” which represented the impossibility of being solely “Canadian” or “Korean.” David also refused to identify himself in a compartmentalized way and emphasized his particular growing up in a multicultural environment. For them, becoming a Korean Canadian involved a creation of one’s own distinctive multicultural identity.

Instead of simply accepting a ready-made Korean identity imposed by parents, the young Korean Canadians continued to search for the meaning of having Korean origins in Canada. The Korean identity had been continuously invented and reinvented over time rather than merely discovered by practicing concrete cultural practices. Neither the practice of Korean traditional culture or participation in Korean communities was enough to make them feel being a Korean. Different from the parents’ version of Korean culture, the young Korean Canadians had imagined and re-imagined Korean culture from their particular experience

of cross-cultural living.

Furthermore, their cultural identity was not solely related to the Korean culture or the dominant Canadian culture but also related to diverse multicultural influences. They talked about that the Chinese culture, Japanese culture, Indian culture, other European cultures, as well as the dominant Canadian culture had visibly and invisibly influenced on their emerging form of identity. They did not see being a Korean Canadian as clearly defined by their cultural origin. Instead, they valued more balanced identification with multiple cultural elements. Having a Korean origin is only one element of a much wider set of commitments and affiliations in their identity construction. Instead of having a guilty feeling over losing a fixed attribute of Korean culture, they came to appreciate the learning process provided by living in a multicultural environment. Enmeshing multiple cultural influences, they had re-constructed their own emerging identity of Korean Canadian beyond the limited boundary of Korean culture or Canadian culture. Their cultural identity should be seen as an interweaving product of several cultures through translating and negotiating cultural differences.

Becoming a Korean Canadian was not merely a process in which new cultural elements are simply added to the prior culture. When the young Korean Canadians learned the new culture, the unlearning, so to speak, the deculturalization of some elements of the old culture occurred to some degree, at least. While learning and unlearning continued, they grew to observe two cultures from inside-out and outside-in perspectives and to enhance their own identity of Korean Canadian in a dialectical and spiral way, not in a linear way in which the Korean identity began to lose as the new Canadian identity began. This was a process of shifting from a monocultural identity to a multicultural identity. As the young Korean Canadians nourished a multicultural identity they had more inner confidence and pride of having the Korean heritage. Anthony spoke of his increased interest in Korean culture, although when he was stuck in-between worlds he felt uncomfortable with the Korean culture. Therefore, it seems incorrect to assume that young Korean Canadians partake separately in two different cultures in a dichotomous boundary: the home culture

and the outside culture. Rather, the mixed and multiple forms of identities are potentially connected and combined through a variety of perspectives, not one perspective.

In conclusion, the narratives of the young Korean Canadians demonstrated that they acquired a bicultural or multicultural identity, although during their childhood or adolescence, they tended to be polarized toward one culture over the other as if fundamentally a person cannot keep two different cultures within. However, while crossing cultural boundaries and reconfiguring different cultures, they became more able to assess which elements of each culture they wanted to embrace in own identity construction. The process of becoming a Korean Canadian made them unable to be the same person they imagined themselves before. As well, it enabled them to fabricate their own identity by taking the best features from different cultures. These three trajectories of identity construction are to be considered as a spiral movement which reflects the different levels of identity the young Korean Canadians have achieved at given points in time.

Cultural identity in fluid movement: Identity as a narrative construction

The young Korean Canadians in my study demonstrate that their cultural identity is non-unitary and contradictory synchronically and diachronically. For example, Jenny exclusively socialized with Korean students in her high school, but later she regretted not exerting more effort to interact with native Canadian speakers. David viewed himself as a misfit among Korean friends although he wanted to have more Korean friends. At first Lily identified herself as “Canadian” rather than “Korean,” but sometimes she felt disconnected from other Canadians by virtue of the difference in cultural background. Teresa desperately wanted to be accepted by white Canadians, yet she distanced herself from her white friends after a visit to Korea. Sometimes she acted in a Canadian way, other times in a Korean way. Teresa continued to identity herself as a Canadian, but at the same time did not discount being a Korean. Like Teresa, other young Korean Canadians described themselves as simultaneously “Korean” and “Canadian.” They practiced the Korean culture in private and openly adopted the Canadian culture in public. They did not define themselves solely as

one; rather they claimed that they were obviously of more than two cultural elements.

Being partly Korean and partly Canadian fundamentally provokes conflicting and fragmented identities that constantly shift through and assemble together cultural differences. In negotiating cultural differences, they confront the discreteness of the different cultural codes at many junctures and levels of decision-making situations. At first glance, these conflicting identities seem contradictory, incompatible and split, but they are narratively interconnected and simultaneously lived out in some ways in each person. David's voice expressed this situation: *"I look like living in a dichotomous world, one being in the Canadian culture and the other being in the Korean culture. But the thing is that it is not like I am juggling between two cultures consciously. It is more of a subconscious event that happens on a daily basis. I cannot say that I am struggling between two split cultures."*

From his statement, some questions come to mind. How can conflicting identities reside and connect in one person? How do fragmented identities affect the construction of new forms of identity? Is there any stability or cohesion? How can "contingent closure" and "confluence point" get juxtaposed? How do young Korean Canadians weave together the fragments of different elements into a provisional construction of identity? How do they make implicit and explicit connections among fragmented multiple identities? How do they integrate non-unitary and fragmented identities into stories of the development of their multicultural identity?

These questions lead me to the idea of narrative identity. Many narrative theories acknowledge that although life is filled with discontinuity and fragmentation, human beings instinctively seek narrative coherence in disintegrated and incoherent experiences (Carr, 1986; Somers, 1994). Carr (1986) observes, "coherence seems to be a need imposed upon us whether we seek it or not" (p. 97). The narrative link displays the process of putting dispersedly fragmentary experiences into an imaginary and provisional coherent structure. Narrative link or coherence is a key to understanding how non-unitary and contradictory

identities are connected and coexist in one person. The narrative understanding of identity supplies the sense of a self-produced continuity for disconnected and discontinuous experiences. Polkinghorne (1991) writes:

It is the narratively structured unity of my life as a whole that provides me with a personal identity and displays the answer to "Who am I?" My self-story gives a unified context in which it becomes clear how I am living my life and what is the nature of my individual existence, character, and identity. (p. 143)

The discrete and fragmented identities are connectively reconstructed through narrative contingency with a provisional unity and internal structure. Identity continues to be constructed and reconstructed through continuity within discontinuity, and discontinuity within continuity, in a narrative process.

Findings and educational implications

Most of the young Korean Canadians in this study rarely shared with their parents and teachers the struggles and troubles they had gone through in cross-cultural living. This missing communication partly reflects a lack of sensitivity and responsibility on the part of the parents and teachers in helping them deal with the issues of identity and difference. In what follows I will address the findings from my study and suggest educational implications to be considered for engaging in multicultural education and immigrant education.

Are young Korean Canadians capable of becoming who they are?

A number of studies on the cultural identity of immigrants suggest that they have been paralyzed by a dichotomizing perspective of assimilation or anti-assimilation which centers on either assimilating into or resisting the dominant Canadian culture (Tse, 1999). These simplistic frameworks emphasize the inner frustrations of immigrants over alienation from

both cultures and their anxieties of losing a pure cultural identity. They overlook an open and emergent identity created by immigrant students through cross-cultural living.

My research shows that although the young Korean Canadians favorably accept the Canadian culture, they still have a high regard for the Korean culture and language. Despite their experiences of emotional anxiety and ambivalence during the early exposure to Canadian culture, they have come to terms with a more open concept of identity. However timid and quiet they might appear when first drawn into the new cultural and linguistic environment, they learned to negotiate cultural differences and to create a flexible sense of identity. As they matured and became capable of dealing with conflicting and contradictory situations they paid more attention to adopting the best elements of both cultures. Rather than simply enacting one culture, they reinterpreted and re-appropriated both cultures in their own way. The young Korean Canadians gradually moved away from a polarized identity to a more balanced one. Instead of remaining forever as marginalized immigrants, they have come to gain some acceptance in both cultures, to create their own cultural identity in a more flexible way, and to take advantage of cross-cultural living. It reminds me of Cook's notion of "multicompetency" which describes a capacity of speaking more than one language (1999). He employs this concept to refer to "the compound state of mind with two languages" (p. 190). According to Cook, "multicompetent minds that know two languages are qualitatively different from those of the monolingual native speaker in a number of ways"⁸ (p. 191). Drawing on this idea, I consider young Korean Canadians as "multicompetent cultural translator." This multicompetency encourages them to invest in learning both cultures and enables them to re-conceptualize themselves as multicultural Canadians, as legitimate members of the Canadian community in their own right, not as deficient immigrants troubled with the loss of the Korean culture or a misfit in the Canadian culture.

⁸ Cook (1999) argues that multicompetent language users show different characteristics, compared to a monolingual person, in terms of *the second language knowledge, the first language knowledge, language processing, and the thought processes*. What he wants to insist, drawn on these differences between multicompetent language users and monolingual users, is that the second language users should be treated as people in their own right, not as deficient native speakers.

Salman Rushdie (1999), in his novel *The ground beneath her feet*, addresses the generative possibilities of living in a culturally diversified environment. He portrays how two adolescents from Bombay, Vina Apsara and Ormus Cama, invent music that was neither pure Western music nor pure Indian music. For them impure music would be “impure Bombay, where West, East, North, and South had always been scrambled, like codes, like eggs.” Rushdie shares their story in the following:

What's a "culture?" Look it up. "A group of micro-organisms grown in a nutrient substance under controlled conditions." A squirm of germs on a glass slide is all, a laboratory experiment calling itself a society. Most of us wrigglers make do with life on that slide; we even agree to feel proud of that "culture." Like slaves voting for slavery or brains for lobotomy, we kneel down before the god of all moronic micro-organisms and pray to be homogenized or killed or engineered; we promise to obey. But if Vina and Ormus were bacteria too, they were a pair of bugs who wouldn't take life lying down. One way of understanding their story is to think of it as an account of the creation of two bespoke identities, tailored for the wearers by themselves. The rest of us get our personae off the peg, our religion, language, prejudices, demeanour, the works; but Vina and Ormus insisted on what one might call auto-couture. And music ... was the key that unlocked the door for them, the door to magic lands. (cited in Kramsch, 2002, p. 12)

The young Korean Canadians in this study spoke of how their own cultural identity adapted to their needs in what the culturally diversified environment of Vancouver provided for them. Instead of living out a cultural identity taken from available cultural frames, they constantly interpreted and re-interpreted each culture from different angles. They were far from the passive recipients of cultural values imposed upon them. Rather, they had re-combined and re-created their own identity in new and unpredictable ways. Examining the different sides of each culture, the young Korean Canadians engaged in their own becoming with self-confidence while enriching their lives.

How do young Korean Canadians experience the Korean culture outside of Korea?

The young Korean Canadians I worked with have fabricated their own images and ideas of Korean culture and identity through the memories imprinted from their experiences in Korea and the memories handed down from their parents. In other words, the Korean culture and identity have been constructed and reconstructed in multifarious ways from various times and across various levels of community — the lived community, the remembered community, and the imagined community. The imagined community of Korean culture may be differently experienced and conceptualized by Korean Canadians contingent on an attachment to Korean culture and an environment in which they grew up. Some of them may experience Korean culture by keeping in touch with Korean contemporary youth culture, or through their parents and other Korean adults in Korean communities in Canada. Particular to the second generation is the concept of Korean culture as much more self-produced and self-defined due to a lack of access to experience it. For Korean Canadians who are not acquainted with diverse Korean sub-cultures and rapidly changing contemporary Korean culture, what is represented as “Korean culture” is a highly homogeneous subset. Here is an example. Lily recently had two short visits to Korea, but she was not afforded many opportunities to experience the Korean culture in a wider range because of her deficient Korean language and limited resources. During these short sojourns, she easily found faults with Korean culture and made unqualified generalization about the Korean culture from her limited experience of Korean culture. In contrast, Teresa had a great opportunity to experience the Korean culture differently. During her visit to Korea, she met a very nice and considerate Korean man who shifted her stereotyping Korean men as authoritarian and patriarchal. Experiencing some sub-Korean cultures also provided her with a chance to clarify certain aspects of the Korean culture, which led her to rethink her negative images of Korean culture and to look at those negative images positively.

In investigating the notion of cultural identity of young Korean Canadians, I found the idea

of “imagined community” intriguing and useful. Wenger (1998), expanding upon Anderson’s view of imagined community, insists that a human being is capable of relating to people beyond immediate social networks through imagination. In his view, imagination is a distinct form of belonging to a particular community of practice, and a way in which individuals locate themselves and others in the world and include in their identity “other meanings, other possibilities, other perspectives” (p. 178). Applying this idea, the concept of cultural identity is seen as contingently imagined, articulated, and preformed rather than fixed, original, essential or permanent. It is evident that the Korean and Canadian communities these young Korean Canadians imagine are kaleidoscopic and contingent upon their subjective experiences and memories. They coordinate these various imagined communities in their identity construction.

The young Korean Canadians narratively construct the imaginary community of Korea through diverse routes. For them the original Korean culture no longer exists out there. It cannot be merely recovered in any simple sense because it has been always invented and reinvented and never remains the same. The Korean culture is rehearsed again and again in an attempt to make a connection of the present with the broken past. David’s story portrayed how his Korean culture was narratively imagined and reimagined in an absent-present contestation of “it is here” and “it is not here.” He stated this by saying: *“I really do not know what Korean culture is because I have never lived in Korea long enough that I have experienced what it is to be part of Korean culture for the age of 17 to 18.”* Anthony also indicated that he just imagined what Korean culture would be like from the Korean adults in Korean communities in Canada. Anthony did not have much opportunity to experience the Korean culture directly. Comparatively, recent immigrants Brian, Teresa, and Jenny continuously attempt to keep track of the Korean contemporary culture by listening to Korean pop music, watching Korean movies, or browsing through Korean fashion magazines. For them, maintaining the Korean culture means keeping in touch with contemporary Korean pop culture, not limiting themselves to exercising traditional cultural practices. Putting these ideas together, I adhere to what Grossber (1997) states: “It is not *where* people belong that is important, but how people belong — the various ways people

are attached and attach themselves affectively into the world” (cited in Kramsch & Lam, 1999, p.70, original emphasis).

What affects the identity construction of young Korean Canadians?

The Korean Canadian second generation students in my study spent their childhood and adolescence during the 1970s and 1980s when the different cultural backgrounds of immigrants were disregarded and assimilation into the Canadian system was considered to be most significant. As a result, they came to learn the new culture and language at the cost of losing their heritage culture and language. Lily and Anthony narrated how awkward it was for them to speak Korean in a generally monolingual and monocultural based environment. Even at home, they used a considerable amount of English because the parents presumed that speaking only in English would smoothen their transitional process. These situations worsened with general negative images perceived by the dominant group of the society towards immigrants and minorities. Anthony and Lily gravitated more towards assimilation within a situation where preserving the heritage culture seemed unproductive and useless, in what they perceived to be an unfriendly socio-cultural environment.

However, the new group of recent immigrants is situated in comparatively different conditions. They have more possibilities to retain Korean culture and maintain a continuing connection with Korean culture than ever before. There are some influential incentives to have them stay in touch with Korean contemporary culture. First, the development of modern communication, technologies and transportation keeps them much closer to contemporary Korean culture. Indeed they communicate and maintain links with relatives in Korea more easily than the previous immigrant generation did. This favorable situation encourages them to maintain the Korean culture and language to ensure familial and affective ties with Korean communities in both Canada and Korea. Immigrating to Canada no longer means a detachment from Korean cultural influences.

Second, the Canadian multiculturalism, initiating cultural and linguistic diversity, provides

young Korean Canadians with more resources and incentives to develop multicultural proficiency. This multicultural ethos invites young Korean Canadians to mix with a variety of cultures and encourage them to appreciate their own unique background. In this context, being different becomes less problematic. Moreover, with an increasing population of Korean immigrants and Korean international students, the young Korean Canadians are more exposed to contemporary Korean culture and motivated to engage in Korean culture and to speak Korean fluently.

Third, another significant factor is their vision of the future in affiliation with Korean communities in both Canada and Korea. As they imagine and envision the communities where they would belong in a much broader and global scope, they highly value multilingual competence and multicultural identity as economic capital. Such a vision leads young Korean Canadians to foster multicultural identity and intercultural awareness as a means of facilitating their mobility locally and globally, thereby increasing their assets for the future.

Furthermore, their cultural identity is influenced by diverse cultural elements as shown through forging friendships and relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds. Their cultural identity is inevitably intertwined with diverse cultural influences such as the Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Latino, to name but a few. Identity construction takes on fluid and movable connections with different cultural influences. The identity of the Korean Canadian is enfolded through, embedded in, and enabled by parts of different cultures as well as the dominant Canadian culture. David was quite explicit about how different cultural elements were constitutive of his identity. Brian also validated his learning from a multicultural context. In this sense, their identity of Korean Canadian seems a dialogical mosaic intertwined with diverse cultures, not just a monological coordination of Canadian and Korean cultures.

These shifting conditions trigger a change in the mode and degree of their adaptation process. The simultaneous assimilation into the Canadian culture and the retention of the

Korean culture clearly influence the different modes of becoming Korean Canadians. They do not have to choose one culture over the other; instead they choose to bring together different cultural elements in own identity construction. Different cultural elements are not grounded in an imposition of one culture to the other. Neither does it mean losing one's culture. The young Korean Canadians in my study expressed that having a Korean cultural background was a crucial way of identifying and distinguishing themselves from other Canadians. They claimed similarity with the majority of Canadians, but at the same time they asserted the right to be a different kind of Canadian and to be a different kind of Korean. Without resorting to a binary language of opposition, they embraced different beings in their identity and sought a ground for "difference in identity" and "identity in difference."

What will multicultural education look like within a culturally responsive curricular landscape?

Canadian multicultural education has been described as a "mosaic" approach that encourages distinctive cultural characteristics to be retained. This mosaic multiculturalism contributes to the promotion of the ethnic heritage culture and accommodates cultural diversity. However, this model tends to circumscribe multicultural education simply as a celebration of ethnic foods and exotic costumes, which is too superficial to understand the complexity, multiplicity, and possibility of cross-cultural living in the midst of negotiating and navigating through incommensurable cultural differences. It draws on benign cultural pluralism which implies that identity is a preexistent presence, or what Aoki (1993) refers to as "multiculturalism as multiple identities" (p. 92). This mosaic approach, dichotomizing and polarizing between the dominant Canadian culture and the ethnic cultures, has implicitly or explicitly inscribed immigrant students as bounded by their own cultural tendency in which they were born, and thereby keeps them strangers or foreigners. Therefore it rarely helps immigrant students enlarge and deepen their horizons by dwelling in the generative possibilities of their own becoming in and through differences. The pedagogical implication of such a perspective is much more serious because in assuming

immigrant students as being trapped by their cultural boundary, it undermines what these students bring to classrooms and what they experience in a multicultural classroom. The aim of the multicultural curriculum does not necessarily mean returning to the original forms and perceptions of pre-given cultural heritage. The young Korean Canadians in my study provided ample evidence that their different cultural backgrounds had neither bound nor limited them to one culture.

We need to shift our attention from a position of what immigrant students lack in terms of cultural difference towards a position of valuing the incipient possibilities of their 'becoming' through cross-cultural living. Although Canadian mosaic multiculturalism moves beyond monoculturalism and welcomes diversity and heterogeneity, it is less aware of living in the midst of, between, and among the negotiations of cultural differences. Aoki (1993) defines this new fabric of curriculum as "a curricular landscape of multiplicity." In noting the in-between space of differences, Aoki evokes us to rethink about the notion of multiplicity drawn on Deleuze's insight on multiplicity. In *Dialogues*, Deleuze states:

In a multiplicity what accounts are not the elements, but what there is between, the between, a site of relations which are not separable from each other. Every multiplicity grows in the middle. (p. viii, cited in Aoki, 1993, p. 93)

Drawing on Deleuze, Aoki notes "difference" between difference in degree and difference in kind. Deleuze alerts us on how our insensitive understanding of difference as difference in degree makes us blind to difference in kind. Difference in kind may not be integrated or incorporated smoothly into a homogeneous whole. Rather, within the in-between lines of differences, something is creatively produced and is constantly growing. This productive space can be referred to as a "third space" where Bhabha (1994) acknowledges and comprehends gaps, interstices, or cracks in which disjunction, supplement, and replacement constantly happens beyond boundaries between cultures.

This landscape of multiculturalism can be defined as "a polyphony of lines of movement

that grows in the abundance of middles, the 'betweens' and 'ANDs' that populate...a landscape of multiple possibilities in a shifting web of rhizomean lines of movement" (Aoki, 1993, p. 94, emphasis in the original). According to Aoki, "between" and "and" are not merely joining words. They are words that allow each to be reborn and to grow in the middle of between words. It is in the borderlands of "betweens" that different cultures continuously intermingle and co-mingle, and therein the new form of cultural identity eventually emerges. A collage of different cultures in the ambivalent juxtapositions and ruptures of conflicting cultural meanings within and among cultural differences constantly creates and recreates the emerging forms of identity that had not existed before. Cultural identity by cross-cultural living reflects multiple becomings through the proliferation of and interaction between cultural differences. Multicultural curriculum should be based on an inspiring understanding of these creative processes.

Unfortunately, the existing ideas of mosaic multiculturalism do not adequately encapsulate the fluid and hybrid cultural identity of immigrants as well as its transformative process in identity construction. It seems that the focus tends to be more generally given to their psychological adjustment with an assumption that their cultural differences will naturally disappear as they adapt more and eventually belong to the host culture. Cross-cultural experience drawn from a profound understanding of differences is not suitably dealt with. Neither is it generally integrated in the multicultural education courses. Lorde (1984) addresses how the education system is lacking in the way it serves students to understand difference in an educationally meaningful way:

Institutionalized rejection of difference is an absolute necessity in a profit economy which needs outsiders as surplus people. As members of such an economy, we have all been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing. ... As a result, those differences have been misnamed and misused in the service of separation and confusion. Certainly there are very real differences between us in terms of race, age, and sex. But it is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects

upon human behavior and expectation. ... Too often, we pour the energy needed for recognizing and exploring difference into pretending those differences are insurmountable barriers, or that they do not exist at all. ... We do not develop tools for using human difference as a springboard for creative change within our lives.
(p. 115)

My conversations with the young Korean Canadians in this study taught me that the multicultural curriculum rarely deals with culturally disrupted students who are confronted with a sense of non-belongingness and uprootedness resulting from their being physically, culturally, and linguistically different. What kind of multicultural curriculum can truly serve culturally marginalized students? What should be considered, in contemporary debates of multicultural education, to understand and accept cultural differences? Culturally responsive and relevant multicultural curriculum, in the face of the growing diversity of students, should be built upon a generative orientation which opens up the questions of identity in multi-layered ways and focuses on the transformation and growth of students in a multicultural atmosphere. Given the inability of Canadian multiculturalism to manage and accommodate the issues of difference, an inspiring multicultural curriculum calls for our genuine understanding of the relationship of the self and other where be(*com*)ing together in and through each other's difference opens up infinite possibilities.

With these questions in mind, I will address four issues to be considered in developing a culturally responsive pedagogy: 1) *the politics of recognition*, 2) *the responsibility to others*, 3) *multiple identities within in-between spaces*, and 4) *identity construction as community practice*.

The politics of recognition

Canadian society tends to consider immigrant students difficult to teach due to different cultural backgrounds that do not fit well with the Canadian mainstream. Some of them speak no English and their culture seems to be at odds with the dominant culture. This

negative assumption is often made about how and why immigrant students demonstrate low achievement at school and consequently are doomed to fail. It ultimately forces immigrant students into a homogenizing mold that is inhospitable to difference and ignorant of their different cultural backgrounds. In spite of the promotion of multicultural education, there is very little evidence that different cultural backgrounds are properly considered in educational practices. Research shows that minority students have been continually discriminated against by the devaluation and disregard of the mainstream education (Corson, 1993; Cummins, 2001; Feuerverger, 1997; Nieto, 1994). Igoa (1995) concludes that immigrant students whose cultures and languages are not included in their education are unable to integrate their worlds:

Children who were afraid to reveal their backgrounds...and who pushed their cultural past into the unconscious, or off onto their home life...feel uncomfortable, acting one way at school and another at home. When they grow up, if they become conscious of their separate worlds, they may look down upon, reject or deny their native cultures; or they may discover that native part of themselves left behind in childhood. When they try to regain this early self at the adult stage, integration of life will take time. (p. 45)

The issue of recognition and respect for cultural difference and specificity should be considered in multicultural education, not so much in terms of a naïve cultural relativism, as in terms of adequate recognition to the hitherto excluded. Frantz Fanon (1986) argues that the major weapon of the colonizers is the imposition of a negative image on the colonized and subjugated people. The marginalized people have suffered from the self-image of inferiority inflicted by the dominant people. In this sense, one of the imperative issues of multicultural education should be concerned with recreating the positive self-image of culturally marginalized people by a cooperation of the marginalized group and the dominant one.

Charles Taylor (1994), in his celebrated article "The politics of recognition," highlights the importance of how we are recognized and acknowledged because identity is shaped and reshaped through a continuing dialogue and struggle with others. Identity is not forged in isolation, but negotiated through dialogue with significant others whether it be overt or internal. Nonrecognition or misrecognition imposed by a false and distorted self-image of inferiority causes us to suffer from a lack of self-esteem, which leads us to be oppressed and suppressed. His main debate is that each person has his/her own original way of being. Thus each other's specificity and distinctiveness should be acknowledged and respected. In this regard, homogenizing differences with a very limited acknowledgement of each other's distinct identity is inhuman and highly discriminatory.

Being exposed to and encountering differences, we "develop new vocabularies, by means of which we can articulate the contrasts between worldviews" (Taylor, 1994, p. 67). Taylor explores how these new vocabularies "are likely to displace our own horizons in the resulting fusions" (p. 73). While creating new vocabularies by acknowledging other cultures, we get to move from what we have formally taken for granted to a new understanding. It is through exploratory and critical conversations with others that we are able to expand and enrich our limited cultural, intellectual, and spiritual horizons.

Drawing on this idea, one of the major efforts of multicultural education should be to cultivate a willingness to be open to differences and to productively incorporate those differences into one's own identity construction. This will provide us with the enriching "horizon of meaning for human beings, of diverse characters and temperaments, over a long period of time" (Taylor, 1994, p. 72). It is through an engaging willingness to create healthy and positive images that culturally marginalized students are able to find out what it means to live in Canada with a particular cultural background and to weave their own identity by living through cultural differences.

The responsibility to others

The pressures of monoculturalism and homogenizing assimilation emanate from a social stance which perceives cultural difference as something to fear. Placing multicultural curriculum within a framework that envisions difference as deviations or problems to be resolved poses a danger. It seems to me that the underlying question is how the relationship between the self and the other should be understood in an affectionate and meaningful way. Emmanuel Levinas (1981) speaks of a call to responsibility to the other based on the ethical relation between the self and the other. He puts into question the western notion of the egocentric and self-interested being that separates the self from the world and ignores the other. Within the self-centered egology, the other is considered as someone we need in order to get certain wants or needs, and thus the other's entrance into our world is seen as interruption and disturbance.

Decentering the self's ego, Levinas opposes the ontological philosophy which accounts for subjectivity as a locus of Being. He replaces the explicit or implicit monism of ontology by an ethical bond of the self and the other. His ethical relationship of the self and the other is not based on the other's beauty, talent, or role, but on the otherness of the other which disrupts the self's egological way of seeing the world and transcends the limits of self-consciousness. The other comes towards us as a total stranger that surpasses our limited capacity for conception and keeps us from monopolizing the world. By and through the other that we cannot totally assimilate, the subjectivity is constructed simultaneously independent of and pertaining to the other.

From within the Levinasian perspective, our concrete existence is fulfilled by ethical responsibility to the other. The responsibility to and for the other is not the interior emotional state of a self-contained subject; rather it is the condition of a subject who is partially constituted by the relationship with the other. It is through a response to the other forged in the nature of the relation that we express and expose ourselves, our own being. Levinas expresses it in his book *Otherwise than being: or, Beyond essence*:

Responsibility in fact is not a simple attribute of subjectivity, as if the latter already existed in itself, before the ethical relationship. Subjectivity is not for itself; it is, once again, initially for another. ... the proximity of the Other is not simply close to me in space, or close like a parent, but he approaches me essentially insofar as I feel myself — insofar as I am — responsible to him. (Levinas, 1985, p.96)

The simple presence of the other implies that we are summoned to respond to the other. This unconditional responsibility is well announced in his statement: "In the exposure to wounds and outrages, in the feeling proper to responsibility, the oneself is provoked as irreplaceable, as devoted to the others, without being able to resign, and thus as incarnated in order to offer itself, to suffer and to give" (Levinas, 1989, p. 95). Lingis in his translator's introduction to *Otherwise than being: or, Beyond essence* states:

I am answerable before the other in his alterity — responsible before all the others for all the others. To be responsible before the other is to make of my substance the support of his order and his needs. I am responsible before the other in his alterity, that is, not answerable for his empirical mundane being only, but for the alterity of his initiatives, for the imperative appeal with which he addresses me. To be responsible before another is to answer to the appeal by which he approaches. It is to put oneself in his place, not to observe oneself from without, but to bear the burden of his existence and supply for its wants. I am responsible for the very faults of another, for his deeds and misdeeds. The condition of being hostage is an authentic figure of responsibility. (Levinas, 1981, p. xiv)

In the Levinasian ethical relationship, responsibility to the other is already formulated beyond his/her presence as well as our intentionality and self-consciousness. It is not a cognitive act, but a vocative and imperative act, something immanent in the human situation beyond rational and calculative thought. What is noteworthy in this ethicality is precisely its asymmetrical and non-reciprocal character. It does not take as a precondition for this responsibility any payment or reward from the other. In this sense, Levinas speaks

of “responsibility before freedom” and “responsibility before rights.” Responsibility to the other is fulfilled by unconditional attention and devotion to the other despite his/her otherness. His ethical relationship invites us to nourish human companionship in a socially constructive and ethically significant way. Gardiner (1996) states how Levinas’s ethical responsibility is taken through cohabitation by intimate contact and closeness:

The key to understanding Levinas’s construal of the relation between alterity and ethics lies in his notion of proximity. ... Insofar as I and other must share proximity, my being-in-the-world cannot be a usurpation of the other’s right to be. In responding to the call of the other, I divest myself of all intentionality and rational calculation, but I must also jettison the mask of power and privilege that comes from my inhabiting a particular social role. ... Levinas suggests that what is required to stem the institutionalized indifference is a recapturing of the ethically contained in the sphere of interhuman proximity, a return to the affective, qualitative relationships within daily existence. (pp. 133-134)

Given that we have an inclination to accept the other to the extent that they share some similarities to us, Levinasian ethical relationship is educationally implicative and meaningful. In front of the otherness of the other, we tend to feel the other as embarrassing, threatening, and frightening, thus consider him/her as the “outsider” from whom we may defend ourselves. It seems easy to reduce and negate the irreducible uniqueness of the other into our own categories. In view of Levinas, the reduction of the other to the same is such a disrespectful and essentially merciless exercise of power over the other and a tragedy of human understanding. Levinas’ ethicality recognizes and respects the other in his/her otherness without violating or destroying it.

The Levinasian view supposes that the self and the other cohabit without completely effacing each other’s otherness. The otherness of the other is no longer feared, and thus eventually we live “fearlessly with and within differences(s)” (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 84). The Levinasian ethical relationship leads us to be willing to take the responsibility for the other, undermines fear towards difference, and unsettles dichotomizing and polarizing tendencies

of the self and other relationship. This perspective demonstrates ethical pedagogy based on a responsible response to the suffering of others with profound attention to and care for the others. This multicultural curricular will enable students to take more caring responsibility for the world.

Multiple identities within in-between spaces

The transformative multicultural curriculum should be based on dialogical interactions among teachers and students inclusive of cultural diversity. Such a productive multicultural space enables teachers and students to engage in creative critiques, multiple voices, and personal stories in constructing the emerging form of multicultural identity with a sense of fluidity and flexibility. The lived experiences of the young Korean Canadians in this study demonstrate how the experiences of living in-between cultures have granted them multiple voices and possibilities for their becoming. Constant dialogues across cultural boundaries encourage them to "go so far as to question the foundation of their beings and makings" (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 88).

The curricular landscape grounded on dialogue across cultural difference concurs with the Bakhtinian idea of the *dialogic existence* of the human being (Bakhtin, 1990). A major theme running through Mikhail M. Bakhtin's work is the distinctiveness of each other that makes possible the productivity of our existence. We do not perceive ourselves as others perceive us and vice versa. We have a limited perception of ourselves just as the other has a limited perception of himself or herself. Projecting the self through the other's eyes, we penetrate the sphere of the other, the other becomes part of ourselves, and we go beyond our limited perception of the world. It is by reflecting the self through the other that we enhance self-understanding and self-awareness.

Bakhtin (1984) emphasizes that two individuals are mutually influenced by each other's discourse. When one's discourse enters into the context of the other's discourse, both individuals become linked together within a dialogized context. The dialogic interaction

between the self and the other creates a cohabitation of existence in a sense that each person faces each other's context as well as his/her own context. The self and the other get into a simultaneous existence and co-create and co-author human life. In the course of co-constructing human life together, existence is something shared; it constitutes a coexistence in which the "I" cannot exist without the "other." It is from the existence of the other that we exist as a human being and become part of the world. In this sense, Bakhtin asserts, "Just as the body is formed initially in the mother's womb (body), a person's consciousness awakens wrapped in another's consciousness" (1986, p. 138). The self does not have sense or meaning in itself; it has meaning only in relation to the whole of social existence and in relation to other selves. The self and the other are mutually inclusive and forge each other in dialogic existence.

What is noticeable in the Bakhtinian dialogic existence is that a pure fusion or complete merge of the self with the other is undesirable. Bakhtin (1990) argues that we need to maintain a 'radical difference' between the self and the other in a way that does not preclude the possibility of a rich intersubjective life. Each other's difference should be maintained in co-presence since it is through this fundamental difference that we abandon our natural inclination towards an inward-looking subjectivism and single consciousness from the vantage point of an isolated ego. Bakhtin explains more concretely that the difference of the other is not only retained but also deemed essential:

In what way would it enrich the event if I merged with the other, and instead of two there would be now only one? And what would I myself gain by the other's merging with me? If he did, he would see and know no more than what I see and know myself; he would merely repeat in himself that want of any issue out of itself which characterizes my own life. Let him rather remain outside of me, for in that position he can see and know what I myself do not see and do not know from my own place, and he can essentially enrich the event of my own life. (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 87)

Dialogic existence does not mean arriving at a common ground of communication, but

rather a community of different and often conflicting voices that may not be resolved into one comprehensive voice. The differences between the self and the other motivate and generate productive dialogue — a productivity not measured by consensus.

Bakhtinian dialogic existence rejects monologic forms; rather it suggests a movement from *monoglossia* to *heteroglossia* where the otherness and difference is essential part of multiaccentuated reality. His notion of *heteroglossia* implies that although two people live in the same cultural community, they are always different contingent upon the different situations they face. In other words, each person has a different way of becoming. Bahktin's idea of heteroglossia puts its focus into the mutable and conflictual aspects of *multiaccentuality*. Bahktin's (1981) words are expressive of this notion:

... in the midst of heteroglossia, which grows as long as language is alive. Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. ... no living word relates to an object in a singular way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that it is often difficult to penetrate. It is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualized and given stylistic shape.
(pp. 272-276)

The heteroglossic and polyphonic essence of social life offers an explanatory ground for the complexities and dynamism of multi-realities and multiple identities. Dialogic existence is grounded on multiple perceptions and locations comprising our existence which allow diverse social accentualities to create an arena in which diverse social interests are not only existentially concrete but also crucial to the maintenance of human existence.

Bakhtinian dialogic existence stimulates us to understand the self not as egocentric but as profoundly social and intersubjective. Unlike a monologic "I" perspective where the other is either opposed to the self or submitted to the self's dominance, the dialogic existence

emphasizes that we are constituted through the ebb and flow of continuous and inherently responsive communicative acts with others. The major contribution of the Bakhtinian idea of dialogic community is placed on the generative possibilities of learning through cultural diversity, difference, and multiplicity within a multicultural situation. It is a shift from a monologic into a dialogic existence that students can explore and discuss the importance of being a multicultural citizen and foster a broader and more critical understanding of the world with respect for multiplicity and difference.

Identity construction as a community practice

Many immigrant students with language problems have been shunted into the lower streams of the school system. Indeed, they have not had enough opportunities to develop English and recoup their lost academic learning. The Canadian school may say that immigrant students are not motivated to make use of school and community service institutions to get over a lack of English. It is insensitive and malevolent to assume that immigrant students fall into the lower streams for their lack of motivation. Besides, it is a naïve hypothesis that they will be naturally integrated into the Canadian society as time elapses. Instead of ascribing all of the responsibility to the immigrant students themselves, the Canadian school system should attempt to create an environment that is secure and inclusive for those students who are culturally marginalized.

In this sense, I find Lave and Wenger's "communities of practice perspective" (1991) useful. They insist that learning is not just a cognitive process of acquiring a set of skills and knowledge, but it is more a part of participating in community practices. Learning takes place in community participation, not simply in individual cognition. When newcomers enter the community for the first time, they are not expected to participate in community practices to the same extent as old-timers. Under the attenuated conditions, newcomers start out their task with short and simple tasks with fewer responsibilities. Lave and Wenger call this situation a "legitimate peripheral participation" which opens access to participation in the community's productive activities. Newcomers will gradually get more and more

engaged in community practices and become full members. It is through an evolving engagement in sustained participation in a community practice that their identity is constructed in a concrete relationship with older members. The key to a newcomer's identity construction is a supportive communal environment. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that we must focus our attention on the social practice rather than the pedagogical structure itself because learning is a part of social practice. They succinctly explain it in a comparison of a learning curriculum to a teaching curriculum:

The practice of the community creates the potential curriculum in the broadest sense — that which may be learned by newcomers with legitimate peripheral access ... A learning curriculum unfolds in opportunities for engagement in practice. ... A learning curriculum consists of situated opportunities... for the improvisational development of new practices. A learning curriculum is a field of learning resources in everyday practice viewed from the perspective of learners. A teaching curriculum, by contrast, is constructed for the instruction of newcomers. When a teaching curriculum supplies structuring resources for learning, the meaning of what is learned ... is mediated through an instructor's participation, by an external view of what knowing is about. (p. 93)

For this study, I employ Lave and Wenger's framework with respect to the significant role of the community and conferring participation in identity construction. The issue of conferring legitimacy is more important than the issue of what contents should be taught particularly in immigrant education. One of major issues to be addressed, at its fundamental level, is the extent to which immigrant students are considered as legitimate members of Canadian schools and how much hospitality are accorded to facilitate their participation in school community practices. The recent immigrant Korean Canadians in my study did not find access to information, resources, and opportunities readily available to help their transitional process. In an unwelcoming school environment, they were less engaged in school community practices and were ostracized at the margins. It was usually up to them who were supposed to adapt and change, not the Canadian school environment. Their lack of fitting in was attributed to their own problems. Given the fact that identity is constructed

and negotiated through everyday interactions among teachers, students, and communities, legitimate belonging and active participation in school community practices will lead immigrant students to become a legitimate Canadian with a positive self-respect and self-acknowledgement. The transformative multicultural curriculum should be one that creates a mutually supportive and encouraging environment for immigrant students to become full members of a Canadian school community and actively participate and interact with teachers and other students of different cultural backgrounds.

(In)conclusive closure 1: Linger thoughts

As I approach the end of this study, some practical suggestions for Korean parents and Korean communities spin in my head. Parents' imposition of traditional Korean cultural values on their children is one of the central conflicts between Korean parents and young Korean Canadians. Parents explicitly and implicitly transmit Korean cultural values to their children in fear of losing the Korean culture transgenerationally. Drawing on this study, it seems more plausible to embrace the multifaceted cultural identity emerging from cross-cultural experience, instead of mourning the loss of cultural authenticity and purity. Attention should move from a dichotomous choice to be a "Korean" or "Canadian" to an invitation to create multiple becomings through navigating differences. Growing up in Canada already makes it impossible for them to be the same as Koreans in Korea. Given this particular situation that they face, I would like to suggest that Korean parents focus on the generative possibilities and potentialities gained from cross-cultural living.

The fundamental challenge is how navigate the tension that emerges between the Canadian context and parents' emphasis on Korean cultural values. For this practical question, I would like to point out two things. First of all, when parents introduce Korean culture to young Korean Canadians, they allow young Korean Canadians the opportunity to re-interpret and re-appropriate Korean cultural values within a Canadian context. In reworking through different interpretations together, parents should guide young Korean Canadians in finding out the applicability of Korean culture to the current cultural context that they face.

However wonderful the traditional cultural values may sound to parents, they do not have any meaning to young Korean Canadians if those values have nothing to do with their reality. Therefore, parents should open up a space for their children to search for their own meaning of Korean cultural values in the process of becoming a Korean Canadian. Teaching Korean culture should involve more than simply learning from the previous generations.

Secondly, I want to warn Korean parents not to transmit Korean culture by decontextualizing and freezing it as an unchanging thing. This study demonstrates that Korean parents who immigrated in the 1960s and 1970s tend to immerse their children with the Korean culture they remembered prior to leaving. Problems arise because the young generation actually experiences a more contemporary Korean culture, most often through various forms of pop culture. Young Korean Canadians are comparatively much more exposed to and influenced by contemporary Korean culture through the internet, by the increasing numbers of Korean students coming to Canada, as well as by recent Korean immigrants. When parents try to teach the value of Korean culture, it should be considered how these influences impact on their children positively and negatively. The transmission of a Korean culture as unchangeably mirroring the cultural experience of parents drives young Korean Canadians to stereotype the Korean culture with negative images such as conservative, unreasonable, outmoded, and inapplicable.

My conversations with young Korean Canadians informed me of the need to provide young Korean Canadians with a space to explore and share their narratives of cross-cultural experiences. In the virtual lack of any institutional and public resources to nurture their emergent identity by cross-cultural living, they deal with their confusions and struggles in an individual way, which makes them more marginalized and estranged. The existing infrastructure of the Korean community in Vancouver is neither large nor stable because the large-scale immigration of Koreans to Canada is a recent phenomenon. In view of this situation, Korean community needs to establish a supportive space to help young Korean Canadians enhance a sustainable sense of identity and articulate their becoming a Korean

Canadian. Although it was not the focus of this study, it is necessary to be aware that the Korean Canadian's construction of identity is contingent upon class, gender, and sexuality. After all, Korean Canadians do not make up a monolithic group; rather, they comprise a heterogeneous group filled with complexities.

The Korean language is the main tool for access to Korean culture. Contemporary young Korean Canadians have access to many routes to and resources of Korean culture. However, if they do not speak Korean it is difficult to make use of those resources. Lily, one of the second generation Korean Canadians in this study, shared her frustrating experience. She joined the Korean youth club at the university as a way of socializing with other Korean students, but unfortunately her lack of Korean language hindered her to intermingle with them. A sense of alienation and estrangement resulted. Lily also found it difficult to experience the diversity of Korean culture due to her lack of Korean language when she stayed in Korea to learn Korean. Recognizing this dilemma, Korean parents often encourage their children to attend the Korean language school. What is considered is that learning the Korean language is not only valuable for communicative competence but also for an understanding of Korean culture.

In this sense, the Korean language school takes on a significant responsibility to nourish a healthy cultural identity for young Korean Canadians. The Korean language schools have tended to aim at fostering linguistic competence primarily focusing on grammatical rules and vocabularies. Less attention is devoted to explore the process in which young Korean Canadians make sense of Korean culture through language learning. With a lack of understanding of the dialectical relationship among language, culture, and identity, the Korean language schools, when teaching Korean, disembody young Korean Canadians from a Korean cultural context in an instrumental perspective on language learning. Anthony and Lily expressed frustration and disappointment with the Korean language school where teaching was confined to the vowels and consonants of Korean letters. They complained that although there were cultural events for Korean traditional costumes and heritages, those events were neither closely related to their experience of cross-cultural

living nor were they helpful in dealing with the confusion and struggles of navigating between the two different “worlds.”

The curriculum in the Korean language school should be aware of the potential tensionality and conflicts between two languages and cultures. With a deeper understanding of the intriguing relationship of culture, language, and identity, the Korean language school's curriculum should move from a disembodied to an embodied education grounded on the students' living reality. Teaching the Korean language should involve a profound consideration of the translational and transformative process of cross-cultural living; should allow young Korean Canadians to seek who they are becoming through cross-cultural living; and should provide them with opportunities to understand themselves through two different languages. The inspiring Korean language curriculum will be one that can help young Korean Canadians enrich their understanding who they are as Korean Canadians *vis-à-vis* learning the Korean language.

(In)conclusive closure 2: An autobiographical returning

It seems almost axiomatic that we write about the consequences of a dissertation to and for others as part of the conclusion. Yet, we seldom reflect upon its consequences for ourselves. In this (in)conclusive section, I would like to reflect upon the return to the subsequent journey I am currently undertaking. Throughout my journey of writing this dissertation, one of the most incredible learning opportunities is the experience of living in a muddle of uncertainty, doubt, contradiction, and ambivalence. So many stories come to my mind as I tentatively close this dissertation.

I recently met a new Korean friend who was about to start her doctoral studies at UBC. Our first encounter was at a Korean student's gathering in August just before school started. She looked very ambitious, eagerly anticipating her new life. She told me of her

dream to live and study abroad. At some point in our conversation she said,

I heard many Korean graduate students are usually so shy and reticent that they exclusively socialize only with Koreans. I want to be different. I want to be more actively involved in the Canadian culture and to participate in Canadian society. Since Koreans are used to being culturally passive we can't improve English quickly compared to Europeans. That's why I moved to the university dormitory where most residents are English-speaking people. I'm looking forward to my new life.

Her declaration and eagerness to start a new life reminded me of my first year at UBC. I felt exactly like her. That time I was totally clueless about living in an environment surrounded with an unfamiliar culture and language. My reaction to her was a smile and a silent prayer hoping that whatever adversities and difficulties she encountered would not get in the way of her passionate longing for the new life.

A month later I saw her again looking very unhappy. Her initial enthusiastic energy was gone. When I asked her about her studies and her new life, her eyes welled up. She spilled her frustration and suffering from being isolated and alienated from her English-speaking classmates as well as the residents in her dormitory. Her response did not surprise me at all.

My current life is going in an extremely terrible way that I never expected before. I am so stressed out. My depression is such an incredible weight to bear. Can you imagine how I feel being left out; having dinner alone while other residents enjoy their dinner chatting with each other? Nobody bothers to talk to me nor ask me to join his/her table. Perhaps I am the only person who says no more than "Good-

morning" and "Bye." There were times when I wanted to skip dinner rather than suffer the isolation and exclusion. Despite the chef's wonderful cooking, I have never enjoyed any of those tasty dishes. The only thought I had during mealtimes was that I wanted to escape this dreadful torture. Doesn't it look like spiritual violence! How can I enter into their conversation? How can I improve my command of English in order for me to talk with them more comfortably? How did you get through this distressful pathetic situation? Do you think I can survive this?

Her story backed the moment when I desperately struggled through language and cultural barriers. I could absolutely sympathize, from the bottom of my heart, with her existential crisis and ontological solitude. Indeed it is severely fearful to live through being different. However, my only suggestion for her was very simplistic:

Don't feel humiliated and embarrassed about your deficiency in English, of being culturally and racially different. You can make a contribution to this society because your presence itself has already brought them different perspectives, different ways of being. Be proud of who you are.

On my way home, I asked myself, "Am I really feeling proud of being different? Am I truly fine with my accented English?" In all honesty the issue of living and embracing difference in a positive way still vexes me. I need to gather up all my courage to deal with humiliation and shame triggered by my accented English and cultural difference. It took me a long time to accept my difference as non-threatening intimidation. It took an even longer time and more goodwill to espouse my difference as a gift, a generative challenge, and to feel comfortable in the muddle of familiarity and unfamiliarity. Breaking new ground is such an incredible experience, akin to being reborn. When we come into the

world from a safely protective cocoon of the mother's womb, we have to bear tremendous pains. Like this metaphor, to be other than what I would have been if I had not crossed the Pacific Ocean, I have to be ready to submit myself to anguish and suffering. The cost of taking on these challenges and risks are the exceedingly rich opportunities for understanding human beings within broader horizons.

I recall one funny story that partly colored this voyage during my visit to Korea last spring. That visit was a time for me to reconnect with my friends. When I bade them goodbye I unconsciously but very naturally outstretched my arm to give them a hug. Everyone looked at me in surprise because Koreans do not hug when saying goodbye. They cynically said, "You have become so much westernized. Hey! You are not supposed to be a Canadian. You are a Korean!" This comment reminded me of my sarcastic response to Korean international students who acted like westerners upon their return from studying in North America. Then I was so critical about Koreans mimicking and cherishing the western culture with a great desire for it.

This moment was an awakening for me; I reflected how I judged other people in my own way. I came to realize that accepting other cultures did not necessarily mean being culturally colonized. In absolute terms, we should be careful not to take in other cultures in a colonizing way. It was through my living experience in a western culture that I came to like saying goodbye with a big hug, but not a mimetic desire for it. A hug is such a warm-hearted way to say goodbye or greet a friend. I have learned the new culture not just by uncritical acceptance or rejection. I have embraced another culture with an understanding that each culture is an irreplaceable embodiment of human wisdom. Not any more do I see and judge the western culture from my attenuated stereotypes and idealized perspectives out of context. I no longer identify the western culture with the one

depicted in Hollywood movies.

Before finishing the first draft of this dissertation, another experience intensified my awareness of the difficulty of living with cultural differences evident in my everyday struggles. When I encountered a problem with a Canadian friend, I soon contemplated my research from a more practical perspective. Confronting the dispute, my friend decisively said, "I guess you might not understand this situation because you come from a conservative culture." I was completely stunned and confused because I did not suppose our problem had anything to do with our cultural differences. Despite my not wanting to judge his behavior, I was convinced that his behavior was also not acceptable within Canadian conventions. I got lost in our conversations when he pinned the matter down to cultural differences. Labeling me as a person from a culturally different background, he seemed to assume that we could not cross our own cultural boundaries. This situation ended up silencing both of us. This experience has continuously challenged me to think about the issue of cultural difference, not just based on theoretical arguments, but also through daily personal struggles, a practically lived and constantly negotiated reality.

In my thoughts and reflections, I acknowledge that the term "cultural difference" should not be used in a way of assuming that my territory is here and your territory is there. Neither would "cultural difference" be possible to understand without involving ethics and care. This term should not be exploited to keep each other's boundary in an apathetic attitude with less willingness to seek for a place of mutual understanding? I regretted giving up continuing more conversations with him. Unfortunately, at the time I had a misplaced perception that letting him hang on to his beliefs meant respecting his culture. That letting go turned out to be about abandoning communication which was not an appropriate or a generative way of living with/through cultural differences. I would not

force him to take my side. Rather, I could have opened up a space for more conversations and sought a genuine understanding with active engagement. When people clash with cultural differences, they easily tend to elude the responsibility of getting at a heartfelt understanding. Perhaps we could straightforwardly understand cultural differences rationally and intellectually. A simple recognition that we are culturally different is mere decency. It requires devotion for more energy and dedication to attain a heartfelt understanding. Since we are vulnerable to dealing with complicated circumstances, we easily give up on more communication and choose to stay with a stubbornness and a hardness of heart. This kind of fake and superficial understanding makes me sick.

I have also considered a play around "differences within sameness" and "sameness within difference" through a constant proliferation of differences amidst similarities and differences. At a more profound level, we all belong to a culture of humankind beyond individual cultures. Sometimes we treat cultural differences more frivolously from this kind of humanistic nostrum. I would not like to think about cultural difference from the mere relativism of "placing ourselves in their position." Refusing to reduce difference to sameness, I also cast doubt on the empathetic approach that views cultural difference from the perspective of romanticizing and exoticizing it.

I have asked myself over and over, "What would I do if I am a teacher in a multicultural classroom? How would I make the most of cultural difference as a generative resource for learning?" It is precisely through an engaging willingness to confront the immense beauty of the different ways of human living that leads to spiritual depth. I am compelled to see my own culture differently through the eyes of the other, and the other culture through my own cultural interpretive lens. Looking and understanding each culture through different eyes is a spiral movement that will facilitate arriving at the genuine

understanding of each other. This will then assist in flourishing the multiple possibilities of becoming. What I have learned through this spiraling movement is creating and continuing to create a self through gearing into the world. I am always trying to expand my boundaries and prepare myself for more wonderful challenges to take in an enchanting newness.

I would like to ruminate upon what I have learned in doing narrative inquiry. The process illuminated the lived texture of complexities and negotiations enmeshed in becoming a narrative inquirer. Although I could not fully relate to the young Korean Canadians' experiences, I realized that sharing my own story of living a cross-cultural life had made them feel safe and comfortable in sharing their stories of living as culturally and linguistically marginalized persona. Particularly in the case of Brian, I was filled with concerns and worries about how to encourage him to share such thorny experiences with open honesty. I attempted at sharing my own experiences of hardships, afflictions, and confusions from alienation and isolation caused by cultural difference and language barrier. Sharing my own feelings and emotions impacted by my awkwardness, discomfort, and distress allowed other young Korean Canadians to be more open about their own emotions when they recalled their more painful memories. The accounts I have written are not so much a "representation" as a "communication."

Moreover, I came to better make sense of my experiences of living a cross cultural life and my cultural identity construction in the process of listening to the stories of the young Korean Canadians, of sharing complexly entangled emotions and feelings entwined within cultural and language barriers, and of seeking for the significances of the stories collaboratively together. By thinking about each other's story we arrived at new understandings of each other's experiences. Sharing and connecting my own experiences

with those of the young Korean Canadians fostered a great sense of rapport, allowed us to feel connected by mutual experience, and offered us multiple places to stand in the story and multiple levels of emotion and experience to which we could situate ourselves in the story. Doing narrative inquiry provided me with a uniquely rich opportunity to understand and search for the meanings of human experiences not on the basis of instamatic snapshots, but through personal interrelationships. Through this journey of doing narrative inquiry I am better able to engage in understanding the lived experience of others as well as myself with mutual nourishment, and to be more attuned to the conflicting and ambiguous spaces we inhabit in narrative study.

As a female scholar, I have a personally very shameful story. I had time to talk with David about a chapter containing his story. He told me, "There is one thing that I should correct which may not so important. You mistook my Indo Canadian teacher for a male teacher. My teacher was a female." How did I spontaneously suppose that the teacher was a male? Suddenly I was shocked and ashamed of myself for my insensitivity towards gender issues unknowingly operating in my consciousness. That was such an enlightening moment, firstly because this experience made me realize how data could be translated and screened through the eyes of the inquirer; and secondly, it was valuable to receive feedback from the young Korean Canadians. Going back to them with the chapters I created with their stories not only assured me of my interpretation but also brought me into the process of illuminating my prejudices, partiality, and bias through which I had been interpreting and understanding their stories, a process of opening inward that allowed me to reach outward towards understanding. This self-reflective practice changed my attitude and understanding of collecting and analyzing data as well as writing process.

Definitely there were difficulties and struggles from ethical dilemmas to practical

reasoning. Sometimes I got into struggling with the paradoxical roles of an inquirer and educator. While listening to their stories, especially about conflicts with their parents, I found myself interrupting the stories and trying to give them direction. The knots of contradictions about my own positions about who we were to one another continually jostled me into numerous and simultaneous directions. Narrative inquiry constantly exposed me to these incomplete edges involved in the communicative process of fluid movement where our understandings of ourselves slipped through and around boundaries and horizons while coming together or moving apart.

Narrative inquiry required a lot of energy, time, and patience. Sometimes I was upset and disappointed when I scheduled a one and half hour interview but only engaged in a 20-minute interview because sometimes students had overbooked their appointments. There were times when I was annoyed when they gave me lame reasons looking so relaxed although my mind was in turmoil. However, these stressful situations that burned me out and caused me to get irritated were nothing in comparison to the incredible and very valuable learning and the wisdom impossible for me to get from books. It was such a privileged opportunity and an honor to work with the young Korean Canadians. This dissertation did not try to reach sweeping conclusions. As much as possible, I attempted at balancing every story that appalled and enticed me. These stories, for me, offer tender and insightful extracts of hope and enchantment. Every story was a treasure to be cherished. I am grateful for the Korean Canadians' voices which were most often honest, caring, good-humored, and unbound. Journeying through their stories and my stories, from living conversations to written texts, has enriched and deepened my understanding of human relationships, human beings in general as well as my own self-understanding. It was such a process of "living inquiry." I have indeed learned to narratively think, understand, and write human experiences. To terminate, I would like to share my poem

inspired by doing this narrative study.

Doing narrative inquiry

Your stories bring out yourself and also myself
When you come inside me and I come inside you
 your stories my stories
 come into play
 and evoke a sense of something
 already familiar
 that we don't fully understand
 but somehow undeniably know

Our stories are not an isolated instance
 not an idiosyncrasy of individual experiences
 not a simple linear accumulation of scattered memories

Our stories open up access to the overlapping layers of memories
 our collaborative memories

Your stories my stories
 eventually become human stories
 through the cross-fertilization

Our stories awaken and transform
 our many selves
 out of the known selves
 back into the unknown selves

We come into a new being
by (re)living inward, outward, forward, backward
through projective identification
reflective mirror of our past, present, and future
in and beyond physical time and space

Engaging in

telling remembering listening
stories
seeking creating weaving
meaning
together

We immerse into an analogical being
by touching and being touched
through the unleashed tides of our togetherness,
through unanticipated evocative threads of similarities and differences

That's the place of a fusion of our horizons
the place of a projection of human possibilities
the place of multi-layered sedimentations
of whole human stories traced and shadowed
over, through, and with individual versions

Working with stories
I've learned to

let go of individually pre-established selves
arrive at the juncture of a common human condition
attend a larger human condition being mutually evolved
stretch out an existential and ontological cage
open up a new human world
that is not yet realized
but is going to germinate in the future

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