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NARRATIVE IDENTITY NEGOTIATION  
OF FIRST-GENERATION KOREAN IMMIGRANTS

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by

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## **ABSTRACT**

It has been more than a century since the first group of Korean immigrants began their lives in America. Accordingly, many studies on Korean immigrants have focused on health-related issues on senior citizens, academic achievement of children of immigrants, or identity establishment of adolescents. Although previous research studies provided remarkable understanding, there are only limited studies on how first-generation Korean immigrants utilize formal or informal learning in their acculturation process. Furthermore, the shaping and reshaping of first generation Korean immigrants' identity in new social setting are not yet fully understood.

This qualitative study used narrative inquiry to investigate life history of four first generation Korean American women who came to America between their early 20s and mid-30s. The study sought specifically to understand first generation immigrants' acculturation process, shaping and reshaping identity, practice of culturally embedded learning approach, and negotiating identity in the process of finding "place" in new social setting. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and analyzed according to narrative analysis procedures, methods of reflection, and writing.

This study revealed that participants' acculturation process was selective, and the selection was based on retaining their pre-established self-image, identity, and social status they had possessed in Korea. As a method of adjusting to the new situation to comply with their "already set" identity, they attempted formal and informal education. The participants found informal learning was more challenging than formal learning. Informal learning comprises much more cultural elements and situational variations, which can only be understood by the member of society. The participants realized that possessing an exact equivalent social status in a foreign country is not possible. As a

result, they negotiate with situation, social status, and/or identity. The participants balanced out disadvantages as an immigrant with their advantage of experiencing multi-cultural society.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Coming to the Topic**

My family and I moved to the United States during my high school years, in the mid-70s. When we first arrived, we didn't know much about the United States. All we knew was that it is a rich country, so we could be rich when we got there. It was not a realistic American dream, but back in the 70s, not many people traveled around. No one in my family knew what it would be like living in the United States. Without thinking about the process of achieving the American dream, we all dreamed about a nice house, nice cars, and speaking English fluently.

One day my mother, who was a piano teacher with her own studio in Korea, regretfully told me that she had been dreaming of a two story house and a big refrigerator filled with fresh fruit and meat. The reality was different. My mother had to work at a factory, and my father had to work day and night. We lived in a two-bedroom apartment, rather than a two-story house. I was not able to enroll in the classes I wanted to, except arts and music. The Koreans I met at church told me that I would be able to speak English fluently in a few months because I was young. I just waited for that few months, but that wonderful transformation did not happen.

At the time, it was not common for high school students in Korea to have a paid job. Most children in Korea lived with their parents as dependents until they got married. But in the United States, everyone worked so I did. My first job in the United States did not require fluent English. Rather, I had to be good with numbers, which I was. However, because of the lack of my English skills, I was paid \$2.00 per hour, when the minimum pay required by law was \$2.50. Similarly, one of my Korean friends was hired as a cashier, which also did not require fluent English. The owner called the first two weeks a "training period" and paid her nothing—even though she had to work full

time the same as any other cashier in the store. That incident motivated me to learn English in order to get the minimum wage.

My struggle with living in the United States began there. As a high school student in Korea, the only thing I had been asked to do was study hard to go to a prestigious college. Here in the United States, I had to work, make friends, and become accustomed to a whole new school culture and system. Above all, the most urgent priority was language. Speaking English in the United States was significant, because it is the official language. Not speaking English fluently had led to not being treated fairly. I began questioning what other Koreans were doing to adjust themselves to the environment with a different culture and a different language.

Still struggling with language, I went to college with an undeclared major. I would have wanted to study Korean literature or education if I was in Korea, but I decided not to make my mind up until I knew for sure. As one of the entry processes, I had to take an English Placement Test. From the test results, I was advised to take one ESL (English as a Second Language) class and two writing classes. Those were also graduation requirements. I had to work extra hours and get help to survive those classes. Needless to say, I decided not to study liberal arts. Instead I decided to study mathematics which consists of less languages, more numbers. I had to switch my future from being a teacher to an uncertain calling.

The interesting thing was that we, as ESL students, had exchanged information such as which professor gives easy topics, fewer exams, and multiple-choice questions. We all preferred multiple choice exams rather than essay questions, because our English skills limited our writing ability. We gathered and spread information, shared things about making a pleasant living in the United States, and passed on new things from our hometowns in Korea including songs and TV shows. Our parents attended Korean church for the same reason. It was a place of social gathering, information exchange,

career services, and spiritual worship. By exchanging information and sharing emotions, we were building a community to work together to face our difficulties.

During these years, I was becoming insecure in my personal identity and getting a sketchy idea of an ethnic identity, which I had never thought about when I was in Korea. Korea is a racially homogeneous nation; I had been surrounded by similar looking people. Cultural difference was not an issue, as we were sharing the same culture. Even now, 35 years after I first came to the United States, I still struggle with many barriers, and people still ask me where I came from. Although my children were born in the United States, they get the same question: where are you from? And my children know that California, where they were born, is not the answer people want to hear. Because of our appearance, we stand out among White people. Although we are not conscious of that, we are constantly reminded that we are from another continent. That question affects how my children and I see ourselves, in terms of our ethnic identity.

Therefore, my next question started to form: How do immigrants, especially those who have a distinct appearance from Westerners, construct self-image in the United States? How do they manage dramatic changes of their social and/or economic status? In the same way that I had not been paid even minimum wage, Korean immigrants were disabled from utilizing their expertise in the United States. How do they emotionally cope with this reality? How do they become familiar with the new society and the new culture? How do they find their roles and position in American society? What if they do not feel they fit in? How do they seek upward mobility?

As a means of improving one's life, updating knowledge and information is a necessary tool in modern days. By the same token, learning plays a meaningful role in an immigrants' life. Not only institutionalized learning but also informal learning plays a significant part in our daily lives. Intended or not intended, people encounter learning constantly. Formal learning may accelerate one's career promotion or elevate one's

socio-economic status. On the other hand, informal learning may be beneficial for personal understanding, cultural adjustment, or psychological stability.

### **Problem Statement**

As the number of immigrants has increased, more studies have strived to understand immigrants' acculturation process. Previous studies have focused on stress levels of acculturation (Mui & Kang, 2006; Oh, Koeske, & Sales, 2002; Yi & Tidwell, 2005), relation with mental problems (Berry, 1998), low economic attainment (Kim, 2004; Min, 2006; Park, 1997; Zia, 2000), and low academic results and low self-esteem of immigrants (Miller, 2007; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003). Some studies relate acculturation with changes in ethnic identity, cultural identity, and personal identity (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006; Umaña-Taylor, 2003).

Most of the studies focused on perspectives of psychology, education, counseling, or economics. Recently, researchers have made progress on empirical studies of immigrant's identities (Clary-Lemon, 2010; Valenta, 2009). However, these studies are focused on social structures, ethnic groups, and above all, they are limited to Westerners moving into another Western culture. Although research studies provided noteworthy knowledge of Korean immigrants; there are only limited studies on how first-generation immigrants utilize formal or informal learning in their acculturation process. Koreans in the United States need to rephrase their life history as they enter to a completely new world. First-generation immigrants confront identity challenges during adulthood. Yet, shaping and reshaping of first generation Korean immigrants' identity in new social setting are not fully understood. A life story of an immigrant--integrating two different cultures, conflicting life styles, disagreeing values into one manageable life; finding their "place" to fit in; and reshaping their identity-need to be examined.

## **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of the study was to explore how Korean immigrants in the United States shape their identity in terms of cultural competency, reverse acculturation, and social roles. The second purpose is to understand how informal learning and tacit knowledge affect identity formation. More specifically, the study sought to address the following research questions:

- What was the purpose of particular Korean women for coming to the United States? Reflecting back on their initial purpose, how do they think their conceptions of themselves and their original goals changed?
- How are tacit knowledge, culturally embedded learning procedures, and other forms of learning implicated in the acculturation process of specific Korean immigrants to the United States?
- What struggles did Koreans face in finding their “place” in American society?

## **Outline of the Study**

This study has six chapters. The first chapter outlined the rationale for the research topic, research problem, and research questions. Chapter Two reviews studies on acculturation, daily informal learning, culture-related learning style (tacit learning in this study), and narrative identity. In the third chapter, I introduce what narrative means in qualitative research and outline life history as a type of narrative research. Also, a method of data collection and data analysis is presented. In Chapter Four, I briefly introduce the history of Korean immigrants and biographical stories of four participants. Chapter Five presents a synthesis acculturation narrative, integrating all four participants as one acculturative life history with five distinct developmental phases. In Chapter Six, I present my conclusions regarding theoretical assumptions, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for further studies.

## **Chapter Two: Review of the Literature**

Acculturation incorporates the internal process of learning new culture and unlearning the old one, while acknowledging that complete unlearning is not possible. Immigrants acculturate as they observe and adopt a new lifestyle and wrestle with a different culture and different values. Basically, this process can't be done without knowing the society and its culture. Immersion in the society and understanding the culture is the first step of acculturation. Therefore, if tacit knowledge is an initial understanding of an object (Polanyi, 1966) and Easterners are more exposed to tacit knowledge (Takeuchi & Nonaka, 2004), tacit dimensions of learning would play a significant role in acculturation.

In addition, identity theory recounts how people understand themselves as social beings in socio-cultural context. Furthermore, narrative identity helps individuals to extract meaning in their lives from their narratives. Suggesting that acculturation is a distinctive personal process, it should be described as a combination of one's lived experiences, cultural/historical background, political and socioeconomic status, personal traits, and shaping and reshaping of identity. Therefore, this chapter scrutinizes what is known from previous studies on acculturation, informal learning and tacit knowledge, culturally biased learning, and immigrant identity.

### **Acculturation**

The studies on acculturation are "as old as recorded history" (Sam & Berry, 2006, p. 1). However, critical research has begun to accelerate since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by sociologists and anthropologists, Park and Redfield (Persons, 1987; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936), and followed by psychologists. Although Park focused on acculturation, his approach was the melting pot theory, rather than acculturation

(Padilla & Perez, 2003). The melting pot is a metaphor suggesting that a multi-ethnic society melts together into an Americanized society with one culture (Meyer, 2008). The idea implies that all the nationalities and cultures amalgamate into American culture and makes homogeneous one. Strictly speaking, it is not acculturation but a type of acculturation, namely assimilation.

Equating assimilation with acculturation is a traditional view of acculturation. This notion emphasizes the one-way process of adapting to the host culture and relinquishing the original one. Immigrants were pressured to be ashamed of their skin colors, last names, their histories, and their life styles (Meyer, 2008.) This concept was based on the melting pot theory, which was initiated nearly a century ago. Nowadays, as the number of immigrants has increased and international mobility has accelerated, the concept of acculturation has diversified. In recent decades, a majority of researchers agree that acculturation is a multi-dimensional selective adjusting process (Berry, 2008; Le Vine & Padilla, 1980; Mendoza & Martinez, 1981; Miller, 2007; Sam & Berry, 2006).

A traditional view of acculturation, “immigrants from developing countries arriving in an industrialized country and faced with the need to learn a new language, develop an understanding of new customs, and interact with people whose values and beliefs differ from their own” (Phinney, 2006, p. xx), sees this as a one-dimensional process. This refers to the adoption of a new culture, labeling how fast one can absorb the new culture. This notion does not consider which ethnic person is immigrating to what type of society. It assumes that individuals automatically lose their original culture as they become absorbed into a larger society (Hodges, 2002).

Today, the leading concept of acculturation has changed. It is regarded as selective adaptation of a new culture while retaining one’s previous culture, the so called multi-dimensional acculturation model. This multi-dimensional model implies that the immigrant has a choice of embracing the culture of the host society, depending on

individual's values. He or she also has a choice of retaining the original culture (Miller, 2007). Ultimately one may build up a unique blended culture of the old and new.

Acculturation involves many dimensions of people's lives. Many researchers believe that profession is the most important element for acculturation. Linguists regard language proficiency as the key factor in immigrants' initial adjustment to the United States (Miller, 2007), educators consider one's educational background as a vital feature in the acculturation process (Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003; Min, 2002; 2006; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003), and other specialists see financial status, religion, or family structure as the core elements of the acculturation process. Some consider acculturation as an emotional process (Mui, & Kang, 2006; Takebayashi, 2004), while others perceive it as a social issue (Mui, Kang, Kang, & Domanski, 2007). Although these studies well describe how some attributes influence acculturation, it is a complex process. There are unlimited attributes of acculturation that constantly stimulate one's life at a new place.

Generally speaking, acculturation includes quite a few elements of daily life. Acculturation involves language, learning, decision-making, social skills, work ability, communication, religion, school systems, family structure, political actions, values, norms, and so on. While immigrants process these activities every day, one makes constant adjustments in behavioral modes and values from one's own original culture, consciously and unconsciously. As a part of acculturation, these modifications shape new social roles and self-identities in the new place where the immigrants settle. This process continues until the uncertainty and unfamiliarity of a foreign place decrease to a comfortable level.

**Measurement models of acculturation.** At present, one of the most widely accepted theoretical approaches to acculturation is Berry's acculturation measurement model, which was one of the first bilinear models (Lee, 2004; Mana & Orr, 2009; Miller, 2007). Many researchers use Berry's four types of the acculturation process:



assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization (Hodge, 2002; Lee, 2004; Mana & Orr, 2009). In this categorization, assimilation implies merging into mainstream culture and adapting the dominant way of life. Separation is keeping one's own ethnic culture and withdrawing oneself from the dominant society. Marginalization refers to cultural and psychological withdrawal from one's own original culture as well as the dominant society. Integration indicates maintaining one's ethnic culture and adapting the dominant culture to become an integral part of a larger society (Hodges, 2002; Lee, 2004). The integrated acculturation process would be considered the most well-adjusted approach, whereas marginalized acculturation would be the least desired and most stressful process.

Basically, Berry's (1980, 2006, 2008) notion of acculturation implies the changes in one's culture arise both from contact with the host culture and ongoing changes within their own ethnic group culture. Although Berry's (1980, 2006, 2008) definition of acculturation considered change in either one or both groups, he mainly focuses on those who move to another culture. Acculturation is not merely the newcomers' process of absorbing or rejecting the host culture. Consciously and unconsciously, newcomers also influence the host society. Culture is dynamic. It is hard to be "not affected by migration in one way or another, either as a sender or as receiver" (Sam & Berry, 2006, Location 243). Thus acculturation is neither a linear activity nor the outcome of an event. It is a continuous, multifaceted process, which involves diverse ethnic groups and the host society.

There are other measurement tools such as Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-ASIA), Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), Bilinear Multidimensional Measurement Model of Asian American Acculturation and Enculturation, or the East Asian Acculturation Measure (EAAM). Most of these models ask multiple choice questions or simple short answer questions. For instance, SL-ASIA,

one of the widely used tools for Asian populations, asks questions like “How do you identify yourself?”, “with what ethnic group do you hang out the most?”, or “which identification does your father/mother use?” People get to choose one of five answers: Oriental; Asian; Asian-American; Chinese-American, Japanese-American, Korean-American, etc.; or American. There is no clear distinction between Oriental and Asian or Asian American and Chinese or Japanese American. According to Suinn (1992), the originator of the questionnaire, answer 5 indicates mostly westernized and 1 indicates least westernized or not westernized at all. It is doubtful how these numbers can give full details of acculturation.

**Critiques of measuring acculturation.** These acculturation measurement models face some critiques. Berry’s acculturation measurement (BAM) model focuses primarily on the acculturation of immigrant groups; however, Schwartz et al. (2006) argue that host society group deals with acculturation challenges as well. The host society involuntarily became a majority group as new people moved into their society. Schwartz et al. present Native Americans in the United States, Palestinians in Israel, and Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland as acculturation examples of nonimmigrant ethnic groups. Even though immigrants reproduce the custom and culture of the host society, they naturally represent their original culture. When immigrants represent their original culture as a larger group, its impact could be influential to the host society.

Further critics contend that Berry’s theory has been empirically verified only a few times. Berry’s hypothesis is that “integration” is the form of adaptation where the best mental health might be expected because of the lowest level of acculturative stress. Koch and Bjerregaard (2003) found no connection between Berry’s definitions of acculturation and mental health among Greenlanders in Denmark. Koch and Bjerregaard also suggested that socio-demographic and socio-economic factors play more important roles for mental health. Accordingly, their conclusion is that BAM may

not work for some ethnic groups, and it is overly simplified to describe various ethnicities.

The other measurement tools have similar problems. The questionnaires, based on multiple-choice questions, may oversimplify the complex and personal process of acculturation. For instance, an immigrant from Europe and one from Asia in the United States may experience different acculturation processes. Although neither may speak English fluently, the experiences of European and non-European immigrants in the United States are qualitatively different (Schwartz et al., 2006). Likewise, a half-Asian or Asian with American spouse may have a distinctive acculturative story. Also Southeast Asians and East Asians in the United States could have different acculturation experiences, since they do not share the same cultural background. These measurement tools are well established to categorize into patterns by ethnic group or nations; they do not describe the personal acculturation process of distinctive cases.

### **Daily Learning in Acculturation**

Many scholars have suggested that learning is deeply rooted in socially and culturally structured contexts (Garrick, 2002; Illeris, 2002; Kim & Merriam, 2010; Niewolny & Wilson, 2009). It hinges on the uniqueness of the individual and complexities of contexts. The learning process is the internal operation of each learner. Through a process, learners construct new knowledge by integrating, assimilating or rejecting new information with their past experiences, beliefs, and values. The learning process is also influenced by the environment, context, and cultural historical background that may be shared within a social or ethnic group.

**Learning informally in day-to-day learning.** The term informal learning has been a focus of study to many researchers in areas such as workplace learning and community learning (Billet, 2001; Eraut, 2004; Kim & Merriam, 2010; Livingstone,

2001; Marsick & Watkins, 1990; Tough, 2002; Wenger, 1999). As stressed by earlier studies, much workplace learning occurs during informal practice (Conlon, 2004). Practically, informal learning plays a more critical role not only in the workplace but in our daily life.

In day-to-day various situations, people constantly encounter learning opportunities. Informal learning may occur in both highly structured settings as well as casual conditions. Marsick and Watkins (2001) suggest the Informal and Incidental Learning model, which is basically shaped on the notion that dissatisfaction of current being stimulates learning. This notion neglects the incidental learning that plays a significant role in daily life.

Marsick and Watkins's (2001) learning model approach was based on trigger-action-reflection spiral activity until dissatisfaction is resolved. This concept focuses on improving informal and incidental learning at workplace. Marsick (2009) also adds that "informal learning is best situated in workplaces where individuals can make a difference in what and how they learn...individuals can and do influence their environments and... their beliefs mediate their actions" (p. 271). As Marsick and Watkins focused on the workplace, their theory and model of learning have contributed to the workplace learning and human resource literature. However, their definitions and learning model are still insufficient to explain informal and daily incidental learning.

On the other hand, Schugurensky (2000) categorizes learning by intentionality and consciousness. His classification of informal learning is based on the social constructivism approach. Social constructivism, originated by Vygotsky, is based on the learner's social interactions with cultural and historical context of learning and a personal critical thinking process (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Schugurensky (2000) suggested three forms of informal learning: self-directed, incidental, and socialization.

This categorization fits better for learning that occurs informally in day-to-day settings, which incorporates immigrants' acculturative learning.

Similar to the idea of self-teaching, Schugurensky's (2000) classification of informal learning focuses on an individual's casual learning in social activities. It is believed that most adults set out to learn new things or understand the necessity of learning, so they often do without recourse to a teacher (Golding et al, 2009). This belief is related to a human's innate ability to learn. An innate desire to learn, which occurs intentionally or unintentionally in everyday life situations, encourages people to acquire knowledge. This intrinsic attribute of learning is interrelated with culture and learning. That is, what people desire to learn and how they learn could be different across cultures and across individuals.

Learners make connections between the newly gathered information and existing knowledge while interacting with the environment at that moment. This means nobody learns exactly the same way. Learning is very personal, situational, contextual, social, and sometimes incidental. However, if knowledge can only be constructed by associating it with already existing knowledge, explaining how the initial knowledge was gained becomes problematic.

Earlier philosophers were much concerned with this. John Locke did not agree with Descartes' theory of knowledge, which emphasizes that knowledge can be attained through innate ideas and intuitions (Locke, 2009). Locke, as an empiricist, asserts that all human ideas come either from experiencing external objects or from experiencing the operations of the human mind, and the mind is originally blank, like a sheet of white paper, thus ideas are imprinted through experience (Abel, 2004). Locke rejects the instinctive ability or innate knowledge in learning but accepts experiences.

On the other hand, Immanuel Kant accepts the empiricist claim but also accepts the rationalist contention. He combines elements of rationalism and empiricism, in

which knowledge begins with experience but is also part of the content of knowledge that comes from the human mind (Abel, 2004). Kant argues for the existence of knowledge that is independent from experience. He calls knowledge of this kind *a priori*, in contradistinction to empirical, which has its sources *a posteriori*, that is, in experience (Kant, 2010). This notion of *a priori* being a foundation of learning may apply differently from one culture to the other—how people attain knowledge and the results of learning may not be the same everywhere.

If experience is the only source of learning and “everyone has the same basic cognitive processes” (Nisbett, 2003, Kindle Location 117, Introduction) as empiricists believe, then the different cultural systems of thought would not influence learning. However, “if it’s possible to produce marked changes in the way adults think, it certainly seemed possible that indoctrination into distinctive habits of thought from birth could result in very large cultural differences in habits of thought” (Nisbett, 2003, Kindle Location 140, Introduction). This is important because immigrants may have refer back to their native culture when people move to new culture, their innate nature have to deal with different culture, different ways of thinking system, and different ways of cognitive process.

**Tacit learning and tacit knowledge.** Tacit knowledge is known as not explicated (Collins, 2010), highly personal, cultural, and hard to formalize (Nonaka, 1994; Takeuchi & Nonaka, 2004), or the first step of knowing (Polanyi, 1966). Due to the nature of tacit knowledge, tacit learning and informal learning seem very similar. However, these types of learning should be differentiated. Tacit learning is associated with an innate ability, personal trait, and cultural bias while informal learning is related to a learning environment. In fact, there are much deeper meanings of tacit learning and tacit knowledge.

The history of the idea of tacit knowledge goes back to Polanyi's two books: *The Tacit Knowledge* and *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. Polanyi's (1966) idea of tacit knowledge involves two terms: knowing by awareness and understanding by attending to it. When researchers quote Polanyi, they usually refer to his statement that "we can know more than we can tell." In fact, there is much more to Polanyi's notion than that. Polanyi's (1966) idea of tacit knowledge was significant to the understanding of initial cognitive process of knowing. He differentiates between what is known and what ought to be known of a thing.

Tacit knowledge is understood as the opposite of explicit knowledge: Explicit is describable while tacit is not. However, these two cannot be sharply divided (Polanyi, 1958). Polanyi asserted that explicit knowledge must be tacitly understood before it turns out to be describable. Therefore all knowledge is either tacit or rooted in tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1958). Adopting Polanyi's idea, Takeuchi and Nonaka (2004) developed tacit/explicit knowledge as East/West way of knowing in organization.

Depending on the degree of resistance of tacit knowledge to being made explicit, Collins (2010) introduced three types of tacit knowledge: strong (collective), medium (somatic), and weak (relational) tacit knowledge. Collective tacit knowledge deals with the way society is constituted; somatic tacit knowledge involves individuals' bodies and brains; and relational tacit knowledge is just a matter of how particular people relate to each other (Collins, 2010). Although tacit knowledge cannot be clearly divided into these categories, there are cultural and situational differences on how people take in and manipulate knowledge.

One of the major characteristics of tacit knowledge is cultural influence in learning. Takeuchi and Nonaka (2004) developed the concept of tacit knowledge and utilized it to create new knowledge by synthesizing western and eastern way of knowing. They present four modes of knowledge conversion: tacit to tacit, tacit to explicit, explicit

to explicit, and explicit to tacit. They view explicit knowledge as Western and tacit as Eastern. Takeuchi and Nonaka (2004) assert that “Western business practices emphasize explicit knowledge” but Japanese “view knowledge as primarily tacit--namely, something that is not easily visible and expressible.” Furthermore, “the emphasis placed on tacit knowledge gives rise to a whole different view of how learning is achieved” (p. 16). Whether tacit is cultural learning or not, there is no clear distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge. Knowledge always begins tacitly and becomes explicit (Collins, 2010; Polanyi, 1966) by the exchange of ideas and negotiation. That implies that knowledge begins from an individual’s insight and know-how.

Gueldenberg and Helting (2007) criticized Takeuchi and Nonaka for differentiating tacit knowledge as the Eastern way and explicit knowledge as Western. Distinguishing tacit and explicit as Eastern and Western may, indeed, be insufficient. However, there are clear differences between cultures, and those differences shape an individual’s viewpoints and ways of perceiving things. Likewise, Koreans shape and intensify their attitude toward the learning process from their cultural, social, philosophical, and political norm. Regardless of Eastern or Western, cultural and social values are among the most critical aspects of learning.

But, the ordinary usage of “tacit” is sufficiently imprecise to give us the “license to call it tacit knowledge” in spite of what we know (Collins, 2010, p. 93). Collins describes tacit knowledge as awareness that “can be acquired only by immersion in the society of those who already possess it” (p. 2). That includes common sense and etiquette that people learn as they become members of society. In order to learn the common behaviors of that particular society, new members should be in constant contact in diverse settings with members of native society. Before Collins, Polanyi stated that all knowledge is either tacit or rooted in tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966). According to Polanyi, tacit knowledge is the initial understanding of an object. How people perceive



an object is different by culture or an individual. Thus, the tacit knowledge is different by culture as well.

**Cultural bias in learning.** Although numerous theories of learning try to explain how learning occurs by emphasizing distinct aspects of learning, one theory cannot replace the other or explain an entire learning process. Learning is a multi-dimensional, complex process, and each theory has its own key factors to explain learning. But most of the theories agree that learning involves social activities (Conlon, 2004; Hager & Halliday, 2009; Illeris, 2002; Niewolny & Wilson, 2009; Wenger, 1999). However the degree of social influence in learning may vary depending on a particular society and its culture. Salili (1996) asserted that learning and achievement behaviors in East Asian countries are firmly rooted in traditional and collectivistic values, which cannot be explained in terms of the Western individualistic model. Although researchers agree that cultural background and society is deeply embedded in any learning activity, the extent of its influence depends on culture and situation.

One of the Korean phrases for illustrating learning is “learning over one’s shoulder.” *Dong-Ah Korean-English Dictionary* describes the term as “pick up bits of knowledge casually.” As the dictionary describes, in general, Koreans acquire “how-to” by watching others. *Nunchi* (or *noonchi*) is another way of learning tacitly. *Nunchi* is a very useful and important skill or instinctual ability in interpersonal relationships, because with *nunchi*, people recognize unspoken words and the mood of the situation, and they act accordingly. When a person does not have *nunchi*, he or she is considered naïve or not clever. It is a key part of Korea’s social life. Koreans pick up a new culture, social context, ‘bits of knowledge’ needed in new society, and language, learning by *nunchi*. Without knowing exactly how *nunchi* works, it is not easy to interpret the acculturation process of Koreans.

According to Wikipedia (n.d.), *nunchi* can be described as:

The subtle art of listening and gauging another's mood. In Korea, “[*nunchi*] is the person's kibun being read, which is his or her pride, mood, or state of mind...It is of central importance to the dynamics of interpersonal relationships in Korean culture. It can be seen as the embodiment of skills necessary to communicate effectively in Korea's high context culture.

*Nunchi* has been a heuristic device and a primary tool for learning and social relations in Korea for generations. There is no logic in *nunchi*, but it takes speedy and intuitive decision-making. So *nunchi* is a good example of the tacit knowledge people learn by immersing into the society that Collins (2011b) discussed.

***Korean Culture.*** Korea is a monolingual and racially homogeneous nation. In general, Koreans hold the same culture, tradition, moral values and beliefs that originated from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. This school of thought is the dominant ideology of communication and interpersonal relationship in Korean society (Kim, 2005). Koreans are expected to obey seniors, place group harmony before individual needs, and not retort to older people (Cha, 1994). When Koreans communicate with different age groups, younger people are supposed to read older people's minds without asking unnecessary questions, and older people should make their messages as short as possible (Lee, 1998). In Korean society, unspoken communication, non-verbal cues, or reading other's facial expressions are considered better means of relationship and communication.

Hall (1976) labeled this as high-context culture. According to Hall, in high-context cultures, “people sometimes appear to express themselves in a roundabout way, especially regarding issues that might be disagreed upon ... to reduce chances of open and direct disagreement” (p. 66). In general, high-context culture people highly value relationship, commitment to the “in-group,” and so make greater distinction

between insiders and outsiders. On the other hand, in low-context cultures the bonds that tie people together tend to be more loose and fragile.

According to Kim, Pan, and Park (1998):

What constitutes a high-context or low-context culture remains very much based on personal observations and interpretations. In other words, the bases or a cultural dimension on which one culture is compared against others in deciding where in the high-/low-context culture continuum it can be placed are not clearly defined. (p. 509).

In general, Korea, China, and Japan are viewed as being at the high end of the continuum and countries such as Switzerland, Germany, and America are placed at the low end of the continuum (Wikipedia, n.d.; Würtz, 2005).

Since Koreans, as high-context culture people (Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998), are trained to be responsive to others and circumstances, they become efficient in grasping lessons from a situation or interaction with others (Kim, 2005; Lee, 1998; Park, 1998). As a result, their sensitivity to a context shapes their learning pattern. There are no systematic forms of learning, but Koreans are skillful at reading a context or making sense out of a situation. This type of tact is useful at learning tacitly, which is highly subjective and intuitive. Tacit learning is not easily describable because people learn not by instruction but by instinct and experiences.

As Kim and Merriam's (2010) study described, Koreans prioritize group harmony, however, they ought to use their own judgment regarding peaceful relationship (Cha, 1994; Hofstede, 1997). It is quite natural for Koreans to observe others' behavior and trace ideas on how to behave at the moment. Observing and imitating another's behavior is one of the universal learning activities, however, the extent of its influence is different from one culture to the other (Park, 1998). This type of ability is deeply rooted in Korean culture, which is often associated with collective culture and relational tacit knowledge.

***Learning structure of Korean immigrants.*** The principles of informal learning apply to acculturation of immigrants. The way Koreans learn in the United States is the way they used in Korea. Their learning method might be obscure, but on the other hand, they are quick in capturing new things. One facet of acculturation is learning intragroup variations and assessing individual differences in a worldview that is attributed to culture (Pak, 2006). Generally immigrants are viewed as a collective or as an ethnic group; however, acculturation is an individuated negotiation of culture and identity. This negotiation cannot be made as a group. According to Berry (1997), acculturation includes both changes in the culture of the group and in the psychological process of the individual. Just looking at acculturation, it is an individual process, because not all individuals participate to the same extent in the acculturation being experienced by their group (Berry, Segall, & Kagitcibasi, 1997).

Nisbett (2003) observed:

If East Asians must coordinate their behavior with others and adjust to situations, we (probably Americans) would expect them to attend more closely to other people's attitudes and behaviors than do Westerners. In fact we have evidence that East Asians do pay more attention to the social world than do Westerners. (p. 86)

Likewise, Koreans are very sensitive to troubling others. So they tend not to ask questions, because asking about someone's behaviors might not be an appropriate conduct. Instead, they imitate people's attitudes and behaviors as they observe them. However, not knowing the root of behavior, observing and imitating may not be correct and could be different from one individual to the other.

For instance, East Asians (principally the people of China, Korea, and Japan) have maintained very different systems of thought for thousands of years (Nisbett, 2003). Their spontaneous reaction to a situation, their social skills and their learning

strategies may be different from other cultures. Even more, their purpose of learning may be different from Westerners. Tucker (2003) made interesting comments on how learning styles and study strategies of Korean students can be different from western students in college. When he worked at a small Christian college in the East, one of his assigned jobs was to oversee the Korean Extension School. He described it:

I found that Korean students did not participate in classroom discussion and rarely (if ever) took any notes from the lectures. They would study for many hours, get up early, stay up late, and usually studied in groups... but do poorly on essay exams. If possible, they would opt for an oral exam rather than a written one...When a Korean student came to my office, they would ask about my wife, about my children, about how things were going, or other matters unrelated to the academic context. They did not get to the point about why they were here.

(Tucker, 2003, p. 2).

Tucker also admit that he learned that collaboration could mean “cheating” or “collaborating” depending on one’s cultural background. Koreans are not good at drawing lines between official and private matters. Similarly, they are not clear on the occasionally subtle distinctions cheating and collaborating.

Informal learning, learning informally to be more precise, is significant to immigrants, because they reshape their identity through social interaction, adapting to a new culture, learning the new language, and finding new roles in the society. Although both original and new cultures are valuable so one integrates both cultures into one’s life, the individual is still placed on a continuum between two cultures (Pak, 2006). They have to find ways to fit in, struggling between original and new behavior. Through these experiences immigrants acculturate to the new place.

## **Negotiating Identity as Learning**

Understanding identity primarily focuses on “how individuals seek to make meaning of their lives, both how they understand themselves as unique individuals and as social beings” (Singer, 2004, p. 438). However many researchers, such as Ting-Toomey (1986; 2008), Druckman (2001), Swann, Jr. (2005), and Dai (2009), argue that identity is constructed through a negotiation process. This is important because “negotiation” is not a replacement of situational “shaping and reshaping” identity but a new concept of transformation of identity.

**Identity and self-image.** Identity theory distinguishes three usages. The first usage of identity refers to the culture of a people: ethnic identity. The second use of identity refers to a common identification with a collectivity or social category, as in social identity theory. The last use of the term refers to parts of a self, which is composed of the meanings that persons attach to the multiple roles they typically play in society (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The self can be reflexive and be classified in relation to other social categories or classifications. This process is called self-categorization in social identity, and one’s identity is shaped through this categorizing process (Stets & Burke, 2000). Self-identity is based on the nature of social normative behavior and thus cannot be independent from one’s society.

Social structures affect individuals shaping their self-identity, and individuals influence social behaviors (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The Stanford Prison Experiment demonstrates how social structures have a bearing on one’s identity construction. Zimbardo (2007) had set up the experiment as if it were a real prison situation. The student participants were quickly attuned to the roles they were assigned and acted as though they were actual prisoners and guards. The experiment demonstrated the flow of one’s identity and controlling power in a social structure. It didn’t take long for the students “prisoners” to give themselves up and submit to the authority.

Also people shape their identity based on expectations and their roles in society. The student participants quickly absorbed their roles as prisoners or guards. In the same way, the power issue applies to minority immigrants. They promptly grasp their new status if they need to relinquish whatever power or status they used to possess in their home country. They find new roles by interacting with others, responding to the situation accordingly, and construing their lives by means of who they are and what they do.

Stryker, Stets, and Burke's (2000) idea of identity implied the role of an individual in a group that shapes self-processed personal identity as a member of the society. Within social identity theory, favoritism towards the in-group and disfavoritism towards the out-group may explain different acculturation experiences between non-White groups and White groups in Western countries. Schwartz et al. (2006) emphasized that personal identity implies personal characteristics that are constantly reshaped over time according to the situation. Shaping one's identity is not a destination but an ongoing evolutionary modification, and successfully developed identities of immigrants may alleviate acculturation stress.

Besides identity theory, some researchers introduce immigrants' identity in order to explain the relationship between acculturation and identity (Clary-Lemon, 2010; Mana & Orr, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2006; Valenta, 2009). Mana and Orr (2009) have introduced a new set of immigrants' identity models: extended identity, rivalry identity, secluded identity, and identity loss (Mana & Orr, 2009). Like Berry's acculturation measurement model, this theory distinguishes all possible types of immigrants, however, this classification may not be able to interpret immigrants' detailed personal story.

**Negotiating identity.** Establishment of one's self-image and identity in a foreign society takes extra processes. Immigrants, as minorities, have to get the picture of their status in the host society. In that sense, identity theory provides the insights into

how people shape and reshape their identity through interaction with other ethnic groups, associate the past to the present, find a role in a group where they belong, and fit themselves to the appropriate place.

Some studies suggest that “the self” is something people construct through daily social interaction with others (Valenta, 2009). When immigrants construct “the self,” they negotiate ethnic and cultural identity (Marvasti, 2005; Purkayastha, 2005). As ethnic minorities, they belong to groups that are lower in status and power in society. Immigrants are not visible and may hold different values from host society (Phinney, 2006). Immigrants and minorities must come to negotiate the meaning and implications of these differences and make decisions about how to live with their status in larger society.

On this issue, Ting-Toomey introduces the concept of negotiating identity between two cultures. She asserts, “I think conflict [between cultures] can be dysfunctional when we don’t acknowledge it in terms of the broader historical and social ecological factors, the deeper value differences, the different individual variations, and of course the differences in communication style” (Cañado, 2008, p. 210). According to Jackson II (2002), Ting-Toomey is one of the originators who related identity with negotiation asserting that identity negotiation is about the choices between cultures and securing their self-image or saving face. That is, when people interact between cultures they “attempt to reach out and hold back at the same time, to seek for mutual validation, and yet at the same time to protect their own vulnerability” (Ting-Toomey, 1986, p. 126).

By the same token, people construct their identity by plotting stories. They interpret their life transition, organize their life story, and make meaning through narratives. Shaping identity is to “craft narratives from experiences, tell these stories internally and to others and ultimately apply these stories to knowledge of self, other and the world in general” (Singer, 2004, p. 438) in a socio-cultural context. Although it was



not always true, Berry sees integration as the ideal form of acculturation and Singer asserts that successful identity construction leads to a sense of integration of one's life, intimate others, and the larger communities, which make up the social fabric.

### **Summary of Theoretical Framework**

It was believed that an immigrant could completely assimilate to the host culture if he or she chose to do so. However, adult immigrants encounter the new culture after they have already established their learning procedure within the original culture. Culturally embedded learning approaches or behaviors cannot be completely unlearned. Yet, people learn and absorb a new culture across the lifespan. Also many people move back and forth between countries in these days; acculturation is not irreversible (Padilla & Perez, 2003).

Acculturation is not a reformation; rather, immigrants consciously and unconsciously observe and learn the surrounding culture, make constant behavioral adjustments, and amalgamate their old and new cultures. Acculturation is not equally applicable to everyone, rather it is a matter of how an individual views a different culture, discerns, and learns in daily life. It is an individuated, unique process, depending on one's culturally embedded learning pattern and behavior. Accordingly, immigrants gradually acculturate to a new society by modifying their culture, values, and identity. Shaping and reshaping identity is another challenging task for immigrants. They accomplish identity through the crafting and telling of an ongoing life story (Singer, 2005).

It is no longer common to be born, live, and die in the same town. Accordingly, acculturation is becoming more and more complicated in a multicultural setting. Similarly, Koreans in the United States would have been shaping and reshaping their identity and self-image, trying to find a better spot to place themselves in. There may be

a difference between earlier immigrants, working as cheap labor in pineapple and sugar plantations, and contemporary information technicians in the twenty-first century, specifically in the influences that are shaping immigrants' identities. Therefore, acculturation may not be able to be categorized, but interpreted in narratives by unique and individuated stories.

## **Chapter Three: Narrative Analysis and Research Methodology**

Traditionally, researchers use technical terms to present new concepts and models. The kind of knowledge most people need is not jargon or highly complex statistical results, but linguistically comprehensible stories they can apply to everyday life (Bensimon et al., 2004; Yoon, 2005). Franzosi (1998) states that although people are aware of the importance of narrative, “we are more at ease in the artificial and (wo)man-made world of statistics than in the more natural world of language and words” (p. 518). However, generalization does not explain “how people reconstruct and reinterpret their past to reconcile with their present perspective” (Kanno, 2003, Kindle Location, 422). Therefore, as the purpose of this study is to describe immigrants’ negotiated identity in narrative form, it will be beneficial to review the historical background of narrative analysis.

### **The Origins of Narrative Analysis**

The history of narrative goes back to the Russian Formalists who distinguished story from plot in narrative (Czarniawska, 2004; Franzosi, 1998; Mertova & Webster 2007). A member of the Russian Formalists, Tomashevsky explains five different elements of a work: description, story, plot, theme, and motif. Description has no story but explains some shift of theme without causal connections. Story requires indications of time and cause. The plot includes time and cause, but also arranged and connected as they were presented in the work. Theme unites the separate element of work and a motif is the smallest particles of thematic material (Tomashevsky, 1965). Tomashevsky states that a plot is wholly an artistic creation, and a story refers to a description of the fundamental events in their natural logical and chronological order.

Whereas Formalists focus on the arrangement of motif and relationship of an object and event, French Structuralists are interested in the object itself. They focus on the object or motif: decompose and recompose it. Then Structuralists further subdivide the plot into discourse and text (Culler, 1983; Franzosi, 1998). Barthes, one of the French Structuralists, was particularly ambitious in disentangling text and discovering secret meanings so nothing is left to be deciphered (Culler, 1983). The Structuralists struggle to understand how people make sense of literature and the discursive codes of a culture. So they maintain the notion of distinguishing plot from story and also attempt to expose various possible connotations in the texts.

In sequence, narrative came to the attention of critics in the United States in the context of the English new criticism. Polkinghorne (1988) argued that the new criticism pays attention to an individual text—literally the words that appeared on the page. In the new criticism, the literary work was to be approached and studied without reference to external perspectives of other fields. That implies the new criticism maintained the text, which was directly accessible to the reader without any further information developed by previous studies (Polkinghorne, 1988).

New criticism appropriated the evolution of the narrative history. From Russian Formalists to the present, there are many theories and critics to reconsider. So new criticism either retains or rejects old theories and pays more attention to texts at the same time. How narrative as a literature evolved from the early 1920s and how that influenced narrative inquiry is the key to understanding the narrative research method. It is from this beginning that narrative analysis as a research methodology originates.

### **Narrative and Life History as Research Method**

Franzosi and Mohr (1997) argue that historians view quantitative approaches as an erosion of the focus and quality of historical scholarship. Using statistical

measurement and linear metrics for studying qualitative social phenomena and human behavior were assumed to be dehumanizing. Lately, researchers have become interested in narrative meaning and presenting messages in narrative form (Riessman, 2003; Yoon, 2000, 2005, 2008b). The advantage of narrative inquiry is that narrative is a cumulative discipline where new theories are added to the older ones (Polkinghorne, 1988). It is not limited to a particular field but interdisciplinary.

Polkinghorne, Czarniawska, and many others extended their interests in the concept of narrative in social sciences and humanities: narrative as a “mode of knowing” and narration as a “mode of communication” (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 6). Polkinghorne, as an academic researcher and psychotherapist, struggled to integrate research and practice. The concern was not only his own; it was the concern of his students and colleagues as well. On the assumption that the practitioners have a better way to help their clients, Polkinghorne discovered that practitioners work with narrative knowledge. He asserts that narrative explanation contains motives and causes that can interpret human behavior. As a practitioner, Polkinghorne’s observations were concerned with how people’s stories and narrative interpret the nature and quality of people’s behavior.

Similarly, Czarniawska’s research changed. Her research used to be a kind of literary criticism, far removed from a systems analyst but distinguished from a novelist (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Czarniawska (2004) raises the report of Lyotard as an example, suggesting that Lyotard contrasted the narrative form of knowledge with scientific knowledge. Czarniawska does not agree with Lyotard. Rather, Czarniawska, an organizational researcher, turns to an interdisciplinary approach and borrows and mixes metaphors from other disciplines. For Czarniawska, narrative is a heuristic device, a metaphor useful for understanding organization (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In the same way, from the early 90s, researchers in Korea began to draw attention to the necessity of narratives and natural language usage in various disciplines.

Yoon, as a professor and organization analyzer, attempts to incorporate research with practice. He stresses that narratives reflect meaningful experiences and make complex cases interpretable. Narrative and story make it possible to “decode” the structure, power, working environment, and/or effectiveness policy of an organization. They are more accurate and reliable than numbers and statistics (Yoon, 2008b). He also points out that text comes from context, and context rests on its cultural historical background, which adds unlimited variation to the analysis. These variations may not be describable in metrics (Yoon, 2001).

As Czarniawska cited, narrative is international, trans-historical, and transcultural: It is simply there, like life itself (Barthes, 1977, as cited in Czarniawska, 2004). From the Russian Formalists to the present, with some shifts and revisions, narrative has been used to read people’s behavior, experiences, and life histories. It makes interpreting and reflecting on human actions possible.

Czarniawska and Polkinghorne view narrative inquiry as an extended literary theory that human science borrowed. On the other hand, Riessman (2003) views narrative as a family of research methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form. Unlike Czarniawska, Riessman (2008) argues that narrative is everywhere, but not everything is narrative. She views only storytelling as one form of oral communication. To Riessman, all talk and text is not narrative. Therefore, Riessman (2008) defines narrative inquiry as grounded in the specific study, in which the analyst is interested in ways of constructing events, and in which the analyst uses language and meaning to make particular points to readers. To Riessman, the purpose of narrative inquiry is to cross-examine how and why a particular incident is storied in the specific language.

Then what distinctions can be made between life history and narrative? When Hatch and Wisniewski were planning for a special issue of *The International Journal of*

*Qualitative Studies in Education* on life history and narrative, they sent out a set of questions to a group of narrative and life history scholars including distinctions between life history and narrative and differences between life history or narrative work from other types of qualitative research (Hatch & Wisniewski, 2007). The majority of responses were similar in the approaches and explicit about the superordinate-subordinate relationship between life history and narrative. Most of the respondents agreed that narrative is broader in scope than life history. That is, all life histories are narratives, but not all narratives are life histories (Hatch & Wisniewski, 2007).

Therefore, to summarize the various definitions of narrative analysis and life history, narrative analysis is one of the branches of qualitative research methods, which embraces case study, life history, biographical research, or autobiography. Narrative analysis focuses on the collection of storied data: how the story is structured, why the story is important, what types of language or symbols are used, where and how the narrative begins and ends, if there is recurrent pattern in the story, and if there are other meanings behind the words. It is a lot more than simply reading the contents; rather, it seeks to understand the meaning of lived experiences in a particular context with distinctive individual background.

### **Why Use a Narrative and Life History Approach for Acculturation?**

Every language has its own systems and characters, which is reflected in the cultural and historical background of that particular group. As Collins (2011) put it: “tacit knowledge can be acquired only by immersion in the society” (p. 3); language lies on delicate nuance and indigenous knowledge that can be only understood by culturally cognizant people. When individuals are familiar with their language context, interpretation is made easy (Yoon, 2000). Also, readers from outside of the context may interpret scientific language in a different way from the original meaning. Ironically,

however, people are more accustomed to the numbers and statistics than natural language and words. Thus, it is essential that researchers be able to describe social and natural science in reader-friendly natural language (Yoon, 2001).

Goodson and Sikes (2001) present three reasons why researchers use the life history method. It is aware that lives are not compartmentalized into what we do at work and who we are at home. Consequently, what happens in one area of our lives potentially influences other areas. The life history method acknowledges that there is a crucial interactive relationship between individuals' lives, their perceptions and experiences, and broader historical and social contexts and events. It also shows how individuals negotiate their identities and, consequently, experience, create and make sense of the rules and roles of the social worlds in which they live.

What Goodson and Sikes (2001) mean by these reasons is that such a complicated social life cannot be generalized or explained in simple words. In other words, "seeking to interpret and re-present the world, or more precisely, aspects of the social world, through a method which explicitly acknowledges and is based on the belief that social and personal 'realities' originate in the dialogical relationship between individuals and groups and the values and practices which characterize social worlds" (p. 112). Description of human emotion or human experience must be precise and delicate so that the resulting life history would be readable and comprehensible. Life history, as a research method, explains, describes, or reflects individual's contextually situated stories.

Acculturation experiences involve social, cultural, emotional, and practical activities. These experiences are not a destination but an ongoing process. When one moves to another country, adjusting oneself to the host society is a lifelong endeavor. It is a story of life, structured by the timing of events, interwoven by a sequence of events, which consist of human perception and experiences. Therefore, life history was the most



suitable method for interpreting the life of an immigrant and the acculturation experience. As stated earlier, all life histories are narrative, but there are other reasons why a story of an immigrant is appropriately explored with narrative inquiry.

The greater part of acculturation is concerned with language difficulty and cultural differences. As discussed in Chapter Two, Korean culture is a very high-context culture, so people need to read many unspoken concerns of others. It can be seen in terminologies. Some Korean words cannot translate into English word for word. That is, it takes a sentence or even a paragraph to explain one word. Yoon (2005) argues that in qualitative studies, researchers and participants cannot be linguistically separated. They have to use the same language and symbols so that the researcher may understand and interpret the participants' narratives (Yoon, 2005). In order to study life of immigrants, it is important to pull together vivid stories where the researcher and the participants share the same first language.

Another feature is a language's structure. In many cases, subjects are omitted in Korean sentences. It is not that Korean does not use subjects, but sentences are shortened and people understand by *nunchi*. Gee (1991) stated that understanding an idea unit is to understand how the English prosodic system, the system of stress and pitch, works. It is same with other languages. Also, Nisbett (2003) contends that English is language of nouns and Korean is language of verbs. However, from a Korean's perspective, English is language of verbs and Korean is a language of adjectives. For instance, there are many verb forms for looking: see, watch stare, gaze, peek, glance, scan, view, and so on. In Korean, all of these cases can be said with one verb "boda," but there must be an adverb that describes how people watch (boda) or look. Thus adjectives play significant part in speaking Korean. Besides, We-ism is a very meaningful concept among Koreans. Korean is mono-tribe with one language. Koreans are highly group oriented, so meanings of "we," "us," "me," or "my" are almost equivalent to Koreans. In

the much the same sense, when a Korean man introduces his wife, he designates her as “our wife.” To him (and Koreans) at this instance, “our” doesn’t mean plural but just emphasizing the sense in which “we (my wife and I) are the one.”

Like Formalists, Yoon (2001) stresses the danger of being overly familiarized with one’s surroundings so that people are no longer aware of them; there is the possibility of observing only what people chose to perceive. This notion applies to my identity as a researcher in this study. As an immigrant, my experience may play role in this study. To all immigrants, acculturation is a familiar story, but each story is unique. Familiarity and sharing the same culture could be advantage to understanding the participants’ stories. On the other hand, it could be an obstacle because of the possibilities overlooking momentous themes. For that reason, it seems sensible to employ narrative analysis as methodology to studying lives of first-generation Koreans in the United States. This method can scrutinize the participants’ detailed narrated experiences in a foreign country, how they organize their story, and what reflections they make from their stories.

### **Methodology and Research Design**

Life history, under the umbrella of narrative inquiry, is an appropriate approach for understanding the meaning of a person’s lived experience. As discussed earlier, an individual’s life story is socially and culturally situated. Life history and narrative offer opportunities for connecting the lives and stories of individuals to the understanding of larger society and human behavior. If a told story were merely a list of dates, names, places, or facts, it would not be sufficient to interpret personal history. However, as Saldana (2011) indicates, “if there were a narrative that wove the facts to hold them together as a linear story line, we are more likely to make sense of history because we now have a plot that sequentially structures the details (Kindle Location, 115).”

One's identity as a social being is constructed by one's experiences in his or her position in society and his or her relation to social and cultural expectations. When a person's socio-cultural expectation is changed, it is assumed that his or her identity changes as well. Narrative and life history also help with self-reflection by reading other's experience and emotional and psychological process. Therefore, narrative language contributes to the construction of people's identity as members of society and families.

**Selection of participants.** As my primary interest for the study was Koreans' acculturation and identity construction as immigrants, my target population was first-generation Koreans in the United States who can exemplify various aspects of immigrant's life. It did not necessarily mean that they needed to present dramatic life or successful acculturation stories, but full and vivid acculturative experiences. I did not limit gender or age at the beginning. However, for the purpose of the study and the richness of the story, I focused on those who came to the United States as adults and who stayed for at least ten years.

**Purposeful sampling.** I employed "purposive sampling," because I choose people "based on particular research question as well as consideration of the resources available" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 70). Hesse-Biber and Leavy also stated that "the goal is to look at a 'process' or the 'meanings' individuals attribute to their given social situation, not necessarily to make generalizations" (p. 70). Therefore, participants are selected purposefully to provide thick descriptions of the experience to develop a comprehensive structure (Polkinghorne, 1998). For the purpose of this study, the participants' experiences and deeper meanings in acculturation are valued more highly than generalizing acculturation from a larger group.

**Maximum variation sampling.** There are several approaches of purposeful sampling techniques (Patton, 1989; Seidman, 2006), but I used maximum variation sampling. Maximum variation sampling "attempts to investigate maximum individual

differences and variations in experiences while also identifying some common patterns of themes across the individual cases” (Pak, 2006, p. 46). In the narrative life history approach, participants’ various experience and rich descriptions of those experiences are significant. According to Seidman (2006), maximum variation sampling should allow “the widest possibility for readers of the study to connect to what they are reading” (p. 52). In this way, readers may identify with participants’ stories and obtain insights from their narratives at the same time.

For this study, I interviewed a small number of Korean women who came to the United States as adults. I tried to give varieties in their situation, locations, number of years lived in the United States, time period when they arrived, and their reasons and goals for coming to the United States. I was especially interested in how they apprehend the cultural differences, rise above minority status, maintain relationship in a dual-culture context, and shape self-image and identity. In that sense, I intentionally sought participants who were active in social gatherings, learning, or career.

***Preliminary interviews.*** After the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Penn State University, I gathered up lists of tentative participants with the help of friends and family. The lists included my sister’s friend, daughter’s friend’s mother, my church member, friend’s neighbor, or friend’s friend. I used a “snowballing” approach to sampling (Creswell, 1997; Seidman, 2006). Although they could not participate, they brought more volunteer’s lists (Bertaux, 1981). In their career, they showed variation: full-time professional, part-time professional, small-business owner, homeschool mother, and housewife. According to the purpose of my study, I selected 15 potential participants.

At the first contact with each potential participant, I explained the purpose of my study, the necessary of recording the interview, the possibility of second or third interviews, and some possible interview questions. Out of 15 volunteers, 13 women and 2

men, 8 of them withdrew at the first meeting. The most common reason was recording the interviews. Although confidentiality was promised, they were afraid of their privacy may be exposed to others, including the Korean community. That is completely understandable from the perspective of Korean culture. In addition, married women wanted to ask their husbands first. That connotes a partial “no” in Korean culture. Making an excuse is a way to say no indirectly. That was understandable too, and I respected their feelings.

The result was seven potential participants. I contacted all of them for the second time and asked their opinions. At the second meeting, four of them directly and indirectly expressed a bit of hesitance to continue to be a participant, but they still gave me permission to use any part of information they gave me during the first meeting. Although I have not used any of them in the study, I wanted to introduce why I was interested, and why I had to stop. Each case was very unique, but on the other hand their cases could represent one common to immigrant’s lives. However, family matters, my relationship with the participant, or gender became an obstacle to continued participation.

The first woman who withdrew was my sister. She has lived in the United States for 35 years. She and her family lived in a few different small towns the United States. The towns where they have lived were fairly far from Korean communities. Once in a while, her whole family used to spend hours to make a trip to the nearest Korea town for grocery shopping and dining at a Korean restaurant. While she was living in the United States, she had visited Korea just once shortly after she came to the United States. Her life seemed one of the typical first-generation immigrants in a small town: not isolated but no close relationship with either host or Korean community. She said she was uncomfortable being interviewed by her younger sister.

The second woman was very interested in my study, but her husband was uncomfortable about their personal story being told to unknown people. She still wanted to participate by giving me limited information; however I thought that limited information may limit my investigation. Interestingly, she was the only interviewee who was not attending church: neither Korean nor American church. Attending Korean church has been a significant connection to the Korean community for many Koreans in the United States. Not surprisingly, she and her family had no relation with the Korean community.

The third woman was a part of the third-wave immigrants (see page 58 in Chapter Four). Unlike other candidates, she came to the United States at a relatively young age, possibly before she firmly shaped her identity. However, I ultimately decided that our previous relationship was an obstacle to the interview. We have friends in common, so there were some parts she wanted to hold back, and I knew I could not ask. Also she was very introverted. Although she was willing to help in any way, I felt a big possibility that the interview may run superficially. So I withdrew.

The fourth person I was interested as a potential participant, was a man in his late 50s. He and his wife immigrated as newlyweds. He had two children, spoke English at home, assimilated to White society, and had no connection to Korean community. Assimilating to White society and making no connection with Korean community could be understood in the same context. As a later part of the third-wave immigrants, he and his wife wanted to live an American-like life. They kept such a lifestyle almost for twenty years. However, when I met him, he was an active member of a Korean church and was quite happy with his decision to join the Korean community.

He repeated that he had graduated from prestigious college in Korea, but in the United States, his pride had been wounded. He had to take a blue-collar job when he arrived in the United States. A few years later, he got a good paying white-collar job at

a big company and worked there for about twenty some years. When he was pensioned off in his mid-50s, he decided to go to a law school and be a pro bono lawyer. He was very excited for his later life. We met at a private office of my friend, who was a member of his church. He was humble and helpful, but on the other hand, he looked uneasy. He looked constantly at the door, made sure my friend stayed out there, and kept talking about his wife. I felt that he was uncomfortable with being interviewed by a woman. I was sorry to release him.

Then I had three remaining potential participants. I was not sure if three participants would provide sufficiently data. As Seidman (2006) stated, “even if researchers use a purposeful sampling technique designed to gain maximum variation and then add to their sample through a snowballing process, they must know then they have interviewed enough participants” (p. 55). Following Seidman’s advice, I reviewed the criteria of a sufficient range of participants. By then, I was introduced Emilie also by snowballing approach. Emilie is married to an American man and has two teenage children. I thought she must experience the most closes and constant cultural contact with White society. Gratefully, she was willing to help and made a significant contribution to the study.

Atkins (1998) suggests balancing out gender and culture in life story interviews. His purpose for balancing out is “to determine more effectively the similarities and differences between the male and female experience and to seek a synthesis that would expand life story options for all and benefit both genders” (p. 19). He advised balancing out culture for the same reason. Initially, however, I thought gender would not be an issue, because the purpose of the study was not comparison of gender or diverse cultures. Thus my intention was not omitting male but including whoever could participate. After the initial meetings with candidates, I saw no problem in gender for analytical reasons.

However, the one male candidate was not comfortable participating a study conducted by a woman study for (apparently) cultural reasons.

Selecting participants was, therefore, concluded with four women. Each individual lived a unique and well-managed life in the United States. The first woman was a part of the third-wave immigrants who came to the United States with a great “American dream of a better, richer, and happier life” (Cullen, 2003, Kindle Locations 62). The second woman initially came for her husband’s study. After her husband’s study, they went back to Korea and came back a few years later with their children. Now she and her children stay in the United States, and her husband works in Korea.

The third woman was a wife, one of the common immigrant families in family structure: father, mother, and children live in a middle-class suburb (Pak, 2006). Her husband works at a research center as a medical professional. One exceptional aspect of her life is that she is homeschooling her children. That piqued my interest because homeschooling is a very unusual thing for Koreans, especially in the United States. The fourth participant lives with her American husband. She met her husband in Korea, fell in love, and followed him to the United States.

They were all willing to help, didn’t mind recording the interview, agreed to second or third interviews, and above all, they were very interested in my research study topic. Their interest made the rest of the process more dynamic and cheerful. When they made the final decision to participate, I obtained informed consent prior to recording the first interviews. I present each of their narrative life stories in Chapter Five, using pseudonyms to protect their privacy. I also altered a few minor personal matters upon their request.

**The interview process.** After I had made my final lists, the interview schedules were then set up one by one. I tried to complete all the interviews with one participant before I went on to the next participant. My thought behind this was that I



believed completing the interview process with one participant and then writing out their biography afterwards would be helpful in preparing for and conducting the next interview. The reason for this is that in purposeful sampling there are stories you expect to hear from each participant. This does not mean that I manipulated the interviewee into narrating about a certain type of data.

For instance, I intentionally did not choose all the participants from the third wave immigration. Instead, I selected individuals with different backgrounds, because I was not studying how people differed in their reactions to the same background experience. The focus of this study was to learn how immigrants acculturated to their own individual situations and to investigate how they constructed their identities based on these situations.

Even though a core set of interview questions was created beforehand, I conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B), and based on the individual participant, I modified the questions. Semi-structured interviews “rely on a certain set of questions and try to guide the conversation to remain, more loosely, on those questions” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 25). I tried to let the conversation flow more naturally as participant talked. Also, I remembered to make room for the interviews to go in new or unexpected directions.

For the interview guide, I employed “The Three Interview Series” as interview guide as Seidman (2006) suggested. However, depending on the participant’s schedule and situation, I combined the second and the third interviews and followed with Skype or phone calls. The framework Seidman suggested is as follows:

Interview One: Focused Life History

Interview Two: The Details of Experience

Interview Three: Reflection on the Meaning

In the first interview, I tried to draw out the participant's life story as much as possible in light of the acculturation process, identity construction, and learning that occurred in the meantime. In the second interview, I tried to concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' lived experiences in the United States. In the second half or in the third interview, I asked what the meaning to live in the United States would be reflecting on the meaning of their experiences (Seidman, 2006, p. 16-19). At the end of last interview, I also asked them what they think about reverse acculturation. This question implied two incidents: willingness of permanent reverse immigration to Korea and feasibility of reverse acculturation.

***In-depth interviews.*** The decision to interview Bonnie first was two-fold. She was the easiest to interview in terms of location, and she was the one I knew best and thus felt most comfortable interviewing. There were seven interviews, a total of nine hours with Bonnie. Some of the interviews were short, while others were longer. Essentially, sufficient data was pulled from the first three interviews, but Bonnie continued to add stories she recalled after the initial three interviews. That was very helpful to construct next participant's questions. Bonnie was most comfortable at home, so most of the interviews took place at her house. For the interviews we knew would be short, we also met at the café in a Barnes and Noble bookstore.

The second participant I interviewed was Rachel. I first met Rachel in New Jersey. From our first meeting, Rachel freely shared about her life as an immigrant. However, it was after Rachel and her family had moved to California that the official interview process began. Having lived in New Jersey and California, Rachel shared a wealth of experiences from her life which were very helpful to my study. While I was unable to interview Rachel in person, because she understood well the nature of my research and due to friendliness of our relationship, I was still able to conduct in-depth interviews via Skype for a total of four and a half hours plus e-mail interactions.

Leah was the third participant to be interviewed. I had known Leah for a very long time, but I had lost contact as we separately immigrated to the United States. When we coincidentally got in touch again and she shared her experience from living in America for almost thirty-five years, I instinctively began considering Leah as a potential participant. Knowing I would have to ask Leah a lot of personal questions, I was cautious about asking her to become a participant, but she agreed without hesitation. We talked via Skype, phone, and face to face for a total of five hours.

Emilie was added later as the fourth and last participant. My initial assumption was that I would not be able to conduct a long interview from the beginning since Emilie and I would be meeting for the first time. But Emilie proved me wrong and from the very first interview, Emilie shared generously about her experiences. Originally, we had agreed to have additional interviews (if need be) via phone and e-mail since she lived far away, but luckily I ended up residing the town Emilie lived in for a short period and thus was able to conduct all interviews face-to-face for a total of three and a half hours.

One participant's interview process could not be entirely independent from the others. After moving on the second, then third participant, if an additional interview from the first participant was needed, I would return to the first participant. The main reason for this was time. There was not enough time to fully complete the interviews for one participant before moving onto the next. After the last interview was conducted and transcripts were completed, their life stories were compared and synthesized. In Chapter five, the life story of each of the participants is presented, and then their biographies were synthesized and put together like puzzle pieces.

The majority of the interviews were conducted in Korean. Surely Korean was the first language to the participants and me. As discussed earlier, speaking the same language is quite important for the quality of the study (Collins, 2011b; Yoon, 2000). But references to conversations with American people were made in English. Also, for words

which may not exist in Korean, English was used. Depending on the context, some answers were given in English. I kept the raw data found in the original interview, the English stayed intact when translated (see Appendix C). For the most of the interviews, I tried to listen more and talk less. There were times I felt I need to ask questions or interact, and then I used my own judgment when to include discourse.

For example, in the case of Emilie, since we were meeting for the first at the first interview, I noticed she was not very open about marrying and living with a non-Korean husband. With the intention of making Emilie more comfortable, I initially began the interview with topics not as pertinent to the research, such as America in general or foods. During our conversations, Emilie would often ask me questions, and in order to continue the flow of the interview, we continued in a conversational format.

***Length and spacing of interviews.*** While there was flexibility in determining the length of the interviews, the base criteria was to keep them at no longer than two hours, but also not less than an hour. This allowed adjustments to be made depending on the participants' availability for each interview. How long each interview would go was pre-discussed with every participant each time. We also planned beforehand whether we would meet over a meal or simple coffee.

On average, the interview itself took about two hours, but as is customary when Koreans get together and share a meal, the actual meeting time was longer. I recorded all interviews but I did not record conversation while eating even though the story seemed important. Instead, I jotted down the idea for the future interview question. Reflecting back on the interviews, I found about an hour and a half to two hours was the ideal timing for interviewing. Over all, the most important factor was making the participant feel comfortable to narrate everything they wanted to say freely during the interviews.

Between each interview, I had three days to a week recess. This allowed ample time to prepare the next interview and to transcribe and interpret the previous interview.

I also believed the participant needed some time to reflect upon the interview as well. If there was too much time between the first and next interview, the participants sometimes forgot the content they provided in the previous interview. With the exception of Bonnie, I tried to complete all the interviews with any particular participant within one month.

### **Analysis of Data**

Polkinghorne (2007) distinguished analysis of narrative data from narrative analysis of data. In analysis of narratives, researchers analyze collected storied data with paradigmatic processes. In narrative analysis, “researchers collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesize or configure them by means of a plot into a story or stories (for example, a history, case study, or biographic episode)” (p. 12). However, “the purpose of narrative analysis is not simply to produce a reproduction of observations; rather, it is to provide a dynamic framework” (p. 20) in which the disconnected data elements are made to fit together in a descriptive way.

In this study, I applied both analysis of narrative and narrative analysis. As the nature of narrative and life history, data were collected in narrative form. Also, as a researcher, I synthesized events and happenings, configured them by significance, and plotted an explanatory life history. The main quality of narrative analysis is to be able to analyze the narrative data “narratively.” Narrated stories are told in a way so that the audience is able to share and feel the experience of the narrator as if they were there with the narrator at the scene (Yoon, 2006). Therefore, I tried to bring out the participants’ experiences as vividly as possible by repeatedly reading and pondering subtle nuance of narrated story.

**Interpreting Personal Story.** In interpreting personal story, I applied the Russian Formalists’ advice. They emphasize making a reader pause and think it through

to get to the meaning by variation of plot. They want to explore profound themes so readers understand what they have to say (Shklovsky, 1965; Tomashevsky, 1965). Formalists warn writers to be unfamiliarized from a familiarized story. When a story seem to be familiar, readers may overlook essential meanings. Then Propp (1968) suggests diverse variations of plot. It would be easy to repeat the same plot when I have similar acculturation stories from the participants. It is true that they have gone through similar struggles and hardship. However, when I looked closely, each of them put different weight on different incidents.

For example, my first question to the participants was always same: What brought you here? After a short answer to that, Rachel began to talk about her identity as an immigrant, Leah began her story with the United States army, and Emilie began her story by talking about how she met her husband. What was important to them was different by individual. As Propp (1968) suggested, I had to keep that in mind when I configured the life history for each participant.

Similar to the Formalists, Yoon (2000) addressed the implications of culture and language. If a story listener is similar to the storyteller in culture and language, the interpretation would be made easier. On the other hand, he also warns the possibilities of neglecting presumed knowledge between teller and listener. Collins (2010) defines this knowledge as “unrecognized knowledge” (p. 95), knowledge that was considered insignificant to both teller and listener.

I began interpretation by mapping out the participants’ stories chronologically. I developed profiles of each participant before I thematically analyzed the data (Seidman, 2006). Some stories were surprisingly well structured. For instance, the first question for Bonnie was what brought her to the United States. She spent two hours just sharing about that. When Bonnie told her story, she was able to speak without any pauses or interruptions. When asked how she was able to provide such a well-organized story,

Bonnie said that just a few weeks ago, she had to speak on a similar topic at a women's retreat. In order to fit everything into the allotted time, Bonnie prepared herself by repeatedly organizing the material she wanted to share.

Bonnie shared her life in a chronological framework beginning with when she first came to America to the present day. Like Leah, Bonnie remembered the exact day she arrived in the United States, including stops at the airport and what airline she rode. Then, skipping the first six months of difficult time, she started to talk about married student apartment's "good old days." Within that chronology, she had already edited her life synopsis, pinpointing the events she believed were most significant. Especially for cases like Bonnie's, the additional interviews were beneficial for extracting more information and other details. In her case, I was being aware of her structure of the story. I paused at several incidents, which allowed me to reconstruct the content the way I needed to for this study.

Data interpretation was possible during the interview, but most of the actual data interpretation occurred after the interview was completed and the recorded interview was transcribed. It was not a linear activity. Like a spiraling process, data collection and data interpretation took place recursively from the first interview to the moment I was ready to write. For instance, Bonnie called me after I completed her biography, and she wanted to add comments if possible. I paused for a moment and asked why. When we had the last interview, Bonnie was working at two different places, and she expressed gratification at both. She explained there was an incident at one of her workplaces, which caused her to quit. It was not her fault she insisted. However, I did not make any change or addition to her biography. I believe what she told me during the interviews was true. Bonnie agreed with that. So my interpretation was made based on her "true story." I didn't see any necessity to change. As discussed earlier, acculturation is not an event but an ongoing process (Miller, 2007). That is, Bonnie's biography is not the end of her story

but a part of it. Even if I reworked Bonnie's story, that would not make a significant difference in conclusion. As long as she lives in the United States, events and happenings will continue to occur. This is true for not only Bonnie but all other participants and immigrants.

By employing Seidman's interview guide, all the participants were first asked about the reason behind their immigration and brief life story after they came to the United States. In regards to specific incidents or experiences after they immigrated, the participants were asked if they had endured any conflict, and they were asked to share specifically about them. They were also asked to describe the actions they took to accomplish the goals they had set up for their new lives in America.

Finding key themes in all of the participants' hardships was also another factor in studying their life history. Polkinghorne (2007) explains, "narrative configuration refer to the process by which happenings are drawn together and integrated into a temporally organized whole" (p. 5). A main similarity the participants shared was that rather than a significant resulting in a turning point in their lives, it was repeated incidents which determined the course of their immigrant lives.

The time period when they immigrated and the recurring events became the deciding factors for the following actions each participant took in their lives. So the continuing disappointment or alternatively, the persevering hope, the ongoing loneliness, the repeated reclusion, all these aspects were key in deciding the next actions the participants chose to take in their lives. When repeated happenings are configured, they take on narrative meaning (Polkinghorne, 2007), and that point was when participants were ready to take action for next step. Therefore, I organized their stories based on these points. At this phase of analysis, I used NVivo as a subsidiary coding tool.

**Coding by NVivo.** For narrative analysis, using NVivo (a software program designed to assist with the analysis of qualitative data) as a primary coding tool was not



appropriate; however, utilizing NVivo as a secondary tool was beneficial in developing the themes and sub-themes. NVivo was useful to organize hundreds of pages of data into dozens of themes and sub-themes. It also allowed me to create multiple codes from a single reference (see page 150). For an example, Leah said she was “afraid of American society because of loneliness.” I coded this reference under two sub-themes: afraid of American society and loneliness. It was helpful and speedy.

Still, there are observations only humans can do from a face-to-face interview. Facial expressions, eye movements, pause—these are all qualities that NVivo cannot pick up. For instance, one of the participants was describing the loneliness she experienced saying, “I had no idea that living in America I could be this lonely...” and along with a verbal portrayal, she looked far off into space, lost in her thoughts. Although a researcher transcribes those gestures into text, NVivo cannot read these details; it cannot interpret facial expressions and other physical reactions of the body. That one sentence of Leah’s left a strong impact on me, but NVivo just added one reference.

Another drawback of using NVivo was the language structure. Even though data could be inputted in Korean, it still had difficulty calculating the frequency of data. The NVivo software itself had been developed in English and so the software provided the most benefits for data in English. To give an example, English has space between every word. Korean language typically combines two parts of speech or the suffix is added to the end of a word. “Loneliness” in Korean can be expressed in several different ways, the variance depending on the suffix, and so in cases such as this, NVivo was unable to determine the frequency “loneliness” was expressed.

While NVivo was beneficial in organizing and thematically coding the data, the software was not best suited for assisting with narrative analysis. An additional assessment of the software is that inputting and coding data in English will produce much better results than Korean. For instance, Olson (2010), who used English

transcripts, could sort out her data alphabetically in NVivo, which I could not do with Korean transcripts. The alternative way I could do was transferring data to Word document using “copy and paste.” It was useful as well. NVivo coding samples are provided in the Appendix C.

**Putting together by themes and significance.** According to Czarniawska (2004), “everything is a narrative or at least can be treated as one” (Kindle Location, 316). She states it would be easier to explain what is *not* narrative than what it *is*. On the other hand, story comprises causal connection. Czarniawska calls these stories emplotted narratives. One example she presents to be a story is: the baby cried, the mother picked it up, and the baby stopped crying. The first two sentences would not be enough to be a story but the third sentence completes a story (Czarniawska, 2004). Similar to Formalists, plots are much more complicated in Czarniawska’s case. They contain chains of actions and events, swinging states of affairs, and apparent actions or mystery, but a minimal plot is enough to make sense of a narrative (Czarniawska, 2004). Employing her basic concepts of story and plot, Czarniawska suggests eight steps of narrative approach to the field of practice and research:

- Watch how the stories are being made
- Collect the stories
- Provoke story telling
- Interpret the stories (What do they say?)
- Analyze the stories (How do they say it?)
- Deconstruct the stories (unmake them)
- Put together your own story
- Set it against/together with other stories.

Based on Czarniawska’s assertion, every text is narrative. Using narration as a common form of communication, one can construction a story, this consists of a minimum causal connection. Then a collection of stories or events with further arrangement is plot. For the purpose of research, Czarniawska (2004) embraces procedures of interpretation, analysis, deconstruction and reconstruction of the stories.

Czarniawska amalgamates the Formalists' plot arrangement, the Structuralists' discovery of meaning, and both their understanding and interpretation of the text.

Polkinghorne (1988, 2007) is more comprehensible on this issue. According to him, narrative is the linguistic form demonstrating distinctive situated action of human. He states, "Narrative is the type of discourse composition that draws together diverse events, happenings, and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed processes" (2007, p. 5). A thematic thread lays out happenings and integrates these happenings into a temporally organized whole in research. Polkinghorne (1988, 2007) calls the thematic thread plot and its integrating operation "emplotment," like Czarniawska did.

Applying the notion of Czarniawska and Polkinghorne, I organized data by themes and sub-themes. I closely looked for recurring words and topics, grouped them into a sub-theme, and grouped sub-themes into a theme. When I was done with this part, I came up with 8 themes and 64 sub-themes. Then I compared these themes with chronologically organized profiles of each participant (Seidman, 2006). For Bonnie's case, her first interview alone stands as a biography. She organized it as a beautiful life story. However, when she prearranged this story for women's retreat, Bonnie blocked out some significant parts. Bonnie's cheerful nature filtered out depressing parts of her life story. In fact, her story was rather collectives of outcome than cause and effect.

For an example, Bonnie said she wanted to learn English so badly. Then she found an old woman who likes to teach English. So Bonnie gathered young mothers at her age and they learned English together for years. At the first interview, she did not mention why learn English so important to her. For an immigrant, the reason for wanting to learn English seems so obvious. However, Bonnie had another reason. Like all other participants, Bonnie's first social contact in the United States was Koreans she met at Korean church. Because she was new, she tried to be close with them. However,

knowing that Bonnie would not be able to understand, these Koreans communicated in English with each other. That made Bonnie so lonely and gave her desire to learn English. Like all other participants, Bonnie showed “cause and effect” connection between her inner conflict and next action.

Similarly, Rachel expressed desire to go to American church for her children. As a matter of fact, Rachel was attending American church when I met her. She said attending American church was a necessity in order to homeschool her children. Then at the later interview, she said she experienced inner conflict when attending Korean church. She kept very close relationship with her cell group people. She insisted that they were very nice hard working people. However, limiting her social life to the Korean community was not what she wanted to do. She was dreaming of socializing with White people, contributing to society, and being a good citizen. So that was the one of the key reason why she wanted to attend American church.

Bonnie and Rachel illustrated that their first contact group was Korean community. Similar to these women, Leah and Emilie had Koreans as their first contact group. Being involved with Korean community was necessary for them to begin new life in the United States. It is like stopping at a visitor’s center when crossing a state border. Immigrants need a station to ask questions and get information. When they are getting familiar with the life in the United States, they emerge from the home ground and launch into White society. So one of the themes I identified from the data was “first Korean in-group.”

Also their inner conflict had driven the participants for the next action. Bonnie’s conflict with English-speaking Koreans motivated her to learn English. She was quite active and pressing in gathering young mothers for English class. She even babysat American children to learn English from them. Likewise, Rachel used all possible networking to search out an American church that would benefit her children’s

homeschooling as well as her spirituality and social life. Leah also talked about seeking better social standing. While Leah was working at a nursing home, she was insistent on getting a nursing license. Thus another theme that I came up with was “upward mobility.”

Looking at participants’ biographies, their individual themes and sub-themes were not identical to each other. What they did to fulfill their dreams differed with their goals. As Leah believed America as a “land of opportunity and freedom,” she worked for prosperity and success. The following is Leah’s descriptive actions under a theme sweat to fulfill:

Leah looked for nursing position → Rejected because of no experience in the United States (Experiences from Korea were not recognized) → Looked for any job → Hired as a cook helper → Needed second job to support herself → Began to work at a nursing home (with Korean’s referral) → No time to study for nursing license exam since having two full time jobs → Quit nursing home job → Passed the exam → Quit restaurant job → Hired at a hospital as a registered nurse

When Leah got a job at a hospital, she felt she had acculturated to the United States. On the other hand, Rachel was different from Leah. Rachel focused primarily on her identity. Consequently she tried to be an influential citizen for society. She tried volunteer work or cooking for homeless people with her church cell group member. Rachel only felt a limitation as an immigrant. However, when Rachel started homeschooling and reached the point of teaching at co-op, she was quite satisfied with her status in the United States.

Likewise, the participants’ meaning and goal for acculturation were all different. They were acculturating into different directions in different ways. Leah’s contentment stage of acculturation was not the same as Bonnie’s or Rachel’s. It is clear that

acculturation measurement models do not fit an individual's acculturation process. The participants were presenting their own individuated unique acculturation story.

**Configuring as a biographical story.** Narrative configuration organizes data into themes, themes into plots, and plots into a final story. However, configuring biography of the participants cannot just rely on any emplotted order on the data. According to Polkinghorne (2007), "the final story must fit the data while at the same time bringing an order and meaningfulness that is not apparent in the data themselves" (p. 16). Furthermore, narrative identity employs narrative procedures to find meanings and roles in one's life. Shaping identity should be accomplished through the crafting and telling of an ongoing life story (Singer, 2005). McAdams and Bowman (2001) stated that "adult identity is an evolving and implicit narrative of the self that reconstructs the past and the anticipated future" (p. 11).

hoped future.

While I developed biographical stories of participants, I employed a part of Dollard's guidelines, which Polkinghorne (2007) suggested. Dollard gives seven criteria the researcher needs to consider in configuration of life history: cultural context, personal goals and life concern, significant events and influential people, specific context, historical continuity, emplotment of the story, and the plausibility of the story. The parts I mostly contemplated were significant events and the specific context in which the plots take place.

Although all participants illustrated diverse life stories, they had something in common. All four of them indicated certain turning points after recursive happenings or experiences. Happenings and experiences were different, but the weights of the significances were heavy enough to set a goal for the next step. For an example, Rachel's contact group was only Koreans at the beginning. While she was socializing with these

Koreans, Rachel's conflict of immigrant's limitation was getting deeper. Even though Rachel was active in social gathering and volunteer work, she always felt isolation from society. Then she stood at a crossroad for a new direction.

Likewise, other women faced several turning points during immigrants' life. At each turning point, they made important decision and obtained wisdom for better and healthier lives in the United States. Between turning points, their behavior and actions were consistent under a same goal. For Bonnie's case, she decided to get a professional job at one of her turning points. Thus she applied for a school and got accepted. While she was a student there, she struggled to associate with her colleagues. Bonnie tried whatever she could do to be involved. Regardless of her hardship, she finally gave up and decided to remain as an outsider. As a result, she went back to Korean church and did not bother to be included at social gatherings. But then that was not the end; she went on to the next stage.

Therefore, I configured participants' life stories based on these turning points. I represented individual's life history in Chapter Four. Interestingly, although all participants had different goals and went on different paths, they demonstrated very similar patterns from beginning to the present stage. I synthesized their stories and reconstructed under representative themes and sub-themes in Chapter Five.

### **Triangulation**

**Validity and member check.** Blumenfeld-Jones (2007) stated “‘validity’ is a difficulty for narrative inquiry—we might ask what validity has to do with a piece of art” (p. 26). He was referring specifically to validity in qualitative research. Under the assumption that what the participant told is not a fiction, the researcher's strategy to describe certain and accurate life story of the participant involves constant checking with the data and the participant.

On this matter, I trusted the participants, and graciously they trusted me. For the last several months, I kept taking notes whatever that came to my mind that is related to my research topic. This was in keeping with Bloomberg and Volpe's (2008) advice that "recording your thinking means that you will accumulate material that can be revisited and drawn on and that can form a substantial part of the methodology and analysis chapters of your dissertation" (p. 4). Then I compared my notes with the date to review if there was any guessing or assumptions while I interpreted their story.

Also, I often had casual conversations with the participants by either phone call or face-to-face meeting. With the exception of Emilie, I have known these women for years now. Before they became the participants, they were my friends, friend's neighbor, or member of my church. It was natural to talk with them and discuss life in the United States. We were open-minded on inspecting and analyzing with each other. The participants contributed an "audit-trail" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that was useful to increase my study's validity. I was very fortunate in this process.

With Emilie, I had a separate meeting to share my findings. She was quite satisfied on how the procedure went. Also she admitted that this opportunity gave her to think through her life in the United States. Emilie said that at the last part of her first interview. However, she said she was repeatedly thinking about her acculturation process since then. Her life is not just accumulated days and months anymore. She crafts every day thinking that every moment she is experiencing is from the Lord, she added.

**Translation of interview transcripts.** As stated earlier, all interviews were conducted in Korean and recoded in mp3 file and audionote app in iPod. The interviews were transcribed into Korean and translated into English afterwards. Translation was done by a fluently bilingual second-generation Korean woman who had completed her master's degree with a qualitative method thesis. She understands the importance of interview data and its translation. I also constantly discussed word selection with her.



When both of us could not find exact word to translate, we tried to use the closest word possible.

### **Ethical Considerations**

For the entire study, I kept two ethical issues in my mind: the participant's privacy and any type of ethnic discrimination. However, it was more complicated than that. First, one of the participants talked about her church small group members. Another participant shared about her born-again experience for a long hour. Superiority of White people became an issue at an interview. I wasn't sure if I can use that as data. My basic policy was that if the participant didn't mean to discriminate any person or case and I needed to use the data, I went back to the participant and what they exactly meant by what they had said. In most cases, the incidents and illustrations were simply supplementary to describe the participants' experiences.

## **Chapter Four: Life Histories of Participants**

This chapter discusses the life history of the four participants in this study. However, examining their life in a larger social context will provide better understanding. Therefore, I begin this chapter with a brief history of Korean immigrants.

### **A Brief History of Korean Immigrants**

Beginning from the Hawaiian plantation labor immigrants, the history of Korean immigration in the United States can be understood within three major waves. Before these movements, Korea established diplomatic relations with the United States through the Treaty of Amity and Commerce in May 1882. When the first treaty was signed, a small number of Korean students, political exiles, and ginseng merchants began to arrive in the United States. The total number of Koreans in the United States at that time was estimated at less than fifty (Kim, 2004; Park, 1997).

The first procession began in the early twentieth century between 1903 and 1905 when Korean migrants were used for cheap labor at pineapple and sugar plantations in Hawaii (Park, 1997). Due to the poverty in Korea at that time, the financial opportunities available from working on Hawaiian plantations were very attractive to Koreans. More than seven thousand Koreans were recruited to work on the islands. Although the Hawaii Sugar Planter Association (HSPA) needed more Korean workers, the Japanese attempted to hinder Korean immigrants from working on the Island (Kim, 2004; Min, 2006). As the Japanese government's brutality began escalating in 1906, only 2,000 Koreans were able to immigrate to Hawaii and California between 1905 and 1924 (Kim, 2004; Min, 2002, 2006; Park, 1997).

The second wave of Korean immigrants arrived in the United States between 1950 and 1964. Those who came during this period have been characterized into three groups: Korean wives of American servicemen (also known as "war brides"); Korean

orphans adopted by American families; and students, visitors, businessmen, professionals, such as medical doctors and college professors. The standard war bride was relatively young with a lower educational background. These young girls typically experienced a culture shock and isolation from the Korean community because of the negative impression of “war brides,” as well as from American communities because of the language and cultural barriers. Among the second group, Korean orphans adopted by American families, half-Koreans with a White father, full Korean, and Afro-Koreans (Park, 1997; Kim, 2004). The third group of people, who had higher educational backgrounds, were relatively well-adjusted to the middle class society and made contributions to the community (Park, 1997; Kim, 2004).

The third wave of Korean immigration took place after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. With the passing of the Act of 1965, the number of Korean immigrants escalated exponentially (Kim, 2004; Min, 2002, 2006; Park, 1997). Korean immigrants who came to the United States during the third wave are characterized as experts, middle-class, urban, and professionals in comparison to those who came in earlier waves (Kim, 2004; Min, 2006). Nevertheless, they still were not proficient in English, and this kept the Korean immigrants from utilizing their expertise in the United States. As a result, the majority of Korean immigrants changed their careers from professional vocations to owning small businesses. Regardless of where Korean immigrants are settled, they frequently tend to own small businesses (Kim, 2004; Min, 2002, 2006; Park, 1997).

One statistic states that 75 percent of Korean working immigrants in the United States are self-employed or working for Korean firms. From the same data, 70 to 80 percent of Korean immigrants attend Korean-speaking churches (Bak, 2006; Min, 2006). Their life boundaries are limited to the Korean community. Correspondingly, a United Way survey reported that 77 percent of the Korean-American community is

associated with a church. There are approximately 4,000 Korean-American churches that provide counseling, job assistance, after-school programs, Korean language classes, youth-at-risk programs, and senior citizen services (KCCD, 2007; Min, 2002).

In 2003, in commemoration of the centennial anniversary of the Korean immigration to America, the Korean-Americans celebrated great improvements in economic, political, and professional occupations. Second and third generations of Korean immigrants are positioned all throughout the United States and working in professional fields. They may not be as aware of the acculturation process as much as their parents. However, the first generations, whose main purpose of coming to the United States was their children's education (Pak, 2006), still struggle with the acculturation process and cultural adjustment.

### **Leah**

Leah, a third-wave immigrant, came to the United States holding a nursing license. Before the Immigration and Nationality Act, entrance into the United States was very limited for Koreans, but following the Act in 1965, hordes of Koreans began immigrating to America. There were several different cases which allowed Koreans to immigrate into the States. The most common case was Koreans with American citizenship requested who permission for their immediate family to reside in America. Another case was made for those who possessed professional skills or knowledge that was needed by the United States. Leah was the latter case and as so she came to the America on her own.

What made Leah's story interesting to me was that she came alone to the United States in her early twenties when people only had a simple view of America: the land of opportunity and freedom. Leah came to the land dreaming that she would reach the status where she could look after her entire family. I felt her story could represent one of

the third-wave immigrants who came to the United States while Korea was not known to the world and was yet a developing country. Out of the participants, Leah's life in the United States is the longest and toughest. Also, unlike other participants, she was quite specific in describing ethnic groups. In general, Koreans, especially older generation in Korea, used use the word 'American' refers to the White distinct ethnic group including European. Likewise, other participants in this study used the word American and White people interchangeably while Leah clearly classified White, Black, Hispanic, African, European, or South Asian. She shared her story with me through two long interviews on Skype and a few short phone calls.

Among Leah's interviews, homesickness was the most frequently narrated topic. Then she talked about reverse acculturation and cultural differences. Unlike other participants, Leah's story does not include much interaction with mainstream society or relationship with White people. That seems one of the characteristics of the third-wave immigrants. Most third-wave immigrants aimed to live in White, middle-class suburbs (Pak, 2006); provide their children the best education possible (Kim, 2004; Min, 2002); and enjoy a stable life. Their primary focus was financial security and good education for their children (Kim, 2004; Min, 2002; Pak, 2006). They didn't have time to relax but only work to fulfill their dreams. Leah lived a tough life to make her dream come true, similar to many other third-wave immigrants.

***Dream vs. reality.*** Leah came to America in April of 1977. She described it by saying:

When I first came [to America]...I had never been on an airplane before...I was just coming with a dream. I was really scared. Because I was so scared, what I remember on the plane is, [I] rode on Northwest, that plane just kept going and going so far, such a fear of an unknown world, I had these feelings, and I kept

thinking that I was all by myself... (LH-5-2222: this code stands for the participant's identification-transcript page number-reference number)

Throughout her entire flight Leah just kept praying, "Lord, I came to the foreign land, please guide me and lead me for the rest of my life and my immigration life" (LH-9-45r). Leah had to survive in the United States all by herself. The only possessions she had were two pieces of luggage and \$650 she saved while working as an RN in Korea. Knowing she would have to find a job as quickly as possible, Leah put her trust in God and fate, and thus began her life as an immigrant in America.

Like most immigrants, the America Leah fantasized about was the land of opportunity filled with only nice and handsome people, just like the movies. Leah said she dreamed about making lots of money, living comfortably, and becoming the one who cared for her families and friends. Leah had a bachelor's degree in nursing and had also gained working experience as an RN in Korea, so she thought she would at the least be able to find a job as a nurse's aide, because America was the "land of opportunity." If she tried hard, she thought she would be able to get a job quickly.

The reality that Leah was faced with was that no one would hire her due to her lack of working experience:

[They were] looking for nurse aide but wouldn't hire [me] because [I] had no experience. I would take the bus and just get off anywhere and try [to submit application for] jobs everywhere and anywhere. [I] couldn't speak English, but after the first few times I gained some courage. (LH-3-1114)

Leah tried for months with no success. She was running out of money, and she knew she was overstaying her welcome at her friend's house. Although her friend's family offered to let her stay longer, she moved to another Korean friend's apartment.

In her desperate state, the only job Leah could find was working an entry level position for minimum wage, \$2.75 per hour, at a nursing home. The job Leah found was

helping clients wipe themselves after using the toilet—and even this job she was only able to find after a Korean friend put in a referral for Leah. The reality was that this was the only job she could find as a nurse that required no prior work experience, and this job alone did not provide Leah with enough finances to support herself. So, Leah found another job working at a restaurant chopping up lettuce through a machine and making guacamole. Finally she was able to rent her own apartment with a Korean woman she met from a church.

***Struggling with social status.*** Leah began to really enjoy her work at the restaurant when she finally reached the point where she could be a server. She enjoyed learning about new foods and about American culture. She also enjoyed being able to interact with her customers. She particularly enjoyed counting her tips at the end of each work day. She said:

When working as a waitress, I wanted to experience food culture of America and communicating with various types of people. Of course, I thought different experiences at young age would benefit your life so I worked whatever that was available and I liked counting tips and saved money, and um... I enjoyed working as a waitress because when I came to America, I had positive belief in America so um... except loneliness, it wasn't that hard. Yeah, I think those experiences were helpful to me. I took everything as a learning opportunity and I was young back then (LH-2-2834r).

But Leah said she knew that working at a restaurant couldn't be her permanent job in America. Also her job at the nursing home didn't give her hope as a nurse. She was struggling with the roles she played and with self-verification (Stryker & Burke, 2000): "I didn't like working at a nursing home. Every day, I wiped their bottom, old men and women... that was all I did and asked myself 'did I come [America] to do this?' and...I really didn't like it" (LH-11-32r). Having worked as an RN in Korea, Leah struggled with

the tasks at the nursing home cleaning up waste after patients used the toilet. Leah desperately wanted to become a certified nurse in the United States, but she was unable to find time for her studies while working two full-time work shifts; she repeatedly failed her nursing exams.

In order to focus on preparation for the RN examination, Leah said she decided to quit her job at the nursing home. She needed more time to study. Besides, one of Leah's American friends advised her to take nursing examination preparation classes, which she didn't even know existed. The classes were very helpful. After taking the classes, Leah easily passed the exam and also immediately found a nursing position.

***Pursuing U.S. accredited education.*** While Leah was working as an RN, she remembered hearing that there were opportunities to work in Korea as a nursing officer through the United States Army, if she earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from an accredited college. So, "because degree from Korea was not recognized here," Leah enrolled in a university, relinquishing her B.S. degree from Korea. When she had graduated from the university, Leah went to the U.S. Army and received six months training to be an army nurse.

Joining the U.S. Army seemed very meaningful to her. When I asked Leah how she would describe her life in America, the first story she told me was about joining the army. She also said the main reason to join the Army was to go to Korea: "I wanted to go home but I wanted success first. That was my priority." There were not many Koreans in America during the time when Leah first came to the U.S., and she found herself dearly missing her family. As a high context culture person, Leah needed an "in-group" to commit to and feel a sense of belonging (Hall, 1976). So she was ready to go home for a social gathering and to feel a sense of belonging. She said:

The first time I went back to Korea, I needed to adjust; Korea had been changed so much. Where I used to live [in America], there weren't many Koreans. I was



just happy to be back in Korea. It had been so long. I was so happy. (LH-9-1124)  
Seven years after Leah first came to America, she felt she was returning to Korea in glory.

***Second acculturation.*** Leah thoroughly enjoyed the year she was able to spend in Korea through the Army. It was like making up for the struggles she endured while living in the United States. However, when Leah had to return to America, she said it was even harder and lonelier than the first time. Even though the investment Leah made in her life in America had brought its rewards – she achieved her RN and bachelor’s degree and she was making sufficient money – Leah still struggled to find contentment. Leah also wanted to settle down and get married. She said “home sweet home” would make her life “happily ever after.” But there were no Koreans in Texas where she was residing.

Leah considered marrying an American man, but she was hesitant. During the interview, Leah told me she was not sure if she could overcome the cultural differences if she married an American man. Leah had made American friends from work, and she hung out with her co-workers after work, too. At first the dining and movie-going fit Leah’s lifestyle fine, but the night clubs and parties were not her style. Leah realized that the culture of America society was much different from her own. She needed to meet and spend time with people who shared the same values and beliefs as she did. So, Leah went in search of a Korean church. Pretty soon, she was setting herself apart from her co-workers and spending less and less time with them after work.

Leah didn’t think of herself as marginalizing her life, but instead accepts that they simply had cultural differences. Leah wanted to find a solution for her loneliness by being with a trustworthy in-group, other Koreans in her case. She exemplified a typical high-context culture person (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1997; Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998). However, she found no chances to meet people. Also, Koreans were not open to meeting with members of the opposite sex unless they are going to marry. If she was in Korea, she

would have had people around her, friends and acquaintances alike, who would be playing matchmaker for her.

In Korea, when people know of eligible men and women, they customarily try to set them up. In America, since there were so few Korean people, this was the typical method for single Korean men and women to get married. This was also how Leah met her husband. Her first priority for a husband was finding someone who had a strong faith. This man, who she met through her church member, diligently attended church. Most importantly, this man wanted to marry Leah. As both single individuals were overwhelmed with loneliness, they got married without the opportunity to get to know one another. Only a few months into their marriage, Leah already realized that she made a poor decision in marrying her husband. Even before her newlywed period was over, she had to suffer from domestic violence. This reality made her life even more difficult for the next ten years until her marriage ended.

There were times when Leah considered moving back to Korea. She said:

If I was in Korea, I wouldn't have suffered like that. Because, in Korea, I would just, uh, just, comfortably...and marriage too... I would have been better. Korea has advanced a lot over the years... and as Korea has advanced; I would have followed that flow and also advanced myself. Those people who have the similar educational background as me are living this way, wealthy and higher social status. (LH-16-4173)

But she believes that the challenges she encountered in the United States and trying to learn America has made her life richer.

**Mix and match.** Leah acknowledges that she herself, as well as Korea, had changed too much over the years. From her working experiences, she learned the differences between cultures and skills. When I asked Leah to tell me any cultural difference she perceived between ethnic groups, she described as:

All the Korean people I've known up until this point have been "sharp" and "skillful," they're very skillful with their hands. Some people say it is because we use chopsticks, but their hands are very "skillful." It's even different when they are giving a shot. Koreans don't make any mistakes and are very precise when giving a shot. And also, uh... they are very good at memorizing, they work quickly, and they work very well... But they lack some patience, and they lack a little bit of tranquility and calmness, and also their weakness is "anger control." So like, uh, like when White people get angry they control it and let it out behind the scenes, but Koreans show it right on the spot. They aren't very good at hiding their emotions. In other words, in some ways they show too much emotion, um, hot-tempered. And another weakness shall we say is their manner is sort of, now sort of stiff, uh...I think they are really like that on the inside, but on the outside, maybe they think, if they are too nice, it will look like flattering. I don't know if it's because they think that, but I think they're a bit lacking in "etiquette." That, um...a bit like "business manners," I think they lack that sort of thing... During our generation, the education was more Confucianism-focused education, because we received Confucianism education... so we can't "relax." [We're] kind of "tight." I don't think [conduct] has anything to do with speaking good English or not. (LH-15-1826)

Leah suggested expressing emotion but only a "good" one. She said anger should not be exposed but kindness and consideration should be revealed instead. It is not a matter of language skill but conducting behavior and cultural influence. Koreans are more emotional than rational. Therefore, Leah explains, people become too personal when they need to confront problems. When Koreans are blamed in front of other people or in public, they take that as personal, even if it was just a matter of business. Hoare (2010) warns:

The way to handle difficult situations [with Koreans] is to avoid direct confrontation or blame in front of others, and then to tackle the issue in private. Take them aside and explain that your understanding of the position is different from theirs. This allows both of you to move around the problem, and, with luck, to find a solution. (p. 135)

Now Leah understands her weakness and strength. She also learned American way of solving problems so she can mix and match to perform the best possible.

To some extent, Leah is Americanized. If she goes back to Korea, she knows that she would have to start all over and try to fit back into Korean society, in the same way that she had to adjust when she first came to America. Although Leah misses the Korean atmosphere, she didn't want to start again. The negotiation that Leah made for herself was to immerse herself in the Korean community of Los Angeles so that she would be able to remain in the United States, but also be among Koreans. Leah chose to live in a Korean community in the United States. She could go to a Korean church, eat Korean food, watch Korean T.V., and live a Korean life. Also, should Leah have to go to Korea for any reason, it would be easiest to fly out from Los Angeles. When Leah first came to America, traveling was not as efficient as it is today. Nowadays, Leah is able to fly back and forth to Korea at least once or twice a year.

Leah's old friends in Korea have reached a certain status in society, and Leah wonders where her life might be if she had stayed in Korea. Leah told me she knows that, just like her friends, she, too, would have had a respectable career and comfortable life in Korea. At the same time Leah knows that if she had not lived the past decades in America like she did, she would not have gained the wisdom and experience she possesses now. Most importantly, the way her faith has grown over the years due the struggles she had to overcome is Leah's greatest treasure in life.

***From now on.*** Summing up all those factors, Leah is glad to have immigrated

to America. She now lives a comfortable life with her family whom she dearly missed. They have all immigrated to America as well. On Sundays, Leah attends a Korean church and helps second-generation Korean-Americans by translating the Korean worship service simultaneously. Leah describes her life now as the golden years. She is truly grateful for all the experiences and opportunities that America offered her. And so, when young people ask about coming to the United States, she advises them that the American dream can be achieved anywhere:

Before, America used to be the global, but now it can be anywhere, and communication has advanced so much that now, you can network using computers, and so if you know how to use it you can do it all, I don't think that have to live here just because you studied here. (LH-24-1223)

Leah defines the American dream as a "rich and successful life." That was the typical American dream in her generation. Nowadays, America is the Mecca of cultural experiences. Leah values these multi-cultural involvements higher than any other achievement. Leah came to America because she wanted to, and she loves her life in America. As a "universal citizen," she is lucky enough to enjoy both of her favorite culture: Korean community in America.

### **Bonnie**

I first met Bonnie at a Korean Church that I had randomly visited. Bonnie had been attending the church with her husband for three years. We both recognized each other as being Korean and shared greetings, but this did not automatically make us friends. There are (now) too many Koreans in America to become friends just because they are Koreans. In years past, there were stories passed down like legends about rare encounters between Koreans. When a Korean person even heard one Korean word, they

would search for the source, and they exchanged phone numbers, and even cried when having to part. There aren't stories like that anymore.

Bonnie and I were glad to see each other on Sundays, but we were still only acquaintances who shared greetings. One day, Bonnie told me about the hardships she was encountering with her colleagues and professors at the school she was attending for her licensing. While she was in good shape understanding English for her studies, Bonnie explained that she struggled to understand when people were chatting at faster pace during break times. At times she would just sit and smile at what people were saying, but she wasn't ever sure if her reactions were appropriate for the conversation topic or not.

Bonnie's admission regarding these cultural differences was the beginning of her participation in my study. I had, in total, seven interviews with Bonnie, ranging from half an hour to two hours. Since we were able to meet frequently, if there was a topic I wanted to pursue further, I was able to meet with her at any time for additional interview. What she claimed the most during the interviews was difficulty of language and relationship with other Koreans. But, in later life, fluent English and intimate relationship with Koreans brought joy to her.

***Coming to the United States.*** Before 1981, Korean students who wanted to study abroad had to go through very strict screening by the government. They could only come to the United States after passing a national examination and document inspection. After the law changed in 1981 (ILKMS, 2011), the process of getting a passport and study abroad became much easier. There was a rush of students who came to America.

About ten years after the law changed, Bonnie came along with her husband who was pursuing a doctoral degree in the United States. Before Bonnie came to the United States, she had received her Master's degree in Korea and also had a job. When she came

to America, Bonnie had no thoughts to continue her education, but since she had left her job behind in Korea, she realized she needed to gain more experience in order to increase her competence. She figured the best thing she could do was to improve her English, but once she arrived in the United States, life did not turn as Bonnie planned.

Her husband was always too busy doing his job as a student and as a research assistant at school. She was left alone in their apartment with a barely one-year-old baby. She described it, saying: “It was so hard, so like. But really, I think the American life I embraced without thinking, without any fear, was just so different than what I had thought it would be like”(BSL-2-2017). Noticing how distraught and lonely she was, Bonnie’s husband found a Korean church she could attend.

***First In-Group.*** The Korean people at the church were also students who had come to the United States right after the law had changed in 1981. In general, these students were from wealthy families. Also they already had ten years of experience living in America. These people spoke English among themselves and were financially well-settled into their lives in the States. Their situation was much different from that of a struggling student couple. As she put it:

The reason those people seemed liked that was especially because they would unnecessarily use English mixed in with Korean. Like, instead of just saying bike in Korean, they would say “bike” in English, or instead of saying put that in the “kitchen” in Korean, they would say in English; and they would use these English words, even for the simplest Korean terms, and because they would use English in direct language, I was turned off...(BSL-6-2046).

Bonnie tried to be involved and make friends, but everyone had already formed their own “in-group,” and Bonnie found there was nowhere for her to fit in. The fact that they spoke English among themselves at church made Bonnie, who spoke absolutely no English, felt even lonelier. So Bonnie recalled her memory as:

Having lived in the United States for a long time, those people knew about a lot more things, such as a concept of common decency, respecting other people's personal space, or waiting patiently in line, controlling their children, and not being a nuisance to other people, and so it's like comparing raising children in America versus raising children in Korea. Those aspects were different, and I would raise my child the Korean way and let them roam free, while they were already raising their children the American way and have more control over them. So I probably didn't make a good impression, right? My ways must've stood out negatively, and I must have seemed uncultured, and so I always felt like they were looking down on me, because of the way they looked at me, and it went on like this for at least 2-3 years? or at least 2 years, when I first came to the States. I think until I learned English, and was able to understand easy conversation in English, I struggled with it all. Like, an inferiority complex, sense of isolation. The sense of isolation, which resulted from the cultural differences, the inferiority complex, and from not being able to speak English... I think everything summed up to me having an inferiority complex. (BSL-5-3117)

Back in those days, Bonnie didn't see that as an inferiority complex but just struggled to get along with them. They were the first group of people she had contact with in America. Bonnie said she did not want to avoid them because there were no other people around her. Bonnie also talked about how these people were Americanized in food culture. She said:

One of those families [from our church] invited the entire cell group for dinner one day. So we went. It was for dinner. Then they ordered pizza from a Pizza Hut and gave us pizza for dinner. I felt so bad. It seemed so insincere. How could they invite people for dinner and serve pizza? I was so offended. I expected Korean food with many side dishes. I did not save my appetite for pizza. And so, on the



way home, I complained to my husband how they eat pizza for dinner, and when we got home, we had ramen to refresh our stomach. It seemed they enjoy pizza. I didn't. We were invited for dinner for another occasion, we went, and you know brat? Sausage? [The host family] gave us grilled sausage in a hotdog bun to eat for dinner... But then I have eaten rice for my entire life. If they gave us just a scoop of rice and a few pieces of kimchee, I would feel a lot better. I would have enjoyed dinner... But hotdog and a bun, ketchup, and that thing, um, yeah, that... mustard for dinner? No, I felt like I was not a valued guest. I felt so bad... I still do not understand that food culture. Well, I understand but can't accept. No, that is not right expression. Anyway, I still don't like that. (BSL-28-29r)

Bonnie endured days and weeks not getting along with them in many ways. After a few months, Bonnie and her husband moved to an apartment complex close to the campus. There were many Korean families who were in very similar situations. All of them were, like Bonnie and her husband, student couples with children who yearned to learn English. The wives had also held similar jobs in Korea, and this made them all even closer. It was from this time that Bonnie began to develop energetic life in the United States. She could find her life meaningful only when she was involved with social and learning activities.

Three days a week, Bonnie and her new friends took turns caring for their babies, and the rest of them would go to learn English. Besides, Bonnie also babysat children of American families. Bonnie said a goal she had was to babysit American children and learn English from them. She purposely decided on children close in age to her own children so that they could learn English as well. She said:

So I repeatedly babysat Americans, um... student couple's children, my children's age. And so, um... an interesting thing happened was that a nurse, I babysat, um... single mom nurse, she had two children. The older one was twelve years old

when I first met her. She spoke very good Korean. This American girl, her first babysitter was a Korean woman lived in this married student's apartment complex. This Korean mom took very good care of her, feeding Korean food same thing she fed her own baby. But then this young mom didn't speak English so she spoke Korean to this American baby every day. The baby's mom was full time student and also worked full time. So baby spent more time with this Korean mom until very late at night. And so this girl learned Korean properly...And her little brother did the same thing. When their mom needed new baby sitter, she purposely chose Korean to keep up their Korean language... Um, I got to babysat both of them later days, they gathered well with my children, and we had very nice time together. I spoke Korean with them, and they ate Korean food, so it was fun and easy (BSL-2-23-38r).

Bonnie repeatedly told me that she had enjoyed life toward the end of her husband's study. She truly enjoyed babysitting "American" children. Unlike Leah, Bonnie used the word "American" referring White people. While she babysat American babies, Bonnie made American friends as well as Koreans friends. She added, "you know, Koreans are extra nice to Americans, loyal [to White people], (laugh) and I guess this American mom liked it too." Bonnie said the children's mom and Koreans in the apartment complex shared good memories together. This is how Bonnie spent her time in America while her husband was in school. Through this experience Bonnie reached the level where she could teach English and enjoyed her life back in Korea after her husband is completed his study in the United States.

***Second coming and relinquishment.*** Several years after Bonnie's family moved back to Korea, her husband found a job in the United States. She was glad for the opportunity to provide their children education in the United States. Unlike the first time, Bonnie could speak better English. While Bonnie was back in Korea, she was

thinking, “If I would have attended an American church even though I didn’t speak English very well, and kept myself in contact with other American people, then I think I would have left having learned some English” (BSL-12-2026). Also she didn’t have much contact with American people at the first stay. She said:

I indirectly learned about life in America through the people in my [Korean] church cell group. Through the other Koreans who spoke English well and had lived in America. for a long period of time, I was able to experience American life. Until then, uh, until I met those people I didn’t even have a chance to encounter American people. (BSL-6-6041)

This time, Bonnie said she wanted to attend American church, meet more American people, and learn true American culture. If she could get a Green Card, Bonnie would also be able to work in the United States. She was very excited about this opportunity. She said:

When I came to America first time, I quit my job in Korea. And I didn’t like the fact that I had to become a stay-at-home mother. I couldn’t just give up and be nothing like that, I felt like I was giving up... There’s something that’s missing. I keep learning English, and for what? I kept asking myself that and even as I waited for my Green Card, I thought about how great it would be to even just have a work permit, then I could at least have a job. I just want to be a part of society. I was frustrated of not working for so many years. (BSL-16-4047t)

During their first visit, she and her husband only had student visas. Being a student and student’s spouse were the only title they could get. But if they received their Green Cards, Bonnie and her husband felt that they could do anything they wanted to do and live stable lives in the United States.

After receiving her Green Card, the first job Bonnie got was as a daycare teacher’s assistant. Without giving any thought to what the job entailed or what the pay might be,

Bonnie was simply excited to have a job in America. She poured all her knowledge from graduate school and experience from teaching in high school in Korea into this teacher's aide position at a preschool. She was ready to do whatever she was told to do and to cater to everything American people wanted. She described it, saying:

There was some of that, what I kept feeling is because I am a foreigner, so my English is my English is imperfect, and I did not want to hear that I wasn't doing my job well. So from the very beginning, I worked like crazy, I would watch children to no end, sing to them to no end, play games for them, find whatever I could to do. (BSL-4-1039)

She believed this was what she was supposed to do.

Still, the other teacher's aide, who was younger than Bonnie's own daughter, would boss Bonnie around and look down on Bonnie because she did not speak perfect English. That was far different from what Bonnie was dreaming of her first career in the United States. Bonnie thought that she would make friends with the other teachers, but the other teachers had no intentions of becoming friends with teacher's aides. She said:

What I'm thinking is I really lived in America 12 or 13 years now... During those 12 years living in the United States, I never really experienced America, until I got a job at the preschool. I had never really known America, you know what I mean, right? Among American people, I was just living as an outsider; I think that's why I fantasized about America. In other words, I just assumed American people are nice people; American people are rational people, in this sort of way, that is, I think that's how I thought. (BSL-1-1081)

Finally, Bonnie thought:

Since I didn't receive an education in America, they don't acknowledge the education I received in Korea. I even went to graduate school and received a Master's degree, and yet I was there working as a teacher aid. And you know,

what it means to be a teacher aid in a preschool, you know. Even American people don't like to work as a teacher aid for long. It's a hard work with a little pay. I kept thinking, if I were to keep in living in the States, doing this, I wondered if I would be able to continue doing this sort of work. And if I was to be satisfied at heart with myself, be at peace, and if I was to be content with the work that I was doing, I needed to first gain an education from this country. In this country, no matter what sort of work I did in Korea, no matter how well I was treated in Korea, if I couldn't let those things go, I would always be unhappy living here. It was these sorts of thoughts which began to trouble me. (BSL-6-9121)

Her ultimate conclusion from this experience was that she needed to further her education from the U.S. in order to get a professional job as she had in Korea. But then, she was not sure what type of study would fit her desire or career. Bonnie and her husband talked about many options she could do. She said:

My husband told me to study early childhood education since I already had teaching experience from Korea and already worked with preschoolers here. He suggested I get a Montessori certificate since it only took a year, or pursue children's education and teach preschool since I liked children and teach them well. And he also said that he didn't want to live in the U.S. forever. He said that after our children graduated from college or so, he was going to return to Korea. And so what he was saying was it would be better for me if I could teach English to children when I returned to Korea. And so my husband kept pushing me in that direction. (BSL-7-10222a)

Bonnie felt bad because she has to consider the direction of her career in the late 40s not in her 20s. It is always good to think about going back to school and studying. However, she had to select the field of study relating to employment that she will do

almost at 50, and also she has restrictions such as age and language. She thought it over and over and very carefully made a decision. She said:

So I responded. I said, in the States, if I were to find a job in the States, as a foreigner I would still have an accent and no matter how well I spoke English I would still be limited in how well I could express myself, and so a teaching job wouldn't work out. I said I knew this as a fact. They would only accept me as a teacher aid. But even if I studied early childhood or Montessori, especially in preschools, in my own thinking, and even if I had an education degree, who would hire me? Not as the lead teacher. Because that's the stage when children learn how to speak, I think speaking proper English is most important at that stage. So that's how I persuade my husband. So I really thought about the teaching job, and said that even though that's what my heart wanted, it wouldn't work out. But I really needed a job, after I graduated from school. And even though nursing requires a lot of hard physical labor, since there were jobs in that field, and because I enjoyed interacting with people and it was compatible with my personality, so I thought I would be able to pursue nursing. (BSL-7-10222b)

This is how Bonnie applied for school and got her nursing license.

***Pursuing upward mobility.*** Going back to school wasn't much different than the social gatherings to Bonnie. During lunch break, whenever her younger friends would talk among themselves in their speed and using their usual slang, Bonnie could not understand a single word. She said, "Honestly... I couldn't stand it at school when the others would be in their own conversation and I would be isolated because I didn't understand their subject. I was so uncomfortable" (BSL-24-4074a). At first, Bonnie said, she wanted to join the conversation so badly, so she would try to gauge the situation and throw in a comment here or there, but the conversation would always come to an

awkward pause. After repeated occurrences, Bonnie's contribution to the conversation decreased more and more.

There were also times when she understood what everyone was saying, but did not find the conversation funny and so would not laugh, but everyone else would be laughing. Then, Bonnie told me that there were the instances where Bonnie would say something she thought was funny, but no one would laugh, Bonnie would try to let these instances pass with a polite smile, but inside she wanted to cry. Bonnie's once extraverted and outgoing personality was gradually transforming to a quiet and passive one. However, in a student evaluation, one of the professors criticized that she "withdrew" herself from her peers. Knowing that the teacher's evaluation played a greater role in allowing her to complete the program successfully, Bonnie forced herself to sit amongst her peers. She said, "After receiving a review like that I was scared and so even though I couldn't hear, and even though I would make stupid comments, I would still try so hard to fit" (BSL-24-4074b). Even when she didn't understand what they were saying, Bonnie would laugh along with everyone. Finally, Bonnie received her license.

***Voluntary surrender.*** Currently Bonnie has her license and has two jobs: one in her profession and one as a teacher's aide. She didn't mean to go back to the preschool. But since she is more confident in her life and the school asked her to come back, she decided to work there part time. Bonnie is quite content with both of her jobs. From the time when her position has changed at the hospital, she felt she was being treated differently from a student worker to a co-worker. Her associates recognize her work ethic and treat Bonnie well. There are some co-workers Bonnie is close with and others she is not.

At first, conversation topics with co-workers were only business-related, but they have started to include more personal topics. Even while this may be a minor change, Bonnie is thankful that she feels she can socialize with her co-workers. This does not

mean that Bonnie created an “in-group” at work, she said. Bonnie would not be calling her co-workers during the week, going shopping together, or hanging out. In spite of everything, Bonnie is glad that she doesn’t have to work alone, and whenever she bumps into a co-worker, they can still share a comfortable conversation.

However, if Bonnie was to sum her life up as an immigrant, she labels herself an outsider. She described it this way:

Just an outsider and I am satisfied with being an outsider. When I’m working, I know I am an outsider because they socializing with each other and I don’t try to fit in anymore. Um... A while ago, one of my co-workers was planning to host a baby shower for the other woman at the school. Maybe it was because I was a foreigner and fairly new, they didn’t ask me if I wanted to be a part of the baby shower. But I still knew about it because I heard them whispering amongst themselves. There was a pregnant teacher, so I said I would do it. And then everyone could contribute any sum of money they wanted to. I had no idea how much I should give... Korean culture is not to ask. Regarding money, we don’t ask about (specific) amounts. So I couldn’t ask about that. But if I did ask, it would have been so much better, what I had difficulty with while living in America was not being able to ask about money, here the culture is to ask. But for us, in our culture we can’t ask, so I think there were many times when I was unsure. So I contributed too much. Then I later found out that everyone else gave so little compare to what I did. And then I heard they would gossip with each other that how much I gave. This kind of made me sad. There are things are like that. (BSL-10-18)

Bonnie realized that there are things she can’t help, even though she tries hard:

In classes, when the other students congregated with each other and I was marginalized, I couldn’t stand it. Even if I would say something stupid I tried so



hard to fit in... But I don't have to try so hard. I'm fine with it all now. I'm at peace. It doesn't bother me anymore at all. I just let them be themselves. That's why it fits to use the term "outsider." (BSL-25-4074t)

Bonnie's original personality did not used to be like that. She said:

The fact that I am an outsider, with my personality I can't stand being an outsider. I'm the type of person who, when I go to a Korean church, I find tasks to do and I take care of the newcomers. But amongst American people I am a completely different person, because I make myself an outsider, because that's most comfortable. In the past I couldn't stand it, so I tried [to be a part of them]. But the fact that I couldn't stand it, so that I had to try so hard made me feel even miserable. So now it was time give it up. I had to let it go and I think I am ready for it. I kept telling myself I had to let it go and I've come to this point. I used to be frustrated when I do not understand anything and feel so isolated, but there's none of that now. And the reason that happened was because whenever I would try to fit it, I would say something stupid and irrelevant. (Laugh) I would answer neither here nor there, and so the conversation would become awkward, and after finding this out, I wouldn't do it anymore. Even if I didn't understand, I would just smile and laugh. (BSL-23-1118)

If Bonnie went by her natural traits, she would react proactively. Yet in her relationships with Americans, Bonnie has learned how to negotiate by trying to fit in some way and stay out at the same time. Living against one's natural personality is challenging for anyone. The solution to this struggle for Bonnie is having a relationship with other Koreans. In Korean society, Bonnie can act upon her natural character, caring for others. Bonnie's way of surrendering and compromising is to interact with other Koreans on the weekends, and stay quiet at work during the weekdays. It is different from having two faces, but she is satisfied with her life.

Bonnie doesn't want to compare the life she has now in America with the life she once had in Korea. This seems to reflect the view that there is only one life that can be lived, and no one can say for sure which life could have been better. Bonnie is happy with the life she is living now in the U.S., and she also knows that if there comes a time when she might have to return to Korea she would still be fine. Both lives in each country have their advantages and disadvantages. Bonnie believes that it is better she has experienced both lives. The benefit to an immigrant's life is being able to take the best aspects of the different experiences gained from living in different countries.

### **Rachel**

I first met Rachel as a neighbor of a friend of mine who lived in New Jersey. Rachel had lived in the U.S. for a year during high school and then another year in college. Also, Rachel spent her newlywed years in the United States for her husband's study, and so all together she did have some experience living in America. When I met her, she was homeschooling her three children. Rachel was still uncertain of whether she was doing a good job or how long she could continue homeschooling. Nevertheless, she gained vitality through homeschooling her children. This was interesting to me.

For Koreans, homeschooling is not typical because the entire concept is quite new. Besides, she was the only Korean I have ever seen doing homeschooling in the United States. On the day we first met, we spent hours talking about homeschooling, how it works, and how it benefits children. My observation was that she portrayed the "tiger mom" (Chua, 2011) and a best friend to her children at the same time. It seemed that she can be one of the best models for mothering immigrants' children.

Two years later, when I was searching for research participants, she came to my mind. I believed that she could give a "good" story on immigrant's life as a women and a mother. She represents one of the immigrants' groups who have more constant contact

with White people than Koreans. She was delighted about participating in the study. In the meantime, Rachel and her family moved to California. We talked through e-mails, phone calls, and Skype.

Among interviews with Rachel, her identity as an immigrant was the most frequently spoken topic. Given that the identity was the most noted issue for Rachel, negotiation of living in the United States followed her interests. She struggled to find reasons and meanings for her life in the United States. Indeed, Rachel wanted to live the “best” life possible.

***Coming to the United States as an immigrant.*** For Rachel and her husband, immigrating to the United States with three children was very different than coming to American as a student. She had to leave her career as an English instructor behind, and there was also the distress of having to live every moment as a minority. She was uncertain about the future. Rachel felt like only a dependent who had to constantly receive assistance instead of contribute to society. She said:

The fact that I was living as an immigrant made me uncomfortable. When I attended a Korean church, um...there weren't many opportunities to learn about American systems [and regulations], I wondered if I can possibly live as a citizen who will hold a sense of responsibility towards this country. Even though I was living in America, because there was nothing I was contributing to society... that was what made me uncomfortable. (RSK-9-1086)

Beyond this, Rachel had to help her children settle into a new country. As an immigrant, she was anxious about not getting “enough” information for her children’s education. Knowing that Rachel’s parents tried the best to provide their children “good education,” she wanted to do the same. Rachel and her siblings could attend prestigious schools, which she has always appreciated. However, she was not positive about the outcome. She said:

I was always an interactive parent regarding school, but I always felt lacking. I knew these are limitations of immigrants. I always worried that my children may suffer in some ways (RSK-10-6062). Living in America wasn't easy for me either. I kept feeling like I wasn't of any help and kept thinking of myself as a 'good for nothing person.' I think I always felt limited. (RSK-9-2035)

That was something Rachel had never felt before. There was no incident that she was limited or "good for nothing person" when she was in Korea.

***Struggling with identity.*** While she felt like she always needed other people's help, she couldn't be an active parent regarding school. She said, "Because I am an immigrant...I was a bit embarrassed that I couldn't live a proactive life because I am an immigrant" (RSK-9024). She also added that she wanted to live a normal life. What she meant by normal life was having career corresponding to her major in college or continuing her education in graduate school. She continued:

If I was in Korea, there would be many different activities I could be doing, but as an immigrant since there is so much boundaries, I don't know, it's a bit frustrating (RSK-14-3027)... It's not that I'm looking for my identity as a Korean-American, I find my identity as a child of God, but I found it's very difficult to grow out of the title of "minority." That was most upsetting. (RSK-31-2044)

Every moment, she felt limits and restrictions as an immigrant.

For the first few years in the United States, Rachel was constantly worrying about doing something wrong that would give a negative impression about Korean people:

I used to worry that I might in some way be impolite because I did not know American culture... when I went to a restaurant for the first time, I would be very careful. I would have to look around to make sure I was standing in line correctly, at the right spot, and such. (RSK-4-1270b)

She always observed her surroundings and figured out how she should behave. Rachel felt that she was a person with no competence at all. She wanted to have someone to teach her American culture or at least someone she can ask questions from time to time. There was no one around she could approach easily.

Even though she was in America, Rachel found herself living in an isolated immigrant community. Rachel wanted to acclimate to a White society; she just didn't have opportunities to associate with them or she didn't know how to make chances. This was a little different from Berry's classification (Hodge, 2002; Lee, 2004; Mana & Orr, 2009) of "separation." Berry's separation connotes voluntary withdrawing oneself from the dominant culture. It was not Rachel's choice. She did not choose to be separated. Nevertheless, she didn't get a chance.

People learn culture by constant contact between individuals or groups of different cultures (Redfield et al., 1936). Immigrants need to relate with people in the host society so they can observe and learn about the culture before they make a decision of accepting or rejecting it. In Rachel's case, she was yearning to learn the mainstream culture. Furthermore, she wanted to belong to the group as one of them. The sense of belonging to a group is very important to Koreans and plays a major role in developing human relations (Hoare, 2006). From this relation, Rachel wanted to establish social identity.

It was not only a matter of social identity, but also her role identity. She felt like her life has lagged behind others. Her sisters received their doctorates from the United States and returned to Korea as professors while she had nothing to show for herself. There were many times when she felt bitter about having to live the rest of her life under the title of "immigrant" or "minority." Rachel was also discouraged when she experienced rigid cultural differences, or when she could only see herself as a "foreigner"

and not a member of society. Hence, as an Asian, she was afraid she could not become a contributing member of society but always have to live in America as an alien.

Identity theory asserts that self-categorization is the key to the formation of one's identity (Stet & Burke, 2000). One can categorize self as reflexive object in relation to other social categories (Turner et al., 1987). Rachel was trying to categorize herself in relation to other social groups in the United States, based on her social status in Korea. A criterion of her identity was how one can be influential and contributing to society. Depending on what criteria one uses, the level of satisfaction one can gain during acculturation differs. Not everyone has the same criterion for acculturation; this leads to different levels of satisfaction. She gave the following example:

One of my nephews came to the States a while ago. He is so well settled and has acclimated well. He is twenty-eight and lives in L.A. now. He says it is great to live in America. Play golf cost so little here and foods are not expensive as in Korea. Just for that reason, he loves living here. For someone like me who hasn't contributed to society will stress them out...um, because contributing to society is acculturation to me. But for those like my nephew who just enjoy themselves, I think that's a type of acculturation as well. (RSK-25-1081)

Rachel's struggle was that her criterion was based on her social status in Korea, but she was physically residing in the United States.

***Sweating to be involved.*** For Rachel, her endeavors with homeschooling were beneficial to acculturating to America. Rachel was well-aware of the advantages of homeschooling her children. The main concern Rachel had was whether or not she could do a good job. Without any experience whatsoever, initiating the homeschool process would be very difficult. Fortunately, Rachel found a church that had a lot of homeschooling families. With the help of these families, Rachel was able to prepare lesson plans, and begin homeschooling her children.

On “co-op” days, all the homeschoolers from church would gather to learn and do activities together. When her children attended public school, Rachel knew some of the other students’ parents, but she did not share an intimate relationship as she did with the homeschooling parents from church. She said, “Because we share same values and same beliefs in education and spiritual life, I got to learn more about American people” (RSK-1628e). She obtained a deeper understanding of their culture and behavior. Little by little, Rachel began developing close friendships with other homeschooling parents and the sense of belonging.

For the first few years, Rachel was unsure about whether or not she should continue homeschool during the summer months. She also wanted to return to school herself to continue her education and get a career. She had to compare the benefits of homeschooling to her desire of finding a career. About two years after Rachel started homeschooling, the homeschool parents suggested she teach one of the co-op classes. They were also very considerate and allowed her to start teaching the easiest classes. She had lingering concerns. She wondered, “Everything I do is so Korean...What if my teaching method is not creative as the other American parents do? What if my class is boring?” (RSK-2348e). But all the other mothers were teaching, so, she mustered up the courage and first began teaching with gym class. Rachel said:

I guess my way of things works too. I had been trying to discard all my previous way of thinking of doing things. I had thought that I needed to learn to do everything the American way and so whenever my Korean habits emerged, I was always trying to minimize those habits. But it was impossible to completely unlearn all my previous way of living and I also couldn’t learn every single American way of life...I think I tried very much the way American friends did. So, um, to learn, I acted like my own ways didn’t exist, I thought I needed to learn the American way from the beginning. So, I just tried my best to prepare the lesson

plans [in American way from “my perspective”] and I focused to make learning fun. Pretty soon the parents were telling me how much their children enjoyed my classes. Their positive feedback brought tears to my eyes. (RSK-2350t)

To her surprise, there were children who enjoyed her class and parents who complimented her teaching. Rachel’s thinking began to change: The methods and thinking system she had from Korea was not worthless in America. She began to value herself.

***Finding her place to fit in.*** Rachel has known many friends who attend Korean church, enjoy Korean dining and other Korean activities, and are fulfilled by their lives in America. Rachel insisted that there is nothing wrong with this sort of lifestyle, however, that was not what she wanted for her own life. Even if only for her children, Rachel wanted to live as an actively contributing member of society. Her friends contribute to each other within the community and try to reach out to other communities as well. However, she wanted wider range of resources when raising her children. Dominant society, White society in her case, may be the best provider of those resources she thought. This was one of the biggest deciding factors for Rachel when she was contemplating homeschooling. Luckily, the children enjoyed homeschool and Rachel found fulfillment in learning, teaching, and becoming someone who could be needed by others. “I felt as if I was helping others really gave my life a sense of purpose” (RSK-313e), Rachel whispered.

As she becomes more confident in how she is doing, Rachel is less afraid to ask questions about differences in behavior and culture. She said:

In those sorts of circumstances, there are times that I am taken back. When we take their children out for dinner, when taking our friends’ children out to dinner, like when it comes to paying, we pay for all of them, but when they take our children out dinner and then they ask to bring \$2 for pizza money... (Laugh), but



now I'm used to it, uh, well, I think I've become accustomed to it. I'm really embarrassed when it seems so obvious they're going to buy it for you, but then asks for money, saying you pay for yours. But I've learned over time that if you ask them about it ahead of time, then it's okay. So now I always ask. Are you going to ask me to pay? I ask like that. If they say they want me to pay, I pay. If they say they're going to pay, I don't pay. In our country we don't ask [about money]. If we don't ask, and then there are times that backfires, which is bit stinks. So I always ask. Are you going to pay for this, do you want me to pay for this? (Laugh) At first though, there were many times I was taken aback by this. (RSK-19-1072)

Koreans are not at ease with "splitting the check" at a restaurant. There are unspoken rules for who pays when. Older people and people of higher rank usually pay for the whole group. It is a sort of face-saving behavior. If anyone suggests going out for a meal, it is considered an invitation, so he or she pays for the whole party. Hence, when Rachel takes her children and their friends out to dinner, it seems so obvious to her that she should pay for all the children.

As Rachel was getting comfortable with other parents, whom she labels "friends," she was able to ask such questions about money. For some people and some cultures, it would be appropriate to ask who is paying for the meal. However, for Korean, it would not be easy, if those parents are not in her in-group category. Gradually Rachel was feeling a sense of belonging. That was one of the most important aspects, which shapes her identity. The sense of belonging to a group and her commitment to the group was what Rachel yearned for.

***Formation of identity.*** Unlike other participants, Rachel expressed concern for identity more than any other issue. Rachel's concept of identity was not limited to a particular area but an integrated identity of role, social, personal, ethnic, and/or

immigrant. She wanted self-assurance as a good citizen. While homeschooling her children and teaching the co-op class, Rachel had gained the confidence she needed. She described this, saying:

Last semester I taught third and fourth grade sciences courses. And I seriously studied. I spent most of my time on studying except eating (laughs). When teaching about atoms, we don't teach strictly from a specific theory and textbook. For example, if we are learning about atoms, then I would research and find an appropriate video to show the children, and pick and choose other than textbook that many of the students would find interests and challenges. I also create lesson plans and do experiments...stuff like that. It was challenging, but still so much fun. (RSK-30-3118)

As a result, she was judged positively by the other homeschool parents, which she labeled as an in-group.

In group-based identity, there are agreed perceptions among group members (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994). They share values, beliefs, behavioral norms, attitudes, styles of speech and other categories that could classify grouping (Stets & Burke, 2000). Rachel is not quite sure if her styles of speech and behavioral norms fit right in every situation she faces. She still struggles with the language and “American way” of behavior. However, she is getting comfortable with her mistakes. She said, “Over time I became used to it, and I've also become more audacious about my mistakes (laughs). I think I worry less about what the person thinks of me or how they judge me” (RSK-4-1270c). She recognized that her mistakes, if she makes any, are trivial things.

Koreans like to discover links that establish social bonds (Hoare, 2006). Schools, university ties, hometowns, careers, religions, or anything that connects people or group create intimate relations. Rachel found these links with other homeschool families. Although there were many moments that she had to sweat while she went through

teaching or social encounters with other parents, she feels homeschooling was worthwhile for her and her family.

Maybe because she has settled so well into America now or maybe because California has diverse ethnic groups than New Jersey, Rachel does not find herself as tense as before. Having become more confident, Rachel's relationships with other American people have become a lot comfortable as well. Rachel also realized that Americans do not want everything done their way. Hearing positive comments regarding the co-op classes she taught, also provided the motivation she needed life worth living. She said:

And my friends also gave many encouraging words which I really appreciated. They were glad I was there; there was much that I contributed, it was very encouraging, and when we moved to California, my friends were sooo~so sad. My friends, there were friends who cried their eyes out, and so my husband was very surprised. He said he thought that we were people who were always in need of aid and a burden to others, but seeing how sad people were, he said that maybe we were useful in some way. (RSK-29-4114)

Even if she could have had a great career in Korea, Rachel is thankful for the time she is able to spend with her children, and through the experiences gained while living in the U.S., Rachel has matured as a global citizen. Rachel does wait for the day when her youngest daughter goes off to college and she can pursue the education she always wanted, but the life she leads now still brings her great joy.

### **Emilie**

Emilie had married an American man and so was attending an American church. A Korean friend of mine was also attending the same church. My friend had mentioned on several occasions that she had received wise advice from Emilie about living as a

Korean in America. Also, sometimes Emilie would take my friend to a Korean church after attending an American church in the morning. This was during the time period I was searching for participants in my study, and I thought Emilie could represent one of Koreans in the United States.

From what I was told about Emilie, I could gather that she had been through much difficulty living in the United States so that she could extract wisdom. She sounded like a promising candidate; however, since we had never met in person, I was concerned that requesting an interview to participate my study could be uncomfortable for her. Also she was living quite a distance from where I live. Still, I could not get Emilie out of my mind, and so I gathered the courage to make a request, and Emilie graciously accepted.

The first meeting was over lunch at a Vietnamese noodle restaurant. It was awkward at first, but throughout the meal we were able to discuss the purpose of my study and also share personal introductions. As we developed our conversation, I knew she was the right one for my study, but I was not sure for the method of second or third interviews. She was not comfortable using Skype or emails. But then, one of my family members, who was renting an apartment nearby Emilie's home, asked me if I could stay at her place since she was planning to be out of town for months. It was a perfect place and time to stay while I finish my dissertation. During that period, Emilie and I could exchange phone calls and enjoy visiting each other for coffee or tea. Given this, it would be possible to interview her a few more times.

I learned Emilie had one boy and one girl and that her husband's job was located far from where they resided. He would leave for work Sunday evening and return home on Thursday evenings. Every few years Emilie's husband also had to travel overseas for three to six months at a time. During the time we met, Emilie's husband was currently overseas. Emilie mentioned that when her husband was absent from home, she felt she needed to pay more attention to her children.

The topics she talked about most frequently were loneliness and the difference between two cultures: Korean and American. Unlike other participants, Emilie could experience constant cultural exchanges within a family. She could also observe how her children respond in a dual-culture context. She was fairly precise in describing differences in cultures and provided examples as well. Different from other participants, she doesn't have her side of family in the States at all. That made living in the United States particularly difficult. She was also felt something missing because her husband and her brothers could not have intimate relationship, because of language barriers and remote distance.

According to NVivo, culture-related topics were most frequently told among Emilie's interviews. However, there are things that NVivo is not able to perceive: emotion. Talking about loneliness, Emilie's tone of voice and countenance left a strong impact on me. Particularly when she talked about having her first child without her mother in the United States, it seems that she recalled the memory so vividly. Although the percentage shows loneliness as only one-fourth of culturally related topic, I would weigh both topics almost the same.

***America as Emilie's husband's country.*** When I asked Emilie what she wanted to do in America, she started a story about how she met her husband. Her husband was the first thing she could think of with the word America. After Emilie graduated college in Korea, she worked at the United States Army base for about fifteen years. At work, she had to speak English, and basically everyone she interacted with was American. Everyone she met at work seemed like the gentlemen she saw in movies. From that time, Emilie developed a positive impression about America. She said:

I liked American people. They seemed like good people even then. I saw many good things in Americans. It might be different these days. But in my mother's

generation [in Korea], husbands are in higher ranking and wives have to submit.

I think that's why I didn't want to marry Korean man. (EHP-1-2014)

Having worked together with Americans so long, Emilie had growing doubts about marrying a Korean man, who would have had an authoritarian mindset.

***Newlywed and homesick.*** Emilie and her husband began their newlywed life in Hawaii. Even though she had come to America just as she wanted to, Emilie did not find herself adjusting to life in America as quickly as she thought she would. She said:

The fantasies I first had about the U.S., those things are being broken little by little. In Korea, I would meet American people in the base, that is, I thought very highly of the U.S., oh! this country called America must live very well, freedom is guaranteed, of course it is like that even now, land of opportunity, and seeing American people they were ever the gentlemen. (EHP-1-1081)

Although she was very happy with her marriage, Emilie felt that she was missing something deep inside: "Feeling those things, fantasies and such things, many were broken about the United States, because my expectations weren't being fulfilled and... such fantasies disappeared, you know. It just happens while we live in the United States" (EHP-1-3029). It was even worse when her first child was born. Emilie found herself dearly missing her mother who was in Korea. After having a child, the custom in Korea is for the mother to help her daughter to overcoming the difficult stages of post-pregnancy. Typically in Korea, the mother would cook special soup and meal for her daughter after childbirth, and assist in other ways so that the new mother can recover comfortably.

Emilie longing for her family slowly unfolded. She described it, saying:

Raising the child all by myself, I really did feel lonely. I was lonely and thought of my [parents'] home a lot, my mother would have visited me, but my father's health was in really bad condition so she couldn't leave Korea... and I went through labor on my own... and... it was like that. I took care of my baby.

And...so, when living in Hawaii, yeah... all [women] get pregnant and raise children, but, because I'm a Korean, [missing] my homeland,...I came here because I liked America, I came to America because I wanted to, but as time passed, I just continue to [miss], my homeland, Korea, the country where I was born, I couldn't stop thinking about it, when I had my child and was raising him, I dearly missed my mother, and sometimes I would ask myself why I came here, I would have these thoughts a lot.... (EHP-8-1142)

After Emilie had her first child, she had to fend for herself. For Korean women, recovering stage from giving birth is one of the most peaceful periods of their lives. They do not have to anything but eat and relax. For Emilie, lying alone in bed, it was the most doleful.

***From an active instigator to a lonely mother.*** During this time, Emilie was faced with sad thoughts that her expectations of America were only fantasies: she had an infant, in what felt like a strange land, her husband was travelling for work, and she had no one to turn to. Neither the language nor the culture was foreign to her, and yet Emilie still felt so alone. She said:

I came here because I wanted to, I liked America...but as I live longer here, hometown, Korea, where I was born, I constantly thought about that...I missed my mother a lot and asked myself why I am here...yeah, I thought that often.

(EHP-1084e)

She felt out of place and uncomfortable, it was as if she was trying to live someone else's life.

She used to be an active woman in Korea. When I asked Emilie if she tried any social activities or learning activities in America, she said she was not motivated to do other stuff like she did in Korea and she described herself, stating:

Oh, when I was in Korea, um, I tried everything. This, that, this, that, even if I wasn't any good at it, I tried anything [learning] possible and I enjoyed it, then...after I had a child [in America], and trying to adjust to American life, I don't know if it was stress or what, but I just didn't have the motivation to do any other stuff, I just didn't have a desire. (EHP-15-1076)

She was also an instigator and a leader among her friends. She used to gather a crowd wherever she went so there were always friends around her. But, here in the United States, she was always alone. This is not the life she had pictured before she came to America.

***Surviving in a dual-culture context.*** In order to help with her loneliness, Emilie went in search of a Korean church. She would attend an American church in the morning and then go to a Korean church in the afternoon. She described this, saying:

Also since I am Korean, in order to fellowship with other Koreans, even though I was able to fellowship and understand English at an American church, it wasn't enough. I enjoyed going to American churches and fellowshiping with other Americans, but I realized that there was something deep inside, something unexplainable, that I couldn't share. And I so I went separately to a Korean church, I went alone. (EHP-12-2092)

Many small Korean churches in the States share a Korean meal following the service. Emilie enjoyed the Korean meals shared at church. As Emilie began settling into attending a Korean church and enjoying the Korean food afterwards, her husband got transferred to California.

Unlike other participants, Emilie didn't have struggle with associating with Americans. For many years, Emilie worked with Americans and now she lives with an American husband. She has had constant contact with American culture for more than half of her life. She understands both cultures quite well and suggests:



Koreans are sensitive on how you are treated at a new place [church]. When I come [to a new church] as a Korean, then to American, I seem like a guest. So then, there is an expectation to be treated better, with more attention. We Koreans hope that someone would come over and at least say one word of welcoming you, but these [American] people don't do such a thing. It's not because they look down on you, rather it means "help yourself" [for coffee or such a thing]. (EHP-11-1081)

The way people treat guests differs by culture. How a guest should behave at a new place is different by culture as well. For Koreans, a guest should stay still and let the host do everything for her. The same rules apply when Koreans go to a new church. Newcomers stay quiet and existing church members should come to ask questions and bring her drinks or snacks. That is somewhat different from American culture. When American people come to a Korean church, they may think Koreans are annoying, and when Koreans go to American church, they may think Americans are not as nice as they thought. Emilie added:

We went to an America church yesterday, and there was some sort of break time before the actual service started, and people were gathered to drink coffee and eat breakfast. Then, this doesn't work for first timers [for Koreans]. Like, you can't just go to someone else's home that you don't know well and just start drinking or eating. Someone needs to come over, and say "please come and eat this" or "please sit here with us," we Koreans are like that. They take care of you, saying come on, eat up, and only then we are able to cautiously agree to join, but for Americans this is definitely not the case. We also have to understand other people. At American church, you can come over and eat up...um, no one's going to stop you. That's the way it is. And you just have to go over yourself and pour yourself a drink or grab some food. That's what I'm very used to, now that's, if

Koreans weren't like that, no Korean would be able to become accustomed at an American church. If that's the way it was. Then it would like, "Hi, How are you?" "Hi!" You would share some chit chat, grab a bite to eat, ask: how did you find our church?, and then you say like, li-, um, you came to see if you would like or not the church, and laugh and joke a little, and then to wrap things up they would ask how liked everything and you respond, Um, maybe I'll try again. Good, good. And that's it. (EHP-11-2262)

Emilie understood the differences and knew how to respond to American culture. She didn't have problems with Americans. But, still, Emilie wanted to have relationships with Koreans. She said:

For us, Koreans, something needs to remain, linger, there needs to be lingering, um, oh well, I adjust but there's nothing I can do because I'm Korean... Even if I live here for twenty, thirty years, my thoughts as a Korean, even if everything fades away, even if it fades away, I must be Korean. I can't do anything about it. Yeah, I am Korean. (EHP-20-4075)

Emilie slowly recited the last part several times, as if reminding herself that she is Korean.

***Repeated transfer.*** Emilie knew what it means to start over again. She didn't want to do it. In Hawaii, Emilie was finally beginning to develop intimate relationships with other people and settling into her life after some time and experiencing many challenges. Finding a church she truly liked was not an easy task. Even if she found a church she liked, getting to know new people and developing new relationships was even harder. She said:

I once left our country...um, America, it's the same U.S.A., but the mainland and Hawaii are so different. I had to readjust when I came to the mainland. I had my son, then my husband, again, several months each time, 3 months or 6 months at

a time, would leave and then I would have to take our son all by myself...this is not what I have imagined at all. Really, all by myself.... (EHP-8-2075)

At times approaching new people was not so difficult, but at other times, trying to be the first to introduce her was very challenging. As she put it:

Whenever I went somewhere [church] for the first time, [God] made me start all over again. I know them all [doctrine] but I had to take [new believer's] class. To be honest, that it drove me crazy. (Laughs) Yeah, Americans don't do that.

Koreans... especially Koreans, it would be better if we can neglect each other, but we can't do that. I have to go to Korean stores, Korean markets, we have to get our own food, and so with Koreans, then we encounter each other, and we also have to see them at church, now whenever I go to a Korean church I don't sign up for anything. I can't do it. (EHP-27-4130)

She sometimes felt she was ignored or slighted. But she didn't want to explain her background each and every time she was ignored. In fact, the hardest thing for her was the loneliness.

Like Bonnie and Leah, Emilie has trouble finding the Korean 'in-group' they all want. Traits and types of Koreans are more diverse in the States. They could be more or less Americanized or could speak good or not-so-good English. Depending on how long they have been in the States, Koreans in the United States could be relatively different from each other in culture and lifestyle. From a small Korean population, it is not easy to find people alike to share life together. As Mathews (2000) said, "Culture has become a problem in today's world...Anthropologists have traditionally defined culture as 'the way of life of a people'...But do such labels, in today's world of global flows and interactions, really make any sense?" (Kindle Location 119). He stated that the contemporary concept of culture as "the global cultural supermarket" (Kindle Location 64) culture. This is more true in larger cities. Koreans who settled in Los Angeles or New York City may

experience different acculturation and end results from those who settled in a small town in Pennsylvania. Hence, when Emilie moved, she had to adjust to the American culture and Korean culture of that particular town even within the United States.

***Integrating two cultures.*** Besides adjusting with other Koreans, Emilie had to adjust with her American husband as well. Koreans are typically group oriented. They want to do things together. And so when a Korean eats or drinks, it is very common to bring food or drink for the whole group or party, even though she was not asked to do so. She just wanted to eat and drink together. Especially when it comes to a family, they definitely share foods and drinks. As Emilie described it, “Koreans have this thing, um, even if you don’t say what you want, they still know what you like. They do things for you and they like, like go out of their way for you. Having to say what I want every time repeatedly is like a pain in the neck” (EHP-17-3023). However, Emilie experiences that whenever her husband drinks coffee, she has to tell him she wants it too.

When we share same culture, there are unspoken things we naturally understand. Emily expanded on this, saying:

It is very tiring to have to report every single little detail... My husband and I are like that. Why doesn’t he notice? That really hurts me, and then I get upset by myself. If I’ve already said this much then he should just know to, I did everything for him without him asking me to, and so if I hint at him, he should already know, oh gosh!... There are times when I get all emotional over that sort of thing, wondering why he does not get clue from my reaction. (EHP-16-3174)

In general, she claimed, “Americans do not have those clues. They say you do it yourself, and think [bringing food or drink without being asked] is interference about other people. They think it is an infringement of privacy” (EHP-22-3036). She added:

However, I thought that with the culture I brought from Korea and the worldview I have and this mentality, especially since [my husband] is a Christian and we

believe in the same God, I thought that would make us compatible. Even if the culture is a little different, if we just believe in God... But that is not the case. It's so different. (EHP-24-2066)

In the meantime, Emilie learned wise ways to respond to those situations spontaneously.

***Letting the past go.*** To survive in the States, she decided to let the past go.

She explained:

In Korea, I used to be independent and live however I pleased, and then I came here, and you've been to other places too. When you go to a new place and try to meet new people, it doesn't just happen on its own. You have to make sacrifices and swallow your pride; I really hated to do that. (EHP-9-4058)

But, as time goes by, she learned that she needs to release the past. The past of being surround by people, being an unofficial leader of social gathering, being the center of attention of friends and family, these are all gone. She continued:

Living like that [alone], I am much more at peace now. I let it all...go, some things, stuff, I just let go, and now I am free. Even if someone thinks of me as a weird person, it is okay, really it's totally fine. (EHP-31-1041)

Again, Emilie had settled in California. She had made new friends, had a second child, bought a home, and recited: "It is good for us to be here." Then her husband got transferred again. This time it was overseas. She wished her husband was joking. By this point, Emilie hated even thinking about having to start over. She said: "I left Korea, left Hawaii, and that's enough! I didn't want to leave again. No more!" But Emilie had no choice but to follow her husband. She knew that it would not be easy but she also knew that great wisdom will be awarded when she endures.

When I met Emilie, it had been about a year and a half since she and her family had moved back to the United States. Emilie admitted that she was still in an "adjustment phase" and still finding a place to fit her in. Although she did have

experiences of having adjusted to diverse places, it will never be easy to become used to a new place.

***Feels at home.*** In the eight years she spent overseas, Emilie's impression about America has changed. She realized that there was no other country in the world which allowed its people to live so comfortably. She explained:

As we travelled around, especially since we left Korea and as we moved around, we experienced multi-culture...no matter what country it is, I'm happy to see it, I enjoy it, I'm curious about it, and also it's similar to myself since we've all come from another culture, and I'm able to find these similarities and share about them... and even though white people have this superior mindset, they are also, um, very open. America is where people who come from other countries and speak at least even a little bit of English can adapt most easily (EHP-14-1098).

She was so relieved when she came back to the States. In the past, America was her husband's country. Although she chose to live in the United States, it was her husband's home. Emilie thought she could not move back to Korea because of her husband and her children. Now, even if she could go back, she does not really care to. She said:

Before, even though I was physically in the States, my heart would be always in Korea. My heart...my parents were there, and we would always talk on the phone, like call back and forth, and they would always send packages and stuff. But, like, this time I went [after my parents passed away], my heart was settled... and I returned knowing that I don't have to...um, I came back at peace. (EHP-15-2076)

Emilie knows that she is not the same person she used to be; neither is Korea the country it once was.

Emilie believes she has what it takes to settle and live in America for a long time. She said:

It's not because I don't like Korea, I am a U.S. citizen, [although I am] not an American, I'm not full white, but ah, and I live knowing exactly where I am headed to, so I'm very happy. I'm thankful and very happy. (EHP-32-2048)

It would be hard if she still looked for chances to visit Korea, but Emilie knows that she has to work hard with what she's got and raise her children well in the United States. Now she really feels at home.

## **Chapter Five: Developmental Phases of Immigrants' Lives**

In Chapter Four, the biographical stories of four participants were presented. The storied narratives of these individuals revealed the participants' unique experiences in a multi-cultural context and how they negotiated the situation. Participants illustrated similarities and differences from each other in what they did to make their desired identity to fit with situation and/or how they readjusted to the circumstances to make it fit. Examining the stories by themes and consequences, one collective representative of the acculturation process stands out. This chapter integrates all participants' stories and presents one complete synthesized acculturation life history.

### **Coming to the United States**

Whether the participants came as a part of the third wave or had recently immigrated, they all came with vision and tension. They had dreamed of abundant life and had been anxious about the new world. Also the participants were all involved with Korean society as their first contact group. They set off their lives in America based on this Korean society. As they were setting up new lives, their struggles had begun as well. These women felt isolated and incompetent. They did not like to be called immigrant or minority. While they navigate their identity, the participants reconstructed it according to their social status rather than ethnic minority.

### **Vision and Tension**

All participants recalled that they came to the United States with fantasies and fears. From the first immigrant Leah to the latest Rachel, they all appreciated the open door to the United States, but at the same time, they were afraid about their uncertain future. Leah, Bonnie, and Emilie said America represented the land of opportunity. The word 'opportunity' meant a lot to them. It was opportunities for living wealthy,



successful, comfortable, and 'ladies-first' lives. Leah's concept of the American dream was an abundant and generous life. When Leah immigrated to the United States, life in Korea was not plentiful, because it was still a developing country. Emilie chose to marry an American man because of the authoritarian manner of Korean men. Bonnie wanted to learn English, which would make her more marketable in Korea. They all had dreams and plans for the lives in the United States.

On the other hand, they expressed fear of coming to a foreign country. Either coming alone or coming with a family, they expressed fear and concern for the future. Leah especially gave a detailed description of how she felt in the airplane and at the airports where she had to stop. She took Northwest Airlines and made stops at Seattle and Minneapolis. Leah felt the trip was endless, so she kept praying and comfort herself by saying "it will be okay." Leah, as a young woman, had to gather up her courage to face an unknown world. Rachel also had heavy feelings. She felt the responsibility for her three young children's future and education.

### **First In-Group**

All participants claimed that their first contact groups were Koreans. From the moment of arrival at the airport, immigrants need help in transportation, lodging, and getting basic commodities. In general, Koreans search for connections and make arrangement for transportation and housing before they come to the United States. Emilie was different in this case. Her husband's company took care of all these things, so she didn't have to worry about finding a home and other responsibilities. Besides Emilie, all other participants needed help to start their new lives in the United States.

Leah had her friend's father to get her from the airport and she ended up staying at her friend's parents' apartment for six months. Rachel searched the Korean Yellow Pages and found a Korean realtor to help them look for their first home in New Jersey. In

Bonnie's case, her husband's college friend helped him settled in the United States. Helping a new immigrant to settle may include many tasks: getting a home, hooking up utilities, banking, buying a car, or even finding a job. Some new immigrants with proficient English can take care of these matters by themselves, but that is a rare case. In most cases, immigrants needed help to settle down in a new place. It could be friends, relatives, church members, or some Koreans they've never met before. As immigrants give and receive help, they build a unique relationship.

Helping and being helped is not always a pleasant process. Sometimes it creates tensions. Old-timer and newcomer may have different views and knowledge since old-timers are already adjusted to the United States in many ways. Bonnie's story, especially, narrates conflict between old-timers and newcomer. She was troubled by her church small group members, who came to America almost 10 years before she came. From Bonnie's point of view, they looked so Americanized. A young Korean couple living next door to Bonnie troubled her as well. It seemed the couple enjoyed America fairly well, while Bonnie was lonely and isolated.

Emilie said she neither had problems gathering or communicating with Americans nor had to search for Koreans to help her get settled. Attending an American church was fine. Relationships with her in-laws were pleasant. Still, she yearned for a small group of Korean friends to share her life. Every so often, Emilie had to take the initiative in forming a Korean in-group. It took time and effort to make that happen.

For these participants, identity theory explains why they form a Korean in-group. According to Stets and Burke (2000), a "social group is a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category" (p. 225). Leah and other women needed a group they feel sense of belonging and share same language and culture. As Kim and Miriam (2010) stated in their study, Koreans usually don't ask questions directly to the person but neighboring peers. Bonnie

and Rachel narrated the experiences of embarrassing moments, because they could not ask questions—especially when it was about money. They can only ask this type of question to close friends. Hence, they all needed a group to support each other, even though they were not always happy with them. A Korean in-group worked as a place of social, learning, and sharing new experiences.

### **Identity Challenge**

While each of the participants reduced initial tensions with the Korean in-group, they faced another issue. They tried to explore their competency, which would make them unique and valuable. Bonnie felt she was worthless, and Rachel's self-esteem dropped. What had been valued before was not worthy in the United States. They didn't speak fluent English, no one recognized their academic background, and their licenses as a nurse or teacher were not accepted. As identity theorists asserted, people find their identity from many aspects of life such as social roles, social relations, networks, social structure, culture, or religion. For Koreans, educational background and social status play a very important role in shaping one's identity. These participants strived to find their identity in a foreign country based on their homeland background.

Leah struggled when she had to work at a nursing home and felt that what she did there was not a respected job. She was a career woman in Korea with a nursing license. In the States, her career was gone; she was just a working woman. When Leah came to the United States, becoming a registered nurse was already in her plan. In spite of that, the process was bitter. Bonnie narrated a similar story. She was a high school teacher in Korea. When she got her Green Card, the first job she found was as a preschool teacher's aide. Rachel was distressed with the fact that she will be called as an immigrant or minority for the rest of her life. Each felt that she had lost her identity as elite and professional.

### **Seeking Upward Mobility**

For Koreans, it was believed that educational attainment guarantees entrance to the higher ranks of society (Hoare, 2002; Min, 2002, 2006). The emphasis on education is still deeply rooted in Korean culture. Consequently social stature from higher education is symbol of virtue and elite status. It is so natural to relate academic background and social status to identity. But their degree and experiences were not accepted in the United States. They had to give up their educational background and social status. Therefore, all of the participants considered pursuing higher education or institutional studies to raise their social class.

### **Relinquishing the Past**

When participants came to the United States, they anticipated having an equivalent social class to what they had in Korea. Leah was a registered nurse, Bonnie was a high school teacher, Rachel was English instructor, and Emilie worked at a U.S. Army base, which required certain skills. They were all in elite group. Even though the participants agreed with the fact that they have language limitations, they wanted to keep their social status. However, their licenses, degrees, skills, and work experiences were not acknowledged in the United States.

Accordingly, the participants surrendered previous education. As an alternative, they made every effort to get replacements. Leah took an examination to be a registered nurse and went back to college for a nursing degree. While she was a full-time student, Leah also worked full-time to support herself. She was not involved in student activities; she just studied and worked. Although it was her choice, her college life was lonely. Bonnie went back to school to get a practical nurse license. Unlike Leah, Bonnie did all she could do to be involved with other students. The result wasn't very pleasant. Bonnie described herself as an "outsider" because she never felt as a part of student body. Rachel

geared up for the GRE. Rachel's preparation for the GRE was not an institutional study; rather it was a type of self-directed study. But, in the meantime, she had to give up going to graduate school. Rachel decide to postpone her own return to school until her children get little older; instead, she began homeschooling her children.

These pursuits were a reiteration of what they did in Korea. Moreover, Bonnie's nursing school was not even a degree program but a certification. This is an important issue to Koreans who highly value academic degrees. Also these were painful processes. They had to give up their past experiences and academic credentials. To some degree, Leah and Bonnie were isolated from colleagues. Rachel had to go through elementary school textbooks for her children. The covered materials were of a lower grade level, but she struggled to review them because of English. Yet, the participants took these as opportunities to learn language, America, and its culture. They were rather positive and anticipated a bright future.

### **Attempting to Achieve**

For all the participants, this phase reveals the heart of acculturation. Up to this point, their acculturation processes were similar. They had anticipated American life; joined a Korean in-group as their home ground; and struggled with their identities, language, loneliness, and social status. The participants also relinquished past careers and prepared themselves to evolve with their dream. They had been through comparable experiences. However, their dream and purpose for the coming to the United States are different. Consequently, how they cope with the goal and situation are different as well.

Leah, as a part of the third wave, came to the United States wanting to a live cozy and comfortable life. She wanted to be rich and famous, so she could invite her family to the United States. Leah started off her American life about 20 years earlier than other participants. Among all the participants, Leah had the most challenging acculturation

experiences. When she arrived in America, she was alone and had only \$650 in her pocket. She had to work hard to support herself and make her dream come true.

When she worked as a waitress, there were some awkward situations. She was often asked out on a date. American men seemed so gentle and nice looking, but Leah considered that as a temptation she had to overcome. She said:

Um, because America is open society, they were very direct when asking. You know, we don't do that in Korea, we don't go out with guys unless you are going to marry him. We are very selective. But this society is different. I had to manage those things well. As a lonely young woman, you have to be careful. I saw a big possibilities it could go wrong. If things get any worse...you never know. It is easy to go wrong. (3233e)

I asked her how she responded. She said: "I just kept saying 'I am not interested in you.' That's all I could do" (3237e).

Leah said she did her best to keep away from all those temptations that she would not face if she was in Korea. Either saying yes or no, Leah was afraid. She was afraid of being asked, afraid of accepting the offer, and afraid of rejecting the offer. "But I knew I had to take care of myself. There was no one to look after me in the United States," she said. However, she comforted herself by getting relatively more tips than other waitresses. Leah recalled:

I think they liked me. I tried to be nice and kind...and I was nimble on my feet...I was young so I could remember things better by then (laugh)...um, when I made a mistake, I was very quick to apologize and brought them a new plate. I think I was good at reading people's mood. (3248e)

Leah enjoyed counting tips every night. She saved them to buy a car. She was desperate for a car, since she had two jobs at that time and public transportation consumed too much of her time. Besides her work, Leah was preparing to take the examination for her

nursing license. Leah occupied herself by saving money and studying for the exam; she wasn't interested in anything else.

After she got the license, she continued to study at a university. But this time, she got paid a lot more than the waitress job, and the studying was for a degree. She felt she had moved up to a higher level. However, temptation had moved up to a higher level as well. While she worked at a hospital, she often went out with co-workers after work. She described this temptation, saying:

I used to go out with them often. But later, I decided not to. Well, I don't fit in their culture. We went to like nightclub places, they smoke pot. I didn't know what that was. I just went out with them. They passed it around so I said "pass." I felt peer pressure but I still said "pass." Since then, they kept me out of the group. I didn't care. I stopped going out with them. (8108e)

Leah focused on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. She had to take care of herself. There was no one to turn to. She also felt responsibility for her family. Leah was not the oldest among her siblings, but still she kept thinking that she had to take care of her mother. Leah's father passed away when she was little. Her mother had to take care of the whole family. So from the young age, she has very strong sense of self-help:

I didn't have friends at school, no friends at work, and no Koreans in town... There were older Koreans at church but I was not close with them. There were only a couple of young people...I related with. I think I was the only Korean at school and work. Indeed, I didn't have time to relate with others. I think all Koreans are like that. They are not active in student association because they need to work too...work, study, and they have to study hard to cover the lack of language skill. (72816e)

Leah thought that joining student activities would take up energy equivalent to having another job for Koreans who do not originally belong to this society. She didn't

have energy left over for those activities. This is a little different from Bonnie and Rachel. Bonnie had dreamed of being career woman and sharing social life with Americans. While she was attending nursing school, she made every effort to be friends with Americans in the class. Unlike Leah, Bonnie put much energy into social relationships with Americans. So “no matter what, I was ready to accept [their way]. Here [in America], I yielded to everything, my think had become: let’s do everything their way.” (42031t) Bonnie did whatever she needed to do to be a part of the social circle.

From work and school, she never missed any type of engagements: seasonal parties, birthday parties, or just social gathering. She said, “It was uncomfortable. And I didn’t want to go...I wanted to contribute to the conversation so badly, but I couldn’t do it right. But I still never missed it. I always went.” (811078t) Sometimes they did not invite her. She understood they didn’t do that on purpose. After an awkward moment, she asked if she could come. When she was lucky enough, one of the co-workers or classmates became aware that she was not included. Then Bonnie could be included. That really hurt Bonnie’s self-respect. She just accepted the fact because this is their land, and she was living there as an immigrant. She was thinking that she had to overcome with those things.

What Bonnie pursued in America was a little different from Leah. To Leah, America was a financial base. Working hard for a comfortable life was the primary area where Leah put her energy. On the other hand, America appears to be a multicultural, international society to Bonnie. She was motivated to meet people, make friends with Americans, learn their culture, introduce Korean culture, and ultimately become one of the best friends. When she lived in America the first time, she didn’t make any American friends. She believed it was because lack of her English skills and misunderstanding of American culture. Now, [she thought] she knew the culture and spoke better English, so she thought it was worth trying.



Bonnie's intention was not neglecting Korean society. Bonnie's two children are fluently bilingual. They speak Korean at home. They eat Korean food, watch Korean TV program, and listen to Korean songs. While Bonnie and her husband attend an American church, their children attend a Korean church. She could not get away from Korean society. Rather, she wanted to live totally integrated life of dual culture. Bonnie thought she could manage the multi-cultural setting. She knows Asian culture, experienced European culture while she lived in Germany, and lived in the United States more than ten years. She struggled to be involved and be a part of the White society at school, work, and church.

Moreover, Rachel meant to be an influential person for the community she belongs to. She tried to be an exemplary citizen, not an "immigrant" titled minority. She gave up going to Korean church, started attending an American church, and tried the American way whatever that was. She said:

"Since I attended a Korean church and even though I was living in America, I had never had a job here or anything like that, so the only people I interacted with were Korean, and that didn't help me at all in trying to adjust to living in America...um, When I attended a Korean church, instead of being a competent individual, I always felt like I was someone who needed other people's help.

(103027t)

Rachel always felt like a dependent of America. "It was hard to live by my own values," she said.

Rachel believed that taking advantage of America as an immigrant was shameful: I think [we should] work diligently, pay taxes, so as a communal immigrants group, we should not take free benefits. I want to become more responsible immigrant. I would rather put my energy to seeking a way to contribute to society. (21140t)

Koreans Rachel meets in America eat Korean food, speak in Korean, talk about Korean stuff, and did not show interest in American politics. As an immigrant, Rachel thought that was not a good attitude towards America. Because immigrants are not visitors, they have same responsibility to keep America a good country, Rachel thinks.

Rachel made desperate effort to be a member of society. It was more than having a relationship with White people like Bonnie did. Rachel tried to be like Americans:

We had a swimming pool at our house. And when we invited our friends over for the first time, I wasn't sure how to be a proper hostess for my friends and my children's friends, in an American way, I just wasn't sure. So I really wanted to be invited over to someone's home, I wanted to see how other children had "pool parties" so I knew what to do with American people, but I never got the chance so I just tried my best on my own. (2961.42t)

Until at some point, Rachel wasn't doing thing in her own way but imitating the American way so that Americans would accept her as their friend.

Hence, when Rachel was able to teach at co-op and had been praised for her work, she was deeply touched to tears. She said:

Homeschooling was a greater success than she had expected. By doing homeschooling, my whole life in America became richer. I made many friends and learned more about America. I studied with my children so I learned world history, science, and much other stuff. Just comparing the amount I studied, it may exceed doctorate (laugh). I feel like I restored confidence. (1721e)

She worked and studied hard for her children, other children at co-op, and for herself. She agreed that everybody may have a different standpoint of acculturation. From Rachel's point of view, this was a right way of acculturation.

Rachel and Bonnie are similar in what they wanted to accomplish in America. The subtle difference between them is in the community where they feel more

comfortable. Bonnie's primary field was Korean society, and Rachel's major concern was to be involved and make contribution to White society. Rachel wanted to keep connection with Korean community, but it was a big deal to her. Her children speak English at home. She tried to keep up Korean language, but did not push her children on that issue. Rachel was proud of being a representative of Korea, but she also struggle to assimilate to mainstream society.

Just like other participants, Emilie liked to live in the United States. She wanted to live an American-style life. She said, "I liked America, no one interferes. I don't worry about what others say about me, speak my opinion with confidence, yes, it was good." Her outlook on American life was free of style. Nobody cares what others do or how they live. Contributing to society, socializing with Americans, or achieving American dream were not the major purpose of life Emilie dreamed in the United States. Just living in the United States would have made her happy, she thought.

However, unlike other participants, Emilie did not sweat to be a part of American society. Through her American husband, she already developed social connections with Americans. Rather, she wanted to socialize with Koreans so she can share her emotional stress as an immigrant with them. However, it wasn't as easy as she thought. Due to the nature of her husband's job, Emilie moved around quite often. When she was about to adjust to the new place and had made some close friends, they had to move. That was the most difficult concern to Emilie. Every time she made move to a new place, Emilie sought to find Korean church, Korean grocery, and Korean restaurants. She also struggled with a prejudice against international marriage, which older generation Koreans may have. Unlike other participants, Emilie was adjusting to Korean community.

All of the participants went through different acculturation process depending on the purpose of living in the United States. It is somewhat related with the time period

when they moved to the United States and their reason for coming. From the 70s to recent days, the national power and economic status of Korea had been significantly changed. Consequently, Leah and Rachel came to the United States with a completely different outlook on America. Their acculturative purpose, approach, course, and outcome are thus, different. Their time of coming to the United States and the first town where they settled may have affected their lives in the United States. That is unpredictable.

Although they all strive by their own distinct path, their conclusion has one common theme. They all say that there are limitations that immigrants can't help. They realized that this is something they cannot get over. They tried to be like American as best as they can but still, they see the differences. Emilie said, "It is like parallel lines." When the participants had social gatherings, Bible studies, or any type of meeting, they prepare what to say and how to act. However, when they need to respond spontaneously, they felt they were doing it in a very "Korean way." They had more difficulties in some particular areas. I see that as culturally biased behavior.

### **Understanding Culturally Biased Behavior**

The participants narrated some funny situations that occurred because lack of understanding the culture. They talked about two issues the most: splitting the check at a restaurant and using tricks and shortcuts. However, since Leah came as a single young woman, she had unique experience the other participants didn't. Leah was embarrassed when she was asked out by the customer at the restaurant where she worked. Looking back those situations, Leah feels she responded very strangely. In Korea, especially for her generation, just being asked out by a man could be considered as a bad conduct. If she was familiar with the American culture and the language, she wouldn't have had to be that scared. But, she said, she would do the same if she were asked out now Leah said:

Although you live here for 30 or 40 years and be Americanized, there are things you cannot do because you are Korean. You have values as Korean, you are educated as Korean, so there are things that won't change even if you live here longer. (31-4070e)

Bonnie's experience was a little different. She said:

For me, the cultural difference was a barrier at my work, there was nothing beneficial about it. Korean culture is to not ask... You know in Korea, they hold it all back. Isn't that so? When the supervisor makes me do a job unfairly, I refrain from complaining or ask him back why? So basically I did the same here... And also in Korea, you wait until someone tells you to leave at work. But here, no one tells you to leave or stay. (18-2097)

In spite of the fact that Bonnie worked based on hourly pay, she always hesitated to leave right on time.

Another thing that irritates Bonnie is regarding money. She described it this way: We don't ask about money or specific amounts. So I couldn't ask about that. When we go out for lunch or something, we don't split check in Korea. You know what I mean? When [my American friends and my] go out to eat, it is different. No one intend to pay the check when we are done eating, and then I can't stand for that odd moment. Maybe, I am the only one feels gaucheness... So even though I didn't invite them, I grab the check and pay for the whole party. That happened about three times in a row...and I thought there must be something wrong with these people or myself (BSL-18-1055).

When they asked her for lunch after those incidents, she wasn't sure if she really wanted to join them or not. She said, "If I did talk about the issue, it would have been so much better. How do I ask? I have difficulty to ask... but, here the culture is to ask. In our

culture, we can't ask, so I think there were many times when I was hesitant." (BSL-18-1055)

Bonnie understands that they didn't mean to take advantage of her. She insisted that they were very nice people. Regardless of that, she could not talk about money or ask to split the check. Rachel had similar experiences. She said "Americans are very precise when it comes to money even with siblings." (RSK-22-2008) Then she gave numerous examples of her friends and families including her own. Rachel used to be stunned when she was asked for two or three dollars for her daughter's pizza from her friends. Rachel already bought their daughter dinner a few times. She still buys her friends' children meals when she take them out, however she always make sure if her children need to bring money or not when she send them to their friends home. Because of these differences, Rachel said: "There are people say that they can't be intimate friends with Americans no matter how much time they spend together" (21-1028). The sense of being friends seems to be different by the culture. One of the ways Koreans find friendship is by treating each other and taking turns.

Hoare (2010) describes his observation as: "Koreans generally do not like the Western custom of 'eating together and paying separately.' The best way to repay hospitality is to invite your Korean friends to dinner after you have been entertained a couple of times" (p. 93). However, "who pays when" is not clear to outsiders. Drake (2008) puts it this way:

Sooner or later you have to buckle down and learn the rules. Then the problem becomes that the people around you who know all the rules, especially the unspoken rules, are generally not capable of articulating them - hence their name. Sometimes you have to be pretty creative to extract basic critical information on why it is important that things be done a certain way at one time and not at another. (Kindle Location 2631)

Rachel also talked about playing games with American friends:

My husband and I would be better at games. My friends, when playing games, they can't think outside the box, my American friends can't. So whenever we play games together, we always win. My husband and I (laugh). I wonder why they don't know [short cut] or they don't go that way. Maybe [my husband and I] try pretty tricks (laugh). Like this, if you do it like this, it would be much faster, but I wonder why they can't figure that out. I wonder about that a lot (RSK-18-1048).

Leah and Bonnie also talked about taking shortcuts and being sloppy. Leah said:

I think there are advantages and disadvantages for methods, Korean way and American way. The advantage [for Korean] is speed, everything is fast, decisions are made quickly, Koreans accomplish faster. Sometimes that is very helpful. Americans do things step-by-step, being slow is normal, but when there are a lot to do, it's actually better to take one step at a time, even though it's slower, less mistakes...um, I think their way is better in the long run... I think Koreans are good at skipping the process in between from step one to step three and they just jump up the pass. They do mental calculation so they jump steps (LH-19-2197).

Leah reiterated that Koreans are quick and nimble so they may not be seen reliable. On the other hand, the American way of doing things may seem to lack versatility. Leah repeatedly said that both have advantages and disadvantages.

Emilie also talked about taking shortcuts, saying:

For me, when I look at it closely I think all you have to do is this and this, but for him, he always has to do everything step-by-step and by the law, and so it takes like a, a week, for me it would be only a day, what would take me a day takes him a whole week to do. I've already figured out the shortest way, but he insists on doing everything formally, step-by-step so we're also different in that way.

(EHP-18-2088)

Emilie consented that, in the long run, her husband's way of doing things would be better. Eventually she follows her husband's way still thinking that his ways are rigid and inflexible for a simple task.

Emilie then talked about directness in saying things. She said:

When my Korean friends visited us, they parked their cars at our neighbor's curbside. If it was a Korean husband, they would just let things go, they would just forget about it and get over with it, but my husband needs to say what he wants to say. "No, no, no, no, I am sorry, I am sorry..." and he tells them directly to move over to another spot, to our guests, and then I feel bad, "oh my goodness"... and after they leave I nag my husband a bit. He asks me isn't it wrong? It is someone else's property so why would they park there. Regardless of what other people think, he has to say what he wants to say. I felt so bad when he told them to move and park in another spot way down there. (EHP-17-2151)

Emilie feels the differences constantly in daily life. She said:

There are times when I feel a barrier between my husband and myself, uh, of course he's a believer and we've lived together this way for fifteen years, but still, ah, well, well, it's different, well, it's different. The way we think is very different. (EHP-22-2121b)

It seems that she was amazed and a bit disappointed by unpredicted differences. She said, "So then... so then, there are unspoken things we do. It's very tiring to have to report every single little detail." I asked Emilie how, in particular, she has to be in asking or explaining to her husband. She said:

I have to tell him every single detail, every time. For an example, I love coffee. He knows that I love coffee. I never say no to coffee. He knows that. But whenever he makes coffee, I have to tell him I want a cup of coffee, too. Otherwise, he just makes one cup for him. If I ask, he goes again and makes one more cup. There is



no problem with that. But I think why he does not make two cups from the beginning. He knows I love coffee and I always ask him to make one more cup for me if he makes only one cup... This is just one of the examples I can think of now...he is always like that. (EHP-17-4032e)

Emilie was wondering how two Christians with same beliefs and same values can be such a different people. Then she added:

There's isn't a term for "*nunchi*" in English, is there? There probably isn't. Maybe "social clue?" but that doesn't explain it. "No", there isn't, there isn't a word for "*nunchi*" Ah... Also the people of our country have a tendency to "over-sense" things...because they have too much "*nunchi*" (Laugh). They create their own misunderstandings and become sad all on their own. While the other party doesn't even notice what is going on here so he is absolutely fine. My husband and I are like that. Even though I don't have to be worried about it, I still do, and wonder why doesn't he notice? I think that [about him], and then I get upset by myself. If I've already said this much then he should just know to, I did everything for him without him asking me to, and so if I hint at him he should already know, oh gosh!... There are times when I get all emotional over that sort of things, wondering why he is like that. (EHP-16-3174)

Emilie's tone of voice was a little high and fast. She concluded there is no answer to this. She compared our lives to parallel lines. People from different cultures walk on each side of parallel lines; we can never meet at any point. We have to take in as a fact and adjust every moment to each other. Emilie's cross-cultural experience could be different from other women. She experiences these differences more at home while other women experience more differences outside of their homes.

These women tried their best to conduct in this foreign country based on their common knowledge. They also claimed that they do not remember any notable racism.

Leah said:

More so than race, competency. I think that was more important. For example, when I was working in ICU in Miami, there were times when I felt that a little bit. Because the nurses in ICU need to be “sharp” and I first went into ICU when receiving training and almost everyone there were white. Instead of racial prejudice, because I lacked experience then, being a position where I had to learn from them, I felt it a little bit. But I always think that, in the United States, ability, capability is what counts, because I think that, uh, I’ve never really dealt with racism, and that, I’ve never thought that way. (LH-22-1371)

Rachel, Bonnie, and Emilie made similar statement on racism. They didn’t have racial issues in the United States. But every once in a while, they feel distressed over living in the United States, because of those differences they cannot get over.

Although the participants understand there are distinct differences between two cultures, they are speaking only from their point of view. Hence they are not certain what the exact differences are. They can only tell the examples from their own experiences. They observe and try to behave as Americans do by their own judgment. From time to time, that works. However, the participants judge from their natures, which primarily do not fit in American culture. The root of the behavior of each culture is essentially different. What is so obvious to Asians may not be clear to Westerners. What is so clear to Koreans may not be clear to Americans.

The participant women had felt the limitations of adjusting to the United States as an immigrant from different culture. At this stage, more so than as an immigrant, they, as individuals, struggled with differences in culture and norms. Koreans/Asians need to observe Western culture from an Easterner’s viewpoint. The most differences they need to know can be acquired by tacit learning. This knowledge is unrecognized knowledge, which was discussed in Chapter Two. To native members of society, this

information and knowledge is as natural, and they often do not even realize such things exist. That makes it harder for immigrants learn the differences.

Therefore, they come to a point that they voluntarily surrender what they wanted to do and negotiate a sensible goal. When they relinquished their educational background and social status they obtained from Korea, it was with reluctance. Now, after a long trial and error, they were willing to give up their desire to live White-like life. Rather, they negotiated goals based on their capability.

### **Negotiating Identity**

This phase is significant to all of the participants. They found peace after this phase. Up to this point, they were struggling and striving for their purpose for living in the United States. However, they were stuck in a foreign society not knowing what to do. Then they started to give up little by little. The most and the toughest area of limitation they felt was social gatherings. As discussed in Chapter Two, high-context culture people are group oriented, so they need secure social gathering and want to make a commitment to the group at the same time. On the other hand, low-context culture societies such as Americans are individualistic. They are not responsive to the sense of belonging as much as Koreans do.

Bonnie and Emilie were more insistent on this issue. Bonnie sought after a career and social life in America. She wanted to get along with Americans. She tried to contribute at least a few words when her colleagues were making small talk during a coffee break. Even though she could not understand and made stupid comments, she would still try so hard to fit. Now, after she gave up being a part, “even if I don’t try so hard, I’m comfortable. I’m comfortable. It doesn’t bother me at all. Just let them be that way if they want to. And so that’s why the term ‘outsider’ fits best.” (BSL-24-4074)

Bonnie repeated that she was, is, and will be an outsider in the United States. Although she said so, she left the door open to the future possibility of social activities. Bonnie indicated that she had enjoyed social interactions with her co-workers at school lately, saying “Nowadays, we laugh and joke around... so that’s how working became a way of socializing. I really enjoy working.” Though Bonnie was mingling with co-workers at this job, she was still an outsider and comfortable being an outsider at the other job. That is, Bonnie still wants to socialize with co-workers, but she is fine even if she cannot at the present. She believes in potential of socializing with Americans in the future.

Bonnie claimed that America is very generous to foreigners compare to other countries where she had lived before. She said:

In the U.S., when someone, if a foreign student comes, anyway, they try to help him/her. That’s why children from Korea don’t struggle because of the language, right? Even if they don’t know English, they have enjoyed themselves and adjust.

(BSL-21-2037)

For now, she surrendered her desire of socializing with American co-workers and negotiated to live as an outsider in American society.

Emilie grumbled about similar matters, but for different reasons. If Bonnie had to live putting her nature aside to negotiate, Emilie had to lay her pride aside. When Emilie could not be involved in social activities, being an outcast hurt her pride: “I let it alllll go, I just let go, and now I’m free.” Emilie was much more at peace living like that. Even if someone thinks down on her, she said, “It’s ok, really... it’s totally fine. After I let it go, I was happy and at peace. After I let it go.” Then she learned how to adjust with less hurting and more peace.

During the first part of her interview, Emilie talked about difficulties with the Korean community. As the interview proceeded, she talked more about struggles with White people. She said:

White people, in their way, especially White people have this sort of supremacy, and there's nothing you can do about that. We can't do anything about that. Supremacy of White people, that is very dominant in this society. This person, thinking they are superior to Asians or Black, there's nothing we can do about that. That's the realm of their thinking; we can't do anything to change that. We don't have to. And also, uh, there's no need for an explanation, that's all there is to their point of view. (EHP-12-2104)

What is interesting here is that White's sense of superiority didn't hurt Emile's pride as much as other Koreans' acting high and mighty. Her conception of relationship between American and Korean are the host and guest. Although she feels superiority complex from White people, she believes the United States is the best country for foreigners (or guests). Emilie said, "Even so, America is a very generous country. I think America might be the best country for immigrants at any rate. When you go to Europe, matters are different. In America, we are at least protected by law." Bonnie's perception of American/Korean relationship is similar: "No matter what, I am ready to accept [American]. Here, I yield to everything, my thinking had become like: let's do everything their way." (BSL-4-2031) Hence, Bonnie and Emilie both think even though it is hard to socialize with Americans as if they are part of the society, America is good place to live. Leah's opinion is analogous to Bonnie and Emilie's. She believes that she is benefited from America in many ways.

### **Narrative Identity as a First-Generation Korean Immigrant**

Bonnie said some events which were forgotten in the past were recollected during the interview. Due to the overwhelming difficulties she endured when she first came to America, Bonnie admitted to having tried not to remember the memories. Now, she says the time has come where she can reflect upon her own experiences as she observes new

immigrants. Rachel often began her story by saying, “come to think of it.” She could connect her past with present and reorganize her life story. For some events, the cause and effect was also realized through the interviews.

Leah said she could construct a future plan during the interview. She admitted that she was considering about starting a “suicide hotline” clinic. When she looked back her hardship from many sources, Leah is willing to help anyone who is in that situation. Emilie was thankful to be given the opportunity to organize her immigration experiences. She said:

I’m also very happy. Truthfully, I’ve really never been able to admit this. I just thought this was normal; there were times that I complained that my husband did this or that, but truthfully I’ve never considered are talked about it in a scholarly way. Not even in casual conversation. But as I’m talking about this, I’m also finding this very interesting. I haven’t been able to clear everything up for myself either in this way. But as we’re conversing, as I’m talking about it, it’s all making more sense in its own way. (EHP-32-4130)

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion and Implications**

In this study, I examined four Korean women separately and demonstrated individual biographies in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, I synthesized their storied narratives and portrayed developmental phases from arriving in the United States to the present. The participants have shown many common themes and plot on learning, adjusting, and negotiating their identities in America. In this last chapter, I tried to integrate my findings with literature. I also summarized findings from four women. I mainly focused on participants' purpose for coming to the United States; how participants utilized informal, tacit, culturally embedded learning in the course of acculturation and constructing identity in the United States; and how they find their "place" in American society as a social being.

### **Acculturation and Identity Formation**

The assumption on acculturation was that immigrants selectively adapt to the new culture while retaining one's original culture (Miller, 2007; Padilla & Perez, 2003). Earlier studies assert that while immigrants acculturate to a new culture, educational background (Kim, Brenner, Liang, & Asay, 2003; Min, 2002, 2006; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003), financial status, social issue, or family structure (Mui & Kang, 2006; Takebayashi, 2004) play an important role in the acculturation process. This notion is based on the traditional view of acculturation; individuals lose their original culture as immigrants absorbed into new society (Hodges, 2002; Phinney, 2006). Assuming that acculturation is losing, adapting, or blending old and new culture, previous research studies examined how such an attribute influence acculturation.

However, a significant theme I found within these four women's narrative was that their acculturation was very selective and the selection was based on maintaining their pre-established identity and self-image. To the participants, acculturation was not a

culture-exchange process but a means of maintaining their identity. People construct and reconstruct identity in a socio-cultural context (Stryker & Burke, 2000). That is, a new situation is supposed to be the core agent that determines reconstruction of identity. And yet, all four of these women struggled to keep intact the identity and social status they brought from Korea. Their self-image was already set, and they were trying to improve the situation to comply with their identity.

In Leah's case, she worked as a registered nurse in Korea, she wanted to do the same job in the United States, and she pursued the bachelor's degree she already earned in Korea. Bonnie is no different. She was a high school science teacher in Korea, and wants to have equivalent status in America. A strong part of her identity was that, "At least I received a higher education with master's degree." Thus Leah and Bonnie chose formal education as a means of acculturation.

For Rachel, who had been an English instructor in Korea, she again wanted to have career of her own in America. More than anything, she wanted to achieve a social status where she could be a contributing member of society. Emilie was a little different in this matter. When other participants were pursuing tangible social status, Emilie wanted to have an "instigator"-type, unofficial leadership position in social relationship as she had in Korea.

Besides, the participants purposefully made partial acculturation by adopting some American way of doings but not all. For instance, when Rachel hosted a swimming party, she first wanted to go and see how Americans do. On the other hand, when she played games with American friends, Rachel kept her own shortcut way of doing things. Leah, Bonnie, and Emilie had similar experiences of keeping their own way but also try to learn American way. The choice of accept or reject was entirely up to the individual. As Padilla and Perez (2003) stated, "the change from one cultural orientation to another can be 'selective,' and persons involved in intergroup contact can decide what elements



of their culture they wish to surrender and what cultural elements they want to incorporate from the new culture” (p. 37).

Part of the reason for this may be because all the participants came to America after they had developed their identity and also had experience as contributing members to Korean society. Erikson (1980) asserted that people shape and reshape their identity throughout a lifetime as situations change. However, identity development models are generally focused on adolescents or young adults (Pak, 2006). The four women participants had identity challenge experiences at the beginning stage of American life. Then they worked out for themselves the self-image and identity they each wanted to maintain.

The four women decisively chose the culture they want to adopt. At the beginning stage of their life in the United States, Rachel and Bonnie showed strong willpower to unlearn the old way and learn the new way. However, complete unlearning was not possible, and also they realized that their way was “not good or bad” but comparable to American way of doing. Leah was proud of Koreans’ quick and nimble feet. Then again she wanted to learn American’s faithfulness and calmness. Learning new way of doing were not the only learning to the participants. They also learned to negotiate what to retain and what to release.

### **Learning Experiences**

As discussed in Chapter Two, scholars suggested that learning is deeply rooted in socially and culturally structured contexts (Garrick, 2002; Illeris, 2002; Kim & Merriam, 2010; Niewolny & Wilson, 2009). I strongly agree with this statement and see the importance of informal learning in daily social context. However, informal learning has been more utilized in workplace learning and community learning (Billet, 2001; Eraut, 2004; Kim & Merriam, 2010; Livingstone, 2001; Marsick & Watkins, 1990; Tough, 2002;

Wegner, 1999). Furthermore, Marsick (2009) states “informal learning is best situated in workplaces” (p. 271), which could limit informal learning to a few particular situations. Likewise, Marsick and Watkins’s (2001) trigger-action-reflection spiral activity learning model does not describe day-to-day learning adequately.

Schugurensky (2000) suggested three types of informal learning: self-directed, incidental, and socialization. Schugurensky’s categorization is closer to daily casual learning than Marsick’s (2001) learning model. It seems socialization may cover sufficient areas of daily learning. However this categorization does not explain immigrants’ learning of culture, which the participants had difficulty with. For instance, Bonnie shared the incident when she was invited to a baby shower. Because there is no such a thing in Korea, Bonnie didn’t know what to do at the shower. She just observed others with tension and pretended she was having a good time.

Bonnie’s case of learning by observation is closer to Takeuchi and Nonaka’s (2004) tacit knowledge or Korean terms of *nunchi* than Marsick or Schugurensky’s classification of informal learning. Takeuchi and Nonaka (2004) stated “the dominant form of knowledge in the West is explicit knowledge and Japanese (East) view knowledge as primarily tacit” (p. 16). On the other hand, Collins (2011b) describes tacit knowledge as “acquired only by immersion in the society” (p. 3). When Takeuchi and Nonaka distinguish tacit and explicit as East and West, Collins distinguishes tacit by culture.

By taking Takeuchi and Nonaka’s theory, it was assumed that Koreans are more exposed to tacit knowledge. The prevailing communication methods of unspoken rules or non-verbal cues were one of the examples of Korean’s tacit knowledge. In general, Koreans communicate by *nunchi* and situational context, which can be “acquired only by immersion in the society” (Collins, 2011b, p. 3). This goes back to the suggestion that learning is deeply rooted in socially and culturally structured contexts (Garrick, 2002;

Illeris, 2002; Kim & Merriam, 2010; Niewolny & Wilson, 2009). That is, Korean's *nunchi* may not work in the American culture.

At an interview, Ting-Toomey stated;

[We can teach] how to say the proper things under what situational context, what's taboo and what's expected. However, the saturated nonverbal cues are the micro-behaviors that we observe and soak up in our cultural conditioning in an unconscious manner. That's why I think mastering appropriate nonverbal behavior and meaning is much more difficult, because there are so many cues and situational variations going on when you communicate nonverbally. (Cañado, 2008, p. 210)

Hence, people use their own judgment to comprehend nonverbal cues from their own culture, which may not fit in the host society.

Leah described her observations about how Koreans and American are different at work. The biggest contrast was that Koreans depend on their own instinct and Americans depend on the system of the organization. Koreans were quick to grasp the gist of a situation; however the solution was usually their instinct rather than a systematic method. Emilie also shared a similar observation, using her husband and herself as an example. She mentioned that Americans needed to follow the designated steps in order to complete a task. Koreans, on the other hand, get frustrated quickly and tend to find tricks and short-cuts to accomplish something. In general, the rule of thumb in Korea is "it depends."

Referring back to Polanyi (1966) who first discussed tacit knowledge, he explained that tacit is the initial understanding of an object and all knowledge is either tacit or rooted in tacit knowledge. Hence, tacit and culturally embedded learning procedures cannot be explained clearly. Nonaka (2004) described tacit from a Japanese point of view and described tacit as an Asian method of learning and explicit as a

Western method of learning. Collins (2011b) also explains tacit from a Western point of view, relating tacit to a linguistic ability.

Another significant issue I found was that focusing mainly on informal learning in acculturation was not adequate. As a matter of fact, the participants' formal learning experiences played a major role in acculturation. Earlier statements contended that these women strived to change the situation in order to keep their identity intact. The formal education was an instrument to change their situation and social status. Hoare (2002) states:

The ego needs to know itself as original, as an actively engaged insider in the vocational-social domain, a self who is a committed, needed, and group-identified player. This is the largely unconscious need of every adolescent who seeks a life and work that are worth his or her commitment. (p. 56)

The participants brought every possible instrument together to work out their identity construction.

### **Narrative Identity Negotiation**

Previous studies on identity negotiation generally focused on cultural identity and intercultural communication (Dai, 2009; Jackson II, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 1999). However, the participants showed negotiation in other areas as well. For instance, Leah negotiated to live in Los Angeles near huge Korea town where she can enjoy both America and Korea. Rachel wanted to go to a graduate school but negotiated to homeschool her children so she can study with them. The participants balanced out life in the United States by negotiating not only cultural issues but their situation.

For immigrants, preserving their identity and social status brought from their homeland is not an easy task. Getting an education in a foreign language, the motivation to become a contributing member of the new society, and the desire to accomplish all

these things are tough. People learn culture by constant contact with majority ethnic group or host culture group. All the participants, except Emilie, were not able to have sufficient contact with Americans. They were aware of the limitations of unlearning the old and re-learning the new culture. Instead, they are conscious of the knowledge and wisdom they possess due to their experiences of dealing with the other culture. From these advantages, they find contentment from having to give up parts of their identity.

When mentioning her friends who were still in Korea who had reached a certain social level there, Leah also admitted that she thinks about how she, too, could have achieved the same social standing had she remained in Korea. This could also mean that she views the point at which her life is at now in America is inferior to her friends' standing. Regardless, Leah observed that her understanding and grasp of a multicultural society was more in-depth and open-minded than her friends.

Bonnie thinks that the social status she would have been holding in Korea and the one she has now in America are basically the same. This means that her identity has not been modified. Rachel stated that she may have been able to become a more influential person in society had she stayed in Korea. Though, she was still just as contented homeschooling her children, learning with them, and teaching the co-ops. Similarly, Emilie considers her position now the same as what it would have been in Korea, and in addition, she considers herself to be a "global" individual.

The above statement could be refuted by saying that eventually participants modified their identity by negotiating. However, considering the narrative and life history of the participants, their thoughts are what are most important. Leah believes that the "American dream" that she had been dreaming of has been achieved. She has a respectable, well-paid job in America, and she also serves at a Korean church, which she values higher than anything else, she said. The other three participants, Rachel, Bonnie,

and Emilie, are also in the position they want to be and they upheld the identity and self-image that had from when they immigrated to America.

### **Adult Immigrants as Adult Learner**

The purpose of the study was to discover how participants negotiated their identity and self-image as an individual immigrant in a foreign country. I primarily focused on the participants' learning, especially informal learning experiences as they acculturated to the United States. Although there were individual variations, I found notable attempts the participants made. Leah, Bonnie, and Rachel sought out institutional education to keep social status and self-image they have. It was "about the choices cultural interactants make in securing their self-image or saving face" (Jackson II, 2002, p. 360), which Ting Toomey labeled identity negotiation.

These participants chose their direction of learning after they had a firm grasp on their identity. Leah and Bonnie relinquished their degree and license they earned from Korea. It was voluntary action. They were willing to let it go and obtain it again in the United States. These women, possessing characteristics of adult learners, knew what they need to learn. They were self-motivated to accomplish their goal.

While Leah and Bonnie voluntarily relinquished their former educational background and got American education, all the participants faced another challenge. All of these women expressed the difficulties of reading social contexts in the new culture. For instance, Emile shared an example of going to a new church. How to behave as a newcomer or an existing member is so distinct in Korean church. However, this unspoken rule does not work in American church. When Koreans go to American church, they often feel they are mistreated. Emilie said it was misunderstanding rather than mistreatment.

Rachel also talked about difficulties of reading social cues. Not only the context, but also general behaviors didn't she understand. Rachel shared an embarrassing example. Koreans don't like 'eat together, pay separate' type of social gathering (Mathews, 2000). According to her cultural background, when she invited her American friends, she paid for the guests. Then, when she was invited, she didn't pay for her meal. After years have passed, she realized someone had to take care of her portion.

Furthermore, Collins (2011b) views reading a beer mat at a pub as the lowest level of learning in a new society while reading academic journal articles is at the highest level. By comparing these two, Collins argues that reading a beer mat can be accomplished by anyone who is merged into that society. However reading academic paper requires linguistic ability close to the natives of that particular society. I do not support this statement. When one does not know the context of the society, beer mat reading does not link to the underlying meaning. In other words, beer mat reading consist of deeper social context than an academic journal.

For Bonnie's case, while she had no trouble understanding the textbooks or academic journal articles required to read for the classes, she still struggled to understand the conversations between her classmates. Even when she did follow a conversation, many times when her classmates laughed at what they thought was funny, Bonnie did not laugh along because she did not consider the topic funny.

For the cases of Leah, Rachel, and Bonnie, institutional learning was much more comprehensible and doable than learning culture and social context. At some point, they negotiated with their limit and capability of reading and understanding the majority culture. All participants thought they were beginning a new "American style" life. However, it was not a whole new life but a continuum of the old one. They kept their self-image, social status, and identity. Rachel said "living in the United States was luck? I never actually thought it was a relief or luck, um, I think that it's fate that I'm here." She

was optimistically adapting fate and lives as it leads. Like Rachel, other three women accepted the fact their lives in the United States positively and constructively.

Narrative identity employs narrative procedure to find meanings and roles in one's life. Singer (2005) argues that people accomplish identity through the crafting and telling of an ongoing life story. As discussed earlier, McAdams and Bowman (2002) argued that adult identity evolves, so people reshape their identity as their social status and situation changes. Ting-Toomey (1999) also introduced identity negotiation as decision-making process between cultures. Reflecting the narrated stories of four participant women, immigrants reshape their identity as they acculturate to a new place, corresponding to their past, present, and hoped-for future. Therefore, I combined narrative identity and identity negotiation to describe the participants' stories. Immigrants, as adult learners, negotiate between cultures as they experience and learn new society.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited to a few Korean women in certain areas. A story of one participant cannot represent the entire population of Korean women in a country. Also, immigrants' life stories may differ by cities and states. For example, Korean immigrants in New York City may have different acculturation patterns from those in Philadelphia or Seattle. One of the primary reasons for the difference is the size of the Korean community. Compared to New York or Los Angeles, the Korean community in Philadelphia can be considered as a small village when considering Korean population, number of Korean churches, Korean groceries, restaurants, and other retail businesses. Therefore this study may not represent an entire Korean immigrants' acculturation process.



The next reason for making difference in acculturation may be the culture of the city or town where Koreans settle. For instance, one Korean woman I interviewed for a previous study was from Mississippi. She said she never felt that she was a foreigner there. The climate she experiences was very homey. People were quite open to everyone, so she could visit neighbors without notifying them in advance. Her White friends often called her and asked to invite them for meals. She was comfortable living in such an atmosphere because that reminded her hometown. However, since she moved to Pennsylvania a few years ago, she has been a stranger since then. She could never feel at home. She came to Pennsylvania with almost fluent English compare to when she first came to Mississippi; however, English skill was not the issue. Thus, a story of an individual Korean woman may describe detailed life of an immigrant, which would not represent the entire ethnic group.

### **Implications for Adult Education and Suggestions for Further Research**

This study focused on how first-generation immigrants utilize informal and culturally embedded learning in the process of acculturation and shaping identity. As a result, this study could redefine what tacit and culturally embedded learning means to humans as social beings. The study also revealed the relationship between reconstruction of adult identity and acculturation of middle-age immigrants. While the participants and I were talking about these issues, we often considered how second-generation individuals would respond to a similar situation. In general, second-generation Koreans live in a dual-cultural context. They live by Korean culture at home and live by American culture outside home. These second-generation children have to use *nunchi* and nonverbal cues in order to communicate with their parents and grandparents. On the other hand, they need to be explicit with Westerners.

When I went to college in the United States, I had to answer to a question in a class. I knew the answer but could not explain in words. Not only because of lack of English skill, but it was one of those “we can know more than we can tell” (Polanyi, 1966) type of things. The professor said if I can’t explain in my “own words,” that means I do not know the answer. “Explain in your own words” was one of the most frequently heard phrases when I first came to the United States. Maybe I remember it because it was “a pain in the neck” to me. During this study, I often thought about this incident. I came from the other end of the culture line. Then what about second-generation or Asian children adopted to an American family? It seems that the second-generation immigrants from East Asia may learn and use both ends of culturally embedded learning at the same time.

What does this mean for adult education? Firstly, adult educators should not underestimate the role of informal learning. It plays significant role in our daily life but because it is invisible it is often not recognized. The study suggests that adult education researchers may need to rethink their notion of tacit and culturally embedded learning especially in heterogeneous society. Secondly, narrating one’s personal history can extract meaning of life and offer ongoing identity negotiations. Thus, narrative analysis provides excellent way to deeper exploration of learning in complex ways and individuated unique life experiences.

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**Appendix A: Informed Consent Form**



Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research  
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: College Students, Identity, and Relationships

Principal Investigator: Amie Park, Graduate Student  
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1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to find an identity of Koreans in the United States with regards to cultural competency, reversible acculturation, social role, and to find how informal learning and tacit knowledge have an effect on shaping identity.
2. Procedures to be followed: You will be asked 10 to 20 questions depends on how the interviews go
3. Duration: Each interview will last between one to two hours
4. Statement of Confidentiality: Confidentiality is promised. The data will be stored and secured at my personal computer in a password protected mp3 file. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.
5. Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Amie Park at 814-380-4425 with questions or concerns about this study.
6. Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Person Obtaining Consent Date

## **Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Guide**

### **First Interview: Questions focused on Life History**

Background information: How would you describe your life in Korea?

Hometown; Family; Career; Educational Background

What was your initial purpose of coming to the United States?

Reflecting back on your initial purpose, what do you think of your original goals?

If your original had been changed, what do you think of your altered goal?

What would be the main reasons you had to change your goal?

If any, how did you manage the gap between the original goal and the altered goal?

### **Second Interview: Questions focused on details of experience**

What struggles did you face in finding your “place” in American society?

What were the most tough reason(s) or incident(s) that caused changes in your social role and status in the United States?

How did you overcome the changes?

What do you think of your present status in American society and how did you find it?

How are Korean style learning, culturally embedded learning procedures, and other forms of learning implicated in your acculturation process to the United States?

Was your learning experience from Korea applicable to acculturation process? How did you apply?

Do you have any learning experience in the United States?

Do you see any differences in learning procedure between Korea and the United States?

How did your learning experiences from Korea (or in the United States) help to find your place in American society?

### **Third Interview: Questions focused Reflection on the meaning**

How would you describe who you are in American society?

Are you involved with Korean community?

Do you participate in community activities (or any other ethnic group activities?)

Do you feel comfortable living in the United States?

How did you see yourself as a foreigner?

How would you feel if you need to move back to Korea?



## Appendix C: Nvivo Coding and Translation Sample

Reference 1 - 0.81% Coverage

처음에 미국에 대해서 알고 있었던 환상, 그런것들이 조금씩 깨지기 시작했죠. 한국에 부대안에서 내가 미국사람들 만나고, 미국에 대한그게 제가 참 좋게 생각했어요. 아, 미국이란 나라는 참 잘 살고, 자유가 보장되 있고 지금도 물론 그렇지만 기회의 나라이고, 그리고 미국사람들 대해보니까 참 신사적이고

The fantasies I first had about the U.S., those things are being broken little by little. In Korea, I would meet American people in the [U.S. Army] base, that is, I thought very highly of the U.S. Ah, this country called American must live very well, freedom is guaranteed, of course it is like that even now, land of opportunity, and seeing American people they were ever the gentlemen.

Reference 2 - 0.14% Coverage

미국사람이 좋더라고요. 좋아보이더라고요. 그때만 해도

I liked American people. They seemed like good people. Even then

Reference 3 - 0.29% Coverage

여기에 이런거를 느끼면서, 환상과 이런거 쯤, 많이 깨지면서 미국에 대한, 내가 이런것들이 안채워지고 그러니까

Feeling those things here, fantasies and such things, many were broken about the U.S., because my expectations weren't being fulfilled and so

Reference 4 - 0.24% Coverage

미국이라 해서 이제는 그런 더 환상도 없어졌고 이렇잖아요. 살면서 그렇더라고요.

Just because it's the U.S., these, such fantasies disappeared you know. It just happens as [I] live [in the United States], it is so.

Reference 1 - 0.81% Coverage

내가 무슨 생각이 드냐면요 내가 진짜로 미국에서 살은게 12년인게 13년인가 살았더라고요. 그렇게 12년을 살은 담에 이 학교를 갔잖아요. 12년동안 살면서 한번도 진짜 미국을 경험하지 못한거야 내가 여기 스쿨에서 job을 잡기 전까지는 진짜 미국, 몰랐더라고요 그, 무슨뜻인지 알죠? 미국 사람들 속에 나는 그냥 아웃사이더로 살은거야 그래서 내가 미국에 대해서 더 환상을 가졌던거 같애. 미국사람들은 말하자면 그냥 좋은 사람, 미국사람들은 합리적인 사람, 이런식으루 저기, 내가 그렇게 생각을 했었던거 같애요

What I'm thinking is I really lived in the U.S. 12 or 13 years. I lived that like that for 12 years and then went to this school. During those 12 years living in the United States, I never experienced the true (actual) U.S., until I got a job at a preschool, I had never really known the U.S., you know what I mean, right? Among American people, I was just living as an outsider; I think that's why I fantasized about the U.S. In other words, American people are nice people, American people are rational people, in this sort of way, that is, I think that's how I thought.

Reference 2 - 0.17% Coverage

너무 힘들었어 막. 근데 정말 내가 아무 생각없이 겁없이 달려들은 미국 생활이 내가 생각했던거랑 너무 달랐든거 같애

It was so hard, so like. But really, I think the American life I embraced without thinking, without any fear, was just so different than what I had thought it would be like.

Reference 2 - 2.11% Coverage

내가 처음에 그리던 미국은 영화에서 보던 미국이에요. 내가 그리던 미국은 ~ 내가 처음에 왔을때 영화에서 보던 거대한 미국이에요. 기회의 나라, 그리고 너무 멋있는 사람들, 영화에선 멋있는 사람들 나오니까, 얼굴도 잘생기고 근데 지금 내가 아는 미국은 그렇게 잘생기고 멋있는 사람들은 외모좋은 사람은 헐라우드에 국한되 있구

The America I was first thinking of was like the American you see in the movies. The America I was thinking of was ~ when I first came to the U.S., the great America I saw in the movies, that's what it was. The land of opportunity and such nice looking people, because in the movies the people are stylish people, and they're good-looking, but in the America, I know now, all those stylish and good-looking people, the people who have good looks are just in Hollywood.

Reference 4 - 2.91% Coverage

그렇지만 내가 여기 온 것을 후회하지는 않아요. 한국에 있었으면 그렇게 고생은 하지 않았을거예요. 근데 왜냐면 한국에서 그냥 어, 그냥 편안히 이렇게 많이 발전됐더라구 그동안 한국이 많이 발전한 만큼 그 흐름을 따라서 나도 많이 발전되 있을거라구요. 왜냐면 나랑 똑같은 배경을 가진 사람들이 그렇게 살고 있으니까. 그리구 첨에 인제 미국에 혼자 살면서 내가 미국을 배우기 위해 여러가지 고생 했던것들이 나를 풍부한 삶을 살게 했다고 생각해요

However, I don't regret coming here. If I was in Korea, I wouldn't have suffered so much. Because in Korea, just, uh, just I progressed comfortably. Just like the way Korea progressed so much over the years, I guess I would follow that flow and I had progressed too. Because the people who have the same [educational] background as I do were living such [progressed] life. And also the struggles I had in trying to learn America, living all by myself, I think that made my life richer.

Reference 1 - 0.76% Coverage

좋게 생각할 때는 제가 한국에 있었다며는 도전을 받지 않아서 새로운거를 찾기 보다는 현실에 그냥 안주하지 않았을까 편안하게, 그냥 제 세상에서만 살지 멀 추구하거나 고민하거나 도전하거나 이거를 벗어나야겠다 이런 생각을 하지 않고 살아서 발전이 없지 않았을까? 이런 생각을 할때 있어요

When thinking positively, if I was in Korea there would not have been challenges so rather than finding new things (experiences), wouldn't I just be complacent with reality,

comfortably, just living in my own world, I wouldn't have thought to add anything, to ponder anything, to try anything, try to break away (break free), not thinking these things there wouldn't be developments, would there? I think that sometimes.

Reference 1 - 0.41% Coverage

좋죠. 미국, 누가 간섭하는 사람 없고, 눈치 안보고, 눈치 안보고, 어, 내, 남 저기 생각 안하고, 내 의견을 확실하게 말할 수 있고...에..좋았어요.

It is good. America, no one interferes, [I] don't worry about how others perceive me, [I] do not have to consider what others say about me, [I] speak my mind with certainty (give my opinions)...yes...it was good.

Reference 1 - 1.14% Coverage

보조간호사잡을 찾는데 경험이 없다고 써주지 않아. 버스타구 그냥 여기저기 내 려가지구 막 잡을 다 여기저기 해봤어요. 영어도 못하구 그러지만 용기가 좀 나더라구 몇번 해보니까

[They were] looking for assistant nurse aide but wouldn't hire [me] because [I] had no experience [in the United States]. I would take the bus and just get off anywhere and try jobs everywhere and anywhere. [I] couldn't speak English, but after the first few times I gained some courage.

Reference 1 - 0.52% Coverage

제가 뉴저지 있을때는 굉장히 미국 친구들이 하는대로 노력을 많이 했던것 같아요.그래서 음, 배울,,제가 이미 아는데도 제 방법은이미 없는거로 치구 미국거를 처음부터 새로 배워야 된다고 생각했어요.

When I was in New Jersey, I think I tried very much the way American friends did. So, um, to learn, even though I knew, [I] acted like my own ways didn't exist, I thought I needed to learn the American way from the beginning.

Reference 1 - 0.47% Coverage

우리가 참 고생하고 살잖아요. 남의, 남의 나라, 내나라가 아닌것 같고, 우리가 남의 옷 좃어입어가지고 안맞아가지고 uncomfortable 한거 같고, 맞출라고 노력하고,

We lived with a lot of challenges. [It was] someone else's, someone else's country, it didn't seem like our country, we were trying on other people's clothes so [the clothes] wouldn't fit, it seemed "uncomfortable", [we] tried to fit (in)

## VITA

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