LEARNING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: A CULTURAL HISTORICAL ACTIVITY
THEORY ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP EMPOWERMENT IN A
KOREAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

A Dissertation in
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by
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ABSTRACT

Community organizations, especially those aiming at social change, play a significant role in establishing societal health and contributing to adult learning in daily communities. Their existence secures marginalized groups’ involvement in society and enhances community development by building community leadership with multiple stakeholders that infuses new meanings to other organizational or community sectors beyond traditional approaches on leadership.

This critical ethnography analyzed how community activists in an urban Korean American Community Organization built community leadership and engaged in daily learning for social justice. Data were collected over a six-month period and included participant observation, formal and informal interviews with seventeen activists, and analysis of documents and cultural artifacts. Data were analyzed using qualitative methods of data analysis, reflection, and writing.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was used as a theoretical framework. Learning in CHAT is understood as a socio-cultural phenomenon in which learning occurs through dynamic and continuous interaction of the subject and object, mediated within a specific socio-cultural and historical context.

Three community leadership activities (activity systems) were identified: Coalition, Empowerment, and Collaboration. The activities were each driven by objects through historical accumulation of the organization’s background and internal/external socio-cultural contexts. Diverse contradictions were found within each activity and among activities. The contradictions throughout three activities may hinder community leadership building and learning.

The contradictions became a driving force for learning. Consequently, the activists created a revised object among the three activities: to advance immigrant rights by enhancing community leadership focused organizational capacity building. This object as a significant learning outcome led to various intended/unintended outcomes for community leadership.
development and unintended outcomes for social and individual level learning, including socio-cultural and structural transformation, new actions, and individual learning. These learning outcomes result in the revision of the community leadership activity network with intended outcomes.

Based on the findings, learning needs to be understood as a social process; researchers need more focus on social outcomes of learning. Several important features for facilitating community leadership and learning were also discussed. Finally, this study concluded with academic and practical implications as well as suggestions for further research.
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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter One outlines the background information for this study. In this chapter, I describe my continuing interest in learning beyond formal educational settings, community leadership, and community organizations in both South Korea and the United States. I then present the statement of the problem, the research rationale, research purpose and the questions driving this study. Finally, I explain the key terms used and present a brief overview of the dissertation.

Coming to the Question

Where does learning occur? Does it only take place in school settings? Are formal education settings more effective than nonformal or informal settings? Even though learning can occur everywhere, it is not always recognized. It is easy to lose sight of the fact that daily learning is central to life. Moreover, there may be a high barrier to formal educational opportunities for socially marginalized people. I was not very aware of this before entering the university. But after organizing a student-based voluntary organization with undergraduates, my perspective on learning—especially for those in marginalized communities—began to change.

As university students majoring in education, a group of us shared concerns about our own social responsibility toward disadvantaged students. Realizing that we had received several types of social benefits, we created an after-school program for middle-school students with the support of officials and teachers in a Seoul school district. They not only offered us a space but also helped us to recruit students of a low socio-economic status who were labeled “troublemakers” at their schools. At first, most of the students had no willingness to study with us. They doubted the program’s intended results, because they felt strongly that they were unable to fit in at school or go further in society. We found that their feelings stemmed from the indifference of teachers and parents. As we expressed concern about their personal interests and
challenges, their grades improved and they seemed to enjoy school and their daily life more. Through diverse interactions with these students and my fellows, this experience gave me the opportunity to reflect on the philosophy of learning beyond the classroom. I realized that it is very significant for socially marginalized persons to be provided with learning opportunities in a community-based setting and that informal/non-formal daily learning can generate a synergistic effect with that of the formal setting for learning. Furthermore, I saw that the students’ challenges cannot be seen as only their own responsibility.

This reflection and experience motivated me to focus on contingent workers and their informal learning beyond formal training programs in the workplace for my master’s thesis. Given the reality that non-regular workers sometimes are branded as social failures or as incompetent, one of my intentions was to shed new light on their value in the workplace. However, the study was limited to investigating learning based on the cognitive and behavioral change of the individual as a unit of analysis and limited to developmental relationships within their organizations. I still had a question about how to analyze diverse learning phenomena beyond formal settings and whether or not the essence of learning could be generalized using a quantitative approach, where learning is considered as a process of separate individuals.

Meanwhile, I had also worked as a community organizer in Seoul, where I was involved at the grassroots level of creating a power base in which stakeholders could influence the decision-making process of local community development. The project primarily focused on empowering marginalized communities in the local area and involved the creation of a civic assembly, a constitution, a civic network of community organizations (COs), and several events and programs such as a local festivals and educational programs for students and adults. However, we confronted several challenges.

The project was originally led by the voluntary participation of undergraduate and graduate students under the guidance of a faculty member. Our group was different from a formal
organization that has effective or systemic power to organize local members and to lead various activities. As a volunteer-based informal group, we had a limited capacity to establish strong and harmonious partnerships with multiple stakeholders for expanding activities for local community, even though we recognized that positive collaboration would be absolutely required to effectively solve local problems in the long term. We also found it challenging to manage the diverse issues and interests of the stakeholders, although they were located in the same district. These challenges gradually resulted in limited participation of diverse stakeholders such as for-profit and nonprofit organizations, community members, local media, and officials/politicians for the local community movement. Since that experience, I have wondered what obstructs or fosters the participation and collaboration of the numerous stakeholders. Furthermore, at the time I did not realize how nonprofit or community organizations as a formal organization work in the real world.

After coming to the United States, I observed numerous activities of Korean Americans (KAs) in their local communities. In the Western U.S. and Eastern U.S. urban areas, I was impressed by the presence of KA communities that were organized around social issues such as generation, occupation, health, finance, education, religion, and so on. In particular, I saw that many KAs were enthusiastic about confronting problems such as their children's education, expatriate adjustment difficulties, and employment challenges. Additionally, they struggled to obtain better lives and contribute to society as KAs while simultaneously becoming integrated into American culture. To overcome their problems and limitations, they formed various communities, which played a pivotal role in their lives. A considerable number of KAs shared their own experiences and learned from each other within these communities. I believe that community-based learning activities through diverse social networks may provide KAs, especially newly-arrived or marginalized KA immigrants, with psychological and mental stability as well as practical help for their lives. Furthermore, I found that diverse COs, including religious organizations, have played an important role as the community’s core by supporting KA
immigrants as they adjust to a new environment and create, establish, and develop their own communities.

However, many of the relationships between COs and KAs are fundamentally passive based on the assumption that the organizations could be sustainable by providing social services to KA community members or offering particular religious experience. In other words, many KA immigrants only have a strong interest in COs that provide social services directly related to their lives, and another large segment of KAs devote their time to the activities of religious organizations. I felt that these phenomena highlighted why there were relatively few COs that focused on broader social change movements for KA immigrants, despite the organization’s significant role and function for the change and growth of KAs’ social status. Moreover, I found limited literature that had investigated the true nature of the COs. These experiences in both South Korea and the United States naturally led me to inquire into the practice and daily learning of COs that play a role in leading and supporting KA immigrants.

**Statement of Problem**

Historically, social movements by a collective action of minority groups has played a pivotal role in obtaining social justice for a better society (Zinn, 1994; 2003). COs comprise the heart of these movements in that they lead by organizing members for social actions and potentially create public spheres for free communication (Habermas, 1987; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). They play a leading part in effectively building relationships among local residents, groups, and organizations to solve problems, to react to social issues, and to improve their local or ethnic communities (Chung, 2007; Green & Haines, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). COs, especially those created by Asian immigrants, have been centers for social change as a crucial organization for the defense of human, political, and immigration rights. They serve as more than a gateway for immigrant groups to enter American society. In the case of KAs, they also have played a critical
role in creating communities by effectively building relationships among diverse stakeholders to (Chung, 2007; Min, 2006).

The activities of COs are not just conducted by internal persons (e.g., staff members or employees) of each organization. They build collaborative relationships with various stakeholders (e.g., board members, volunteers, external groups and organizations, local or community residents, and so on) to accomplish common goals. This collective relational phenomenon can be explained by the notion of community leadership. Community leadership is described as a capacity building process for creating and developing a community that includes diverse and interactional relationships among specific individuals, groups and organizations to achieve common purposes (Barker, 1994; Fairholm, 1994; Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Pigg, 1999). In the process, learning is considered as a significant factor for effectively developing community leadership by resolving dynamic and complicated challenges that occur (Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Pigg, 1999).

Additional studies indicate that learning through various relationships and educational efforts is an important component to strengthening capacity building in daily practices (Balatti & Falk, 2002; Bickford & Wright, 2006; Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008; Pigg, 1999). However, these previous studies do not suggest appropriate analytical tools for examining the diverse inter-relationships in community leadership development. Moreover, although learning is indispensable for the community leadership, they fail to understand how community leadership is built and developed through thoroughly examining dynamic learning in the practice.

Building community leadership involves creating or expanding diverse communities that reflect common issues or interests of specific groups within socio-cultural contexts (Green & Haines, 2002; Pigg, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). The communities may allow participants to not only learn together by sharing repertories, thoughts, and experiences but to also build collaborative relationships for capacity building by empowering one another (Barker, 1994; Kirk
& Shutte, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Northhouse, 2010; Pigg, 1999; Wenger, 1998). However, not many studies pay attention to how adult learning in the community takes place in daily or informal settings (Engeström, 2001; Sawchuk, 2003; Sawchuk, Duarte, & Elhammoumi, 2006). The primary reason for this may be that “community” is an ambiguous concept that is difficult to investigate. More importantly, most contemporary adult learning theories do not thoroughly provide a framework for examining daily or informal learning in the community.

**Theoretical Issues in Understanding Adult Learning**

Understanding learning within communities is complex, but it has a great deal of meaning for adult education. Jarvis (2007) pointed out that learning in diverse communities is important as an alternative form of education in a lifelong learning society, that goes beyond formal education. Many scholars have argued that a central activity of these groups is to engage the community by incorporating learning activities into daily lives, and that learning is an essential adult education endeavor (Balatti & Falk, 2002; Bickford & Wright, 2006; Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008; Sawchuk, 2003). The communities not only provide socioeconomic benefits through creating social capital among adults (Balatti & Falk, 2002), but also encourage the voluntary participation of adults. Learning in communities—including formal, informal, and non-formal learning—plays a significant role in deepened and expanded adult learning with a focus on reflection as well as community development (Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008). In this respect, understanding learning in the community is an critical area for investigation in that it goes beyond just researching formal adult education (Bickford & Wright, 2006; Johnson, 2000).

However, it is not easy to understand learning in urban communities. As a matter of fact, numerous communities can exist within cities, even if they are in a same area. The communities reflect multiple societal issues around race, ethnicity, long- or short-term residents, immigrants, lifestyle, faith, economic class, and so forth (Borrup, 2006; Martin, 2004). The learning in urban
communities also occurs in diverse and dynamic interactions among ethnic groups, residents, organizations and so on. This means that learning in urban communities cannot be exclusively described as internal processing by an individual, because learning occurs socially, culturally, and historically including diverse learners’ backgrounds as well as any external contexts in which they are engaged (Daniels, 2004; Engeström, 2001; Engeström & Sannino, 2010; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Marsick & Wkins, 2001; Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008). Learning from this perspective is understood not as a simple, one-dimensional, cognitive phenomenon of an individual in a formal setting, but rather complicated, multi-dimensional phenomenon based on various socio-cultural contexts in everyday life (Illeris, 2004; Sawchuk, 2003). However, most adult learning theories have proven to be inadequate to meet the challenges of understanding learning in urban communities (see Engeström, 1987 and Sawchuk, 2003 for discussions on the inadequacy of adult learning theories).

Although many adult learning notions and theories emphasize the importance of social contexts to overcome the dualism between the individual (subject) and society (object or environment), they primarily assume that it is sufficient to understand them separately. Moreover, these theories still primarily focus on individuals’ characteristics, cognitive change or development, and formalized education or formal learning (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Sawchuk, 2003). Even if some theories emphasize informal learning, organizational level attributes, and the situatedness of learning beyond the agent perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Marsick & Wkins, 1990, 2001; Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Yorks & Marsick, 2000), they are not only limited in explaining the diversity and dynamics of adult learning, but they also understand learning within a systemic view or a bounded setting. More importantly, none of them thoroughly explain the socio-culturally mediating process of adult learning across and between the individual and society (Engeström, 1987, 2001; Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Sawchuk, 2003; Youn & Baptiste, 2007).
It implies the necessity of adopting an appropriate theoretical framework to thoroughly understand adult learning in everyday life.

**Research Rationale**

This study’s theoretical framework is anchored in cultural historical activity theory (CHAT). CHAT has strengths in that it overcomes some of the limitations of existing adult learning theories and studies (Engeström, 1987, 1999, 2001; Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Engeström & Sannino, 2010; Foot, 2001; Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006; Leont'ev, 1978; Park & Schied, 2007; Sawchuk, 2003; Youn & Baptiste, 2007). CHAT fundamentally assumes learning may occur in diverse and dynamic socio-cultural contexts through collective daily activities (Engeström, 2001; Kim, Schied, & Kwon, 2011; Sawchuk, 2003). Moreover, CHAT allows researchers to thoroughly examine community leadership and learning by suggesting the concept of activity or activity system\(^1\) as a minimal unit of analysis (Engeström, 1987; Leont'ev, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978). In this respect, the CHAT approach offers a comprehensive perspective to thoroughly review the attributes of community leadership and daily learning through examining activities in the urban KA community. Therefore, the study has significance for the broader field of education, in that it promises to provide a theoretically sound and grounded analysis of how informal learning occurs in everyday life, a much-discussed but poorly understood phenomena (Engeström, 2001; Sawchuk, 2003; Sawchuk, Duarte, & Elhammouni, 2006).

The activities of COs have significance in that they result in creating alternative learning communities that may allow people to interact and learn together in daily lives or informal settings (Bickford & Wright, 2006; Green & Haines, 2002; Jarvis, 2007; Johnson, 2000). Diverse activities of KACOs have contributed to not only provide social services for KAs’ adjustment in their lives, but also to advocate for KAs political, economical, and educational empowerment

\(^1\) The term ‘activity’ of CHAT is used synonymously with the term ‘activity system.’
(Chang, 2006; Choi, 2001; Ecklund, 2006; Min, 2006, 2010; Noh & Avison, 1996; Zhou & Kim, 2006). However, academic efforts on KAs to understand the activities and daily learning by examining the nature of KACOs have remained largely unexplored in the educational field. Although considerable effort to understand KAs has been made, many studies on KAs focus on psychological/behavior adjustment and mental stability, religious organizations, or educational achievement in formal education settings (Chang, 2006; Ecklund, 2006; Noh & Avison, 1996; Zhou & Kim, 2006). Studies on KAs pay little attention to daily or informal learning of adults in the organization or community. Hence this study contributes to identifying the daily learning practices of KAs in the organization that allow organic communities to perform activities. Furthermore, this research offers useful organizational knowledge to managers in diverse organizations by investigating the developmental approaches of a KA organization that has successfully led community leadership.

Another critical issue is that a majority of previous studies on KAs understand community leadership by only focusing on the surface relationship among COs or ethnic groups without thoroughly considering inner socio-cultural contexts of COs that play a leading role in developing community leadership (Chang & Diaz-Veizades, 1999; Chung, 2007; Min, 1996; Park, 1997). This partial approach limits our understanding of the attribute of community leadership in specific cases led by COs. As a result, this study focuses on activities of a CO for community leadership driven by common purposes and performed through diverse internal and external stakeholders. The research findings comprehensively highlight how KA activists develop community leadership in daily practice by building collaborative relationships with internal and external people, groups, and organizations and further reveal facilitating factors and challenges. The study offers an in-depth understanding of the practices for community leadership empowerment based on socio-cultural contexts and daily learning in an organization. It may
provide useful and practical knowledge for activists who work in diverse ethnic communities as well as KA communities.

**Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

This study explores the CO’s community leadership that has socially, culturally, and historically developed by crossing boundaries as a relationship-building process with multiple internal and external stakeholders by enhancing capacities to overcome limits. Namely, to understand adult learning in the daily practice of the community, the study does not focus on a specific and short-term-based task or work within a CO. Based on CHAT as a theoretical framework, the purpose of this study is to understand how KACO activists (staff members)\(^2\) build community leadership and engage in daily learning in the community. The study seeks to address the following main and specific research questions:

1. **How have the activists built community leadership?**
   - How has the KACO developed community leadership throughout its history?
   - How do the activists form community leadership activities?

2. **What features hinder or facilitate community leadership and learning?**
   - What are contradictions throughout the activities?

3. **How do the activists learn through encouraging community leadership?**
   - How do the activists engage in learning by negotiating contradictions throughout the community leadership activities?

\(^2\) The terms ‘activist’ and ‘staff’ are used synonymously in this study.
Definition of Terms

Activity

Activity refers to social or collective activities in which human beings are situated in the socially, culturally, and historically accumulated mundane practice. The activities are performed by collective humans and oriented toward objects they select or establish. The object is an entity or purpose within a society or social dimension. It is a motive to lead or guide an activity. The activities are distinguished from individual or small-group actions and routinized operations. Namely, the collective activity includes diverse goal-directed actions of the individual/sub-group and unconscious/conditioned operations of the customized human/machine. In sum, activity is collective, object-oriented, and culturally mediated, and it is formed within specific social, cultural, and historical contexts (Engeström, 1987, 2001; Leont'ev, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978).

According to CHAT, humans learn, develop, or transform their skills, personalities, and consciousness in the activities. The activity, thus, become minimal unit of analysis to understand human learning. This activity is comprised of six components (subject, object, mediating artifacts, rule, community, division of labor) within a triangular model (activity system) and outcome (Engeström, 1987, 2001; Leont'ev, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978). In the third generation of CHAT, the basic model has evolved to include, at a minimum, two interacting activities in an activity network (Engeström, 1987, 2001). In this study, the activity is a basic and critical lens for examining community leadership and learning.

Community

For this study, community does not refer to a physical place or a bounded setting for learning, but rather a flexible and dynamic entity in daily lives formed by the activity proposed by CHAT. The community assumes that learning does not automatically or naturally take place.
According to CHAT, minimal community is composed of subjects (activists) and community (other stakeholders who historically share same object of activity) to perform an activity (Engeström, 1987, 1999, 2001; Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). Thus in this study, community is defined as a flexible and interactional field in which learning may occur through diverse interactions among the community members to conduct activities proposed by CHAT.

Community Leadership

The concept of community leadership rejects the traditional perspective on leadership that considers leadership as a hierarchical or linear process between individuals. Community leadership assumes that leadership is not the behavior of individuals but rather a collective inter-relational phenomenon based on socio-cultural contexts. It is defined as a capacity building process creating and developing communities that include diverse and interactional relationships among specific individuals, groups and organizations, through ongoing planned and organized efforts to achieve common purposes that reflect socio-cultural issues (Barker, 1994; Fairholm, 1994; Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Pigg, 1999).

Contradiction

The role of ‘contradiction’ in CHAT is significant for the higher-level development or expansive transformation of both individual and group/community. Contradictions are considered as “sources of change and development.” They “are not the same as problems or conflicts” but are “historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems” (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). Contradictions can occur at each component (primary) and between the components (secondary) within each activity system, and between/among activities (tertiary and quaternary) in the activity network (Engeström, 2001). The “contradictions become actual driving forces of expansive learning when they are dealt with in such a way that an emerging new object
is identified and turned into a motive” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 7). In this study, contradiction is defined as a socially, culturally, and historically accumulated structural tension that may hinder or facilitate community leadership and learning.

Learning

Learning in CHAT is a collective socio-cultural phenomenon. It is not static or fixed, but rather it is an ongoing, dynamic, and flexible process. CHAT assumes learning may lead to the expansive social transformation of group/community/organization by a process of socially resolving contradictions (learning processes) that take place throughout activities. This transformational result is accomplished by creating a new (revised or expanded) object through combining each object between/among activities and outcomes such as changing the components of existing activities (socio-cultural, structural transformation) and making new actions/activities by dynamic interactions of activities in the activity network. Thus new objects and outcomes result in reconfiguration of the activity’s practice (Engeström, 1987, 1999, 2001; Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Engeström & Sannino, 2010).

However, not all outcomes of activities can be considered as learning outcomes because most daily activities do not have an intentional purpose for only learning or education. Hence, in this study, learning is defined as a possible and procedural unintended outcome through interactions during daily activities by resolving or negotiating contradictions throughout activities.

Consequently, learning as outcome of activities can be described as a new object, socio-cultural and structural changes, and new activities at the social level that include new actions and the diverse learning at the individual level. These outcomes of learning play a role in leading the expansive transformation of both individual/group and community that reflects reconfiguration of activity network’s practice by revising existing activities and creating new type of subject’s
agency (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). The concept of contradiction and learning in CHAT are examined in detail in Chapter Three.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

This chapter has outlined the research purpose and questions and key terms with discussing research problem and rationale. Chapter Two reviews literature related to the meaning of community, community leadership, and the important role of COs in building community leadership and learning. It also argues that the existing literature, including KA studies, have explored community leadership and learning partially and insufficiently. In Chapter Three, I examine the limitations of contemporary adult learning theories and then investigate CHAT as an alternative and useful theoretical framework to understand community leadership and learning. It focuses on its theoretical development by explaining key concepts, basic principles and perspectives on learning, and theoretical implications. Chapter Four presents a thick description of the research site focusing on the local area surrounding the KACO, the organization’s history in developing community leadership, and the daily practice of the organization. In Chapter Five, I outline the approach of critical ethnography as a research method and discuss the methodological appropriateness of critical ethnography for this particular project. Moreover, I describe how I collected and analyzed data and discuss my positionality, ethical issues, and limitations of this study. Chapter Six presents the results of my data analysis, highlighting community leadership activities and learning. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I outline my conclusions and implications, including possible directions for further research.
Chapter 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter I begin by discussing how the concept of community for adult learning can be understood. Second, I review the concept of community leadership and how it can be developed. I then continue by exploring the importance of community organizations (COs) and challenges for community leadership and learning. Finally, I investigate the literature related to Korean Americans (KAs), in terms of community leadership practices and adult learning in the community.

Defining Community

Community is accepted as a significant field of learning under an assumption that community can contribute to adult learning by facilitating social interactions. Through daily activities in diverse communities, adults may learn from each other. Hence creating and developing community for social learning is a critical role for adult educators (Wiessner, Sheared, Lari, Kucharczyk, & Flowers, 2010). However, the occurrence of diverse communities in current society has led to confusion about how to perceive the concept of community, thus making it hard to define the specific boundaries of communities (Green & Haines, 2002; Putnam, 2007). As a matter of fact, the concept of community has been used interchangeably with neighborhood, social organizations, numerous forms of coalitions, online spaces, and so forth. In this respect, how adult educators or scholars view community should be regarded as the foremost task for understanding learning in the community.

Much of the literature for community building or development has included a place-based approach, and the discussion is primarily based on social issues and problems in local areas (Borrup, 2006; Gill, 2010; Green & Haines, 2002). This is largely because most communities have boundaries based on territory or place, even if they are blurred and extended more than
traditional territory-based communities. Namely, a place or given geographical area is considered as a critical factor to understand the communities, because several researchers still recognize that it is most effective to provide environmental contexts that significantly influence the local communities (Borrup, 2006; Green & Haines, 2002; Swaroop & Morenoff, 2005).

However, defining community primarily based on a residential view or a narrow bounded place does not adequately address the diverse ways people interact with others without the limits of time, space, and place in current society. Although some sociologists have traditionally considered community as a key term for describing a bounded geographical area or a specific place by census tract or counties (Frey, Wilson, Berube, & Singer, 2006; Gieryn, 2000), the development of transportation, telecommunication devices, and social network services changes what constitutes community boundaries and expands beyond the physical limitations of time and place (Green & Haines, 2002; Monkkonen, 1990; Putnam, 2007). Moreover, we are not able to thoroughly explain the diverse communities with a local residence lens because the members of every community do not always consist of only local residents. As a matter of fact, a variety of communities exist within cities, even though they are in the same area. The communities reflect numerous societal issues around race, ethnic group, long- or short-term residents, immigrants, life-style, faith, economic class, and so on (Bogdan & Biklen, 2010; Borrup, 2006; Martin, 2004; Wilkinson, 1991; Wolcott, 2008). In particular, growth of ethnic and immigrant groups who have indigenous cultures makes urban cities culturally diverse societies that allow dynamic communities with interactions among ethnic groups and organizations (Wiessner et al., 2010). These terminological and phenomenological issues necessitate reframing the concept of community beyond an understanding of community that focuses solely on a geographical area or place.

With regard to this, Wilkinson (1991) argues that community generally includes three elements: (1) territory or place, (2) social organizations or institutions that provide regular
interaction among residents, and (3) social interaction on matters concerning a common interest.

In other words, community can be defined as a residential territory or place that allows social organizations or groups to conduct social interactions based on a common interest. Even though this approach still includes a physical territory or place for understanding community, it provides a useful meaning by suggesting social and interactional aspects.

On the other hand, Bernard (1973) suggests the concept of ‘the community’ differed from ‘a community.’ The concept of ‘a community’ generally has three characteristics: locale, common ties, and social interaction. On the other hand, the concept of ‘the community’ requires an understanding not by locale but by factors such as a high degree of intimacy, social cohesion, and moral commitment among members. However, community can often be created not by sameness or emotional bond but rather by difference that guides people to have a acceptance and connection to others by investigating differences with each other (Wiessner, 2005). In this respect, the conceptualization is still limited to explain diverse communities in current society. Nevertheless, the attempt has significance in that it seeks to understand community beyond a traditional view that emphasizes or includes place-based approaches.

More persuasively, Wiessner et al. (2010) point out that community should be viewed as a form of coexisting commonality and diversity, allowing boundless and shared space, having intentions for learning, and leading development and creativity. This argument not only overcomes a conventional view on the notion of community based on the (same) place, but provides a flexible view for explaining diverse extant communities. Thus their discussion expands the concept of community by adopting multiple perspectives including a variety of theoretical, developmental, cultural, spiritual, and global viewpoints, yet it is still obscure in terms of identifying community.

To specifically conceptualize community, a theoretical discussion of community is proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991). They suggest a term community of practice (CoP) defined
as “an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities” (p. 98). CoP refers to “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). The CoP does not mean a club of friends, a network of connections between people, or a community of interest, because it should be identified by three key characteristics: domain, community and practice. Namely, it should have an identity established by a shared domain of interest and legitimate membership, members (practitioners) who engage in joint activities and learn together, and a practice accomplished by mutual engagement, joint (negotiated) enterprise, and shared repertories (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002).

CoP is a useful concept to identify existing communities in daily lives by assuming that it has a fuzzy boundary and is based on relevant topic, interest, or issues. Nevertheless, it is still limited to explain the diverse communities because CoP fundamentally indicates a learning community within a relatively well-established boundary (Engeström, 2001; Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). Namely, CoP is largely considered as a strongly bounded and stable community (Boud & Middleton, 2003). In this respect, CoP cannot reflect the natural attributes of daily communities and various networks formed by loosely connected communities, which do not aim to a planned learning or an education. They may be formed by not a strongly legitimate, self-selected, and stable participation, but rather flexible and dynamic participatory relationships.

On the other hand, a perspective on the community using cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) can provide a useful framework to understand diverse communities in daily lives by suggesting the concept of collective activity. According to CHAT, the community can be described as a group that performs an activity to achieve a historically shared object (Engeström, 1987, 2001; Leont'ev, 1978). The group members are made up of the ‘subject’ (main actors) and ‘community’ (actors who share an object with the subject) as the elements of activity. Depending
on the researcher’s perspective, the members of community in an activity always have a potential to become the subject, and it is a positive concept that opens the possibility of other stakeholders. Unlike the CoP, CHAT has a practical assumption that learning through the activity cannot take place. Moreover, CHAT provides researchers an expanded view that allows them to examine a diverse and dynamic learning phenomenon through interaction between the ‘subject’ and ‘community,’ even though they are interested in the subject in a specific study.

Therefore, I would like to suggest the concept of community for adult learning established to perform a collective activity, as proposed by CHAT. This community is considered as not a bounded place but a flexible field focused more on the common interest/purpose or the object of activity related to social issues of each community than a geographical place. In the community, learning may be occurred by dynamic interactions among stakeholders.

**Community Leadership**

**Understanding Community Leadership**

The concept of leadership has been transformed from focusing on a hierarchical into interactional process among individuals. Leadership is described as a complex and interactional process by which a person influences individuals and groups within an organization to help and guide them in effectively establishing and achieving a common goals (Northouse, 2010; Schein, 2004). Although the concept of leadership emphasizes not a hierarchical or one-way linear process from leaders to followers, but an interactional process between both leaders and followers under the organizational culture (Northouse, 2010; Schein, 2004), most organizational approaches to leadership still focus on individuals’ processes within an organization.

On the other hand, community leadership is a broader concept that includes individuals, groups, and organizations in a local area or community. The concept of community leadership
emphasizes diverse relationships and interactions beyond an organization rather than individual behavior (Pigg, 1999). In this respect, Barker (1994) describes: “The leadership process for community development may be considered separately from the leader’s behavior … Leadership is defined broadly as a community development process” (p. 4, italics added).

As the process of forming community leadership, a variety of interactions among individuals, groups, and organizations is necessary in the community development in order to advance capacities. In light of this, community leadership is not considered to be an outcome based on the leader’s characteristics, traits, or styles, but rather it emphasizes processes that make, facilitate, and develop interactional relationships with diverse stakeholders (Barker, 1994; Fairholm, 1994; Pigg, 1999). Thus this concept denies a stereotype that leadership is understood as a hierarchical or linear process between individuals based on their patterns of behavior or characteristics within a bounded organization or community.

Community leadership does not disregard the role of the individual as a social actor in developing community leadership. It looks at the individual, group, and organization’s relational process as developing a common interest or purpose within the community field. Although the concept of community leadership includes individuals as cultural human beings, it more strongly emphasizes the processes of interactional relationships beyond any one individual. In other words, community leadership is operated through collective relational efforts or activities to achieve a common interest or purpose, and it leads to building community assets or capacities for community development (Barker, 1994; Fairholm, 1994; Green & Haines, 2002; Pigg, 1999).

Since community leadership is connected with the process of community development, it is absolutely based on the culture, in that it is related to not only social issues based on socio-cultural contexts, but also the participation of diverse people and organizations with their own original cultures (Brennan, Flint, & Luloff, 2009; Green & Haines, 2002; Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Pigg, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). In fact, community development is an ongoing process
affected by social, cultural, and historical backgrounds or contexts (Brennan et al., 2009; Green & Haines, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). In this process, the activities for community development are fundamentally related to social issues that imply problems or improvements of the community. To reflect the social issues, members of a comparatively successful community conduct activities for community leadership led by COs under their original culture so that they effectively perform and develop the activities (Rubin & Rubin, 2008). At the same time, community leadership is also the culture-making process of the community, because the outcomes or results of activities for community leadership affect community culture—both external (or local) and internal culture of COs (Brennan et al., 2009; Green & Haines, 2002; Schein, 2004). It means that community culture and community leadership have an interactional or reciprocal relationship. To understand community leadership, hence, it is critical to consider diverse socio-cultural historical aspects of the community.

In sum, the concept of community leadership is an alternative approach to understand capacity building processes for the community development. Community leadership emphasizes not a hierarchical or linear process between individuals who each have characteristics and social status, but rather interactional relationships among stakeholders who have a different role in the community driven by the socio-cultural contexts surrounding them. This community leadership can be understood as a capacity building process by creating and developing communities that include diverse and interactional relationships among specific individuals, groups, and organizations through ongoing planned and organized efforts to achieve common purposes that reflect socio-cultural issues (Barker, 1994; Fairholm, 1994; Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Pigg, 1999).

Developing Community Leadership: Learning as Central to Community Leadership

Community leadership is not static but dynamic and complicated. It allows the participation of a variety of stakeholders that have distinct socio-cultural attributes. By this
attribute of community leadership, community leadership building and development cannot always progress smoothly. In other words, the participation of diverse individuals, groups and organizations, community leadership involves a dynamic process that negotiates unequal power relations and overcoming challenges among them (Pigg, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). To effectively foster community leadership by resolving the challenges including power conflicts, many scholars suggest learning and educational efforts based on dialogue, trust, and equal relationships beyond social and organizational status as a critical factor (Balatti & Falk, 2002; Bickford & Wright, 2006; Jarvis, 2007; Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Martin, 2004; Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008; Pigg, 1999; Sawchuk, 2003).

With regards to this, Kirk and Shutte (2004) argue “if capacity building through community leadership is a process, learning must be at the heart of that process” (p. 238, italics added). Namely, they mentioned the importance of learning through ongoing dialogues that occur in a safe context that allows participants to freely communicate with each other without the oppression by power relations. Based on this reflection, they suggested the community leadership development framework (see Figure 2.1).

![Community Leadership Development Framework](image)

*Figure 2.1. Community leadership development framework. Adapted from “Community Leadership Development Framework” (Kirk & Shutte, 2004, p. 239).*
In this case, “dialogue” goes well beyond a simple communication. It approaches collective thinking or inquiry by in-depth discussions among all participants in order to continually identify a common purpose and move together into a shared direction. Meanwhile, connective leadership is relevant to (1) help “individuals connect with their goals (establishing their roles),” (2) help “members collectively to explore the possibilities and potential of connecting with a common goal (effective team working),” (3) help “to create and sustain a creative space where collective leadership can flourish” (Kirk & Shutte, 2004, p. 241). Finally, collective empowerment is concerned with helping individuals to find their place, role, identity, and voice in the community. These three factors are interrelated for developing community leadership. For the community leadership, the framework shows the significance of creating a sustainable and risk-free community that allows participants to establish a common purpose or direction by collective learning through free dialogues not influenced by the power relation or social status.

Pigg (1999) also stresses that identifying an intrinsic interest or common purpose by creating a relational community is important to developing community leadership. This argument is connected with a discussion of Wilkinson (1991):

What is important to defining community development is the orientation (i.e., the substance of the purposes) of the actors. The actors usually have specific tasks and goals in mind, and they tend to give little thought to the structure of relationships through which the goals are pursued. Community development occurs when the actors attend explicitly to the relationships among themselves and try in some way to alter those relationships, specifically so as to increase the generality of the relationships among themselves. This orientation of the actors to the structure of community relationships is a most distinctive property of community development. (p. 95)

Moreover, Pigg (1999) argues that “the ability of leaders (and followers) to see one another as allies, collaborators, people with capacities and resources of potential value to the mutual
purposes of the relationship is very important attitude to cultivate” community leadership (p. 205). In addition, he also emphasizes free communication and learning activities.

However, what they miss is understanding how community leadership is built and developed by thoroughly examining their learning. Namely, there are few studies on how dynamic learning takes place in the community and for the community development by the process of community leadership.

**Community Organizations, Community Leadership, and Learning**

**Importance of COs for Community Leadership and Learning**

To effectively form and develop community leadership, the role of COs is critical. COs are a cultural product of community itself, in that community members establish them by responding to social issues in their quest for a better community (Green & Haines, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). The role of COs is very important in community building, because they enhance community members’ well-being in various settings including social, emotional, physical, and economic (Rubin & Rubin, 2008). Green and Haines (2002) argue that “successful communities generally have successful organizations representing their interests” (p. 72). Hence the COs’ activities contribute to build, facilitate and strengthen not only community leadership but also a variety of community assets (Green & Haines, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2008).

In fact, COs play a pivotal role in community development: “a planned effort to build assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life” and to solve the social problems of community (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 8). Moreover, “CBOs [community-based organizations] often build local assets better than governments or markets” (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 70). Rubin and Rubin (2008) describe the organizational strengths of COs for community organizing and empowerment:
(1) Organizations Focus Power … Organization coordinates the actions of large numbers of people and politicians pay attention … When those in power receive a complaint from an individual, it is often ignored … (2) Organizations Provide Continuity … Having an organization in place, especially one with a paid staff, means that the interest in the issue will persist. (3) Organizations Can React Quickly … established, progressive organizations scan the action environment, noting what has changed and respond quickly to prevent problems from getting out of hand … (4) Organizations Help Individuals Develop Personal Capacity … teach people business and job skills, how to cope with personal problems … help individuals economically perhaps through training in business skills while others help people overcome disabling problems – drug addiction, for instance – and gain the strength to build a new life. Leadership skills that organizations teach … have an important role in life … (5) Organizations Build Capacity by Garnering Expertise and Information … Organizations become the depository of knowledge obtained through successful projects and actions, storing these experiences in the memories of their employees … or in documents and records that the organization maintains … Those in power try to avoid fixing problems by pretending they don’t exist. Social change organizations gather the information that belie these excuses … (6) Capacity and Organizational Networks. Social change organizations come together within networks in ways that expand community capacity … link their efforts in a common mission. These networks expand capacity by sharing knowledge about problems. (pp. 96 – 99)

In other words, COs could potentially play a role in more effectively building and developing community leadership than separated individuals or groups in daily lives.

In addition, the efforts of COs provide a lot of benefits in terms of socio-psychological aspects, social capital, and creation of new knowledge to contribute to a community, and
economic development through collaborative activities among community members as well as other communities. In this process, people can seek the meaning of life and obtain psychological stability in their local communities (Henslin, 2002). Moreover, the communities help to form a trust-based social network based on learning activities among participants by understanding each other, creating meaning about their collaborative work, enhancing original culture, and obtaining new knowledge (Balatti & Falk, 2002; Geertz, 1975; Kilpatrick, Field, & Falk, 2003; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008). The learning activities in the local communities provide socioeconomic benefits by creating social capital. Eventually, the social capital, which is based on the trust relationship in local communities, contributes to facilitate the co-working of networks to accomplish a common object (Balatti & Falk, 2002; Kilpatrick et al., 2003; Putman, 2007). The learning activities in the community also promote the voluntary participation of adults. Their learning and the self-directed volunteer’s informal learning plays an important role in deepened and expanded adult learning with a focus on reflection as well as community development (Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008). With regards to this, the learning/educational activities in a community are magnified as an alternative and important way to overcome formalizing in adult education (Bickford, & Wright, 2006; Johnson, 2000). Therefore, COs are a key factor in community development in that they effectively create a fundamental base for developing community leadership.

**Problems and Challenges of Community Leadership and Learning**

Although COs provide various benefits in building community leadership, the organizations always have external and internal tensions (Rubin & Rubin, 2008). At first, they are exposed to external leadership issues. Green and Haines (2002) point out:

Probably the biggest challenge that CBOs face is the tension between public participation and leadership … they may lack the leadership to carry through with their objectives.
Conversely, strong leadership may be a deterrent for many people to participate in the organization. (p. 73)

In particular, the professionalism of staff in COs by management or instrumental approaches may result in the limited participation of diverse stakeholders and future prevent from developing community leadership (Green & Haines, 2002; Pigg, 1999).

Meanwhile, the more that diverse people participate in the activities for community leadership, the more it may be possible for members to encounter socio-cultural tensions or differences. This is also true when collaborating with other groups or organizations. All human beings and groups/organizations fundamentally have their social identity, culture, specific stereotype socially and historically accumulated (Ashmore, Jussim, & Wilder, 2001; Fetterman, 1998; Schein, 2004); when the stakeholders sufficiently recognize and allow for the differences and make efforts to overcome challenges with each other, genuine community leadership building can be initiated (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, & Allen, 2001; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). Hence one of the important issues confronting community members is how they deal with the socio-cultural contradictions among them.

As an external factor, competition among groups or organizations based on limited resources is traditionally one of the basic latent factors that obstructs community leadership (Green & Haines, 2002; Hare, 1992; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). COs are always affected by changes in the external environment, such as the disappearance of funding sources, the change of place (e.g., gentrification or developmental issues), the revision of federal law, natural disasters, the change of population and so on (Freeman & Braconi, 2004; Gotham, 2007; Green & Haines, 2002; Johnson & Beale, 1998; Pais & Elliott, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2008; Zukin, Trujillo, Frase, Jackson, Recuber, & Walker, 2009). Those external factors may demand changes to the structure and culture of COs or decide whether to continue them to overcome the challenges.
In addition to external factors, including relationships with diverse stakeholders, COs have internal leadership tensions in terms of interpersonal relationships. According to Green and Haines (2002), COs are different from traditional categories of organizations in that “they frequently provide services, but they also are activist organizations promoting social change” (pp. 72-73). The non-traditional attribute of COs enables them to allow diverse participants in their activities ranging from employees (e.g., directors, staff members) to volunteers, community residents, and external activists. In other words, they all perform activities to build community leadership. In this situation, the actions and words of leaders are significant in that “they can reinforce a democratic organization culture, by encouraging involvement of community members” (Rubin & Rubin, 2008, p. 100). Although the behavior and language of leaders or participants are also influenced by organizational culture, “most CBOs pay very little attention to organizational processes including relational issues among staffs because they tend to focus on the community’s issue” (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 72; Schein, 2004, italics added).

These challenges all reflect that it is necessary to consider both external and internal factors including a variety of relationships. They also have a potential to impede learning of participants in that learning is closely intertwined with community leadership development (Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Pigg, 1999). However, a lot of studies partially understand community leadership focused on conflict issues. Namely, not many studies for community leadership, coalition building, or community development have thoroughly examined how participants perform processes to overcome the challenges for better advancement or transformation with considering diverse relationships. Furthermore, they have not thoroughly considered the role of learning for the processes, although learning is a key factor for community leadership development.
Community Leadership and Learning of Korean Americans

Socio-Cultural Issues

As an immigrant group, KAs have struggled to obtain better lives and contribute to society as Koreans while simultaneously becoming members in the United States. Most were enthusiastic to confront problems such as their children’s education, expatriate adjustment difficulties, employment challenges, and so on (Choi, 2001; Noh & Avison, 1996). To overcome the problems and limitations, they spontaneously create communities, and these communities then play a pivotal role in their lives (Chang & Diaz-Veizades, 1999; Min, 1996, 2010; Zhou & Kim, 2006). For their adjustment, the communities provide diverse social services related to education, family issues, health, language, law, and so forth (Min, 2006). Besides, a considerable number of KAs share their own experiences and learn from each other within the communities. Learning activities within numerous social networks in the communities provide KAs with psychological and mental stability as well as practical help for their lives (Noh & Avison, 1996; Zhou & Kim, 2006).

Various KACOs have played a pivotal role in building and developing the diverse communities in daily lives. In particular, KA churches and ethnic groups/organizations have served as a representative CO to support the first generation (Chang, 2006; Min, 2006, 2010). In fact, a number of first-generation immigrants have had a tendency to join religious or cultural organizations in order to preserve traditional heritage, to feel comfortable, to obtain information, and to increase mobility by building ethnic solidarity through social relationships. For their participation, their adjustment and that of their children is a very significant issue for those living in unfamiliar U.S. ways. As a result, many studies only focus on church-based activities, psychological/behavior adjustment and mental stability, and children’s educational achievement in formal education settings (Chang, 2006; Choi, 2001; Ecklund, 2006; Min, 2010; Noh & Avison,
1996; Zhou & Kim, 2006). Moreover, existing sociological studies have largely focused on entrepreneurship and ethnic tension with African or Hispanic Americans in business because many KAs have served in small businesses with them (Min, 2006; Park, 1997; Yoo, 1998). However, these studies did not thoroughly consider the emerging ontological phenomena expressed by various socio-cultural issues that KAs have encountered, as well as increase of social change COs.

After the Los Angeles riots in 1992 and following economic growth, KAs recognized the necessity of developing political power, and positive participation in community activities has increased. This change has led to increased community movements centered on COs and also changes in KAs’ perspectives based on ethnic solidarity. Especially, the new generations involved in COs saw the need to not only protect the interests of KAs by advocacy activities and organizing them, but also to promote racial harmony and social justice by positive collaboration and political participation (Park, 1999; Min, 2006).

The latter generations include new leader groups who generally have a higher educational attainment and a mixed Korean and American identity. Their participation largely resulted from negative experiences that indicate their struggle with visible and invisible discrimination related to skin color and background. Although they are open to collaborate with the first-generation groups of KAs, their efforts have been advanced into more coalition with other ethnic groups beyond ethnic solidarity. These phenomena sometimes bring out socio-cultural tensions among KAs’ generations, KACOs, or with other ethnic groups (Chung, 2007; Chang, 1992; Park, 1999; Min, 2006).

Existing studies point out generational conflicts have occurred with younger KAs who refuse to take on Korean values, culture, and traditions that are embedded in the KA society (Chung, 2007; Min, 2006). This indicates that studying community leadership based on KACOs must consider a diverse and complex view related to socio-cultural aspects. Moreover, KAs have
distinctive behavioral patterns with other Asian groups. For instance, in Queens, New York, many Chinese Americans live in an area located in their workplace and pursue co-investment by many persons for managing the business. On the other hand, many KAs not only keep living areas separate from their workplaces, but they also avoid a joint investment (Jeong, 2008; Lee, 2004). It is a result of the difference of cultural belief, language, religion, and tendency (Min, 2006; Park, 1997). This means that cultural diversities in the KA community and differences with other Asian groups cannot be subsumed under generalized categories from quantitative studies that obscure diversity of experience. However, many studies still consider “Asian American” as one group that has a similar characteristic under the same culture without considering diverse socio-cultural aspects in a specific context (Lee, 1998; Min, 2006).

**Limited Understanding of Community Leadership and Learning**

Some previous literature has made considerable efforts to understand KAs’ community in terms of community leadership. Through introducing a case of Black Korean Alliance, Chang (1992) pointed out the efforts of sharing resources by “maximizing commonalities while minimizing differences” between KAs and African Americans are important for reducing conflict between the two ethic groups (p. 37). For their coalition, the author suggests mass media should play an important role in educating the groups and stresses education programs that allow them together.

In similar research, Norman (1994) emphasizes the opportunities for dialogue between the two communities in order to increase understanding each other and resolve their conflicts. Furthermore, through a study of coalition building among KACOs and other ethnic groups for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community, Quon (2002) also identified that creating common themes and education opportunities for community members by ongoing planned efforts is important for the continuous collective social movement.
On the other hand, Dhingra (2003) outlined that the socio-cultural aspects of a local area (such as Dallas culture, population size, and economy) affected the participation of community members by introducing a case between a second-generation KACO and an Indian American association in Dallas, Texas. The author argues that the KACO and the association’s approaches lead in an unintended way that implies the partial or limited participation of community members if the COs downplay the importance of cultural aspects.

More specifically, Chung (2007) confirms the role of KACOs as “an important medium for providing mutual aid to incoming immigrants and raising the status of individual leaders within the community” (p. 23). By investigating two KACOs in Los Angeles, California, she mentions the effects of tensions and conflicts surrounding COs among different generations on their activities. At the same time, she found the participation of varied generations who have a variety of ethnic-centered experience influence on making a distinguished organizational culture. Moreover, the generations contribute to enhance the attainment to other communities as well as KAs by addressing and appealing to diverse social issues.

However, these studies do not systemically examine the phenomenon of community leadership without thoroughly considering learning issues similar to the existing literature for community leadership described above. Besides, most previous studies of KAs still place more focus on inter-ethnic or racial conflict in small businesses and organizational conflict or competition (Chang, 1992; Chang & Diaz-Veizades, 1999; Min, 1996; Park, 1997). Despite the fact that COs have practically played roles in developing community leadership as a core mediator, not many studies include their inner-relational and cultural issues that influence community leadership, building on an assumption that they are more concerned about local or national issues (Chung, 2007; Green & Haines, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). Furthermore, KA literature in the field of adult education pays little attention to daily learning in the informal settings of workplace, community, or organization including both profit and nonprofit sector.
These partial approaches of the studies prevent thoroughly reviewing the community leadership practices and learning lives of KAs. Ultimately, to comprehensively understand the community leadership of KAs and their daily learning, I argue that internal issues of COs that influence community leadership building should be positively considered as key factors as well as external socio-cultural contexts.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I argued that community needs to be considered as a flexible and interactional field, in which learning may occur, to achieve common objectives that guide activities proposed by CHAT. I then suggested the concept of community leadership that focuses on inter-relationship building processes among multiple stakeholders within the community field to strengthen capacities. This concept has a significant meaning as an alternative approach that denies a stereotype that leadership is understood as a hierarchical or linear process between individuals based on their patterns of behavior or characteristics within a bounded organization or community. In the process of community leadership development, learning was situated in the core as a most significant factor. Moreover, COs have played an important role in developing community leadership as well as facilitating adult learning.

Meanwhile, collective learning that allows risk-free dialogues by accepting differences and creating common purposes among stakeholders is integral to facilitating community leadership. In terms of hindering community leadership, key themes such as professionalism, diverse socio-cultural tensions, competition, other diverse external factors depending on situations, and the inner socio-cultural issues of COs were identified. This means that we should comprehensively examine community leadership and learning, considering both external and internal socio-cultural issues of COs.
Moreover, I argued that the practice of KAs cannot be understood under the same category as other Asian groups due to their historical originality in the United States and cultural diversity. For the community leadership of KAs, I also highlighted the importance of learning/educational opportunities, dialogue to understand differences and share common features/themes/purposes, media’s role, and both local and COs’ socio-cultural contexts from previous KA literature. Interestingly, I found diverse generational participation of KAs in COs’ activities may have potential for building community leadership beyond a view that assumes different generations largely bring out tension or conflict toward each other.

However, existing literature for community leadership including studies of KAs have a limitation in that they do not thoroughly address learning for understanding community leadership, despite its importance. In addition to this, an appropriate framework to investigate how community leadership and learning simultaneously take place was not found, although they cannot be separately understood. With regards to this, I examine CHAT as an alternative theoretical framework for exploring community leadership and learning in the next chapter.
Chapter 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter investigates cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), also known as activity theory, as an alternative theoretical framework for exploring adult learning. I start by discussing how adult learning should be understood. I then briefly discuss the challenges of contemporary adult learning theories. Finally, I investigate CHAT, focusing on its theoretical development, principles, and perspective on learning.

Reflection on Adult Learning

As the self (adult as a human being or subject) does not exist in the society by oneself, the learning of an adult cannot be understood by focusing only on the individual’s internal/cognitive/psychological processes or outcomes as a simple/static phenomenon by focusing on formal settings (Foley, 1999; Illeris, 2004; Merriam et al., 2007). Human or adult learning “simultaneously comprises a cognitive, an emotional and psychodynamic, and a social and societal dimension” (Illeris, 2004, p. 19), and it also “takes place in all the private and non-organized contexts of everyday life” (Illeris, 2004, p. 151).

As Merriam et al. (2007) stated: “Adult learning does not occur in a vacuum. What one needs or wants to learn, what opportunities are available, the manner in which one learns – all are to a large extent determined by the society in which one lives” (p. 25). Alternatively, according to Foley (1999), “Adult learning is a complex and diverse sphere of human activity, as central to human life as work or politics. Adult learning and education are also contextual and contested activities” (p. 7). Their arguments mean that it is impossible for adult learning to simply be described as the changing or developing process of the internal self-directness of the individual. Sawchuk (2003) concludes:
Learning defined as lasting change in the individual is blind to the fact that there are specific discourses of learning that define relevant learning as well as relevant learners … a great deal of learning cannot be talked about because it is tacit, protensional and/or must be performed, often with others, rather than reported individually. Forms of educational research that cannot move beyond either the autonomous individual or the assertion that only self-conscious descriptions of intentional personal change signify the learning process cannot begin to grasp the relationships of social class and learning. (p. 33)

Learning occurs through socio-cultural contexts including persons’ backgrounds as well as external contexts which surround them in their daily lives (Daniels, 2004; Engeström, 1987, 1999, 2001; Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Illeris, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Sawchuk, 2003). Hence, more precisely, learning is not the internal process of the individual but rather a social process including the individual’s all kinds of changes or transformations.

In fact, adult learning in current society takes place more continually and dynamically through interacting with a variety of relationships and socio-cultural contexts (Engeström, 1987; Illeris, 2004; Merriam et al., 2007; Sawchuk, 2003). This means that human learning, especially adult learning, cannot be simply understood as a functional or vertical phenomenon that occurs in well-structured educational/learning settings, or the internal/cognitive/behavioral change of each individual. Adult learning includes not only horizontal aspects but also dynamic phenomena through participating in informal or daily practices. However, existing adult learning theories have several limits when accounting for the entirety of adult learning (Engeström, 1987, 2001; Sawchuk, 2003, 2006).
A Critique of Contemporary Adult Learning Theories

Andragogy and Self-Directed Learning

Andragogy and self-directed learning (SDL) are representative adult learning concepts that focus entirely on adult characteristics (Knowles, 1975; Knowles & Associates, 1985; Merriam et al., 2007; Tough, 1971). Since Knowles introduced the European concept of andragogy to North America, it has become the best-known concept of adult learning. Focusing on the characteristics of adult learning—voluntariness and self-directness, problem-solving, collaboration or participation, utilizing experience and resources—andragogy quickly became a rallying point for adult educators wanting to define their work as separate from childhood education or pedagogy (Knowles, 1975; Knowles & Associates, 1985; Tough, 1971).

About the same time that Knowles introduced andragogy, the concept of self-directed learning appeared in North America. SDL assumes that most adults are engaged in learning projects or events and that this learning is deeply embedded in their everyday lives (Knowles, 1975; Knowles & Associates, 1985; Tough, 1971). The more fundamental assumption of SDL is that adults have self-directedness for learning and that this characteristic is deeply related to andragogy’s assumptions about adults.

These concepts, andragogy and SDL, have a common characteristic in terms of how they distinguish between adults and children. However, regarding their assumptions, it is hard to understand why only adults have a characteristic of self-directedness to learn, because children occasionally show self-directedness or voluntarily make cultural meaning when they learn new concepts and play with toys or the like (Shin, 1995; van der Veer, 2008). Conversely, adults can learn within informal or incidental situations regardless of their intentions (Day, 1998; Marsick & Watkins, 1990, 2001). Although Tough (1971) refers to informal learning, the learning basically indicates intentional or self-directed learning of individuals. However, some adults are not
particularly self-directed, and some may not have the range and depth of life experiences that children in certain situations may have had.

Moreover, Knowles (1975) suggested six major steps for self-directed learning: (1) climate setting, (2) diagnosing learning needs, (3) formulating learning goals, (4) identifying human and material resources for learning, (5) choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and (6) evaluating learning outcomes. An evaluation of these steps raises one question in particular: Do these processes occur by step-by-step or they can be understood by focusing on the individual’s internal processes? Namely, his approach does not thoroughly address the complicated and dynamic attributes of adult learning.

The most important challenge to these concepts is that they do not consider organizational and social interventions in adult learning; they excessively emphasize individual characteristics (Grace, 1996; Merriam et al., 2007). Specifically, they fail to recognize that “social divisions that include power relationships and the systematic distribution of time, resources, and human energy in society are closely interwoven with the adult learning process and play an important role in shaping adult learning” (Sawchuk, 2003, p. 31, italics added from p. 32). As a result, they ignore the socio-cultural and historical context in which learning occurs.

**Cognition and Formalized Educational Setting: Transformational Learning**

Other touchstones of adult learning include transformative learning theory of Jack Mezirow, and the “pedagogy of the oppressed” theory of Paulo Freire (Freire, 1970; Merriam et al., 2007; Mezirow, 1994, 2000). Mezirow’s theory of perspective transformation, based on Jürgen Habermas’s knowledge theory, has significantly influenced the field of adult learning by arguing that an individual’s perspective transformation may lead to social change. It emphasizes problem-solving as a critical component of adult learning (Mezirow, 1994, 2000). His work in this area offers an explanation of how people come to change their understanding, or worldview,
as it relates to self and society. He argues that we acquire meaning perspectives through processes of acculturation and socialization—culturally defined structures that act as perceptual filters.

Meaning perspectives support us by providing an explanation of the happenings in our daily lives, but at the same time they are a reflection of our cultural and psychological assumptions. Meaning perspectives are underpinned by sets of unquestioned assumptions about the way of the world. In Mezirow’s model, transformative learning occurs when there is a transformation of a person’s meaning structures: a perspective shift. Such a shift may be the result of a cumulative process, but often occurs as a consequence of a ‘disorientating dilemma’ that leads a person to critically reflect on the assumptions that underpin his or her meaning structures. Such reflection may lead to recognition of discontent and the subsequent trial and adoption of a new meaning perspective, incorporating new knowledge, roles, skills and relationships (Mezirow, 1994, 2000).

Freire’s work focused more on the nature of the relationship between education and social transformation. In particular, Freire was critical about the role of mainstream education in reproducing relationships of power and domination, and he argued that education was a process that could never be politically neutral (Freire, 1970). In contrast to Mezirow, Freire is much more concerned about a social transformation via the unveiling or demythologizing of reality by the oppressed through the awakening of their critical consciousness. In this process, they learn to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1994, 2000). In Freire’s work, it is raising of awareness, or conscientization (emancipation and empowerment), that allows learners to then take action (praxis) to address oppression in their lives and the world around them (Freire, 1970).

Despite the differences, both theories focus on the importance of critical reflection or conscientization as part of the process of the transformation of the individual’s perspective. Although they consider social interactions and situational context important to adult learning and try to expand the range of transformation to the group or organizational level (e.g., action learning;
Yorks & Marsick, 2000), they fundamentally emphasize not only the internal process of the individual, especially cognitive change or development, but also focus on systemized or well-bounded settings such as a classroom (Baumgartner, 2001; Freire, 1970; Merriam et al., 2007; Mezirow, 1994, 2000). In addition, Mezirow’s transformative learning has a limit in that he incompletely and selectively applies Habermas’s theory to his own theory. As Sawchuk (2003) indicates:

The theory of transformative learning centers on relations of communicative action that Mezirow claims are key to understanding learning that synthesizes the disparate and competing forms of rationality. As in the discussion of Knowles and Tough, in this approach we are left with what Newman (1994) has correctly described as a vision of free-floating communicators, unfettered by material constraints that play such an important role in shaping learning among subordinate groups. Hart’s (1990) critique is perhaps one of the most relevant, centering on Mezirow’s suggestions of universalism in the communication process. Mezirow’s perspective for the lofty heights of high abstraction over the real, concrete circumstances of learning life invariably leads to serious difficulties. (p. 33)

Although Freire’s concept of praxis and conscientization emphasizes upper-level change such as group, community, and society based on informal dialectic communication, it is not free from critique in that it still focuses on formal and curriculum-based education (Sawchuk, 2003; Smith, 2002). Moreover, Freire’s concept of conscientization does not itself provide “a means of making visible the actual social nature of the learning processes of subordinate groups” (Sawchuk, 2003, pp. 35-36).
**Experiential Learning**

There have been theoretical efforts to overcome individual (subject) and society (object) dualism as well as the concentration on individual characteristics and the cognitive dimension in adult learning. Experiential learning theory is one effort to closely consider social context through examining the importance of experience to adult learning (Dewey, 1938; Fenwick, 2000; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb, 1984; Merriam et al., 2007). According to Kolb (1984), “learning is a continuous process grounded in experience” and “knowledge is continuously derived and tested out in the experiences of the learner” (p. 27). Although there are many approaches to experiential learning, in general, they have six propositions:

First, learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes … Second, all learning is relearning by examining/refining belief and idea … Third, learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation (between reflection, action, feeling, and thinking) to the world … Fourth, learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world … Fifth, learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment … Finally, learning is the process of creating knowledge. (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194)

The diverse approaches for experiential learning theories are fundamentally based on John Dewey’s philosophy. His theory emphasizes the role of experience in education to overcome the challenge of traditional education that focuses on knowledge transmission, separated from experience. Dewey (1938) stated that “the belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experience are genuinely or equally educative” (p. 25). Namely, he argues that all experience does lead to learning but not necessarily education: “for some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience” (p. 25). In order for educative learning to occur through experience, Dewey (1938) suggests two major principles of continuity and interaction:
The principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after. (p. 35)

An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment… (p. 43)

Continuity focuses on the longitudinal aspect of experience: a learner connects current experiences with past experiences as well as future implications. The continuity principle is involved “in every attempt to discriminate between experiences that are worthwhile educationally and those that are not” (Dewey, 1938, p. 33). Meanwhile, the principle of interaction is a concept that emphasizes the situatedness of experience. In other words, an individual’s past experiences or interests based on those experiences affect his understanding of the current environment, and this leads to the creation of a specific situation. This current experience also affects future experience. Thus the two principles are not separate from each other because an individual continually interacts with his environment (Dewey, 1938).

Dewey provides valuable arguments that learning should be understood using the interactional connection between the individual and society, based on examining the past and current experiences of individuals. However, his arguments are still problematic in that he assumes the learning process is depicted by dividing the psychological dimension (individual’s internal conditions) and the sociological dimension (external conditions). Even though he emphasizes the integration between individual and society, his concept of experiential learning consequently brings out the separation of learner from context, since he does not suggest what connects the individual and society (Fenwick, 2000; Park & Schied, 2007). Namely, he does not articulate the mechanism of two principles that operate with each other, and other experiential theories also do not sufficiently provide socio-cultural mediations to connect between individual and society (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Park & Schied, 2007; Youn & Baptiste, 2007).
Moreover, most experiential learning theories do not sufficiently explain how learning is derived from experiences and how the negative aspects of learning or contradictions of subjects by experience occur (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Fenwick, 2000; Merriam et al., 2007). In addition to this, although other experiential theories make efforts to expand their perspectives, ranging from conceptions of reflective constructions of meaning to psychoanalytic, situated, emancipatory, and ecological theories of learning, it is hard for them to avoid the critique that they still place more emphasis on cognitive or individual dimensions of learning (Fenwick, 2000).

**Informal, Organizational, and Situated Learning**

Recently, some efforts have attempted to overcome such problems as the concentration on formalized learning, dualism between individual and society, and individually focused approaches. Although these efforts definitely help expand adult learning perspectives, they also present several limitations.

The concepts of informal learning are related to many adult learning theories and provide a useful theoretical foundation for them beyond the concept of learning in formalized settings (Marsick & Wikins, 2001). However, the concepts do not thoroughly consider a variety of social or power relations and cultural mediations as they still focus on modeling and learning at the level of individuals. In particular, they do not suggest an appropriate theoretical framework for understanding informal learning of adults over a definitional classification (see Eraut, 2004, Marsick & Wikins, 2001, and Livingston, 2006).

The concepts of organizational learning or learning organization expand the learning level from the individual to the organization (see Argyris, 1977, Argyris & Schön, 1978, Crossan, Lane, White, & Djurfeld, 1995, Fiol & Lyles, 1988, Levitt & March, 1988, Senge, 2006, and Yorks & Marsick, 2000). Despite this change, these conceptualizations are not free from a critique that individuals are considered a sub-function of the organization. This is especially true
in the field of organizational development and the idea of knowledge management. In this view, individual learning only exists to support better organizational systems, and the diversity of learning is restricted in a systemized setting (Kim, Joo, & Schied, 2010). This approach, eventually, has a strong possibility to more closely focus on formalized educational trainings or programs under the systemic management perspective. Moreover, although adult learning is also involved in resolving contradictions, many models of organizational learning have an assumption that “the assignment for knowledge creation is unproblematically given from above” (Engeström, 2001, p. 151).

Finally, the situated learning theory of Lave and Wenger (1991) points out the situatedness of learning. Lave and Wenger describe learning as effectively occurring in socio-cultural practices (mutual engagement, shared repertoire, and joint enterprise) among legitimate peripheral participants and full participants in a community of practice (CoP). The CoP is a self-organized or selected group which has their original rules and cultural artifacts to create, expand, exchange knowledge, and develop individual capabilities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). Despite the fact that they emphasize group interactions or collaborative practices on learning in socio-cultural contexts beyond the focus of individual learning, they do not capture the diverse types, directions, or dimensions of learning. They assume one-way movement within a well-bounded CoP to become collaborative subjects of learning (Engeström, 2001). Engeström and Miettinen (1999) stated:

The problem here is in the temporal dimension … [which] depicts learning and development primarily as a one-way movement from the periphery, occupied by novices, to the center, inhabited by experienced masters of the given practice. What seems to be missing is movement outward and in unexpected directions: of authority, criticism, innovation, initiation of change. Instability and inner contradictions of practice are all but
missing – ironically, a feature of which Lave and Wenger (1991, pp. 47-48) themselves criticize Vygotskian notions of internalization. (p. 12)

Although the necessity of socio-cultural and political contexts of adult learning and diverse types of learning in daily lives has been emphasized, current learning theories partly fail to overcome basic challenges, such as the primary focus on the learning of individuals, the privileging of the cognitive or psychological dimension of learning, subject (i.e., individual) and object (society) dualism, and the focus of formalized or well-bounded setting (Engeström, 2001; Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006; Kim et al., 2010; Park & Schied, 2007; Sawchuk, 2003; Youn & Baptiste, 2007). The definite limitations of contemporary adult learning theories can be summarized as seen in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Limitation</th>
<th>Individuals’ characteristic</th>
<th>Cognitive, internal, or psychological, change/development</th>
<th>Dualism</th>
<th>Formalized education/ learning</th>
<th>Well-bounded/ systemic view</th>
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<td>Knowlesian approaches</td>
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<td>Transformational learning</td>
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<td>Experiential learning</td>
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<td>Informal learning</td>
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<td>Organizational learning</td>
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<td>Situated learning</td>
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In particular, although adult learning is an ongoing dynamic and complicated socio-cultural phenomenon beyond the individual (Cunningham, 1998; Engeström, 1987, 2001; Illeris, 2004; Sawchuk, 2003), many adult learning theories have largely discussed learning within the
boundary of individual as a unit of analysis by focusing on internal or psychological processes and outcomes (Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2005; Mezirow, 1994, 2000). This focus on the individual primarily results from an unconvincing assumption that internal transformation or the change of individual (e.g., critical reflection, perspective transformation) should take place prior to something (e.g., social action or transformation) as one-way process.

While they recognize the importance of social context—and some theories do in fact suggest social outcomes for adult learning—they do not provide a theoretical framework for thoroughly understanding how learning occurs in the socio-cultural context by dynamically crossing boundaries between the individual and society in daily lives (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Marsick & Wakens, 2001; Wenger, 1998; Yorks & Marsick, 2000). More importantly, most of them do not thoroughly suggest specific socio-cultural mediations between the individual and society as requisites for understanding adult learning (Engeström, 1987, 2001; Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Sawchuk, 2003; Youn & Baptiste, 2007). These limitations lead to an insufficient understanding of adult learning based on the dualism between individual and society (Engestöm, 1999, 2001; Sawchuk, 2003).

Eventually, these partial or limited understandings of the existing theories on adult learning prevent a comprehensive examination of daily learning in urban communities that have diverse and dynamic characteristics. In this regard, CHAT may provide a useful framework to overcome those limitations. CHAT assumes that learning is dynamic across individuals and society, and that it occurs in social context in the activities of daily living including all formal, non-formal, and informal learning settings by focusing on learning at the social level through suggesting the concept of activity (Engeström, 1987, 1999, 2001; Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Engeström & Sannino, 2010; Foot, 2001; Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006; Leont'ev, 1978; Park & Schied, 2007; Sawchuk, 2003; Youn & Baptiste, 2007).
Theoretical Development of Cultural Historical Activity Theory

According to Kaptelinin and Nardi (2006), CHAT is an “approach in psychology and other social sciences that aims to understand individual human beings, as well as the social entities they compose, in their natural everyday life circumstances, through an analysis of the genesis, structure, and processes of their activities” (p. 31). This activity theory or CHAT was initiated from the cultural historical school of Russian psychologists L. S. Vygotsky, A. N. Leont'ev, and A. R. Luria in the 1920s and 1930s, and is philosophically rooted in Karl Marx’s ideas (Engeström, 1987, 1999, 2001; Leont'ev, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978). Marx and Engels (1968) argue:

The chief defect of hitherto existing materialism (that of Feuerbach included) is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively. Hence in contradistinction to materialism, the active side was developed abstractly by idealism – which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, but he does not conceive of the human activity itself as objective activity. Hence he does not grasp the significance of “revolutionary,” of “practical-critical” activity.

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.

The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice. (pp. 659-660)
The concept of sensuous human activity not only transcends the dualism between ideal (individual subject) and material (objective social environment) dualism but also provides the idea of social change through human activity or revolutionary practice (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). The revolutionary practice is “not to be understood in narrowly political terms but as joint ‘practical-critical activity,’ potentially embedded in any mundane everyday practice” (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 3). As well as the activity idea, Marx’s concept of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption greatly affects the foundation of CHAT (Engeström, 1987; Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). As a theoretical framework, the development of CHAT is generally divided into three generations (Engeström, 2001).

**First Generation: Cultural Mediation**

Generally speaking, CHAT has been developed through three generations. The first generation was initiated by Vygotsky. Along with his colleagues Leont’ev and Luria, he developed the idea of ‘mediation’ as a cultural tool for human actions in order to explain that the individual could not exist without society and vice versa (see Figure 3.1). In other words, a human (S) never reacts directly to the environment (R), but instead the individual (subject) and the objects of environment (object) are indirectly connected by the cultural mediating artifacts: tools and signs (X). Through developing this idea, he overcame the dichotomy between individual and societal structures and thus in great detail he could suggest the idea that an object lies in equal position to a subject (Engeström, 1987, 2001). Vygotsky and his colleagues also devised a new theoretical framework that stressed the incorporation of cultural, historical and societal aspects into understanding how individuals function mentally (Roth & Lee, 2007). However, this approach had a fundamental limitation in that it focused individual as the unit of analysis.
Second Generation: Collective Activity

To overcome the first generation’s limitation, Leont’ev tried to distinguish between an individual action and a collective activity. This work of Leont’ev is considered to be the second-generation activity theory. Leont’ev suggested a famous example, the ‘primeval collective hunt’:

A beater, for example, taking part in a primeval collective hunt was stimulated by a need for food, or perhaps, a need for clothing, which the skin of the dead animal would meet for him. At what, however, was his activity directly aimed? It may have been directed, for example, at frightening a herd of animals and sending them towards other hunters, hiding in ambush. That, properly speaking, is what should be the result of the activity of this man. And the activity of this individual member of the hunt ends with that. The rest is completed by other members. This result, i.e., frightening of the game, etc., understandably does not in itself, and may not, lead to satisfaction of the beater’s need for food, or the skin of the animal. What the processes of his activity were directed to did not, consequently, coincide with what stimulated them, i.e., did not coincide with the motive of his activity; the two were divided from one another in this instance. Processes, the object and motive of which do not coincide with one another, we shall call “actions.” (Leont’ev, 1981, p. 210)
In this example, even if he is participating in the hunting activity, his action is frightening animals by beating a drum, because he needs to send the game to other hunters hiding in ambush. In other words, the goal-directed action is distinguished from the object or motive-directed activity (Kuutti, 1996; Leont'ev, 1978). Leont’ev (1978) argued the activity is the minimal meaningful context for understanding individual actions. To specifically explain the activity, he demonstrates three levels of human activeness: activity, action, and operation (see Figure 3.2, Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006, p. 64).

![Figure 3.2. The hierarchical structure of activity. Adapted from “The Hierarchical Structure of Activity” (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006, p. 64).](image)

An activity is accomplished only through actions, and the actions are accomplished only through operations (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006; Leont'ev, 1978). The activity in the top level is distinguished from goal-directed actions and routinized operations, in that it is object (motive)-directed and occurs in mostly conscious ways. On the other hand, operation on the bottom level is often carried out by routinized human beings or automatic machines in relatively less conscious ways based on instrumental (prevailing) conditions (Leont'ev, 1978). Youn and Baptiste (2007) provide a succinct description to explain the difference among activity, action, and operation:

Operations, the most concrete level, are directed by prevailing conditions; actions, the intermediary level, are directed by goals; and activities, the most abstract level, are directed by motives. Operations are particular ways of performing a task – e.g., particular
ways of peddling a bike, or memorizing an algebraic equation … Actions are a set of
operations that are coordinated to achieve particular goal … Motives are biologically
induced, culturally-mediated drives, desires, interests etc. … Goals, on the other hand, are
intermediary objectives, undertaken to satisfy one or more motives. Compared to goals,
motives are more basic, more fundamental, more abstract, and more universal. (p. 2)

This activity, action, and operation are respectively concerned with the questions, “Why
does something take place? What takes place? How is it carried out?” (Baerentsen, 1987 as cited
in Bødker, 1997, p. 151) The above discussions are summarized in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Key Question</th>
<th>Intention</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Why does something take</td>
<td>Object/Motive/Purpose</td>
<td>Community/Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>place?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>What takes place?</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Individual/Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation</td>
<td>How is it carried out?</td>
<td>Instrumental/Prevailing Condition</td>
<td>Customized Human/ Automatic Machine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The object of activity (either an entity or purpose) is defined as the motive of an activity
(Leont’ev, 1978). The object is based on objectified needs and becomes a true motive when the
needs are based on actions by conscious goals meeting with an object (Foot, 2001, 2002).
Specifically, a motive is an object that meets a certain need of the subject and a drive to perform
an activity by motivating subject (Foot, 2002; Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006; Leont’ev, 1978). Thus
the object or motive is “the most important attribute differentiating one activity from another”
(Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006, p. 61).

Leont’ev explicated the concept of activity by explaining the role of mediating cultural
instruments within the social dimensions of practice. In other words, he argued that the
relationship between the environment and an individual is mediated by cultural means: tools and signs related to the social dimensions and relations of practice (Leont'ev, 1978). Originally, the concept of mediation by human and social relations was not included in the triangular model of the first generation until Leont’ev included the concept of division of labor as a basic historical process at the root of mental functions. Furthermore, Leont’ev suggested the concepts of two other components: rules and community (Engeström, 1987; Leont'ev, 1978). However, he did not concretely clarify these concepts and depict them graphically.

Based on the efforts of Leont’ev, Engeström (1987) suggests the activity system as a triangular model which describes collective rather than individual activities. He makes efforts to systemically arrange the six components of an activity: subject, object, mediating artifacts, rules, community, and division of labor. These components lead the outcome (see Figure 3.3).

![Figure 3.3](image)

**Figure 3.3.** The structure of a human activity system. Adapted from “The Structure of Human Activity” (Engeström, 1987, Chapter 2, para. 1562) and “The Structure of a Human Activity System” (Engeström, 2001, p. 135).

The activity (or activity system) is “a unit of analysis that fulfills the following demands: it is representative of the complexity of the whole, it is analyzable in its contextuality, it is specific to human beings by being culturally mediated, and it is dynamic rather than static” (Foot,
An object motivates the subject to undertake the activity and create intended and unintended outcomes by integrating among other components (Engeström, 2001). The activity system includes four sub-triangles. Those indicate the aspects of human activity - production, distribution, exchange (or communication), and consumption. Expanding on this:

Production creates the objects which correspond to the given needs; distribution divides them up according to social laws; exchange further parcels out the already divided shared in accord with individual needs, and finally, in consumption, the product steps outside this social movement and becomes a direct object and servant of individual need, and satisfies it in being consumed. Thus production appears to be the point of departure, consumption as the conclusion, distribution and exchange as the middle … (Marx, 1973, p. 78)

Although Engeström divided the sub-triangles as four separate functional forms, they are fundamentally inter-related and do not simply divide into individual forms in that “the combination of production, distribution, and exchange are then mediated by a system of social consumption of the product of labor” (Blunden, 2010, p. 230). Thus they need to be understood within an activity system as a whole (Engeström, 1987; Youn & Baptiste, 2007).

At the top sub-triangle, ‘subject’ indicates “the individual or subgroup whose position and point of view are chosen as the perspective of the analysis” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 6). ‘Object’ plays a role in distinguishing an activity from other activities, because it guides and leads the activity. Object refers to a material entity or a non-material purpose that guides the activity. ‘Mediating artifacts (Instruments)’ are cultural tools and signs. They include both abstract and physical artifacts such as ideology, habitus, meetings, language, maps, computer, and a work of art, and all sorts of conventional signs, symbols and so on.

At the bottom line, ‘rule’ includes formal/informal conventions and norms that “afford and constrain the goings on within a functional activity system” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 222-
‘Community’ means a group of people who collaborate over time in sharing the same or similar object of an activity. It is not communities of interests but rather communities of practice (CoP) that share repertoires, undertake joint enterprises, and facilitate mutual engagement. However, ‘community’ here is a flexible group or community more than within a CoP that has a bounded setting. The community has a same object and maintains relationships with the subject over a period of time. ‘Division of labor’ refers to “horizontal division of tasks, assignments, or roles and vertical division of power and status” among actors such as different assignment, role, (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 6, italics added). The rule, community, and division of labor represent one side of socio-cultural contexts with mediating artifacts to conduct the activity (Engeström, 1987, 1999, 2001; Leont'ev, 1978; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). The components within an activity have a hierarchy, as outlined in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3.  
Hierarchical Structure of Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Mediation</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Division of Labor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collective subject</td>
<td>Methodology, ideology</td>
<td>We in the world</td>
<td>Societal network of activities</td>
<td>Societal (state, law, religion)</td>
<td>Societal division of labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual subject</td>
<td>Models</td>
<td>Problem task</td>
<td>Collective organization</td>
<td>Organizational rules</td>
<td>Organizational division of labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-conscious</td>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Immediate primary group</td>
<td>Interpersonal rules</td>
<td>Interpersonal division of labor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from “The Proposed Hierarchical Structure of Activity” (Engeström, 1987, Chapter 3, para. 776).

At the activity level, the collective subject that conducts an activity with the community through establishing societal network is more emphasized. The activity is mediated through the methodology or ideology and the subject is guided by societal rules and division of labor to perfume the activity. The second line in the table is related to the individual’s action that occurs
more immediately in a group or organization. The third line is concerned with unconscious or atomized operations. Even though the emphasized factors are located at the action and operation level, they can move into or be explained at the activity level depending on the socio-cultural situations, collected data, or a researcher’s interest/inquiry for a specific study.

Finally, ‘outcome’ refers to the intended and unintended outcomes of dynamic interactions among elements in the activity. The intended outcomes are related to the object of the activity. Unintended outcomes are unexpected results such as the emergence of new actions, the creation/revision of rules and tools, new activity and so on. These unintended outcomes are related to learning in daily activity (see the latter section, ‘CHAT’s perspective on learning’, for further explanation). All outcomes, eventually, recursively influence the creative or expansive transformation of existing activity as well as that of human consciousness development (Engestöm, 1987, 2001; Engeström & Sannino, 2010; Leont’ev, 1978).

**Third Generation: Activity Networks and Contradiction**

The third generation of activity theory is primarily based on the work of Yrjö Engeström. In this generation, the basic model has evolved to include, at a minimum, two interacting activity systems (see Figure 3.4).
Engeström (2001) explains the figure:

The object moves from an initial state of unreflected, situationally given ‘raw material’ (object 1; e.g., a specific patient entering a physician’s office) to a collectively meaningful object constructed by the activity system (object 2, e.g., the patient constructed as a specimen of a biomedical disease category and thus as an instantiation of the general object of illness/heath), and to a potentially shared or jointly constructed object (object 3; e.g., a collaboratively constructed understanding of the patient’s life situation and care plan). The object of activity is a moving target, not reducible to conscious short-term goals. (p. 136)

The figure shows that the contradiction occurs between the objects of activity systems. Engeström (1987) describes the contradictions as four levels: primary inner contradiction, secondary contradictions, tertiary contradiction, and quaternary contradictions:

1. The primary contradiction of activities in capitalist socio-economic formations lives as the inner conflict between exchange value and use value within each corner of the triangle of activity. (2) The secondary contradictions are those appearing between the
corners. The stiff hierarchical division of labor lagging behind and preventing the possibilities opened by advanced instruments is a typical example. (3) The tertiary contradiction appears when representatives of culture (e.g., teacher) introduce the object and motive of a culturally more advanced form of the central activity into the dominant form of the central activity … The culturally more advanced object and motive may also be actively sought by the subjects of the ventral activity themselves. (4) The quaternary contradictions require that we take into consideration the essential ‘neighbor activities’ linked with the central activity … (Chapter 2, paras. 1883-1898)

His descriptions of contradiction are expressed in Figure 3.5. These contradictions can occur within and between the components in an activity and among activities in the network of activities (Engeström, 1987; 2001). The concept of contradiction is one of the important principles of CHAT, as well as a core value.

In sum, as an alternative approach to understand adult learning, CHAT has been developed from the model of Vygotsky and the notion of activity of Leont’ev into the activity network and the concept of expansive contradiction suggested by Engeström. These efforts can be evaluated as a means to thoroughly investigate the learning and consciousness development of humans under a socio-cultural understanding. This approach escapes traditional approaches of psychology of learning at the individual level based on cognitivism/behaviorism or well-structured/established learning settings.
Figure 3.5. Four levels of contradictions. Adapted from “Four Levels of Contradictions within the Human Activity System” (Engeström, 1987, Chapter 2, para. 1914).

Principles of CHAT

According to Engeström (2001), CHAT has five principles of development to its current state. First, “a collective, artifact-mediated and object-oriented activity system, seen in its network relations to other activity systems, is taken as the prime unit of analysis” (Engeström, 2001, p. 136). Namely, the current generation of CHAT argues that human learning and the development of its consciousness are explained by not a single activity, but rather multiple activities that act simultaneously on each other. CHAT provides dynamic processes in that related activities continually create new activities themselves by generating actions and operations in the activity network.

CHAT emphasizes multi-voicedness of the subject (sometimes including other actors, the community) who perform the activity as the second principle (Engeström, 2001). Obtaining the views of different and diverse subjects make it possible to understand how individuals or
groups represent, perceive, and interpret culturally-mediated tools and symbols. Namely, this multi-voicedness of the activity provides “a community with multiple points of view, traditions, and interests” which are key to the activity (Engeström, 2001, p. 136). Hence the subject is always examined as one of first factors to investigate the activity, due to its importance.

In addition, an activity has not only a division of labor that produces social relations, especially status (position) and power, but also communities that are distinct from the subject but transform a same or similar object. Moreover, “the multi-voicedness is multiplied in networks of interacting activity systems” (Engeström, 2001, p. 136). The various groups guarantee diverse voices which are the possible source of trouble, tension, or contradiction—but also at the same time, innovation—within socio-cultural contexts.

Third, CHAT notes the historicity of activity. Fundamentally, the activity is historically formed over a long period, and it reveals the socio-cultural influences on the activity as a whole. Historicity represents the historical development of the activity. The historicity of activity can be understood by comprehensively investigating the diverse external and internal contexts of the subject of specific study (Engeström, 2001). Moreover, the historicity provides new awareness of how socio-cultural influences on rules and mediating instruments are interpreted or perceived. Furthermore, it gives better insight into how people transform objects as well as outcomes of activities and how this process occurs.

The fourth principle of CHAT involves the major role of contradictions “as sources of change and development” (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). They “are not the same as problems or conflicts,” but “historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems” (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). Negotiating or resolving contradictions leads to the transformation, advancement, and development of activities, and this furthers the activity network.

The final principle is “the possibility of expansive transformations in activity systems” (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). The process of forming the activity reflects long-term historical efforts
based on prior activities. In the process, expansive transformations are achieved “when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualized to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activities” (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). For instance, in an activity or the activity network including activities, if there is a contradiction between subject and social rule within an activity or between/among activities, the contradiction indicates the distance between/among them, or zone of proximal development. In the process of resolving the contradiction or double-bind condition (reducing the distance), an expansive transformation becomes possible, where existing activities are revised or new activity is created based on a new/expanded object by resolving the contradiction. Engeström (2001) argues that the transformational process can be triggered by expansive learning.

These principles of CHAT allow researchers to examine the diverse aspects of community leadership and learning through investigating historically accumulated multiple-activities which includes various voices of stakeholders. Moreover, the process of identifying contradictions and the expansive transformation helps researchers to understand not only what factors to hinder or facilitate community leadership and learning are, but also how they have developed.

**CHAT’s Perspectives on Learning**

Learning in CHAT is a socio-cultural phenomenon developed through the cultural historical human activity (Engeström, 1987). This means that learning occurs through dynamic and continuous interaction among the individual/group (subject), society (object), and cultural mediations within socio-cultural and historical contexts (Engeström, 1987, 2001; Leont'ev, 1978). Lord and Sawchuk (2006) argue:

CHAT is a specific tradition of analyzing learning and human development that accounts for informal as well as formalized learning; consciously directed as well as tacit learning;
individual as well as collective practice; material, organizational and cultural barriers and supports. This offers a systematic social analysis of learning throughout its full range of variation, but never loses sight of the deeply human face of human development. (p. 1)

This approach denies that learning is understood by examining the cognitive change, development, or characteristics of individuals while investigating between subject and object and considering the existence of interactional medians (Engeström, 1987, 2001; Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Sawchuk, 2003). Moreover, learning is understood as not a static, but rather a dynamic and continuous phenomenon that reflects the socio-cultural changes based on the historicity of the individual, group, or community.

Learning in CHAT is presented by diverse outcomes driven by the interaction between/among activities (Engeström, 2001). However, it is important to carefully consider whether or not learning can be described as all outcomes of activity. Most learning in daily activities has unintentional outcomes, because numerous activities in life, workplace, or community do not aim to obtain a planned object/motive/purpose for learning or education. Not every activity leads to the consciously intentional or inevitable learning of individual and community. Besides learning as the activity’s outcome is temporary because the subject or “learners learn something”, “it is not yet there” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 2). In fact, the outcomes are not static but dynamic, in that they always continuously influence existing activities or create possible new activities (Engeström, 1987, 2001). Hence, strictly speaking, learning in CHAT is a possible outcome through activities and at the same time a procedural outcome for another transformation of the activities’ practice (Youn & Baptiste, 2007).

With regards to learning outcome in a study by using CHAT as a theoretical framework, it may be described as diverse forms that include individual learning (e.g., cognitive or behavioral changes, information or knowledge acquisition, task- or problem-solving, etc.) and organizational/community learning (e.g., organization’s fundamental problem-solving, knowledge

In other words, the learning outcomes can be expressed as any forms of those existing theories suggested depending on research interests or researchers’ perspectives. However, CHAT underlines the social or collective outcomes of learning by focusing on the activity’s expansive transformational process of the individual, group, or community as the result of learning more than learning at the individual level. The reason is that the social outcomes represent the higher-level development of human learning (expansive learning at the activity level) that already includes individual learning (Bateson, 1972). I discuss this further in the next section.

**Expansive Learning**

CHAT stresses the expansive or creative transformation that reflects the revision of existing activities or the creation of new activities by resolving contradictions. The transformation can be accomplished by expansive learning (Engeström, 1987, 2001). In order to explain expansive learning, Engeström (1987) introduced the learning hierarchy Bateson suggested. According to Bateson (1997), the hierarchy of learning is divided into three levels:

- **Learning I** is change in specificity of response by correction of errors of choice within a set of alternatives.
- **Learning II** is change in the process of Learning I, e.g., a corrective change in the set of alternatives from which choice is made, or it is a change in how the sequence of experience is punctuated.

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3 Originally, Bateson (1972) suggested five levels of learning including zero learning and learning IV. However, the zero learning was considered to be meaningless and the learning IV was described as the learning level that “probably does not occur in any adult learning organism on this earth” (p. 293). Thus I elucidate the three levels of learning in this chapter.
• Learning III is change in the process of Learning II, e.g., a corrective change in the system of sets of alternatives from which choice is made. (p. 293)

At the Learning I level, “every item of perception or behavior may be stimulus or response or reinforcement according to how the total sequence of interaction is punctuated” (p. 292). Hence learners in this level are passive and respond to new information unconsciously and immediately. The developmental level of Learning I indicates “conditioning, acquisition of the responses deemed correct in the given context - for instance, the learning of correct answers in a classroom” (Engeström, 2001, p. 138).

On the other hand, the Learning II refers to deuto-­­learning (learning to learn) (Bateson, 1997). Since the Learning II is concerned with examining immanent rules and behavioral characteristics occur in the Learning I, it may occur in anywhere at which Learning I is observed. For instance, “in classrooms, students learn the ‘hidden curriculum’ of what it means to be a student: how to please the teachers, how to pass exams, how to belong to groups, etc” (Engeström, 2001, p. 138). This Learning II is composed of two types: Learning IIa and IIb. Learning IIa means reproductions while the Learning IIb relates to productions (Engeström, 1987):

In Learning IIa, the object/outcome is given and the instrument is found through trial and error, that is, through “blind search” among previously known means. In Learning IIb, the object/outcome is given and the instrument is found - or rather invented - through experimentation. (Chapter 3, paras. 461-466)

The developmental level of the Learning II indicates that learners solve pre-given situational problems through transitioning from Learning I to Learning II. Thus Learning II still focuses on trial/experimentation and (re)production under the given context at the level of individual. However, in the process of Learning II, learners sometimes confront contradictory or double-bind situations that that have the possibility of creating expansive learning.
Learning III originated in contradictory or double-bind situations and is motivated through resolving these contradictions. In other words, “a person or a group begins to radically question the sense and meaning of the context and to construct a wider alternative context” (Engeström, 1987, p. 138). Hence Learning III is connected with not only resolving contradictions but also constructing and applying “world outlooks or methodologies - or ideologies” in the practice (Engeström, 1987, Chapter 3, paras. 680-681). Individual symptoms in this learning level can be described as the terms such as “personal crises, breaking away, turning point, or moments of revelation” (Engeström, 1987, Chapter 3, paras. 701-702).

Learning III has its own new problems or new tasks. In Learning III, to solve contradictions, some work or efforts (e.g., continuous recognition on historically accumulated or confronted problems, creations of alternative tools and rules, etc.) inevitably occur. Consequently, Learning III refers to a process that indicates the subject of the activity makes efforts to solve contradictions by creating alternative approaches, solutions, an expanded object or activity, and so on, through collaborating with other groups. Learning through this process means the expansive learning occurred in the level of activity (Engeström, 1987, 2001). The discussions above are summarized as following Table 3.4.

Because Learning III includes Learning I and II, the occurrence of Learning III means that learning at the lower levels already takes place. That is why CHAT focuses not on learning at the individual action or routinized operation, but rather learning at the activity level that addresses expansive transformation by resolving contradictions through collective endeavors.
Table 3.4.  
The Hierarchy of Activity and Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Mediation</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Learning Level</th>
<th>Developmental Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>Methodology, ideology</td>
<td>We in the world</td>
<td>Learning III</td>
<td>Resolution of contradictions/double-bind situations, Creation of new problems/tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Models</td>
<td>Problem task</td>
<td>Learning II</td>
<td>Solution of pre-given problems/tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation</td>
<td>Non-conscious</td>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Learning I</td>
<td>Conditioning, acquisition of the responses/information in the given context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Refer to “Characterizations of the Hierarchical Structure of Activity” and “The Proposed Hierarchical Structure of Activity” (Engeström, 1987, Chapter 3, para. 711 and 776).

Engeström (1999, 2001) proposes the cycle of expansive learning as an ideal type which includes seven learning actions to describe a process where expansive learning occurs by resolving contradictions (see Figure 3.6). In the cycle, contradictions play a role in triggering that the epistemic or strategic learning actions occur by facilitating the logical interactions and communications of the activity’s subject through critical social discourses.
Engeström & Sannino (2010) summarize the sequences as follows:

(1) The first action is that of questioning, criticizing or rejecting some aspects of the accepted practice and existing wisdom… (2) The second action is that of analyzing the situation. Analysis involves mental, discursive or practical transformation of the situation in order to find out causes or explanatory mechanisms. Analysis evokes “why?” questions and explanatory principles. One type of analysis is historical-genetic; it seeks to explain the situation by tracing its origins and evolution. Another type of analysis is actual-empirical; it seeks to explain the situation by constructing a picture of its inner systemic relations. (3) The third action is that of modeling the newly found explanatory relationship in some publicly observable and transmittable medium. This means constructing an explicit, simplified model of the new idea that explains and offers a
solution to the problematic situation. (4) The fourth action is that of examining the model, running, operating and experimenting on it in order to fully grasp its dynamics, potentials and limitations. (5) The fifth action is that of implementing the model by means of practical applications, enrichments, and conceptual extensions. (6) The sixth and (7) seventh actions are those of reflecting on and evaluating the process and consolidating its outcomes into a new stable form of practice. (p. 7)

At the first learning action, questioning, the subject starts to critically view existing practices, wisdom, and some aspects of standards. It occurs through the first level of contradiction (see Figure 3.5). The second learning action aims to search for a reason or mechanism related to how the contradiction took place through a historical and actual-practical analysis. These two actions are to examine the contradictions within and between components in an activity.

The third learning action, based on the previous analysis, is a process to suggest a new experimental relationship, solution, advanced tool, new form of the activity, and so on, between components of the activity in order to the contradictions. These new suggestions have the examining process (the fourth learning action) to confirm their dynamics, potentials, and limitations.

By the examining process, a new model is implemented, if it is accepted. When the model is applied, the third level of contradiction between a central activity and an advanced activity may take place. The contradiction leads to the sixth learning action, reflecting. In this process, the central activity may have contradictions with neighbor activities. By a process to resolve the contradictions, modified relationships among activities based on new theoretical, methodological, or ideological models are incorporated into a new practice and these processes recursively occur (Engeström, 2001; Engeström & Sannino, 2010; Foot, 2001). This process also creates new type of agency, “his or her capacity to change the world and his or her own behavior” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 5).
In sum, CHAT approaches human learning socially, culturally, and historically, and it assumes that learning takes place continuously and dynamically by crossing between individual and society. In addition to this, learning in CHAT is a possible and procedural outcome based on historicity, and it has a potential that leads to expansive or creative transformation. As learning results, CHAT emphasizes the higher developmental levels of learning by creating a new or expanded object through resolving contradictions (expansive learning) such as expanded or revised patterns of existing activities (or rearrangement of the activity network’s practice), socio-cultural and structural changes including new models, and new type of agency.

Although it is significant that Engeström suggested a specific analytic or methodological framework by proposing the activity system and cycle model in order to point out how the higher level learning of adults (expansive learning) socio-culturally and historically occur, his approach to CHAT has some controversial issues.

**Limitations of CHAT**

**Systemic Approaches and Oversimplification**

At first it is difficult to distinguish activity, action, and operation because of the abstractness of the activity. According to Engestöm (2001), expansive learning is more related to the level of Learning III that “radically question(s) the sense and meaning of the context and to construct a wider alternative context” by collective endeavor (p. 138). If we follow this concept of expansive learning, individual learning or group learning basically includes the change of operations that is routinized in practice (Youn & Baptiste, 2007). However, clearly identifying activity, action and operation is not easy work, because operations may be indistinguishable from activities and actions. In particular, it is very hard to examine how the objects or motives of groups differed from individual’s (Davydov, 1999).
In addition, rules, community, and division of labor are blurred. The community and/or division of labor may also have rules and be overlapping (Youn & Baptiste, 2007). More fundamentally, it is still questionable whether the components of CHAT (i.e., rules, community, and labor of division) sufficiently reflect socio-cultural contexts (Blunden, 2010). CHAT also does not thoroughly explain how to understand inner relational forms within each component. This may include a variety of individuals, groups, or organizations such as the subject, community, and division of labor. Moreover, according to Sawchuck (2006), many approaches of CHAT have “not adequately addressed class [invisible] class-cultural dispositions, as either a historical dimension of activity or as a central mediating artifact” (p. 301, italics added). In other words, many approaches utilizing CHAT have emphasized visible artifacts such as language and instrumental tools and ignored more invisible artifacts such as class or ideology. Because of these challenges, the current generation of CHAT cannot be free from a critique of systemic approaches represented by the activity system.

There is also a question about whether or not the explanation of contradictions’ occurrence is directly applicable in practice. According to Engeström (1987), the third level of contradiction takes place between a central activity and another culturally-advanced activity. Depending on the specific situation, however, it may be difficult for researchers to identify precisely what the culturally-advanced activity is. In practical research, it may be more useful that researchers consider the activity as one of the neighboring activities that surround the central activity. In fact, several central activities and neighboring activities may simultaneously occur and exist in the practice. They may also be complicatedly changed or revised by influencing each other. In this case, it is hard to analyze the all historicity and relational patterns of every activity, despite utilizing the systemic framework of CHAT.

Furthermore, the expansive cycle of Engeström (1999, 2001) can be only applicable to a restrictive central activity or a few activities within a well-bounded setting in a specific period
because “the expansive cycle is an ‘ideal type’ of an activity’s development, as any process of
development includes contractions as well as expansions” (Foot, 2001, p. 70). Moreover,
discussions on how learning actions are facilitated or hindered are still limited.

**Ambiguity of Learning as an Activity Outcome**

In terms of learning, even though learning as one of the outcomes of activity may be
described as various individual and organizational changes, it is important to carefully consider
what outcomes result from learning in daily activities. When the current generation of CHAT is
used to investigate daily activities, it may lead to confusion since it does not clearly distinguish
learning outcomes from results through activities. Engeström and Sannino (2010) point out “the
‘what’ of expansive learning consists of a triplet: expanded pattern of activity, corresponding
theoretical concept, and new type of agency” (p. 7). Also a new object, socio-cultural and
structural changes, and possible new actions/activities are mentioned as products or outcomes that
result from the process of expansive learning by resolving contradictions (Engeström, 1987, 2001;
Engeström & Sannino, 2010). These forms that result from expansive learning can be described
as the intended outcomes of learning activity because Engeström’s model is fundamentally based
not on the daily activity, but rather the learning activity that has an object related to learning.

However, the outcomes, in fact, do need to be separated into possible and procedural
unintended outcomes, including learning outcomes and corresponding results of the daily
activities, because most daily activities do not aim to accomplish learning as an intended outcome.
Learning in daily activities is basically a possible and procedural outcome that leads to the results
of expansive transformation. As a result, I depict the sophisticated classification of daily activities’
learning in Figure 3.7.
Because the results are influenced and produced by all kinds of outcomes—both intended and unintended—an assumption, arguing the results are wholly affected by the learning outcomes, cannot be acceptable in daily activities. More strictly speaking, genuine learning outcomes of daily activities need to be considered as one of the unintended outcomes.

The learning outcomes include outcomes at the social (or collective) and individual level. In the social outcomes, although ‘an expanded object’ does not directly mean a learning outcome in contemporary literature of CHAT (Engeström 1987, 1999, 2001; Engeström & Sannino, 2010), it should be firstly considered as an important learning outcome due to its significant mediating role in leading the expansive learning and transformation. Moreover, ‘socio-cultural and structural changes’ that affect existing activities, such as change of rule or structure, creation and implementation of new tools or other mediations, and so on, can be included in the social outcomes. Possibly, ‘new activities’ also are suggested as a social outcome.

Possible learning outcomes at the individual level can be described as ‘new actions of each individual or small group’ and ‘both positive and negative learning at the diverse aspects.’

Figure 3.7. Learning outcomes and results of daily activity
The latter is depicted at the instrumental, communicative, affective, interpretive, essential, critical, political, passionate, and moral level (Newman, 2012).

These unintended learning outcomes influence the results of the activity network that reflect the ‘reconfiguration of activity network’s practice’ with various intended outcomes. The results involve ‘revision or transformation of existing activities’ at the social level and new type of the subject’s agency at the individual level influenced by intended and unintended outcomes. The process including resolving contradictions, creating outcomes, and corresponding results continuously and recursively occurs. Moreover, like the hierarchy of activity including actions and operations, the outcomes and results at the social level are positioned at the higher level by including those of the individual level.

Therefore, in this study, learning is defined as one of the possible and procedural unintended outcomes at both social and individual level including a new object by interacting between/among daily activities historically accumulated. With intended outcomes, these learning outcomes lead to the reconfiguration of an activity network’s practice as the result of expansive transformation.

**Conclusion**

CHAT, like other theories, is not a perfect theory that explains adult learning. However, it is clear that CHAT leads to a change in the adult learning perspective from that of a prevailing psychological orientation that focuses on the dimensions of individuals to a broader and alternative socio-cultural view that considers diverse contexts. This view allows for an examination of adult learning that overcomes the individual and society dualism. Furthermore, the flexible and diverse attributes of CHAT provide a valuable and powerful theoretical framework to examine learning in natural everyday lives without regard to situation (Engeström,
CHAT provides a comprehensive and exhaustive framework for analyzing both the manifest and latent processes among activities. The structure provided by the triangles and the associated diagrams including diverse concepts provides the opportunity to reveal cryptic relations and understand contradictions among participants (Engeström, 1987, 2001; Sawchuk, 2003). In particular, the dynamics of activity network and the concept of contradiction not only overcome an assumption that community leadership and learning always occurs in a positive way but also allow researchers to thoroughly investigate the various aspects of community leadership and learning. In this respect, CHAT is a useful approach when examining community leadership and adult learning in diverse situations.

Even though CHAT provides a comprehensive framework to understand both community leadership and adult learning, it has some challenges in terms of ambiguity of learning outcomes in daily activities and oversimplification by systemic approaches. Given positive reactions to the challenges, learning in this study is understood as possible and procedural social outcomes that include individual outcomes by resolving contradictions such as an expanded object, socio-cultural and structural changes, new actions/activities, and individual learning. These outcomes affect the revision of an activity network by changing existing activities and the agency transformation of subject. Furthermore, the structural or systemic challenges of CHAT require that researchers make efforts to thoroughly examine their field with appropriate research strategies and examine the activity network by in-depth understanding in a lengthy period of time. It requires researchers to carefully consider methodological issues in order to better understand how to apply CHAT in research that aims to investigate daily or informal learning.
Chapter 4. OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH SITE

In this chapter, I first describe the background of the Flushing, New York area, presenting a thick description of my research site to help readers better understand my research approach and methods. I then explore how KACO has developed community leadership, focusing on its organizational and historical aspects from early years to the present. Finally I outline the KACO’s daily practice to depict overall work reality and culture.

Background: The Flushing Area

The organization where I conducted this research (referred to as KACO from this point forward) has been located in the center of Flushing since 2003. Flushing, located in north central Queens, is the largest community county in New York and an entry point for many Asian immigrants. Asians comprised 22.9% of the Queens County population in 2010. The percentage of Asian residents is almost twice that of Asians in the rest of New York (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1.  
2010 Population Statistics of Queens County and New York City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Facts</th>
<th>Queens</th>
<th>New York City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>2,230,722</td>
<td>8,175,133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population, percent change, 2000 to 2010</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td><strong>22.9%</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino origin</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More specifically, Flushing is located in the community district 7 of Queens County. District 7 has the highest density area of Asian population in the districts of Queens (see Figure 4.1).

![Map of Queens Districts](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/cwp/qn.shtml)


According to a report based on the 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, district 7 includes 42.9% of Asian Americans in the total population of the district (Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE), 2011). The Flushing area in district 7 is known as the one of largest Asian American enclaves in the United States. As a matter of fact, whenever I took a bus in Flushing or took the Line No. 7 subway to visit in Manhattan, I met with Asian Americans and heard Korean, Chinese, and others as frequently as I saw Whites and African Americans and heard English spoken. At this unique area, a lot of Korean American (KAs) and Chinese
American (CAs) are living and working on the streets around Flushing-Main St. Station, Line No. 7 as well as Northern Boulevard to the east (see latter Figure 4.2). As an activist who is working in KACO said:

I think (..), the Flushing area (..), it's very unique (..), very unique from any other (..), cities or any other areas where a lot of, there is a high concentration of KAs (..), because people [especially workers] both work here and live here (..), and it’s one of the only cities where KAs and larger group of Asian Americans live and work here. So, you see (..), you see how (..), you see how immigration and (..), immigration affects the people that live here, the workers that work here, and how does all interconnected (..), and I think that’s, that’s very rare, where I grew up, um, you know people worked in DC, or and then came home to the suburbs.

Interviewer (I): Yeah, most of KAs prefer to live in a suburban area.

Oh sure, the social statues, social mobilization and child education yeah (..), yeah I think, I think it’s a little different for (..), for people who settle in here in Flushing. I think there is a different paradigm (..), and yeah it’s very unique, very unique. (O, 120-133)

Because of the existence of small businesses, largely ethnic markets, and restaurants, this area itself includes low-income and limited-English speaking Asian American workers as well as business owners (AAFE, 2007; Min, 2006). Even though they do not speak English well, this is not a problem in their daily life or workplace in Flushing. In addition, it is common to not only see a crowd of Hispanics gathered on the street to find work or get a free lunch, but also to find many of them working in the small businesses. Accordingly, Flushing is and has been a unique

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4 When I quote interview descriptions, I use the double parenthesis including two periods that represents where people are trying to say something, but they have a hard time finding the right words. Through this work, I made an effort to leave out large chunks (e.g. uh, um, mm, ah etc.) and make comments more understandable.

5 The alphabet refers to an interviewee and the numbers refer to the line numbers of the interview transcript. The profile of interviewees is described in Table 5.2.
area that continuously includes various racial groups, immigrants, lower and middle classes, and different generations as well as the large CA and KA communities. As L said:

Here (..), communities in Flushing have been really (..), rapidly changed. Pace of change is so fast. When I (..), I firstly came here, 2000? (..), no, 1999 (..), here was almost Korea town (..), here Main Street and Roosevelt (..), but, Chinese had come here from then on.

From 80s, 90s, KAs had come from Jackson Heights and Woodside to here Flushing (..), but, currently here became a Chinese (..), China town totally. So (..), Flushing is a very special place in New York, it’s an immigrant gateway. If immigrants firstly come to NY, most of them come to Flushing (..), especially Asians (..), but, Latino, South Asians also are in near areas. There are a lot of South Asian communities (..), there is a largest Sikh temple (..), it’s so amazing. So (..), place of intense change, population change, culture change are very (..), very fast. So (..), here has such characteristic. (L, 128-139)

J described it this way:

Many people consider Flushing as an immigrant gateway at the same time a place to get away (..), KAs, of course, have such the tendency. But, new immigrants continually move into Flushing-. So, a certain level of immigrant numbers maintains so far. (J, 149-152)

Although diverse Asian immigrants reside in the Flushing, CAs and KAs are the largest ethnic group. Moving history of KAs and CAs into Flushing’s main area dates back to the 1970-80s. Naturally, Flushing was not a large enclave of KAs and CAs at first. This area was originally established in 1600s:

… founded in 1645 and named for the Dutch town of Vlissingen, Flushing soon became a safe haven for Quakers who found refuge from the ban on their religious practices by then-Governor Peter Stuyvesant. The signing of the Flushing Remonstrance in 1657 protesting religious persecution gives Flushing the claim to being the birthplace of religious freedom in the New World. In the 20th century, Flushing was home to both the
In the 1930s, Flushing was a gateway for European Jews and followed Italians and Greeks. Until the 1970s, ordinary Whites and Japanese who worked at trading companies mainly lived in Flushing (Jeong, 2008; Lee, 2004; Santos, 2010). Afterward, as KA immigrants increased, after the passage of the Hart-Celler Act in 1968, a number of KAs gradually came into Flushing. In those days, KA immigrants expanded their living area from their business zone in Manhattan into closed outside areas such as the neighborhoods in the Bronx as well as the Woodside, Jackson Heights, and Elmhurst neighborhoods of Queens (left side of Flushing, community district 1 and 3 in Figure 4.1). In addition to this, KAs began to locate in the Main Street of Flushing in the mid-1970s (Jeong, 2008; Kim, 2003; Lee, 2004). From that period to the early 1990s, many KAs moved into Flushing and had pride that they contributed to the prosperity of Flushing. Also many KAs described that period by using such terms as hardship, adversity, sacrifice, and diligence (Jeong, 2008; Kim, 2003; Lee, 2004; Min, 1996, 2006).

Many CAs flowed into Flushing in the 1980s due to soaring real estate market prices of Chinatown in Manhattan. Moreover, at the beginning in the late of 1980s, inflow of Hong Kong dollars into Flushing was accelerated by following the decision to return Hong Kong to China in 1999. Hence CAs began to own buildings around Main Street. These situations led KAs to slowly move away from the main area of Flushing because of the Chinese’s capital power (Lee, 2004). According to a KA interview of Santos (2010), she said that “many of the stores occupied by the more than 2,000 Korean-operated businesses in downtown Flushing have CA owners” (p. 1).

A dissimilar tendency between KA and CA also led to the KAs’ movement that they pushed out of the main area. If CAs were first located in a specific area, they tended to expand to other areas around the first area, close together. They often co-invest with other CAs. This
facilitates expansion as they can more quickly buying buildings and real estate. Many KAs are self-employed or have family-centered businesses, and they have a tendency to move their living area away from their places of business while maintaining KA business town (Jeong, 2008; Lee, 2004). KAs move into suburban areas for better living and children’s education after accumulating wealth as possible. F described it:

… KA community in New York has shifted east starting from Jackson Heights and on and on and on (..), now all the way in the Long Island and also to New Jersey, but we always have gone from Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, Woodside and whatever (..), and Flushing. Here, Flushing is where we created (..), where we opened a lot of the business. And then we started moving east (..), Long Island farther and farther to achieve the American Dream, although most of them will not admit that, they say it’s because of the educational reasons for their children. But for most them in their mind this is the American Dream moving to the suburban area. As they gain more economy they move out from the busy cities into more suburban area. So those who are left in Flushing particularly by this main street area are the marginalized community, so (..), all those who are left behind in Flushing are the marginalized people, everyone else is just they have the money, they are incapable of moving because of their situation, whether it’s they’re old, they don’t have money, because they are poor, or their legal status they can’t move, they are bound to Flushing … Sometimes, I feel like KAs are very individualistic (..), they are very proud of being Korean, but it’s not about like working together it’s more about working together but for your family. So, it’s all about my family, my kids, what they are going to be, what I’m doing, all the sacrifices are for my family not for the greater community. (F, 93-116)

A KA woman who has managed a guest house over 20 years in Flushing said: “Actually, at those days, many KA lawyers persuaded KAs not to buy buildings or houses … they [lawyers] said there will be annoying matters if you buy those” (Field Note (FN), 03062011). Additionally, in
Flushing, the numbers of KAs has decreased and their business also has a bit of downturn due to the trend change of recent KA immigrants. In terms of this trend, J said:

Previous KAs immigrated into America to get a job (..), because of poverty. So (..), KAs who want to move to eastern area, many of them move into here [Flushing]. But, recent wealth KA immigrants do not move into Flushing ... Why? They directly move to a wealth place in the U.S. because they should go to a good school district for their children. (J, 159-163)

These tendencies all make KAs more likely to extend their businesses based on streets widely by getting out of the Main Street areas.

As a result, currently, CA businesses have filled up most of the Main Street area in Flushing. On the other hand, KAs commercial areas have extend to the east side around Northern Boulevard. Based on my observation, I illustrated the business zones of KAs and CAs by using Google Map as following Figure 4.2.

![Figure 4.2. Business zone of KAs and CAs](image-url)
In Figure 4.2, the dotted circles refer to CA business zones and others indicate those of KAs. Meanwhile, the star marks the public parking lot of Flushing which is approximately five acres. This parking lot, in particular, has contributed to the prosperity of nearby small businesses owned by KAs by improving customers' accessibility (Kim, 2010; Santos, 2010).

A variety of KA stores, restaurants, and social and medical service clinics were located on Northern Boulevard, Union Street, and the area surrounding Murray Hill Station of the Long Island Rail Road. There are small food stores and big grocery Korean markets. When I looked around, I saw many signboards in Korean and flyers for churches (see Figure 4.3).

*Figure 4.3. Signboards and church flyers in Korean on the Northern Boulevard*

There are so many of advertisements for churches as many KAs have built their ethnic solidarity based on religious organizations (Chang, 2006; Ecklund, 2006; Min, 2010).
With the historical memory of KAs on the Flushing, multiple convenient facilities lead many KAs to consider this area as their second home (Jeong, 2008). When I attended a focus group interview, an old woman said: “I’m living in Manhattan, but I have come here several times in every week (..), many friends are here and medical facilities are very serviceable (..), I could have a relaxed and comfortable mind …” (FN, 01252011) A KA taxi driver said: “[with a sigh] KAs had better days … Look at there [Main Street area] (..), it’s totally China town (..), but, I don’t resent CA people because KAs have a responsibility too (..), constantly leaving here …” (FN, 10162011)

From 146th Street (middle of Figure 4.2) toward Main Street (left side of Figure 4.2), signboards that have mixed Korean and Chinese as well as English began to show. Numerous Chinese stores held the most areas of the Main Street (see Figure 4.4).

*Figure 4.4. The scene of CAs and their stores on the Main Street*
When I first visited Flushing, I was shocked to see the Main Street area because I felt as if I had come to the commercial or marketplace of China. I could not believe that such place existed in the United States. Across from a public library in the middle of the Main Street, Starbucks—which largely has a standardized menu—sold Chinese-style coffees and teas. Moreover, much commercial advertising for U.S. companies were also written in Chinese similar to the styles of KA zones.

Consequently, KAs and CAs share the land in Flushing. Some media occasionally describe it as though there is severe tension between CA developers/owners and KA business owners by a local development plan surrounding the public parking lot (Kim, 2010; Ryu, 2010; Santos, 2010). However, the tension is not between KA and CA community members. As participant I said:

Well (..), generally (..), there is a difference between KA and CA of course, however (..), there is no big conflict like those media said (..), I have been look this area over a pretty long time (..), generally, the conflict results from not common CAs and KAs, but rather among developers and owners. (I, 70-75)

With regards to this, A mentioned the biased view of media:

But let me tell you something about media (..), they love to emphasize even small matters make a big. That’s a role of media (..), I didn’t really know such sudden news and (..), I didn’t see any big tension. Business issues are still ongoing, as long as CA people are in Flushing. Of course you know everyone is different. (A, 116-124)

As a matter of fact, the majority of KAs and CAs in Flushing are working and living separately or together without big tensions or conflicts. The two discrete ethnic groups, along with other Asian Americans, have played a pivotal role in improving the local economy of Flushing. O described it this way:
… when there was no CA, or Asians (..), Asian Americans here (..), Flushing was a dying city (..), you know, 25% of businesses were empty because nobody could afford to pay the rent (..), you know the (..), the streets (..), there was no commercial activity here and it was slowly dying. But (..), as KA (..), KAs and CAs started to come over, it really revitalized the economy here. (O, 177-182)

However, the Flushing area faces several challenges. Although the local economy has been enhanced by the gradually increasing immigrant populations, housing problems have occurred in the area. In particular, these issues mainly result from different interests between developers and low-income immigrants. As G described:

People living here these days (..), it’s not like they [low income immigrants]’re all rich enough to pay the high rent - not too many of them can afford it. One of the reasons why housing is so expensive now in Flushing is because (..), this is a bit of a different story now but, a lot of people live together in one house, a whole lot of them. So even though the rent is so high, they’re still there. That’s because this is where they can do business and at least get a job. KAs are the same (..), and the CA community, too. Sometimes six of them live in a three-bedroom place (..), because they have to pay the rent. I mean, they can’t help it. You have to keep living here even though the rent is high, so you have to pay. And the house owners know that, so they want to keep raising the rent. And when that keeps happening, it just becomes a vicious cycle. The developers build a fine-looking space (..), build a good apartment (..), and then (..), they (..), the developers think (..), they think they could rent the place at a reasonable price, but for the people who set up a base here, that’s actually not (..), that’s not a benefit they [low-income immigrants] can enjoy. (G, 93-108)

In addition to this, there are a lot of undocumented workers who are working in small businesses owned by KAs and CAs. An important issue is that workers occasionally have difficulty because
some unscrupulous owners do not provide their wages by abusing the workers’ unstable status. Moreover, there are ongoing problems in terms of the limited access and opportunities to social services of Asian immigrants as well as KAs and CAs. With the current problems, the KACO’s current office has been located in the central part of Main Street, in the middle of Flushing since 2003.

**Overview of the KACO**

This section explores the organizational and historical aspects of KACO by focusing on its mission, goals, functional structure, and history including its recent changes. This examination is necessary to thoroughly understand how KA activists have historically empowered their community leadership.

**Mission, Goals, and Structure**

By 2008, this organization formally described its mission and goals as follows:

… the mission of meeting the needs and concerns of KA community … places a special emphasis on marginalized community members who have less access to resources, including the youth, the elderly, recent immigrants, low-income residents, and limited English proficient residents.

Our goals are to educate community members about issues that are impacting immigrant communities, including the KA community; to increase KA civic participation and to promote immigrant rights through long-term organizing, advocacy and education programs; to serve the marginalized members of our community through various social services; and to preserve our cultural roots by promoting out ethnic and cultural heritage. (As cited in the 2006, 2007, and 2008 annual reports of KACO)
This organization currently has six programs: advocacy and organizing, social service, civic participation, education and communication, youth, and culture. There are approximately 16 board members and 18 full-time staff. The organization annually recruits two fellows from South Korea as full-time staff providing them with one-year contracts. In addition, the directors or managers of each program recruit seven interns three times a year for spring, summer, and winter.

The organizational structure of KACO has three main parts: a board of directors, a steering committee, and staff arranged by work area (see Appendix A). The previously listed programs are contained within this overarching structure. Each program performs several projects separately, but the programs also work together on specific issues. For instance, the civic participation program largely manages all voter-related issues and operates door-knocking and phone banking events in an election period. All staff in other programs participates in the events during that period. Moreover, although the organizing and advocacy program mainly operates organizational campaigns (e.g., Albany Day, Town Hall meetings, diverse outreach activities), other programs’ activists try to attend the campaigns together. The steering committee plays a role in not only mediating between board members and the staff, but by making organizational decisions such as future direction, recruitment, layoff, finance, personal transfer and so forth. The KACO has another group designated as senior staff (directors), but it is not part of the formal organizational structure.

The organizational mission, goal, and structure were created based on the historical change and development of the organization. Although they are still valid, a few parts have been revised based upon changes in organizational identity, work practice, and direction due to a significant organizational transformation in recent years. This transformation has been accomplished through on-going historical efforts in the organization.
Historical Overview of KACO: Efforts to Empower Community Leadership

Korean American Activists, Not Wagemakers

The KACO was established at a family house by a small group of individuals in Jackson Heights on October 21, 1984 with three slogans, ‘Live Righteously, Know Our Roots, and Live in Harmony.’ Since then, it has evolved into one of the leading COs and the only KACO in New York that comprehensively approaches immigrant issues by not only organizing, mobilizing, and advocating for immigrants, but by also providing diverse social services and education programs.

In the initial stage, the founders were mostly young and first generation. Only a few persons were one and half (1.5) generation. These individuals envisioned a welcoming community center that provided social and educational services to the surrounding KA community:

As I remember (..), the scene of past Madang-jip was that a lot of people come together at night, so, making and sharing foods, and if we have an event, we were doing together … because we have a kitchen and floor space, so (..), in the evening, a crowd of people gathered and sat around the floor (..), so very different (..), I mean the atmosphere (..), very different with current our office because it was like a family house … (N, 28-46).

We were not just working community, but rather seemed like living community while working. (J, 207)

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6 The first generation indicates KAs who immigrated into the United States after graduating from high school in South Korea. The 1.5 generation means KAs who immigrated to the United States during the period of secondary school enrollment. Second generations refer to KAs who immigrated in the United States during an elementary school or earlier period, or who were born in the United States.

7 Activists use the Korean term, ‘Madang-jip’ when they describe their initial community center in a family house. In Korean, ‘Madang’ means a courtyard or front garden, and ‘Jip’ refers to a house or home.
As with any start-up, numerous obstacles existed between vision and reality. However, they put the full force of available monies and other resources into the center. Also activists who worked full-time in the house did not receive any salary; all participants were volunteers. An activist said: “At those days, all of us scarified our many things without any expectation, just with true mind ourselves” (FN, 12172010).

Along with an unwavering conviction, the founders developed a strong coalition that would go on to produce significant accomplishments toward social justice. In particular, they focused on inviting activists to work together a long time. Some of the activists are still working in the current office as senior staff. Consequently, the early years of the KACO provided a solid foundation for what would become the six core program areas.

**Our Homeland Korea: Entering into the Life of KAs**

In the 1980s, American society was experiencing a profound shift with the civil rights movement (Zinn, 2003). Also the KA community had continued to rapidly grow, since they came in to the United States by the immigration act of 1965 (Park, 1999). The KACO’s founders noticed a disconnect though, in the sense of community unity, and took measures to rectify this by focusing on grassroots education for the young and social services for the elderly and others in the community.

Accordingly, they expanded efforts by creating an integrated network of preschool care for working parents, after-school activities and classes for elementary-aged students, and a summer youth camp. One achievement of particular pride was the creation of a library that included more than 3,000 books and periodicals on civil rights and social issues relevant to the KA community. A monthly class on important political issues of the day was also made available to the general public.
From the 1980s to the 1990s, many education programs of the KACO were managed by a cultural spirit that emphasizes education for both community members and activists. The programs largely focused on matters related to South Korea, such as the antidemocratic political landscapes by a military regime in that period, struggles against the antidemocratic system, national histories, and other socio-economic situations:

As a 1.5 generation (..), you know (..), I didn’t know that Korea’s situations, really (..), I was very surprised when I knew the reality of Korea in 1980s (..), we received hardcore trainings [laughing]. OO [a senior activist] pushed us to make presentation and recordings about really don’t know issue like why our country experienced IMF crisis and thing like that. Anyway, such learning was so emphasized. (N, 88-93)

I’m a second generation Korean, so interested in Korean issues of course. But, as you know I came here when I was in middle school (..), no, no (..), nearly in elementary school period (..), it’s over a decade ago …. When I was a high school student, I got a Korea history class [provided by the KACO] and then I really had pride of Korea (..), and also felt like I need to more help KAs …. I didn’t know if I work here, but maybe that’s why I’m working here [laughing]. (H, 89-106)

In the 1980s, however, activists realized that they should provide immediate help for community members because immigrants suffered from several difficulties in their daily lives. The activists recognized that it was necessary to offer some kinds of free social services to facilitate the participation of community members into the KACO’s activities. As a result, from the late 1980s on, the KACO’s social service programs began assisting local residents with applying for government benefits, registering for senior housing, obtaining citizenship, and resolving debt problems. The KACO’s legal and social services rapidly gained popularity as the elderly, those with limited English skills, and others with financial issues quickly realized their value. This continued with the inception of the first Korean legal clinic. Established in
conjunction with the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, individuals were now able to access professional help at no charge. Issues most commonly addressed dealt with small business assistance, discrimination and/or violence, and immigration. Through these efforts, the KACO gradually established a trusting relationship with community members.

Meanwhile, the KACO formed a Korean cultural troupe in 1985. The main purpose of creating this group was to keep Korean traditional culture as well as teaching it to KAs. The performers of the group used song and dance to share various aspects of traditional Korean culture with the outcome providing audiences an opportunity to reflect on their heritage and contemplate life as newly minted Americans. This group is still active in celebrating Korean festival days and performs at events requested by outsiders (see Figure 4.5).

![Figure 4.5. 2010 New Year’s Day cultural event in Koreatown, Manhattan. Adapted from “A Picture in Internal Electronic Documents” (KACO, 2010).](image)

From the 1980s to early the 1990s, through these multi-faceted efforts, the KACO started to establish itself as a significant CO in the surrounding KA community, and as a result began to receive small financial donations and gifts from its beneficiaries. In this period, the KACO’s
community leadership focused on establishing the foundation of internal capacities of the organization by recruiting activities and community members as well as emphasizing cultural roots and education of Korea.

**Immigrant Rights in the United States: The Second Expansion of Community Leadership**

After the end of the military regime in South Korea, the democratic government ushered in a civilian president in 1993. As a result, the KACO began to focus more attention on immigrant issues in the United States rather than Korea’s issues.

Another course-changing event was the 1992 Los Angeles riots. Previously, this community of immigrants had believed itself to be secure, at least economically. Instead KAs were shocked to realize that they could not escape the racial, social and economic problems so embedded in American society. With the 1994 elections, the KACO became extremely concerned that some reactionary politicians were beginning to blame immigrants for social ills. Many politicians pushed for strict anti-immigrant policies and:

… a lot of politicians and policy makers argued that immigrants were taking up too many social and governmental resources, of course, still (..), continues today (..), but (..), it’s wrong. The truth was the opposite I think (..), yeah. You know (..), for many dollars in benefits that immigrants received (..), they paid even greater in taxes in fact (..), most of them hel- (..), helped America’s economy growth too. Also (..), I think they have brought many valuable cultural contributions. I believe it’s the real truth (..), really. (J, 109-115)

Benefits for both undocumented and legal immigrants were scaled back and deportation issues gained renewed attention.

At this point the KACO entered full-scale advocacy mode on behalf of immigrant rights. In addition, the KACO proceeded to publish numerous publications to correct perceived misconceptions on the nature and role of immigrants in American society. It also campaigned
against laws considered unfair to immigrants by coordinating volunteers and holding petition drives (see Appendix B for an examination of the summary of KACO’s key campaigns and coalitions from the 1990s to the 2000s). The KACO had moved into the Flushing area in 1991 to more closely meet with the larger number of KAs in the area.

Those efforts also provided a wakeup call to the community. Until then, the immigrant community was politically unorganized. As a result, the KA community’s activities became a model for immigrant rights advocacy. One event of particular note was the KACO’s participation in a White House signature ceremony with President Clinton when he signed important legislation rolling back the cut in benefits for immigrants.

Throughout the 1990s, the KACO led the effort to engage KAs civically through advocacy, education, social services, and cultural programs. Through the organization’s efforts and civic participation, this organization started to establish itself as a leading civil rights organization. In this period (the 1990s), the organization’s community leadership efforts can be summarized as starting expanded participation for immigrant advocacy by establishing collaborations with outside stakeholders. This expansion required the KACO’s transformation. Those who worked for the KACO became experts for addressing diverse immigrant issues, leaving behind the custom of working without a wage in a family house. It also influenced the movement of KACO from a family house into the current office in 2003.

**Toward Justice for All: The Third Expansion of Community Leadership**

The peace and prosperity of the United States came under assault when four American passenger jets were hijacked on September 11, 2001 by Islamist militant terrorists affiliated with al-Qaeda. The four tightly coordinated attacks resulted in the devastating loss of almost 3,000 men, women and children. The result of the attacks was a change in the direction of American foreign and domestic policy, with the main emphasis on national security. In this respect, activists
at the KACO believed that the civil rights of immigrants were also at stake. In fact, the KACO’s previous organizing and advocacy work of the 1990s was threatened, as immigration reform was pushed back. As a result, the activists of KACO began to re-think their long-term vision that addresses the rights of all citizens and the ability to live in peaceful co-existence as well as advocating for immigrants:

One of the reasons why we try to build coalitions with other ethnic organizations or diverse groups is that (..), I see it is too natural (..), some kind of, general social nature. In the community society (..), we believe it is not a healthy community society if we do not help each other by each own power. It’s too normal common sense, so this recognition made us to enable to build a lot of coalitions differently with other KA organizations. (I, 247-251)

Confronted by such dramatic change, the KACO realized the need to re-direct its own course. The organization concentrated advocacy efforts on budgetary issues at the city, state and federal levels, and improvements within the educational system geared toward immigrant students and immigration reform. A new initiative, the Building Bridges campaign, was launched to forge stronger ties between the immigrant and African American communities. The KACO strategically chose to collaborate with all community members— regardless of ethnicity or origin—to ensure a voice in America’s future (see Figure 4.6).
With other COs, the KACO has made reform a centerpiece of its efforts. Some marketing initiatives include a New York Times ad campaign, Sending Immigrants’ Pictures Campaign, and the National Asian Pacific American Lobby Day. These have all encouraged KA participation in key shared issues nationwide. The KACO has also focused their attention on politically empowering the KA and immigrant communities. The KACO’s civic participation program aims to fundamentally strengthen the political power of the community through voter registration/education, research, protection, and mobilization initiatives.

In terms of community engagement, the KACO has made an effort to provide social services for KA and CA immigrants and to manage an empowerment program for youth. Low-income community members have found the Immigrant Rights Legal Clinic of the KACO a critical resource with full representation available on issues such as labor, immigration, housing, and civil rights. Additionally, the Social Services program has offered free low-income tax assistance, counseling on how to set up financial accounts, assistance with applying for food
stamps, and eviction prevention services. Furthermore, the KACO has managed the Youth Empowerment Project, another sponsored activity that provides approximately 80 KA youth members in high school per year with experience in community activism and leadership development.

Since 2000, the structure and activities of the KACO have transformed from focusing solely on the KA community into trying to empower broader communities with the recognition that involvement of other ethnic communities was vital to making a better society by establishing various coalitions. Therefore, in the period from late the 1999 to 2006, the KACO’s community leadership was broadly expanded by focusing on fostering relationships with other stakeholders such as external groups, organizations, and community members. This expansion required improvement in the internal capacities of the KACO as well as related transformation.

**Recent Organizational Transformation: The Fourth Expansion of Community Leadership**

Given the recognition historically accumulated, the KACO has dramatically transformed in recent years. Since 2006, the organization has tried to gradually increase staff (activists). In particular, the organization recruited ten staff members between 2008 and 2010. The number of staff increased twice in just two years. In 2008, the organization hired a CA community liaison (later CA community outreach coordinator) as a full-time expert to expand their services to community members:

With regards to federal immigrant issues, there was a certain amount of coalition building and some progress. But one the other hand, in our local community (..), in this Flushing area, it is true that there wasn’t a lot of activity. Compared to that (..), when we took a look at it, you know there are a lot of CA people (..), here. But it turns out they didn’t really have an organization that directly provided services for them. It’s pretty amazing, that (..), I mean there are (..), one or two large places. Perhaps it’s because the CA
community is so large, I’m not sure about the reason (..), but they couldn’t handle all the demand. So we thought (..), when we started getting involved in the local issues, and obviously (..), because there are a lot of CA residents here, we thought perhaps they could be in need of some such service, and I think the results have been very positive. I mean there’s still a lot to learn (..), and we don’t know the CA residents very well.

Frankly (..), we know so little (..), how they think (..), and the KA residents are the same [laughing]. They’re so diverse. But I think it’s good to build this kind of thing. You look at this place now (..), it’s mostly CA (..), mostly (..), things have changed a lot. I mean it was different when I first came (..), first came to the US (..), and I grew up in Flushing, you know? But there are so many people here now. (N, 236-250)

In addition to this, to strengthen organizational competency, one more program associate and a development associate, who largely conducts fundraising-related work–were recruited. In addition to this, two more attorneys joined in the organization in 2009. The organization not only hired individuals to assist with community, housing, and worker issues but also a civic participation coordinator and a financial empowerment counselor with the intent of taking a more active role in advocating, organizing, empowering, and supporting community members. Most of the recently hired staff members were younger and second generation KAs. As a result of increasing the number of people representing more recent generations, the organization’s official language was changed from Korean to English.

Meanwhile, in 2009, the KACO changed the official name of the organization to better reflect the civil rights component in their current approaches and as a long-term direction. The name was definitely disparate with the organization’s former name in that the term, KA, was excluded:

After the early and mid-90’s, the focus of our activities moved to community movement and, in particular, our advocacy for immigrant rights became our most essential area of
service, and now we’re dealing with a broad spectrum of the public (...), we (...), are now dealing with the immigrant population. And our services have also expanded to include even a legal clinic as you can see. The name we had before, OOOO, it became so that the name itself was expressing only about 30% of our identity. But these days we’re always saying our significant programs are education and civic participation, so in that sense, OOOO as an organization name was no longer appropriate. So that’s why, after a lot of soul-searching and discussions (...), really careful discussions (...), because we couldn’t come up with any good names [laughing].

I: But was there a particular reason why you didn’t include ‘KA’?

Yes, we did that intentionally. If you look at the list of business establishments here, it’s all KA something, KA something (...), and our identity is still that of a KA organization. That’s for sure. We can’t deny that. Just because we have one CA staff, we can’t suddenly call ourselves (...) an Asian organization or anything like that. We can’t deny the fact that our identity is KA, but when we look at the direction we’re headed, our social service expansion targeting diverse ethnic groups in the local community (...), we’re expanding. And now (...), to build a civil rights movement that goes beyond the immigrant rights protection movement (...), an American social movement that transcends the advocacy for immigrant rights and interests, because our long-term direction is to reach such objectives, the name ‘KA’ could become a hindrance later on. (J, 432-481)

Although they changed the official name, they maintain Korean identity by straightly using Korean term in their official English name. With this change, the organization also removed the term KA, and more clearly sought to express their diverse approaches to social programs and project in the mission and goal statement (see Table 4.2).
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Recent Organizational Expansion and Change

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The expansion took place at the same time as increased fundraising. The ongoing diverse efforts of the KACO enabled them to obtain secure funding. At the same time, its growth also resulted from their fundraising efforts from diverse sources such as foundations, government, corporate, and other support/donations through annual reception and gala and so on, as well as the diversification of programs they managed:

If we were (..), a very weak social service group (..), we wouldn’t have escaped the downturn either. When the current board crisis began (..), grants dried up (..), and a lot of those (..), nonprofit organizations are failing (..), or scaling back their programs. But … we still have a growth engine that can ensure that this organization continues to operate. To be more specific about it, right from the start when we established our organization, it wasn’t dependent on grants. That’s because from the beginning, we (..), we worked full-time without pay. The annual operation costs (..), the costs for at least one year (..), such as rent (..), it was a system that worked as long as we had money for only things like that. So then we (..), with grants, we’re still (..), most non-profit organizations (..), in the US (..), they’re almost 99% dependent on grants (..), but our level of dependency is still at about 60%. Which means the rest comes in through our own fundraising events or (..), through community sponsorship … we’re still financially very healthy (..), that’s a source of our strength. And this, too (..), we (..), are not a social service agency that simply depends on grants (..), but as we do our work in the personal civic area we’ve also been strengthening our status in the KA community by advertising and keeping our contacts with the community (..), strengthening our political status (..), thus gaining the trust of the KA community (..), and those things now leading to sponsorships (..), all these things that we do have now become a source of our strength … we’ve been dealing not only with federal issues (..), but also with various issues of the city and the state (..), and doing well
in finding our way to grant opportunities in the areas of advocacy and civic participation

…. (J, 247-273)

These efforts contributed to the fact that the organization’s annual budget has also rapidly increased from approximately a half million to one million dollars, since 2009 (see Figure 4.7).

![Figure 4.7. Annual budget change of the KACO. Refer to “05-10 Annual Financial Statements” (KACO, 2005-2010).](image)

In 2010, the KACO managed that sixty-seven percent of the total annual budget went to pay for the ‘organizing and advocacy’ and ‘social service’ components (see Figure 4.8).

With the budget increase, a key outcome in early 2009 was the formal expansion of available legal and social service programs for local CAs. Of special note, the “Single Stop” concept was launched in July of that year. This showcased the organization as a unique resource for community members: with one visit individuals could receive counseling on all applicable benefits. As a result, the Flushing site became noted as the first Asian American community in New York to offer this concept.
In addition, the organization has formed coalitions with other organizations and institutions on budget equity, housing issues, tenant-landlord issues, foreclosure issues, voter issues, workers’ rights, and youth issues. A representative example is the ‘12% and Growing Coalition.’ In 2008, the organization also co-founded the ‘Voice Your Vote NY’ Coalition. Moreover, in 2010, the KACO performed a project with other four organizations that aimed to investigate the practical situation of elderly KAs. Additionally, the organization conducted the ‘Waterfront project’ by collaborating with the research team of a local university to advocate for the voice of KA retailers and marginalized tenants against the Flushing gentrification development plan. Furthermore, the organization also has made an effort to establish favorable relations with Korean media and began to include Chinese media as well.

Beyond the coalitions, the organization also launched the ‘Community Meeting’ that aims to facilitate the positive participation of community members in their issues, but provides them with diverse seminars/workshops. This meeting has been held every month from 2008:
There weren’t any regular community meetings before. People would mostly come for things like seminars that would benefit themselves. For example, a lot of people would come for seminars like how undocumented immigrants could get a driver’s license…

I: Why did you start the community meetings?

The (.), the most basic reason was this. When we would go to the City Hall or participate in Albany Day, things like that (.), OO [another activist of the KACO] would say, “You guys are a community-based organization, so why is it that whenever you do something, it’s just the 10 staff members that come out and there’re no community members?: (.), so (.), OO would say that to me. It was a bit embarrassing to hear that. With OO (.), for example, in a march, they have a hundred people that show up. They have Hispanics as well, so (.), so (.), then (.), the basic idea was that it would be good for us to also have such groups participate in our KACO group and that that would empower us as well as we become members of the community they belong to. And that thinking led us to want meetings where we could gather regularly (.), I think that’s how it started (.), so at first, we didn’t know any better, we just called around community members (.), we were doing it blindly, so we didn’t know who was interested or who we should contact (.), so we asked people we knew to help us as well [laughing] (.), so at any rate, we began to meet every week. Regular meetings (.), the first week no one came because it rained [laughing]. (Q, 119-128)

This community meeting has played a role in empowering KA community members, adding two other meetings, housing and worker, which became active in 2010.

**Community Leadership Development and the Emergence of New Tensions**

The KACO’s mission has evolved over the past three decades. Originally its function was to provide basic educational, social service, and cultural preservation programs to marginalized
KA and CA immigrants in the Flushing community. In the 1990s, this expanded to civic efforts such as a comprehensive voter empowerment campaign, including voter assistance. For the next decade, the organization proceeded to spearhead numerous immigration reform efforts through advocacy and education. These developments were possible through ongoing efforts for enhancing community leadership. In the early period, the KACO tried to root in the United States by recruiting activists and increasing meetings with KA communities. Later, the KACO also expanded coalitions with external partners by focusing more on immigrant issues in the United States, beyond a focus on Korea’s issues.

Since 2000, KACO has held the designation as the sole KACO in New York that actively pursues community concerns through advocating for specific causes and mobilizing its residents. Its provision of free immigration, labor, and housing legal services, as well as various social services has made it a leading Asian American organization, not only in the New York vicinity, but also on the East Coast, due to its comprehensive voter empowerment program which includes an intensive GOTV (get out the vote) component and voter organizing. Furthermore, by encouraging organizational growth by recruiting qualified staff members, the KACO has become the only local KA organization that offers an innovative combination of youth education, peer organizing and advocacy, and social services in Flushing. Hence, in this period, the KACO had made efforts to more broadly strengthen community leadership by collaborating with diverse partners, empowering community members beyond KAs. The organization then further transformed its focus by establishing a long-term direction, “to advance civil rights of all for social justice in the United States beyond advocating for immigrant rights.”

However, not all of the expansions and changes have been accomplished smoothly or harmoniously. The community leadership of the KACO has become established and has expanded by its considerable endeavors to overcome several challenges, and the challenges always have existed. In particular, recent changes have caused the occurrence of additional challenges, which
will be described more fully in Chapter Six. Therefore, although the KACO has made tremendous efforts throughout its history, activists of the KACO still confront various challenges in the coalition with external stakeholders and collaboration among themselves. As I described above, all these developmental processes were based on the KACO’s traditional culture. In addition to this, the activists have also created a unique culture and approaches. Next, I describe the organization’s daily practices in order to provide a clearer picture of their workplace realities as well as its cultural aspects.

**Daily Work Life of Activists**

The office of the KACO is a five-minute walk from Flushing-Main St. Station, Line No. 7. They moved into the office in 2003 to increase accessibility to community members and provide a space to work more professionally:

First we started in the Jackson Height area, and then in ’91 we came to Flushing and from there on [things got going]. It’s because Flushing has now become a pivotal center for the KA community. We moved three times after we got to Flushing. At first it was just moving, looking for a place. But the last time we moved (..), at that time we had to think seriously about some things. When we considered what the actual criteria were for a house with a yard becoming a set location (..), when we thought about that (..), there were many factors (..), most important one was accessibility. It had to be easily accessible to the working-class residents we were dealing with. And also (..), there were other factors as well, such as cost of rent (..), that we had to consider (..), but accessibility was a huge factor. Regular people inevitably end up using the public transportation (..), so the office should be close to the subway if possible (..), if we could think about that (..), now (..), it would be great to look for such a house. But with the real estate prices going up so much in New York, especially back then (..), we ended up settling on an office space like this.
one. For us, it was a big culture shock (..), when we first moved here (..), we thought now (..), now we're in an office. But in the end (..), thinking long-term, it was a good choice (..), because things turned out pretty well. (J, 226-243)

As office spaces, they use the third and fifth floors in a building they rented. Both floors have a restroom and an office space; a multi-use conference room is located at the third floor. Most of social service staff works on the fifth floor with the rest situated on the lower floor (see Figure 4.9).

*Figure 4.9. A part of office space at the third floor*

On the first floor of the building is a print center managed by a KA who is the landlord of the building. They normally use the center for copying and printing their materials. There is a Chinese health clinic on the second and fourth floors. In fact, numerous CA stores are located near the office building of KACO.

The KACO officially begins daily work at 10:00 a.m. and officially finishes work at 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. However, many staff are used to working overtime due to several
meetings for community members, the meeting of the cultural troupe, organizational events, or unfinished tasks. They also prepare and attend several outside events (see Appendix C). As a matter of fact, the activists have a duty to participate in outside activities, campaigns, or marches in some days except for daily working hours, sometimes including weekends (see Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10. Note for annual events attached on the organization’s wall

In their daily work, they arrive in the office around 10:00 a.m. and usually have a short coffee talk at the one side of third floor where a two-person sofa, snack shelves, and a refrigerator are located. It is the only free time besides their lunch time, because their telephone never quits ringing during working hours, and they cannot be absolutely free from their computers.

Staff have a meeting that lasts about one and half hours, beginning at 10:20 a.m. every Monday. In this meeting, the activists talk about personal issues they want to share with others, and they discuss the issues of each program areas in the previous week. KA volunteers answer the organization’s official phone during the meeting time. In addition to the staff meeting, they have a program meeting every week and a joint meeting between the advocacy and organizing and the
social service part twice a month. Directors (senior staff) periodically have a meeting that is
closed to the other staff, and some of the directors regularly participate in the steering committee
meetings and board meetings. The quarterly board meeting is open to all the activists.
Additionally, all staff frequently have informal meetings depending on work-related issues.

Although the official language was changed to English by the increase of 1.5 and second
generations, they use both Korean and English in the daily work. At the first work day, an activist
D introduced me to other staff around the organization. I tried to briefly introduce myself in
English or Korean depending on their speaking language. When I went to M, she said:

What’s your first language? English? Korean? … [change language from English to
Korean with a smile] I can also use Korean, of course (..), feel like English speaking is
more comfortable. Anyway, you can use your comfortable language in our organization.
You can use both, of course. (FN, 10062010)

They do not feel very uncomfortable because most of them are bilingual, although they have
different language levels. Moreover, the organization has a practice that an activist who has
relatively higher language skills provides an interpretation for the next person who has lower
skills.

Meanwhile, the KACO has another distinguishing cultural practice. When I first visited
the organization for the second internship interview, I was impressed by their behavior for
preparing lunch. They, in fact, eat lunch together daily at the conference room by making food in
the organization’s kitchen. The organization has a rotating system where two persons among full-
time staff and interns on duty to make a lunch on an assigned day. They, of course, bring in some
food if they have a press conference or other events in the afternoon at the conference room;
however, they always eat lunch together in the organization. The activists provide lunch food for
interns or some volunteers for free; however, they pay $25 weekly for their own lunch. During
the lunch time, they have numerous informal talks with each other from private concerns to work issues. They consider this lunch time as a nice culture:

You get close. You know the Korean proverb (..), about sharing meals cultivating affection [strong kinship, say ‘Jeong’ in Korean]. So there's that, it's about growing to like each other through sharing meals. And this is something that OO's talked about a lot from the beginning, but he said let's not talk shop during meals. I mean, if you don't talk about work, then you end up talking about other things, and when that happens, you get to see their personalities more and you become closer. So even now, if we can, we try not to talk about work during lunch time. Then we naturally talk more about other things. And frankly, if we tried to talk about work during lunch time, then there's a lot for us to talk about. We can cancel a meeting and have it during lunch time instead. But then OO says that we'll get indigestion (..), so that's why lunch time really has to be (..), I mean, this thing called social movement, you must've talked to OO about this already, and he says that now, many of us are not thinking about anything like a real social movement (..), or being activists (..), but the most fundamental thing about social movement is people. I mean, because we're people, the most basic thing is to change the thinking of another person, and as we do our work (..), while we're doing a project, we can see through our work that an individual has clearly been inspired (..), and when we do something like a post-campaign, obviously (..), we can be moved by that fact, by the truth of what we've accomplished, but because it's only one of countless things that we're working on, we can forget it very quickly. But when we are chatting away during lunch, that kind of memory stays with you a long time, you know? So when some of the past interns come back and we ask them what they remember the most, a lot of them mention our lunch time (..), and I think it's really great that we have such a time of sharing. (M, 101-117)
Moreover, if a guest from other organizations that have a partnership with the KACO is present during the lunch time, the activists encourage the person to eat some Korean food together in the conference room (see Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11. Lunch together at the conference room

Sometimes, they eat delivery or stored foods as a dinner in the office if they have a formal work, using the organizational budget. Some of them frequently have dinner or do something together outside, after working hours. These diverse informal meetings make the staff feel closer each other beyond a merely working relationship.

Except independent working and staff meetings, they spend most of time meeting community members or clients they serve and want to empower. Although, many clients visit the organization having made a prior appointment, it is not difficult to see that they are waiting their turn, sitting in chairs or standing the front of conference room in the small space.

Sometimes, the activists meet with community members outside of the organization. For example, an activist and interns visit the courthouse in Queens every Tuesday and Thursday
morning in order to facilitate the voter registration of KAs who wait to obtain a U.S. citizenship or the right of permanent residence. Also, in the election period, all activists perform door-knocking and phone banking to not only encourage KAs and CAs to participate in the election, but conduct an election survey (see Appendix D).

Inside or outside of the office space, organizers spend a lot of time managing meetings for KA community members who are interested in the KACO’s activities, temporary KA workers who have difficulty in the workplace such as unpaid or inequality issues, and KA tenants who have a housing problem with their landlords. Also they lead church and street outreaches to meet new KAs and advertise their activities to them.

Furthermore, all activists of the organization have a variety of formal and informal meetings with the people of other COs, institutions, or media. In these meetings, the staff not only plans their current or future projects together but also introduces their activities. Through this process, they build a trust relationship with each other and build capacities through coalitions. Moreover, they advocate for KA issues by telling stories related to language access, tax report, foreclosure, unpaid wage, and voter issues and so on to the government officers.

Finally, they have an officially managed ‘Education Session’ for staff once a month. Although the rule was not kept well because of workloads during 2010, senior activists always emphasize staff education as part of the organization’s history and culture. Hence the organization tries to positively support staff members who wish to engage in external conferences, workshops, or education sessions. In external educational opportunities, activists can meet with activists of other COs for coalition building as well as knowledge sharing.

As a result, activists form various relationships with diverse internal and external people to perform their activities beyond the organizational boundary of KACO. In particular, I found that the staff largely has three relational dimensions for community leadership; external partners (e.g. community organizations, institutions/foundations, media), community members (e.g., KA
and CA immigrants, KA youth members), and internal activists of the organization each other. They recognized that the work through the relationship between the diverse stakeholders cannot be separated and they, in fact, had tried to connect them in their practice to comprehensively approach to immigrant issues. However, their work does not progress without problems, and they faced several emerging tensions as a result of the rapid transformation of the organization as well as ongoing challenges. The challenges and tensions influenced the building of community leadership and the learning of the activists.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I provided a thick description of research site including both local area and KACO. In addition to this, I concretely reviewed activists’ daily work life to understand their culture and work practice. Historically, the KACO has developed its community leadership by positively reacting to the change of external socio-cultural contexts. The development was achieved by dedicated endeavors to overcome the organizational limited capacity and various challenges in inside and outside of the KACO. With ongoing challenges, the KACO confronts new tensions related to its recent rapid transformation. Those require the KACO to create new alternatives for community leadership. Before exploring those in detail in Chapter Six, I will first discuss research design in next chapter.
Chapter 5. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, I argue that critical ethnography is an appropriate method for examining the community leadership and learning of activists in KACO. I begin by describing critical ethnography as an appropriate research method for this study. I continue by outlining how I accessed the research field through building rapport and identifying specific research interests. I also describe issues related to data collection and analysis, as well as issues related to my positionality and ethics. The chapter closes with a discussion of the limitations of the study.

Critical Ethnography

Another Approach to Ethnography

Critical ethnography is one of the types of ethnography with a critical lens and purpose. Although the philosophical foundations of critical ethnography are related to critical theory associated with the Frankfurt School or neo-Marxist thought, this approach is basically grounded in ethnography (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Thomas, 1993).

Ethnography was originally derived from the traditions of cultural anthropology conducted in the early 20th century, and later, the qualitative sociology of the Chicago school (Creswell, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Ethnography is broadly defined as “the art and science of describing a group or culture” (Fetterman, 1998, p. 1) or the study of “the culturally shared, common sense perception of everyday experiences” (van Manen, 1990, p. 177). The main purpose of ethnography is to describe and interpret a culture-sharing group or community primarily focused on its particular culture (Creswell, 2007; van Manen, 1990). Hence ethnography fundamentally focuses on a group or community that shares a specific culture.
Ethnography assumes that it is impossible to thoroughly understand a group without investigating its original culture. As a result, an ethnographer should not examine the group and culture separately (Fetterman, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In this respect, ethnography can be specifically described as “a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group” (Creswell, 2007, p. 68).

Currently, ethnography has served as a useful methodology in diverse areas such as cultural studies, education, industrial engineering, literary theory, nursing, and women’s studies (Tedlock, 2000). Ethnography differs from the various human science approaches in that ethnography seeks “to study ways of doing and seeing things peculiar to certain cultures or cultural groups” (van Manen, 1990, p. 66). The approach of ethnography provides ethnographers “a better understanding of the beliefs, motivations, and behaviors of their subjects than … by using any other method” by “entering into firsthand interaction with people in their everyday lives” (Tedlock, 2000, p. 470).

There are many forms of ethnography based upon philosophical foundations such as holistic, semiotic, and behaviorist approaches (Sanday, 1979) or diverse applications in the educational field with different approaches (Spindler & Hammond, 2006). However, it is difficult to find consent on the typology of ethnography in the field of education or social sciences. With regard to this, Creswell (2007) noted that the popular types of ethnography are divided into the realist and critical categories.

Realist ethnography is “a traditional approach used by anthropologists” (Creswell, 2007, p. 69). Realist, traditional, or conventional ethnography aims to show “cultural description and analysis that displays meaning by interpreting meanings” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). In this approach, it is important for a researcher to objectively explain the situation without personal bias, political goals, or judgments. Creswell (2007) argues that ethnographers must have a third-person view to
see and report object information learned from subjects at the site, using “standard categories for
cultural description (e.g., family life, communication networks, work life, social networks, and
status systems)” (p. 70). Similar to the general purpose of ethnography, the main purpose of
realist ethnography is to objectively describe the culture of a group.

On the other hand, critical ethnography aims to reveal and change that which constrains a
group (Thomas, 1993). Critical ethnography acts “in response to current society, in which the
systems of power, prestige, privilege, and authority serve to marginalize individuals who are from
different classes, races, and genders” (Creswell, 2007, p. 70). Thomas (1993) explains the
characteristics of critical ethnography in contrast to conventional ethnography:

Critical ethnography refers to the reflective process of choosing between conceptual
alternatives and making value-laden judgments of meaning and method to challenge
research, policy, and other forms of human activity. Conventional ethnography describes
what is; critical ethnography asks what could be … Conventional ethnographers
generally speak for their subjects, usually to an audience of other researchers. Critical
ethnographers, by contrast, accept an added research task of raising their voice to speak
to an audience on behalf of their subjects as a means of empowering them by giving more
authority to the subject’s voice. (p. 4)

Critical ethnographers are concerned with emancipating marginalized groups in society
(Thomas, 1993) and thus study “issues of current societies such as power, empowerment,
inequality, inequity, dominance, repression, hegemony, and victimization” (Creswell, 2007, p. 70).
Hence critical ethnographers take a position: “by uncovering what is normally concealed, critical
ethnography contributes to the emancipatory project that conventional science fails” (Thomas,
1993, p. 70).

Consequently, realist ethnography emphasizes objective description and interpretation.
By contrast, critical ethnography focuses more on hermeneutics and emancipation (Creswell,
Critical ethnography is a more positive or action-driven approach than realist ethnography. While the two approaches serve different purposes, both are equally influenced by the central concepts and basic research processes of ethnography (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Thomas, 1993). Their difference is driven by the epistemological and axiological assumptions of researchers that guide their approaches to the field work and analysis. In this respect, Thomas (1993) asserts that “critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a political purpose” (p. 4).

Focus of Critical Ethnography

Critical ethnography is not merely considered a criticism, but rather it aims to effect positive social change by revealing ideology and hegemony (Carspecken, 1996). According to critical theory, ideologies are considered as broadly accepted and distorted sets of values, beliefs, commonsense, ideas, myths, explanations, and justifications that appear self-evidently true, empirically accurate personally relevant, and morally desirable to a majority of the populace, but that actually work to maintain an unjust social and political order. (Brookfield, 2001, p. 14, italics added)

Hegemony refer to the mechanism of dominant groups that reinforces relational sets to reinforce ideologies at the same time inhibit the social activities of a specific group, especially marginalized people (Althusser, 1971; Foucault & Gordon, 1980). Also ideology is considered to have a negative meaning that constructs, reproduces, or strengthens the power of dominant group (Brookfield, 2005). However, exactly following the traditional concepts may limit the possibility of application of critical ethnography for more diverse research (Madison, 2012).
Critical ethnography can be more flexibly applied in research, depending on how researchers view the concept of ideology. According to Foley (1999), ideology could have a positive role:

Here ideology refers to the various ways in which social meanings and structures are ‘produced, challenged, reproduced and transformed’ in both individual consciousness and social practices and relationships. Ideology in this sense is an active process, one that is constructed (and which can be ‘de-constructed’ – pulled apart – and ‘reconstructed’ – rebuilt) by people. Ideology in this sense performs both positive and negative functions. (p. 14)

In this view, the conflict between power relations can be also interpreted as a potential driving force that may lead to positive change. Following this concept, critical ethnography cannot exist for only marginalized groups that have to be emancipated from an unequal reality. Namely, this methodology could be applied in diverse groups that want or need to change at the both individual and social level.

Currently, critical ethnography has been utilized in studies that include diversified theoretical and methodological approaches by focusing on results in terms of generating practical knowledge. Many of the critical ethnographic studies emphasize providing knowledge for not merely marginalized groups, but rather various communities. They do not adhere to the traditional approach of critical theory that conservatively interprets the terms ‘critical’ ‘emancipatory’ or ‘ideology and hegemony’ (Carspecken, 1996; Madison, 2012). The knowledge as the results of the contemporary research has a potential to contribute to make the communities to realize not only their own misunderstanding of practice but also strategies for better performance or social change by promoting discourses of social justice. The practical result or action-oriented focus beyond a strict adherence to the conventional notions of critical ethnography enhances the possibility of broader application in various research settings (Carspecken, 1996; Madison, 2012;
Therefore, this study does not exactly follow the concept or approach of traditional critical ethnography by providing emancipatory knowledge for a suppressed group, but rather responds to offer practical knowledge based on its focus itself in terms of “what could be” to the subject of this study as well as other audiences.

Methodological Appropriateness

Community leadership and learning are socio-cultural phenomena performed by diverse stakeholders. The community leadership and learning is a process of interacting with the existing culture of both external (local) and internal culture of COs, while also creating or transforming the culture. Moreover, empowering community leadership and learning is accomplished by a process of negotiating between stakeholders because the process always includes a challenge in terms of power issues (Brennan et al., 2009; Daniels, 2004; Engeström 1987, 1999, 2001; Engeström & Sannino, 2010; Green & Haines, 2002; Illeris, 2004; Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Pigg, 1999; Powell, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 2008; Sawchuk, 2003, 2006; Schein, 2004). Furthermore, the community leadership and learning of KAs or KACOs should be differently understood on account of their distinguished cultural attributes historically accumulated from other ethnic groups or organizations (Chung, 2007; Min, 2006; Park, 1999). In this respect, critical ethnography is appropriate for this study in that it provides a view of cultural understanding while sensitively addressing power issues based on its original purpose and approach (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Madison, 2012; Thomas, 1993).

Moreover, the activities of COs for community leadership are fundamentally related to social issues. Their focus is to identify the social problems of community members or marginalized groups and make efforts to solve those problems (Green & Haines, 2002; Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Pigg, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). Thus critical ethnography is more appropriate for examining their activities than traditional ethnography, because it aims to reveal the problems
or limitations of a group and contribute to changing the constraints of the group through the interpretation and critical analysis of the group’s culture and practice (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Madison, 2012; Thomas, 1993).

Critical ethnography is not a value-neutral approach (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Denzin, 1997; Fetterman, 1998; Madison, 2012; Thomas, 1993; Wolcott, 2008). Critical ethnographers need to understand a culture-sharing group with theoretical and purposeful viewpoints. With regard to this, I adopted CHAT as a theoretical framework to investigate the community leadership and learning of activists in a KACO. To explore community leadership and learning through the concepts of activity and contradiction proposed by CHAT, the ethnography approach especially a holistic view or contextualization and a thick description (Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 1998; Wolcott, 2008) is suitable because CHAT’s concepts require the exploration of social, cultural, and historical perspectives based on the extensive fieldwork for identifying the concepts. Critical ethnography is one of the types of ethnography merely having a different purpose; the basic research procedure and approach of critical ethnography are not different from other ethnographic approaches. I partly used realist approaches to investigate the research site, KACO’s approaches to community leadership, and its daily work practice (see Chapter Four). This work helped me to establish a foundation to identify community leadership activities of activists in the KACO and learning by the activities. Critical ethnography as another approach of ethnography gives researchers a way to overcome a systemic application of CHAT for their research in a bounded setting. Furthermore, critical ethnography and CHAT form a supportive relationship in that CHAT also guides critical ethnography approaches by providing the concept of activity including socio-cultural components as well as the notion of contradiction.
Coming to the Research Site and Building Rapport

By following ethnographic procedures, I deeply engaged in the research site and built a good rapport with the subject of this study. By focusing on KAs, this study is about community leadership and leaning of COs in the urban context which includes diverse and dynamic daily interactions. For this critical ethnography, I established four different criteria to select a research site (Creswell, 2007): (1) symbolic meaning of the area to KAs, (2) socio-cultural dynamics, (3) accessibility to the site, and (4) a KACO that employs positive approaches to social change movement beyond simply providing social services to local residents. Based on these criteria, I researched major cities in the Eastern U.S. that have a large KA and Asian American enclave and looked for an organization that employs multiple approaches to social movement by searching websites of news media and COs. Through the research, I chose an urban area, Flushing of Queens, New York. This city, in fact, has the second largest KA community next to Los Angeles and the Flushing area also has symbolic meaning to KAs as a representative place to understand the KA community in the United States. Moreover, the area has dynamic cultural interactions among ethnic groups (Min, 1996, 2006; Park, 1997). Through the beginning process of selecting the research site, I finally found a well-established KACO that emphasized social movement as well as social service for KAs as a research site for this study.

I contacted the organization in September, 2010 and served as an intern for about 18 hours per week from October 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011, familiarizing myself with the organization and establishing rapport with the participants. I quickly decided to perform the intern work after the initial contact and internship-interview process, during which I identified that this organization had major events during the period such as the Gala, an annual ceremony that announces their yearly achievements for approximately 600 invited guests, and the annual retreat in order to set goals and decide the organization’s direction. The events helped me to understand
the organization’s work, culture, and approach while at the same time observing their daily practices.

To build rapport with activists in the KACO, I initially provided a detailed explanation of my intention about why I wanted to work at this particular organization to gatekeepers, my supervisor and an executive director. I informed other activists later in the process (Creswell, 2007). At the first work period, however, some of activists saw my involvement as peculiar, because they could not understand why I willingly made a round trip of approximately 10 hours between Pennsylvania and New York every week. Also they had never accepted a Ph.D. student or researcher as an intern in their organization. Most interns in the organization were undergraduates or law school students; most had a bachelor’s, and rarely master’s degree. Hence they had the feeling of heterogeneity and a wariness toward me at the beginning.

As a result, I made effort to positively participate in informal meetings and events during or over working hours as well as performing several menial tasks as same as other interns and activists in order to build a close and trusting relationship with them. These efforts allowed me to not only smoothly process this research but also collect their candid voices. Those, consequently, allowed me to obtain diverse data by performing participatory observations and informal and formal interviews as well as collecting documents and cultural artifacts.

**Identifying the Research Interest**

Based on the initial interest in community leadership and learning in daily activities, I first considered the subject of this study as a variety of internal and external persons who collaborate together to perform the activities by developing community leadership. During an internship there, however, my research interest changed to focusing on internal persons (activists) as a main subject of this study. Moreover, I had to understand community leadership and learning
not by exploring their natural daily work activities but in activities focusing on community leadership itself in daily practice.

As an intern, I was involved in the civic participation area by focusing on research for the political participation of Asian Americans and activities for KAs’ empowerment. At first, I participated in election matters such as door knocking in the Flushing area, phone banking to encourage voter participation, and testimony activities related to KAs who had experienced voting difficulties in government agencies, as well as a voter research. I also participated in preparing for the organizational annual gala and had an opportunity to engage in their retreat. The 2011 retreat was the first retreat where interns were allowed to participate. Moreover, they approved my participation in diverse program meetings and counseling meetings with community members. Later, I was able to engage in their educational planning meetings in the organization. I was largely involved in the activities of the KACO with activists.

Although I participated in various meetings and events of the KACO, most of activities in my work and research period were very dependent on inter-relationships among activists. Moreover, in the period, I could not find a strongly bonded relationship with external groups or organizations. Even though I also participated in a research project for KA elders’ welfare, it seemed to be a short-term event, not a long-term activity. These contexts prevented me from sufficiently working together with other external persons, groups, and organizations beyond the KACO.

Besides, the activists consciously confronted several internal issues among themselves due to the recently rapid expansion of the organization at that time.\textsuperscript{8} Even if the KACO had made coalitions and collaborations with various stakeholders to conduct their daily work activities over a long period of long time, I could not find a specific case or relationship. They seemed to

\textsuperscript{8} A more detailed description is presented in Chapter Six.
maintain loose relationships with other stakeholders in those days. In addition to this, it was impossible for me to thoroughly explore the numerous stakeholders in the research period.

As a result, these situations revealed an internal double-bind situation in terms of the initial research interest. I could not thoroughly investigate their community leadership including external stakeholders as outlined in the above statements. Namely, I would not have opportunities to investigate community leadership and learning including both activists and external stakeholders as subject through their daily work activities. As a result, the situations led me to move my focus to activists in the organization by concretely developing the research inquiries. Furthermore, those also guided me to grasp their community leadership and learning by focusing on the activists’ community leadership activities in daily practice rather than daily work activities that include diverse stakeholders as the subject in a specific or bounded case. After narrowing the focus of my research interest, I proceeded with data collection and analysis as supervised by my advisor.

**Data Collection**

In this section, I outline how I went about collecting data by describing the unit of analysis, purposeful sampling, and data sources including participatory observation and informal interview, document and cultural artifacts, and in-depth formal interview.

**Unit of Analysis**

Patton (2002) stated that “the key issue in selecting and making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study” (p. 229). One of the main concerns of this study, as a critical ethnography, is to provide practical knowledge that reveals factors that hinder or facilitate community leadership

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9 Identifying activities will be described in Chapter Six.
and learning by focusing on the activities performed by KA activists in a CO. The factors are fundamentally related to socio-cultural mediations including structural features, rather than the characteristics of each individual. Therefore, while the unit of observation was individual participants (activists), the unit of analysis of the study was a collective activity proposed by CHAT (Engeström, 2001).

**Purposeful Sampling**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that sampling within a qualitative study should be “based on informational, not statistical, considerations. Its purpose is to maximize information, not facilitate generalization” (p. 202). For the purposeful sampling, I used a sampling strategy, intensity, seeking information-rich cases that clarify the phenomenon intensely and contribute directly to the research inquiry (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Moreover, I received support and advice from my supervisor and some activists in the other programs as key informants for my intern work, so that I could get more exact information related to potential interviewees and better determine the crux of interview questions for each interviewee (Creswell, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Consequently, to maximize diverse variations and increase intensity of data (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002), the purposive sampling was used to select 17 KA activists who have worked in the organization for at least a year.

**Participatory Observation and Informal Interviews**

To collect data, ethnographic researchers primarily use participant observation and interview strategies conducted in a long-term field work as well as other sources including literature, documents, and contextual materials (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Fetterman, 1998; Madison, 2012; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Thomas, 1993). According to Emerson et al. (1995):
The ethnographer seeks a deeper immersion in others’ worlds in order to grasp what they experience as meaningful and important. With immersion, the field researcher sees from the inside how people lead their lives, how they carry out their daily rounds of activities, what they find meaningful, and how they do so. (p. 2)

As an initial strategy, participatory observation and informal interview are most representative modes of data collection in the qualitative research (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Emerson et al., 1995; Fetterman, 1998).

For this study, I observed the daily practice of KA activists in my work hours and at key events, as well as local contexts. These observations enabled me to not only understand their ordinary routines and invisible cultural diversities, but also to explore the socio-cultural scene of the local area (Emerson et al., 1995; Fetterman, 1998). Through the observations, I made efforts to record both emic and etic views by describing their behaviors and activities with my own views including emotions, questions, biases, and reflections (Carspecken, 1996; Fetterman, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Tedlock, 2000). For deeper immersion and understanding, I participated in the regular meetings, non-regular activities, and main annual events beyond my routine in the regular working hours. Three months after beginning my intern work, after obtaining permission, I was allowed to attend some meetings of directors that do not normally admit general staff and interns (see Table 5.1). These observations for doing work and participating in other activities were very helpful as I sought to comprehend the KACO’s culture, in combination with informal interviews.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 2, 2010</td>
<td>‘One Nation’ march</td>
<td>Lincoln Memorial Park, D.C.</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 6</td>
<td>Meeting for preparing ‘Annual Gala’</td>
<td>KACO’s conference room (CR)</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 7</td>
<td>‘Community Member Meeting’</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 14</td>
<td>Annual Gala</td>
<td>A banquet hall, Flushing</td>
<td>5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 20-21</td>
<td>Phone banking</td>
<td>KACO, Fifth floor</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 27</td>
<td>Door-knocking</td>
<td>Flushing area</td>
<td>2.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 20</td>
<td>Meeting for language issue (case report) for election</td>
<td>The Manhattan Election Administration Committee</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 17</td>
<td>Holiday party of the KACO</td>
<td>A house, Flushing</td>
<td>5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 3, 2011</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 7-9</td>
<td>‘Annual Retreat’ sessions</td>
<td>Upstate NY</td>
<td>18 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 18</td>
<td>1) Staff meeting</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Administration meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Three programs’ meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 24</td>
<td>1) Decision-Making meeting</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>4.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) A program meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Housing meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 25</td>
<td>Focus group interview</td>
<td>Another CO, Flushing</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 7</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 8</td>
<td>Education committee meeting</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 7</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 8</td>
<td>Education committee meeting</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 21</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The informal interview is another effective strategy for data collection in ethnographic studies. Fetterman (1998) pointed out that “informal interviews are the most common in ethnographic work” (p. 38). They are different from casual conversations because of their potential relatedness to the research inquiry. The informal interviews are beneficial; they allow researchers to explore “what people think and how one person’s perceptions compare with another’s” (p. 38). In particular, I could gather a lot of data to understand activists’ basic backgrounds and the basic information on the KA and Chinese communities of the Flushing area.
Moreover, I could verify the collected information and further obtain more exact information through informal interviews with diverse people (Merriam, 2002).

Through numerous, mostly unplanned informal interviews that followed a form similar to natural conversations, I not only established a healthy rapport but also quickly understood the approach and practice of the KACO. In particular, I tried to avoid threatening questions or discussing sensitive topics in the daily conversations at first (Fetterman, 1998). After establishing a better rapport, I could obtain their honest views through the informal interviews or later in-depth formal interviews.

To avoid an interruption of KA activists’ talks in the informal interviews, I did not take actions such as writing field notes, using a laptop, or recording by using a voice recorder. Hence I tried to record field notes immediately after informal interviews. As a matter of fact, it was difficult to utilize a recorder during working hours because I did not usually have an independent time or space. However, after informal interviews, I made an effort to record their voices by using the record function of my smart phone as often as possible, in order to exactly describe their views. Fortunately, I had quite a few opportunities to take notes while conducting participatory observations and occasionally use a voice recorder during observing some discussions in the KACO’s retreat (after getting their permission).

Eventually, all records from both participatory observations and informal interviews were unified into my field notes with a thick description. Emerson et al. (1995) insisted:

… fieldnotes differ from a personal differ from a personal diary: fieldnotes are not merely the personal reactions of the writer, intended to heighten self-awareness and self-insight; they are more fundamentally accounts framed and organized to be read by some other, wider audience. (p. 45)

In this respect, my field notes include a thick description by observation and informal interviews, as well as my reflections and several points of views from activists. The records in my field notes...
enabled me to build primary and secondary data related to my research interests and questions with related documents and cultural artifacts (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Emerson et al., 1995; Fetterman, 1998).

**Documents and Cultural Artifacts**

Fetterman (1998) argued that written and electronic “documents are one of the most valuable and timesaving forms of data collection” (p. 58). To begin to understand my research site before going to the field, I first searched several types of literature, documents, and cultural artifacts such as Korean newspapers, organizational reports, pictures, and information on websites (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 1998). They described the scene of the Flushing area and the KACO. Those data made me to not only form an image and understanding about the site, but also articulate the initial interest of this study. Moreover, my knowledge obtained from the data helped me to have a comfortable conversation with the activists of the KACO (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

After coming to the site, I collected more diverse and rich data such as newspapers, local advertisements, and the publicized/internal documents and audiovisual materials of the KACO (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 1998). More specifically, the data of the KACO included annual reports, descriptions of history, brochures, documents related to formal rules and bylaws, pictures, audio recordings, videos, minutes of meetings, materials for retreats, and advertisements, and so forth. Additionally, I took several pictures of the Flushing area and the practice and activity of the KACO. These were helpful for me not only to understand cultural attributes of the research site, but to recall the situation in which the practice and activity were performed. Consequently, the whole records from participatory observations, informal interviews, and documents and cultural artifacts guided the interview questions of the study.
In-depth Formal Interviews

Interview is one of the representative modes of data collection with observation (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 1998). Based on purposeful sampling, I chose participants (the KACO’s activists) for formal, in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). The 17 interviewees were comprised of eight men and nine women. Seven persons lived in or near the Flushing area in which the KACO is located. The three generations were almost evenly divided. Only one person could use Chinese (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2.  
The Profile of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Under 22</td>
<td>In/near Flushing (F)</td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>In/near F</td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Under 22</td>
<td>In/near F</td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Outside F</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Outside F</td>
<td>M.A. degree</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>Outside F</td>
<td>B.A. degree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>Outside F</td>
<td>B.A. degree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Outside F</td>
<td>M.A. degree</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>In/near F</td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>In/near F</td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>In/near F</td>
<td>B.A. degree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Outside F</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Outside F</td>
<td>M.A. degree</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Outside F</td>
<td>B.A. degree</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>In/near F</td>
<td>B.A. degree</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Outside F</td>
<td>B.A. degree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>Outside F</td>
<td>B.A. degree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carspecken (1996) argued that “the ideal qualitative interview will be semistructured” (p. 155). Even though research questions were based on CHAT, I planned to make semi-structured
questions in order to collect rich data that shows diverse aspects of activists and the KACO. Based on data I previously collected, I made 11 central questions and several sub-questions (see Appendix E). The interview questions were created in both Korean and English. The correctness of translation from English into Korean was verified by a person fluent in both languages.

However, the sub-questions varied a little depending on interviewees, since I already recognized who might be able to speak most effectively to specific issues based on their backgrounds. For instance, senior activists knew well about the organizational history in the initial period. On the other hand, I had an opportunity to get a real knowledge about the issues that KA community members currently confronted by talking with some newly employed activists, because they have directly met and discussed the issues with the community members.

In addition, I occasionally had new questions after performing previous interviews. The efforts to transcribe or carefully listen to a previous interview were beneficial to create the new questions. Also those eventually contributed to obtain a rich data in later interviews over merely preparing for the interviews.

Before each interview, I provided the interview consent form and research questions with them as well as additional explanations of the study for their preparation. Each interviewee selected a comfortable place for the interview; interviews were performed in the office space, conference room of the organization, or outside places. If I conducted interviews at their office space, I chose a time when other activists were not present or after working hours. Each interview took approximately one to two and half hours. With three participants, I conducted an additional interview, using an email or phone call (see Table 5.3).
Table 5.3.
*Interview Place, Date, and Time*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Hotel lobby, Manhattan</td>
<td>03/05/2011</td>
<td>119.40 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6/15/2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>03/06/2011</td>
<td>84.18 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Bakery, Flushing</td>
<td>03/08/2011</td>
<td>66.00 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Coffee shop, Flushing</td>
<td>03/08/2011</td>
<td>182.00 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5/27/2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>03/09/2011</td>
<td>46.57 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>KACO’s conference room (CR)</td>
<td>03/09/2011</td>
<td>59.26 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>03/09/2011</td>
<td>68.29 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>03/10/2011</td>
<td>107.29 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>03/10/2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>03/21/2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>03/10/2011</td>
<td>83.56 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>03/10/2011</td>
<td>100.39 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>03/11/2011</td>
<td>60.52 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>03/11/2011</td>
<td>56.42 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>03/22/2011</td>
<td>74.19 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>03/22/2011</td>
<td>61.05 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>03/22/2011</td>
<td>97.38 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>04/05/2011</td>
<td>76.29 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>04/07/2011</td>
<td>85.46 min.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews started with lead-off or nonthreatening questions in terms of daily practices, activities, or other contexts of life. In one-on-one interviews on the site, I brought a protocol that mostly included the main questions and some new questions based on previous interviews into the interview settings (Carspecken, 1996; Fetterman, 1998). Also, in my mind, I frequently checked what I missed, guided by the sub-questions. Although I tried to double check with activists the primary and secondary data obtained during the informal interviews, I made an effort to confirm the former data among interviews as well as obtaining in-depth information by more focusing on the research questions (Carspecken, 1996; Merriam, 2002).

With the consent of interviewees, the interviews were recorded by using two devices, a smartphone that has a voice recording function and another supplemental recorder, in order to
completely keep interview data. The interviews were conducted in Korean, English, or both depending on their preference. I also transcribed these interviews myself so that I became deeply familiar with the data (Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 1998; Merriam, 2002). I then sent the interview transcripts back to each interviewee to check the accuracy of transcriptions and obtain their feedback (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002). Throughout the data collection period, I tried to obtain exact information by cross-checking collected data from multiple sources (Carspecken, 1996; Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 1998).

Data Analysis

This section outlines the process of data analysis by taking four steps: (1) familiarizing with data, (2) open coding, (3) focused, and (4) axial coding.

Familiarizing Myself with the Data

Multiple sources I collected above were used for analysis (Merriam, 2002). Data analysis, in fact, starts with collecting the first data (Carspecken, 1996; Charmaz, 2006; Emerson et al., 1995; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Wolcott, 1994). As Emerson et al. (1995) suggested: … data do not stand alone: rather analysis pervades all phases of the research enterprise – as the researcher makes observation, records them in fieldnotes, codes these notes in analytic categories, and finally develops explicit theoretical propositions. Viewed in this way, analysis is at once inductive and deductive. (p. 144)

Namely, “the process of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process – they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project” (Creswell, 2007, p. 150). However, researchers should have a process to intensively refine and analyze numerous data they collected for fitting with a particular research (Charmaz, 2006; Emerson et al., 1995; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).
The first step of concentrated data analysis was becoming familiar with data (Emerson et al., 1995). For this step, I began to read all field notes, documents, and transcribed interviews as well as reviewing the KACO’s website and collected cultural artifacts several times. I then wrote memos and noted questions that reflect my earlier insights on each meaningful unit. This process familiarized me with the data and provided me with insight on how to manage data. It eventually supported me as I began to create a thick description, since I had comprehensively explored the local area and the KACO (Carspecken, 1996; Wolcott, 1994).

Open Coding

For precise data analysis, a grounded theory approach was mainly used because this approach provides the systemic ways of analysis by minimizing a myriad of data (Charmaz, 2006; Emerson et al., 1995; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The first step was open coding. Open coding is “a means for developing interpretations or analytic themes [meaning units] rather than causal explanations (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 147, italics added). Open coding includes line-by-line and selective analysis, and initial coding work (Charmaz, 2006; Emerson et al., 1995).

For this work, I used NVivo 9 by importing all data sources, including my notes, into the research software. Through the line-by-line and selective analysis, I created initial codes by naming each line of my written data and selective parts of audio and visual data. Brief examples of the above data analysis work are illustrated in Table 5.4. Creating codes cannot be a separate process but rather an ongoing process connected with the next step, focused coding.
### Table 5.4.
**Example of Open Coding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Data extract</th>
<th>Initial codes and notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Field note** | *Door knocking*  
This work was related to the civic participation program. However, the staff has to perform it two times … some Korean American (KA) and Chinese American (CA) did not open the door, just saw us through a small window … | • Door knocking work of civic participation program  
• All staffs’ duty on door knocking  
  - Why work all together?  
• Community members’ guide against us  
  • Why they showed such behavior?  
| | *Gala*  
We’re preparing all stuff and divided roles in the Gala … we made presentations in Korean, English, and Chinese … | • Preparing Gala all together  
• Making presentation in three languages  
  • Most people KAs, and use English, need to Chinese??  
| **Document** | *Mission Statement*  
… places a special emphasis on meeting the needs of our marginalized community members. | • Serving marginalized communities  
• Why they delete a term, KAs, in their mission statement?  
• Isn’t this organization for KAs?  
• What’s their identity?  
| **Interview** | … there was no difference between work and life (..), people really sacrificed a lot. And seeing that, it was very inspiring to me (..), and it was inspiring and I knew it was a very important work …  
I think (..), the Flushing area (..), it’s very unique (..), very unique from any other (..), cities or any other areas where a lot of, there is a high concentration of KAs (..), because people [especially workers] both work here and live here … | • No difference between work and life in the initial period  
• Scarification of founders  
  • No wage, what led their dedication?  
• Inspired from early activists’ works  
• Flushing as a unique area  
  • High concentration of KAs in Flushing  
• Work while live  
  • Is it different with other areas?  
  Why?  

**Focused Coding**

Focused or selective coding indicates “using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). In this step, I refined and elaborated the initial codes. Moreover, all initial codes and memos were not entirely related to this study, because I collected as much data as possible. Hence I had to decide what initial codes are core for this study (Emerson et al., 1995).

For this decision, researchers should consider giving priority to the topic based on previous theories or research (Boyatzis, 1998; Emerson et al., 1995). According to Boyatzis (1998), “there are three different ways to develop a thematic code: (a) theory driven, (b) prior data or prior research driven, and (c) inductive (i.e., from the raw data) or data driven” (p. 29). The theory-driven or prior research-driven approach is largely used in social science research, as well as critical ethnography, because the approach aims to create codes based on the values of researchers depending on a particular research topic or research questions and theories. On the other hand, the data-driven process emphasizes a substantial approach to the data relatively free from previous research, notions, values, or theories.

My approach in this study was to investigate community leadership and learning based on CHAT as a theoretical framework. For this, the activity proposed by CHAT was assigned as a unit of analysis. In this respect, I collected much of the data and created interview questions guided by CHAT. Thus, by the theory-driven approach, I must firstly and carefully consider the components of CHAT such as object, mediating artifacts, rules, division of labors. In particular, I focused to grasp the invisible and latent aspects of the components from my data. In addition to this, I made an effort to identify contradictions by focusing on what activists identify as challenges for empowering community leadership and learning. The contradictions helped me to identify the relationships among themes in latter analysis.
On the other hand, I also partly adopted the data-driven approach to explore not only how they have developed community leadership in the developmental history of KACO, but also in their daily work practices at the KACO. Furthermore, this approach helped me to identify the visible aspects of the activity’s components. This focused coding, in fact, was simultaneously conducted with the next type of coding, axial coding.

**Axial Coding**

Axial coding “relates categories to subcategories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a category, and reassembles the data you have fractured during initial coding to give coherence to the emerging analysis” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). In this step, I established the relationships of elaborated and selected codes by creating subcategory, category, and theme (Charmaz, 2006; Emerson et al., 1995; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Because I analyzed data based on CHAT, themes were actually one of each element within the activity. An example is illustrated in Table 5.5.

The example includes two types of components (mediating artifacts) within one of the community leadership activities (“Collaboration” that will be described in Chapter Six) by activists. The first one is a habitus that influences activists’ behavior. It was classified into a category and three categories including codes. Another one is meetings as cultural artifacts activists made and utilized to conduct their activity. It was classified into two categories including several subcategories and codes. For this classification, numerous codes from diverse data sources were utilized.
### Example of Axial Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Sub) Theme</th>
<th>Category, Subcategory and Code</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Habitus among activists for collaboration</strong></td>
<td>Together on the Same Page</td>
<td>- Interviews (Is), Documents (Ds), Pictures (Ps), Field Notes (FNs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong bond</td>
<td>- Is, FNs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Family-like tradition</td>
<td>- Ds, FNs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Personal care</td>
<td>- Is, Ps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doing together</td>
<td>- Is, FNs, Video File (VFs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Preparing and eating lunch</td>
<td>- FNs, Ps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Cleaning together</td>
<td>- Is, FNs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Additional works beyond tasks</td>
<td>- Is, FNs, Video File (VFs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>- FNs, Ps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Equal space</td>
<td>- Is, FNs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Open conversation</td>
<td>- FNs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Equal benefits</td>
<td>- FNs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Cultural artifacts (meetings) among activists for collaboration** | Formal and informal meetings | - Is, FNs |
| | Having program meetings | - Is, FNs |
| | Staff meetings | - Is, FNs |
| | Education sessions | - Is, FNs |
| | Non-regular informal meetings | - Is, FNs |
| | - At the workplace | - FNs |
| | - Outside | - FNs |
| | - Online | - FNs |
| **Particular events** | Annual events | - Ds, Is, FNs, VFs |
| | - Gala | - FNs, Ps |
| | - Retreat | - Is, FNs, Ps |
| | - Staff planning | - FNs, Audio File |

During my data analysis, I worked with two peer reviewers, a faculty (not my advisor) and a Korean Ph.D. candidate in Education (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002). Although they could not be involved in all processes, they frequently gave me an advice and also discussed creating codes and their appropriateness with me. In addition to this, I sometimes found it difficult to correctly express some parts of the Korean transcriptions in English, due to the delicate, nuanced differences between the two languages. In this case, after making an initial translation myself, I then received a help from a second generation KA who is fluent in both languages; we discussed these challenging passages together. At times, the interview excerpts and
quotations I have included in this document seem to be somewhat awkward; I translated literally to avoid a distortion. This is due, in part, to the fact that 1.5 and second generation activists frequently answered in Korean although they were not fluent in Korean.

**Researcher’s Positionality**

In qualitative research, especially ethnographic studies, researchers are considered as a primary agent or instrument used in the process (Carspecken, 1996; Emerson et al., 1995; Fetterman, 1998; Wolcott, 2008). In other words, the identity or positionality of researchers influences all phases of the research processes. With regards to positionality, Thomas (1993) argued that researchers “must always be aware not only of how we might influence and shape the slice of culture we study, but also of how we ourselves are changed by the research process” (p. 67). This means that researchers should not have a coherent identity and further need to revise it reflexively during the research (Carspecken, 1996; Emerson et al., 1995). As a matter of fact, my positionality in regards to the activists of KACO fluctuated among overt critical ethnographer, intern, passive or objective observer, and Korean learner (Carspecken, 1996; Emerson et al., 1995; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). During the data collection period, I tried to maintain unbiased positionality (Carspecken, 1996; Emerson et al., 1995; Fetterman, 1998; Wolcott, 2008).

**Critical Ethnographer versus Internship**

In my research period, I had a responsibility to work as an intern while providing practical knowledge as a critical ethnographer. In the initial period, I should learn their work, explore their approaches, and build trust relationships with activists. Although I had previous knowledge of nonprofit organizations and organizational experiences, those were unfamiliar for me due to the diversity of activists and complicated immigrant issues in the United States. Especially, it was hard to understand their feeling and viewpoints as a KA immigrant who has
experienced and lived in the United States. As a result, I needed to immerse myself into their practices.

As time passed, however, I felt that I might too deeply assimilate with them as well as their culture over time. In this case, I might miss some critical points. Hence I repeatedly reestablished my positionality as a critical ethnographer. Even though it was challenging to spend so much time in travel to the research site each week, due to work responsibilities at my school, the travel time fortunately helped me to refresh my point of view.

Meanwhile, as an intern, I could not have an enough power to thoroughly conduct my research. Although activists acknowledged me as a researcher, the intern position limited my participation in some meetings and my access to internal documents. Therefore, as a researcher, I approached toward them overtly and used full disclosure, at a specific point in the research period. Nevertheless, I should carefully have the researcher’s identity and persistently recheck the positionality because my behavior related to this research may disturb their daily activities.

**Observer versus a Korean International Student**

After coming to the research site, I had to change my preconceptions and carefully interpret some issues. For instance, at the second internship interview with the KACO (after a first phone interview), I asked an activist who is a second generation about the relationships between KAs and CAs. At that time, I had a prejudgment that the two groups have a big conflict, because I reviewed Korean and English newspapers that described their relationship as a severe competition. He responded: “we don’t wanna say the term (..), conflict, competition, sort of things and don’t wanna intend such values too” (FN, 09202010). However, another activist who was also a second generation but has lived in the Flushing area told me that KAs pretty much have conflicts with CAs and other racial groups, especially Hispanics, even though the conflicts are not very serious. The activists sometimes have a different perspective on a particular issue. In
this context, I need to protect my identity as an objective observer to avoid a biased understanding.

Besides, the KACO’s culture that supports each other based on a strong kinship (say ‘Jeong’ in Korean) served to remind me of Korea. I felt more comfortable in some aspects of the organization later by building a trusting relationship with a few activists. Although the feeling led me to be more involved in the organization’s activities, I should have reorganized my positionality as a little more passive observer who objectively investigates the staff’s activities.

**Ethical Issues**

**Informed Consent**

Although I received the approval of Institutional Review Board and got the organization’s permission for this study (see Appendix F), I confronted an ethical issue in terms of informal interviews and discussions with activists in the KACO and conversations with other persons outside because I did not obtain consent in all cases. To avoid this issue, a personal or demonstrative pronoun (e.g. he, she, activist, staff, woman, KA taxi driver) was largely used in this study rather than using a name.

With regards to formal interviews, I fully informed participants of the purpose, questions, and confidential issues of this study before interviews. In addition, interview participants volunteered to participate in the interviews. I also let them know that they could stop the interviews anytime and avoid questions they do not want to answer during the interviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The informed consent form is found in Appendix G.
Confidentiality

By using pseudonyms, I try to avoid characterizing interviewees in order to protect their confidentiality. For this, I use alphabetical identifiers (A, B, C, etc.) instead of their names. I also do not describe their work status/title/role and gender that might allow readers to identify the interviewees (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In addition to this, I pixelated the critical part (e.g. faces, titles of cultural artifacts etc.) of some pictures inserted in this study.

Furthermore, I did not use the name of KACO and a cultural group of the organization as well as the names of external partners which have coalition relationships with the KACO.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this research are threefold. The research is limited by boundary, by a focus on the community leadership activities of activists in the KACO. This study did not comprehensively consider the perspectives of other stakeholders as the constituent of a community which works together to perform an activity. Especially the voice of community (a component of the activity) in each activity on community leadership was not thoroughly considered. The study also limited the organization’s area of focus, including fieldwork and observations to Flushing, Queens of New York.

In addition, it is important to note that the scope of this study was not sufficient to examine the whole historical aspects and activities of the organization for community leadership due to restricted resources and occasional restrictions on my participation by the KACO. It resulted in a limited understanding of the social or collective learning process of activists as well as the process of community leadership building.

Finally, although the purpose of this study was more concerned with an in-depth understanding of learning in a length of time, I had a limited involvement of no longer than six
months due to budgetary and time constraints. As a result, I did not have opportunities to more thoroughly explore the activities of the KACO. It made me focus on investigating not a process of occurring and resolving contradictions at the different levels, but rather the outcomes of activities by negotiating already emergent contradictions in a comparatively short-term period primarily based on the activists’ voices.

In an attempt to compensate for those limitations, I made every effort to provide a thick and rich description of the history and daily practice of the KACO as well as describe the scene of a local area for readers before describing by the research questions (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002).
Chapter 6. COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES AND LEARNING

In this chapter, I begin by describing how activists build community leadership activities and what contradictions occur throughout the activities, using cultural historical activity theory (CHAT). I then examine how activists learn throughout the activities by negotiating contradictions. In these processes, I identify what features hinder or facilitate community leadership and learning of the KACO’s activists.

Identifying Activities and Contradictions

When identifying activities of CHAT, researchers should carefully identify the object of each activity first, because an activity is driven by an object (Engeström, 1987, 2001; Foot, 2002; Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006; Leont'ev, 1978). Before identifying the object, it is always important that researchers determine how they perform their research—through whose perspective and with what kind of specific research questions/interests. This is largely because numerous activities can be described in daily practices, depending on the viewpoint of researcher. Hence the decision is central to the development of a particular research project, and it also significantly influences the researcher’s approaches as he or she identifies what kind of activities.

With regards to this, researchers could generally consider two approaches. The first is that the subject is assigned by the activity in a specific case or well-established context through identifying the object. In this approach, it is more important to investigate a relatively well-bounded context and then the subject can be determined by identifying activities driven by objects in the context. Another approach is that the activity is identified by investigating the object through intentionally assigned the subject in advance. Here, it is important to determine the subject prior to identifying activities, because the object and activity are differently specified by who is the subject. Although these two approaches can definitely be distinguished, qualitative
researchers must continuously consider what type of approach is the most suitable for their particular research both before and during the field work.

For this study, I followed the latter approach based on my investigation in the field as described in Chapter Five. Moreover, one of the main inquiries of this study was community leadership. The concept of community leadership is fundamentally not a bounded phenomenon but rather a boundary-crossing phenomenon based on diverse stakeholders. That is why I did not focus on the daily work activity within the KACO, even though I primarily depended on the voice of the KACO’s activists.

To identify activities, investigating objects through the data should be considered first. In other words, identifying the object is foundational to examining the activity. As a result, I paid special attention to identifying the object of activities for community leadership in the data analysis. According to CHAT, an object refers to a fundamental desire or motive to guide an activity. Meanwhile, community leadership is relevant to build relationships with diverse stakeholders inside and outside of the KACO to overcoming limited capacities. Hence the objects of community leadership activities indicate a desire or motive that reflects why community leadership building is required and with whom, what capacities are limited, or why constructing relationships among activists within the organization as well as between the activists and diverse stakeholders. In this respect, the objects of community leadership activities are different than the work activities bounded in the KACO related to the specific goals of each program within the KACO.

The activists have formed and consciously recognized three relational dimensions for community leadership (external partners, community members, and activists themselves). From the data and based on the dimensions, three objects as conceptualized by CHAT were identified to guide three inter-related activities: “Coalition,” “Empowerment,” and “Collaboration.” The
objects can be described as an entity or a purpose (Engeström, 2001; Engeström & Sannino, 2010) as outlined in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. 
*Objects of Three Community Leadership Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coalition</td>
<td>External organizations/partners</td>
<td>To advocate for Korean American (KA) and other immigrant communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Community members (KA and CA)</td>
<td>To empower KA and Chinese American (CA) community members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Activists of the KACO</td>
<td>To comprehensively approach diverse immigrant issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The activities are not only driven by each fundamental object through historical accumulation of the organization’s background and internal/external socio-cultural contexts, but they also have inner contradictions. Moreover, a contradiction occurs among the activities because of the relatedness of the activities.

The contradictions have a significant meaning in that they provide a head start for identifying what features hinder or facilitate community leadership and learning. The contradictions of the three activities basically have the potential to impede community leadership building and learning in daily practice. However, if the activists try to create alternatives by positively addressing the contradictions, the contradictions became driving forces to enhance community leadership and learning (Engeström, 2001; Engeström & Sannino, 2010). Therefore, in this study, facilitating features for community leadership and learning reflect the diverse historical and current endeavors of the activists to resolve several contradictions.

In identifying contradictions, the researcher needs to understand that contradictions are not the problems or conflicts of an individual that temporarily occur but rather historically
accumulated structural tensions, challenge, or proximal distance in a length time. For instance, an activist said:

I don’t understand why we eat lunch together. As you know I have to pay for $25 in a week for that (..), also I cannot select my favorite foods (..), so (..), I feel it will be better that I bring my lunch from my home sometimes. (FN, 10202010)

However, she also mentioned that she is satisfied with the lunch culture overall, despite some dissatisfaction. In this case, her statement cannot be considered as a contradiction because it occurs within a specific individual, momentarily. Moreover, the other activists did not generally indicate that the lunch culture is problematic.

On the other hand, most of the activists commonly stated that a cultural disposition of KAs and CAs—the pursuit of stability in their lives—has prevented them from conducting their activity to empower community members. This historically accumulated feature was identified as a contradiction in the activity. Additionally, to shed light on the purpose of this study as a critical ethnography, I make an effort to investigate potential contradictions from data, even though all activists did not more consciously recognize those. In the next section, I will thoroughly investigate the three community leadership activities and their contradictions.

Community Leadership Activities and Contradictions

Coalition Activity and Inner Contradictions

The first activity is “Coalition” driven by an object, ‘to advocate for KA and other immigrant communities by building coalitions with diverse partners.’ The object addresses why activists fundamentally build coalitions with diverse external partners including community members. Historically, the KACO began as a small group to speak for KA communities, and it
has expanded its activities to include issues of other immigrants by advocating and supporting for marginalized KA immigrants against unfavorable realities for them:

First of all, it [daily living] too difficult for them (..), they experience a lot of difficulties with little things. For example, they can’t understand these general documents so they come to us for help. It’s simple stuff but it’s in English. They’re having problems because, frankly, there isn’t a working language service, and so we’re saying we need to give voice to these citizens and give them language access. Of course, the goal is to obtain the proper rights of immigrants …. I mean for their living (..), they can’t properly express themselves in matters concerning their rights. So with that, we want to give them what should be rightfully theirs … (C, 98-101 & 127-129)

Here, most of KAs have a low language capability (..), actually everywhere as well as here New York (..), more than Asian people here and people in other areas. We have a voting rights act, yeah. Voting rights act 1965 …. that’s like it said, you must provide a there must be no (..), obstacles to participate, so, language access is part of getting rid of these obstacles, language is a big obstacle …. But, comparing with voting (..), social service part is still limited so that KAs comfortably use several forms (..), or read English letters because there are not many Korean forms, almost nothing actually. (D, 101-103 & 152-163)

Hence this activity includes various individual and group actions such as projects, campaigns, and marches with partners to appeal the immigrants’ difficulties to policy and law makers. To achieve the ‘object,’ activists as ‘subject’ perform this activity mediated by several artifacts such as habitus, diverse formal and informal on-offline meetings with ‘community,’ and other cultural materials and communication tools (e.g., e-newsletters bi-monthly, annual reports, Facebook, Twitter, email, phone etc.; see Figure 6.1).
In the figure, explosion marks refer to contradictions within each component (primary contradiction); two-way arrows refer to contradictions between bold components (secondary contradiction). In addition, a dotted explosion mark refers to a potential primary contradiction of a bold and italic (‘assigned responsibility’ in the ‘Division of Labor’). On the other hand, a dotted two-way arrow refers to a potential secondary contradiction between components by the potential primary contradiction.

As a matter of fact, a variety of coalitions with diverse partners has been an important basis so that KACO has become one of the leaders in the area as a social change organization for immigrant issues, since the 1990s. Activists instinctively realize their survival strategies and appropriate approaches to cope with immigrant issues as minority. An activist said:

Our expansion and development historically results from our continuous changes (..), our organizational name change and focus change of issues accruing to political landscapes.
(..), so then builds collision with more diverse organizations ... those are necessity because you know we are really a minority of minorities. (FN, 02072011)

Namely, their coalition is not a matter of choice but rather an indispensable way to speak for the voice of KA immigrants:

Among the problems that we want to solve are problems that the minorities are facing. If it’s just KAs speaking, that goes nowhere very quickly. With what we do, the nature of our work makes it imperative that we join forces with a diverse group of people. (I, 251-253)

… it seems that there are pretty much KAs in New York, but just 1% in the entire population of New York. So, such (..), coalition building for advocating rights is inevitable to KA community (..), it’s not an option for us. (J, 673-675)

These represent the activists’ natural and historically accumulated habitus as their cultural disposition for building coalition. The habitus is considered as a most significant of mediating artifacts in this activity more than others.

However, it has a contradiction itself because the KACO always has a competition with other partners in the capitalist economic system. This primary contradiction led a secondary contradiction between components, ‘mediating artifacts’ and ‘community’:

Because there are a lot of KA organizations, in order for us to appeal to … honestly (..), it’s because there’s a lot of competition among KA organizations. Frankly, there are a lot of overlapping services. Looking at what we’re doing here (..), it’s almost all overlapping because things like food stamps or applying for citizenship, these things all overlap. And frankly, the clients need to come but we also get funding. (B, 85-88)

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10 Sawchuk (2006) suggested Bourdieu’s concept of habitus as a significant mediating artifact in order to overcome current CHAT’s approaches that merely emphasize language or instrumental mediating artifacts. He argued that the habitus as a class-cultural disposition should be considered more important than semiotic and symbolic tools, because habitus represents a cultural historical mechanism of each class.
In fact, this competition always has a potential to occur in daily coalition work. When I participated in a focus group interview of KA elders with other organization’s activists, most of them had been busy promoting their organizations’ services and activities. In the interview, an elder told other participants: “I received tax-reporting service from OOOO [the KACO]. It was free and really good.” And then, other two activists quickly respond: “Our OOOO [another CO] also provide such services (..), from March 1 to mid-April. Here is my business card. You can contact me whenever you need help” (FN, 01252011). To avoid fierce competition among partners, the KACO has formed trust relationships over a long time. These relationships at the individual and organizational level facilitate the coalition work:

In the case of OOOO [another CO], many parts of the organization’s services overlap with our programs. But, fortunately our OO director [a senior staff of the KACO] individually knows the OOOO’s executive director well each other. So, we have been able to collaborate with that well (..), for such coalition, personal relationship is also very important. (H, 143-145)

M also emphasized the personal relationship to collaborate work other partners:

The staff changes very frequently in organizations, too [laughing]. We say almost the same things over again every year.

I: But if the people change, you need to reestablish relationships …

That’s right. Personal relationships are very important. It’s because, let’s say an organization is close to our organization, but when someone in that organization, someone I don’t know, asks me something (..), I mean, between organizations, you have to send formal letters and they have to be dealt with. But if someone I know asks me the same thing, I end up looking at that first. That’s just how it is in real life (..), and frankly, is there anyone working for these organizations who’s not busy? That’d be a lie (..), if someone working an organization says they’re not busy, that’d be a strange thing to say.
So if my work is piling up and I’m sending an email, if it’s someone I know personally (..), I can say, could you do this for me? It’s an emergency. If I send it like that, I get an immediate reply. But if it’s to someone I don’t know, then it’s awkward to ask for any favors. If I ask, I’m so-and-so calling from KACO, we did this-and-this with your organization, and now could you take a look at this, deal with it and get back to me? I’ll hear from them in a few days and they’ll say I’m sorry for the delay I’ve been busy … it’s like that. So there’s that kind of difference. It’s subtle. You know the Korean saying that an arm bends inward? Here it bends inward all the time. (M, 433-442)

The ‘community’ also has its own contradiction resulting from limited capacities of partners and different/diverse interests of community members:

… When we were growing at 12%, KACO’s capacity expanded a lot—in the past one to two years—but there are also organizations that are short on capacity. When we contact those organizations, we have to ask them to come out, but they only have an ED and a staff of one or two people. So we have to lead and contact them, and they keep saying they can’t come (..), because they can’t leave their office unattended. It’s a difficult situation (..), because that’s the culture. We think it’s important, but they think (..), yes, it’s a good thing but (..), they think, “It’s not our priority” (..), and that’s a bit [sighing]. (Q, 461-467)

An activist also said it this way:

For example, among the Latin organizations or the CA organizations, there’s no one that has the kind of influence that we have, doing the kind of collative activities that we do at this level …. When you look at this area, the CA community is about five times bigger. But among the several CA organizations here, no one does the kind of coalition or community building at the level that we do … Various ethnic or racial groups and social classes are gathered here (..), and it may be because of linguistic differences or man-made
conditions but it’s never really easy to gather everyone together. These objective conditions (..), for example (..), let’s say (..), something about the public parking lot becomes a hot issue all of a sudden. In a lot of cases the KA merchants and the CA merchants can’t communicate with each other (..), and not only with each other but even among KAs, there can be different points of view, and there are also many different social and historical conditions (..), it’s a big challenge. Then there’s another challenge. In other communities, they don’t have the kind of leadership group like KACO that they can trust, relatively speaking. I’m not boasting that we’re doing well but (..), for example, such representational organizations could (..), if there were such organizations …., if there were these representative organizations for each of the ethnic groups, all we’d need to do would be to band together with those organizations. But South Asians are especially weak, and also with the CA community, granted they are far behind us, still there’s no group that’s politically active or has the needed infrastructure. You know there’s a big Filipino population here? They have just about one social service organization and no social change organization like us. With the Latin community there’s not even anything to mention there (..), even with the African Americans, there are a few groups, but their community is much more divided than ours and only a few groups have an office, let alone full-time staff. But we can’t go to all of these groups and organize them (..), so (..), it’s very difficult. (I, 270-330)

These primary contradictions within the ‘community’ lead to a secondary contradiction with the ‘object.’ These contradictions have led activists themselves to try to expand their social services and organize and mobilize community members.

Meanwhile, various rules guide the subject and community to perform this activity. First, there are numerous federal and state laws related to diverse immigrant issues such as housing, citizenship, voting, worker, foreclosure, undocumented youth issues and so on. Although many
activists usually said several laws are problematic, I actually could not exactly investigate all related laws. However, an activist described how a housing law can be abused by using an example:

There are a lot of problems that we can’t solve legally or with our services …. right now there are issues that cannot be resolved through law. For example, with MCI [Major Capital Improvement], the law has been set the way it has now and we have to follow it (..), even though it’s a bad law.

I: Could you explain a bit more about MCI?

MCI, now (..), it’s about a law that supplements or replaces public housing facilities. You know facilities like security cameras or elevators within apartments? The law helps to upgrade these or replace them with new products. The main purpose for creating the law was (..), the owners of apartments under rent control do not really think about the condition of their buildings or the welfare of their residents, because they don’t receive a lot of rent. So New York City made a law (..), it says that if the building owners replace or repair the facilities in these public buildings, the law will allow them to raise their rent. That was the intent of the law but the owners are abusing it. The law’s expedient (..), but there are too many loopholes. It was inevitable that there would be these loopholes because a huge amount of capital was used for lobbying …. Let’s say there an elevator. Then that elevator actually has a depreciation period of about 25 years or 30 years (..), and the owners usually apply to replace the elevator after about 15 years. They do that, but in reality, they don’t actually replace it. They just change the outer appearance and change just a few parts (..), whereas they were supposed to replace the whole thing (..), they just fake these documents and get the approval. Then after they get the MCI approval, they use it to increase the rent. But now if they keep making this kind of upgrades, there are side effects (..), from poor construction. The elevator doesn’t work
again (..), the rent has gone up (..), that would be the kind of example. (G, 168-205)

According to the activist’s statement, the law has a contradiction itself. This inner contradiction brings out a secondary contradiction with the ‘object’ of advocacy for marginalized immigrants. That is why the activists have made an effort to conduct a variety of campaigns and rallies by building collations with diverse partners. In addition, the activists are influenced by an informal rule related to funders, policy makers, media, and coalition partners. The term, ‘quantity,’ in Figure 6.1 is an expression by condensing this rule. In terms of their approach to media and policy makers, an activist said:

Emphasis point on the newspaper and media is always the number of participants. So, we are involved (..), always in media in promoting our efforts. Also you know (..), policy makers start to have an interest when a number of people are aggregated. (D, 234-236)

Another activist stated the importance of numbers with regards to organizational position in the coalition:

Anyway, visible number is so important. It’s impossible (..), if I go to collation activities like some marches or campaigns alone without community members. I mean (..), it can dwindle our position in coalition (..), in terms of our role. Currently, most of our collation is so good I think (..), because they’re [partners] recognizing KACO can make something possible. I (..), I think the recognition results from our successful accomplishments with a lot of community members. (G, 458-465)

As a result, the activists are careful to record the numbers of people who participated in their activities so that they can validate their activities to funders, policy makers or media. Also they need to show their large-scale activities to COs in order to maintain their learning position. This rule more importantly affects the later second activity, “Empowerment.” Moreover, not only KACO and other partners have each own rules, but also the activists of the KACO make an effort to respect others’ rules or approaches with manners:
They had their own set of rules and we had ours so as long as we don’t do anything rude to each other (..), we try to keep a promise like (..), in a march or campaign, if we said we will bring about 80 persons, we nearly keep the numbers. We established the numbers very realistically. But, some of other organizations sometimes break out a mutual consent. I mean (..), they just bring 20 persons even though they promised they bring 100 persons… but we always try to respect them (..), because we’re progressing together. (A, 267-277)

The KACO’s approach to other partners has contributed to maintaining ongoing coalitions with various partners.

In addition to the above contradictions, another potential contradiction was found between ‘division of labor’ and ‘object.’ The KACO has either a leading or supporting role depending on the project. Namely, when COs perform projects together, they assign each responsibility by formal or informal consensus. When the KACO plays a leading role in some projects, it tries to write a MOU (memorandum of understanding) or formal letter including detailed responsibilities or roles of participants. However, many other projects were conducted by informal consensus without exact guidelines for participating organizations. If a leading organization does not provide detailed plans or defined roles for the other organizations participating in a particular project, it may cause a discord among them. Moreover, a bigger problem is that supporting organizations occasionally do not express their opinion, even though they found some problems or better suggestions during projects; they have a kind of informal consensus that supporting organizations should follow an organization or organizations that have a learning role. Even though these informal approaches without assigning exact responsibility guarantee effective collaboration or quick progress for a specific project, they sometimes do not guarantee the project’s quality:

The people at OOOO [the leading organization], they’d rather just quickly publish some
academic paper rather than do careful research. Frankly speaking, they don’t care about the quality much. I mean they care, but the important thing for them is to get some kind of result, so that they can publish. They’re like the media that way, they need to produce something. So, um, you know, even if it’s sloppy, these people they just do it anyway because they have publish quickly. Man, I talked about it a lot at first during the project meetings (..), it was irritating, irritating and suffocating, because they couldn’t do it right (..), makes you really want to speak out.

I: Why didn’t you speak your mind?

Yeah, my opinions aren’t well received (..), that’s because here, we at KACO have a supporting role. I think, you know, those people, they’re the leaders.

I: Is there a precisely fixed supporting role?

(..), if there’s a meeting, we participate, and if OOOO says they need something, we support them with that (..), just like the way you went there today and helped them with data analysis. But no, there wasn’t a role that was precisely laid out when we started. The thing that makes this situation tricky is (..), at first they said they really needed our help and even later they talked as if they wanted us to actively participate (..), but now that the project has progressed somewhat, they’re doing whatever they want (..), even though I’ve had professional work experience in this matter.

I: Don’t they know your background?

No, no they know (..), but (..), which is (..), that’s kind of typical. (D, 553-571)

**Empowerment Activity and Inner Contradictions**

The second activity is “Empowerment” that aims ‘to empower KA and CA immigrant communities by not only providing social services/information/knowledge, but encouraging civic participation.’ This activity includes numerous actions such as organizing and educating
community and youth members, promoting civic participation, and providing social services including labor and housing, immigrant, foreclosure, and public benefit issues. Although the each program of KACO has a specific goals, activists commonly mentioned that the ultimate purpose of programs is empowerment. According to their expression, within this context empowerment means that community members or immigrants consciously realize and seek their rights by furthering positive civic participation beyond a passive approach where they remain silent or just receive free social services. Hence they also emphasize education for the consciousness of community members:

The ultimate purpose of us helps community members to seek a kind of their rights, and promoting political power (..), and assist them to directly participate in diverse civic actions (..), to seek their rights themselves. (G, 153-156)

KACO, as an organization, the purpose is to empower a community, so the old name used to be OOOO (..), I think fundamentally that has not changed, that we want to see the empowerment of the community (..), facilitates that empowerment through (..), in and through elections and the electoral process and you know related topics. (D, 122-127)

I actually I wanna do more. Do more means like not just in social services, you know but actually do more in maybe helping, not just helping the community, but bring all the community in to (..), sort of like a (..), if you put in general ideas helping community, but if you put in specific idea should be like helping with issues you know, what’s going on with community, yeah, not just one doing social services. (P, 445-462)

I think that it’s mainly to (..), to educate and prior the community, in advance, a lot of community members don’t know well about financial law and services in detail. And, they have a lot of misconception about it, so by educating them by know that (..), this, these are the requirements and then this is what this service is actually about. So it is important to let them know those in advance (..), so (..), like for financial services, once
they get counseling about budgeting, and (..), credit scores or not, then after few consultations, and for the future, now that they know it, they can just do it like every year, they can go request their own credit report, look at it [by themselves], by themselves. They can, they can keep like a monthly budget by themselves and then they will just and then that’s they will change the way that they live and I think that’s the (..), [yeah] end point. (K, 177-197)

In this respect, this activity’s object is related, in that the activists build relationships with community members to enhance community members’ capacities. More precisely, the community members are KAs and CAs who are main clients and volunteer groups of the KACO (see Figure 6.2).

![Empowerment Diagram](image_url)

*Figure 6.2. Empowerment activity and inner contradictions*
However, the ‘object’ also contains a primary contradiction itself. In recent years, other ethnic clients such as African-Americans, Hispanics, and Whites began to visit the KACO to receive social services:

With social services, more and more Asian Americans (..), it’s gradually expanding. In terms of the local community, there are a lot of regular white residents right now and they keep using the services, so (..), now a lot of them come. With things like food stamps or foreclosures (..), more and more (..), before it was like perhaps once a year (..), or none at all (..), but now it’s (..), I personally saw about 4-5 people in the last one month … (J, 837-842)

Moreover, some of them came to a regular housing meeting of the KACO that is primarily composed of KA tenants who have difficulties related to housing issues:

Right now we are centered round KAs (..), now we’re organizing a housing meeting (..), but in the future, if we can, we’d like the CA community members to come. At first there was one (..), a CA community member. But I think that person has pretty much lost interest in this (..), doesn’t come out anymore. Then some Hispanic people started coming (..), but we had difficulty with translation problems. If possible, we’d like English, Chinese, Korean and Spanish—provide services in four different languages. But we’re short on staff …. and now, we’re wondering whether we’re a social service or an organization, or exactly who we’re serving (..), whether we’re an organization serving just Koreans or Korean Americans. (G, 347-380)

This was a concern because of how the KACO has positioned itself. Although the KACO has primarily served KAs and expanded its services to CAs, many outside persons have a tendency to consider this an organization for Asian Americans, in general:

I mean that’s our focus, but currently, more of Asian American (..), to certain extent, because when you say Asian its Korean, Chinese, Indians … but frankly we’re supporting
Korean and CA in current. So, we can’t really say we are supporting all Asian Americans but many media, or external organizations have a tendency to consider us as Asian American supporting organization. (A, 415-422)

These contexts bring out a secondary contradiction between ‘object’ and ‘subject.’ Namely, activists, especially newer activists, began to be confused whether the KACO serves KAs (and a few CAs) only or more broadly serves all immigrants of diverse ethnic groups. Although they always tried to provide different languages in their activities, the KACO’s current capacity is still not enough to care for all. Although the activists introduced and connected them to other organizations to resolve the issue, some of them revisited the KACO with the same problem.

Meanwhile, to conduct this activity, activists have several mediating artifacts. The activists have a habitus that they would like to accomplish their purposes together with community members. This cultural disposition is already examined in their concept of empowerment. As I mentioned above, the activists consider the meaning of empowerment as the positive participation of community members beyond merely providing social services for them.

Moreover, in fact, this organization had been established by general KAs as a volunteer group at first, although some of them are currently working in KACO with having a staff title. Namely, the KACO has a historically strong belief that community members can play a pivotal role in social movement. It made them to go together with community members for conducting their activities. Furthermore, the activists justly make efforts to keep federal and state laws in terms of diverse immigrant issues. However, cultural habitus raises a primary contradiction with the activists’ habitus. The habitus of community members is largely summarized into four dispositions.

**Stability.** Although in general, many people hesitate to participate in social movement, a number of KAs and CAs, in fact, have a tendency to more lead in a comfortable life:

> You know there are some negatives with your typical first generation KAs (..), and Koreans. They like to talk but don’t take action [sighing]. They talk a lot but what (..),
they don’t do anything. So, with immigrant reform, it was like that as well. Of course, it’s important (..), we should help (..), they say these things (..), they all know it’s important. They read the papers and they know, but they don’t actually participate and do anything. (Q, 272-294)

KAs are not politically active (..), actually CAs are more-. As you know, many of them do not also participate in candidate forums if we can select a better city official for our community (..), so (..), frankly, that’s why we are doing door-knockings and phone bankings and so on (..), to push their positive actions. (A, 95-98)

This disposition is also related to KAs’ behavioral pattern that emphasizes a family life as well as the education of their children (see Chapter Four). More importantly, in Flushing, there are many KAs and CAs who are undocumented. Namely, their unstable status makes them hide in the background:

I think especially here in this community has a lots of undocumented people, right, and then, although they have difficulties, it’s actually, they actually not wanting to share their difficulties because they are undocumented. They don’t wanna make a problem. Their fear is the biggest thing that they really struggling them in their mind, like they are afraid of somebody might know them who they are you know, and then, if they, they come to the KACO, oh, this organization is doing politic stuff, I don’t wanna do anything with that, you know and then that's the challenge (..), I'm saying that supposedly they come and they talk about this politic then they will think, oh this is the politics and in their mind also actually oh, this is the politic organization, that kind of mindset because first they already have a mindset of afraid of the government, and then second of all, they heard of, it connects to their first mindset. (P, 282-395)

As a matter of fact, I found this tendency in some cases when I performed door-knocking activities with other activists to encourage voting. Several KAs and CAs were looking at us
behind a small window without opening the door, even though we intentionally and sometimes loudly introduced ourselves. Some of them said in their native language: “Who you are? (..), I’m indifferent to such things (..), Please just go” (FN, 10272010). Although the activists actually knew well about this tendency of KAs and CAs in this area, and many people generally believe that it is a common culture among them, the activists have tried to break the culturally prejudged myth with a strong belief that they should empower them:

… a lot of undocumented workers are very, they are scared of coming out (..), because of their status, but, I think it’s really important for them to know that they’re not alone in this, and that they have rights, regardless of their immigration status. They have a right to be paid for the hours that they worked. And (..), a lot of people don’t know that they got basic rights. (Q, 284-289)

L also said it this way:

For example, when we started actually knocking on doors, the people at our organization said this in the beginning. They said KAs would not like it (..), KAs wouldn’t like people coming to their door and asking them these questions. But we asked ourselves this: “Are you sure this is the case? How do we know that?” So we tried it for a few years. We tried it, and you did it yourself, too. Well how was it? It was better than you thought, right? Sometimes people really like it. They really like it, and sometimes it seems they like it better than other Americans. Actually, there’s this myth, too, that KAs (..), they would not apply for something like food stamps, which is for people having difficulties with their livelihood. Because of pride (..), but look at it now. See how many people come to apply for food stamps. So, sometimes we need to say, okay, we have to do it in a culturally sensitive manner, but at times, cultural sensitivity can become a hindrance. (L, 408-422)

This interview shows that their action-based approach sometimes contributes to more participation of community members. Namely, the KACO’s approach occasionally enables the
dispelling of a cultural myth that KAs or CAs are not interested in the political matters.

In addition, another basic reason of maintaining stability of community members could result from busy working and supporting their living. In fact, many employees in Flushing frequently have big workloads. Also an activist pointed out that the population in the area is characterized by a lot of first and elder generations who are not largely active in civic engagement:

I think it’s like this (..), they’re not interested unless it’s got something to do with them because they’re busy with their own lives. For example, if they’re having a hard time with their livelihood and their child becomes a dream act student (..), then they’re interested, no matter how difficult their own lives are. But now, as far as I know, there are a lot of first-generation grandfathers and grandmothers who’ve come through family invitation (..), they’ve come because their children are citizens. They have a green card from the start and because they’re old, they can’t speak English, but they get $300 or $500 from the SSI, and it’s not a problem for them to live on $500 in an apartment for the elderly. So they always go out to social gatherings, and immigrant reform isn’t something they’d be interested in. We have a lot of people like that. People who came at a younger age, pursuing the American dream, have to make money (..), and because they have children they have to send to high school, they work more (..), on average about 6 days, 12 hours a day … so they work 72 hours. They don’t get any overtime compensation. So they can’t care about these things. When they come home they have to feed their children (..), and then have to sleep. On the other hand, with Spanish people, there are a lot of part-timers, and they don’t work overtime like us at dry cleaners or the delis, so (..), of course, there’s also a difference in their perspectives, too (..), they come out more because they think it’s their issue … (Q, 297-321)

Moreover, the conservative nature of first generations of elder KAs could decrease their civic participation for social movement:
There are a lot of difficulties. First of all, with the first-generation KAs (..), who are older (..), some of them have negative feelings about our activities. In Korea, the adults used to look down on young people protesting, saying they’re “demonstrating,” you know. Of course, some people in Korea still look at things that way (..). In any case, we’re not like that, but I think a fair number of people misunderstand who we are. And if we talk about politicians, they mostly tend to have difficulties with that. In Korea, they would look at someone from the National Assembly as being better than them (..), they would look up to them somewhat (..), and I think the way a lot of them used to think still influences them here. So they tend to want to avoid participating in our activities (..), and there are people like that even among those who come to volunteer and actually participate in our activities. The ones who are rather conservative (..), especially among men (..), some criticize us for our activities [laughing]. But their opinions are important, too … (H, 527-535)

A CA activist in another organization, who assisted with the annual gala of the KACO, told me:

I think it is because CAs newly came from the main land into here Flushing aren’t largely unfamiliar with U.S. political system. And also why they do not positively participated in voting or political actions is that they have a negative feeling in a national matters or politicians a little. (FN, 10142010)

Despite this tendency of community members, I could observe the perspective change of some KA community members who have been participating in the regular community meeting of the KACO. In a community meeting, an elder KA said:

As you know, I actually, firstly participated in the march at the D.C. last week really. I really realized a lot of things. I felt our KACO activists are performing great works that our generations could not do that. I really appreciate your [activists] activities one more time. It is very important our KA immigrants I think. Let’s give our activists a big hand!
The change of community members’ viewpoints is one of the reasons why the KACO has tried to organizing community members with a grassroots approach.

**Church-based ethnic solidarity.** As with other areas in the United States, churches are deeply engaged in KA communities. In fact, I could easily find large and small Korean churches in Flushing and saw a lot of advertisements in the local media. Also I always met persons who provide a church’s newsletter or a small Bible for people whenever I visited at a large Korean mart on the Northern Boulevard in Flushing. B described this area’s characteristics related to churches:

> When you look at the Flushing area itself, everyone knows everyone. Things like church communities are very developed and there’s a strong sense of fellowship, so (..), when people unite here, they come together very tightly, but once they turn their back on someone, that person may have to leave town. There’ve been some cases where someone would get a bad reputation for something and ended up leaving. (B, 107-110)

This church-based solidarity of KAs in the area makes it more difficult for the activists of KACO to organize community members, since they are doing their social activities with them together without a religious issue. Hence how they connect their issues to the issues that concern many church persons is still one of the biggest challenges faced by the KACO.

**Cultural dependency.** As I mentioned above, the concept of empowerment to activists includes not only self-directed actions of community members but also their positive participation in the KACO’s activities to advance immigrant rights. However, many KAs are generally passive to the KACO’s activities; otherwise, they just consider the KACO as a social service organization:

> … a complaint they [KAs] have (..), like (..), especially when I worked in the KACO, a lot of KA clients come in (..), always have complaints why they couldn’t do that about something because we is a leading organization within the KAs. We are like
representative in Flushing KAs (..), why they give us pressures frequently while they
don’t participate in marches (..), our activities. (A, 130-138)
They take our helps for granted. Of course they appreciate those but don’t much
participate in our activities positively. (B, 138-139)
With the first type, if you look at it simply, they come as soon as they receive a letter. It’s
because they don’t know, because of language problems. With the second type, and it’s a
bit of a bigger issue, you know there’s a thing called cultural dependency. They just want
to depend on someone (..), there’s a natural tendency to do that. They want to give their
problems to the social service provider and ask us to solve them, so that becomes a factor
(..), the problem is (..), when they bring something, sometimes it’s like, why do they
bring the same thing over again, though sometimes it is different. But they don’t know.
They can’t tell them apart (..), I think that’s why they come. (E, 148-155)
With regards to this perception of KAs on the KACO, I observed a scene where an elder KA
woman said (to other KA peers): “The social service of KACO is free. But, you could just give
small money if you feel you’re sorry a little” (FN, 01252011). Given that social service part is
one of the big portions in the KACO, the recognition of KAs shows a challenge that proceeds into
a different direction from the activists’ original intention. To resolve this change, in the first half
of 2010, the KACO launched a meeting between ‘social service’ and ‘advocacy and organizing’
programs in order to discuss how they lead social service clients to participate in their activities.
Moreover, the KACO has continually appealed for language access issues to the state or federal
agencies by diverse advocacy actions as well as providing social services directly with
community members.

Deception. Another big challenge is the KAs’ action (habitus) of deceiving to apply for
social benefits:

These people just lie. Especially with government subsidies like public benefits or for
foreclosures, not everyone can get them, not when they don’t qualify. But they keep lying, even when they don’t meet the criteria. They lie about their rent (..), try to lie about their income report (..), a lot of them do that. So when you tell someone, sir you don’t qualify, sometimes they get angry. At first when things like that happened, I’d be taken aback (..), get upset (..), and a bit embarrassed. I would point out exactly the relevant regulations and tell them firmly that (..), we’d really like to help you but we can’t break the law. But this place is a bit like the KA community (..), they say things like, hey, just let it slide, why you being so difficult? At other places if I pay them, they write it up for me (..), even when we tell them we’re not an organization that takes money (..), it’s because in this community, that kind of thing actually happens a lot. There are a lot of people here who make money by writing false documents for others. So people sometimes lie regarding their Medicare, food stamps, and also in their tax reporting. I’m not saying everyone does that, but I think a lot of people do lie. And among the clients that come here, some are very knowledgeable about applying for tax or other social benefits. If we say no, then they go to another place (..), it’s like they’re shopping. Anyway, there are some people like that. I think it’s a big problem. (K, 549-567)

Moreover, an activist described why a lot of CAs are reluctant to pay taxes in this way:

The reason is that they don’t have a trust of nation. Especially CAs coming from China (..), you know, they have not been entered long in the liberal market system (..), so, they unconditionally think it’s a loss if they pay for taxes. So, because there are many people who think a free ride is for their rights and paying for taxes is to lose their rights. (M, 215-219)

This habitus raises a conflict with the activists’ habitus that they fairly approach social service issues based on federal and state laws. As a result, the primary contradiction between the habitus
of activists and community members, especially KAs, leads to the secondary contradiction with the ‘object’ of this activity.

Moreover, there is a language problem basically. Even though, an activist and intern provide services with Chinese, the language difference obstruct mutual understanding between CA community members and other KA activists as well as KA community members. As I mentioned before, although the KACO always makes an effort to provide three languages at least (Korean, Chinese and English) in their major events and recently began to give Chinese version newsletters to Chinese media, this language issue is still remained as a challenge.

Another mediating artifact is on- and offline spaces. Online spaces such as organizational website, Facebook and Twitter, YouTube, and Flicker help to advertise the KACO’s activities to all external persons and organize diverse generations of KAs. In particular, in 2010, the KACO newly opened its website and began to post more qualified newsletters and reports in both Korean and English. Moreover, networking with diverse stakeholders using social media was reinforced.

On the other hand, with regards to offline spaces especially, the space in the KACO is very limited, although this space plays a pivotal role in connecting activists and community members. Most group activities including eating lunch, press conferences, community meetings, offering social services, internal education session, staff meeting, program meeting and so forth are conducted in a conference room in the third floor which is approximately 55 square meters. Missed this limited space:

(..), right now the KACO’s office plays a certain role for the community members, but frankly, it leaves a lot to be desired. We’re still lacking in a lot of ways (..), because, for starters, we don’t have the space. Because we’re in an office building, it’s difficult for us to utilize the kind of space we used to have at the “Madang-jip” place. Now it feels somewhat like a professional office (..), compared to before, a lot more community members come to us now but I’m not sure how deep our relationship is. Practically, we
have a lot of problems with space (..), so we’re always sorry (..), to the community members. Frankly (..), they just end up waiting standing up in that small place. At any rate, I see this as something we have to work on (..), in that area. (N, 158-166)

In relation to meetings with community members, several activists missed the quality of meetings even though they have increased a contact with community members through diverse formal and informal meetings:

Our ideal goal is not to just make them use our services but also to make them participate in our activities, but that’s hard. They have jobs for their livelihood, their social status, and also a lot of those who come aren’t citizens or even green card holders. They have that burden due to their status, and we also lack manpower. We need to raise their awareness through education but we don’t have the people to do that. We try to educate the staff members but, doing that with the community members, that doesn’t really happen much (..), we meet with individuals or have group meetings but they don’t usually lead to any deep conversations or education opportunities. (B, 143-151)

Consequently, the primary contradiction of mediating artifacts results in a secondary contradiction with ‘object.’

At the bottom level of this “Empowerment” activity, ‘rules’ includes various formal and informal rules as similar as the first “Coalition” activity. However, informal rules from funders strongly influence on the activists’ daily actions to perform the “Empowerment” activity. The KACO received 77.3% of total revenues in 2010 from more than 20 foundations and government agencies. As a nonprofit organization, the funds play a pivotal role in progressing the organization’s activities. In other words, the KACO fundamentally has a financial dilemma in that some of the annual budget of the organization depends on external funds. Even though the foundations and agencies do not formally request numbers related to services provided and other accomplishments, the KACO frequently provides reports, including numbers, to more
persuasively demonstrate their effectiveness. As I mentioned in the section describing the first activity, these numbers are also important in appealing to law and policy makers. Furthermore, media always demands the numbers such as social service beneficiaries, new immigrant voters, participants in campaigns, rallies, and other events and so forth:

We actually have to write a report depending on how long, because sometimes they don’t give us the payment all at once sometimes, most of the time, it’s in increments and after let’s say they gave us one check, we have to give them an report; another check, we have to give them a report. Sometimes that’s once a year, at the end or sometimes twice a year, quarterly, it depends on the grant. So we are not just getting free money doing whatever. It’s for specific reason, and we have to show that we completed the task that we wanted to complete that was listed in the grant application, so we list our major goal, what we plan to do, how are we going to do it, and how it’s going to be enforced. (F, 218-227)

My own thinking is, in the past it was the first-generation [who were in charge], and the ED now is a second-generation, so our direction these days is a bit different from before. It’s true that the previous generation expanded KACO and developed it but we couldn’t free ourselves from funding. To do that, as we said before, to get funding, we need a lot of media exposure, and also as a social service (..), numbers are important, such as how many people we provided services to … (B, 157-126)

That’s one thing [appealing numbers to media] Okay, and then also fundraising, when we also perform fundraising, it [number] is very important (..), we receive individual donations, about one third of total? (..), so 33% and the rest is foundation or grant (..), or government. So, it’s very big part (..), when they provide us funds (..), when we apply (..), or maintain the funds, we need quantitative numbers because you know, I mean think about it (..), if we just say them you’re done many things like qualitatively (..), that’s not enough. We cannot persuade them (..), I think it’s really significant. (D, 244-253)
As a result, the rules require activists to count all of their achievements. The activists, in fact, have had numerous accomplishments. In 2010, they registered 50,016 new voters from 2004. They also provided consulting services for 824 community members, and 176 people became naturalized citizens and permanent residents. In terms of tenants’ rights, they counseled 391 persons, and 92 community members received direct assistance. In addition to this, 21 homeowners obtained direct help by 96 one-on-one counseling and 257 phone consultations. In addition, 32 low-wage workers of 447 counseling recipients were able to get benefits. With regards to other benefits, they provided consultation for 655 low-income families, and 135 families received the benefits of food stamps. Also 15 low-income families obtained healthcare benefits, and 91 marginalized families received free cell phones. They assisted tax-reporting services with 403 community members, and 234 people received direct assistance by obtaining tax benefits. Moreover, they mobilized about 500 community members to participate in 2010 Annual Immigrants Day of Action in Albany, New York and One Nation Working Together Rally in Washington D.C. Those accomplishments are also important to achieve one side of the ‘object’ of “Empowerment” activity. However, the quantitative approach is still limited to accomplish other sides of the object in terms of conscious communication between activists and community members and the self-directed participation of the members. In this respect, an activist told me:

As you know, we expanded contacts with community members through social service counseling and general community meetings, but, despite this, we always must be conscious about the quality of relationship with community members (..), the numbers is also important but just number is not enough when we think about our ultimate goal. (FN, 03112011)

Another activist said it this way:

Frankly some people just came to there [One Nation Rally] because we provide free foods and buses. We always appreciate their participation of course, but I frequently feel
like many elders just came automatically (..), because they have much time. Many of
them did not have any conscious thoughts (..), you know they consider such participation
just like a simple (..), enjoyable traveling. (FN, 03212011)

This dilemma of the informal rule concern with numbers leads a contradiction with the ‘object.’
In order to alleviate the dilemma, in 2010, the KACO began another fundraising event, a spring
reception, as well as ongoing efforts to obtain donations from individuals. Also the KACO made
an effort to build a better relationship with media. In terms of media, I will examine this more
fully later, as I explain ‘community’ of this activity.

Moreover, the activists have an informal rule in terms of mutual respect and manner,
similar to the first “Coalition” activity. In particular, in this activity, a polite matter was significant
because most of activists’ daily actions are conducted with elder KAs. As a matter of fact, the
younger Koreans largely use honorific expressions to others. Especially in the case of significant
age difference, the younger’s honorifics are considered as a matter of common courtesy among
Koreans. Thus activists always try to keep a polite approach to community members. In addition,
various rules existed in each partner in the ‘community’ and the activists also have several rules
in terms of recruiting community members and managing their meetings. For instance, B said:

[for the regular meeting], We try to organizing community members who really (..),
directly associated with our [KACO] activities (..), Usually we seek to community
members who want to positively participated in our activities (..), and have more
understanding for our organization. Frankly, it is better that we can recruit community
members who conduct our activities together with a same viewpoint with us. (C, 225-236)

Also they have a schedule rule that refers to holding a meeting monthly by mutual consent
between activists and community members. Moreover, by increasing community members who
want to receive the services and consultations of KACO, activists made a rule that they only have
meetings with community members who make an appointment before coming to the KACO.
In terms of ‘community,’ the activists always stated that there are a few COs or related organizations in the Flushing area (primary contradiction) that provide empowerment programs, compared to demands of community members (secondary contradiction with ‘object’). Given this situation, the KACO has had several partners. For instance, the KACO made a coalition with another CO to provide literacy programs for community members in 2010. In addition, it has provided diverse annual seminars in terms of tax-reporting, worker and housing issues, and citizenship by collaborating with some partners.

Another important partner in the ‘community’ of “empowerment” activity is media, because most KAs and CAs primarily get important information from local Korean and Chinese media. In fact, KAs and CAs in Flushing easily get free local newspapers on the street or stores, and many people routinely read them. Despite the high dependency of community members on media, most of media’s capacity is still limited (primary contradiction) to accomplish the ‘object’ (secondary contradiction):

Another thing, the media often gives misleading news reports because they make mistakes in their analysis. It’s because they’re not really specialists. When there’s a wrong news report, it can create a panic situation. A while ago, maybe in August, one reporter wrote something wrong in the main title. It was something about how the social service benefits that immigrants receive from the government were going to be cut, and an awful lot of people rushed over here [KACO] asking things like, why is this happening? I want to get my citizenship quickly (..), I think we worked three times as hard as we usually do.

I: Which newspaper was it? Do they all read that newspaper?

OOOO (..), OOOO (..), things like that (..), that’s because, as I told you before, there’s a big KA community in Flushing, so most people here read (..), and the same for the CA. Also as I said before, the church is connected with the community. So once some news
breaks, they all find out (..), through people at the church … (B, 379-391)

As a result, the KACO has tried to build a strong relationship with local media by making
personal relationships with journalists as well as sending exact information to media. Moreover, it
began to expand the relationship toward other English media.

With the Korean media it’s almost (..), right now we’re very tight.

I: Were you always tight?

We did a lot of building (..), until now (..), I’ve been writing stories myself and sending
them since 2004 (..), joining them for drinks [laughing]

I: You mean the reporters?

Yes, yes, so we’ve continued to build up our relationship (..), and also we’ve been
educating the reporters. Sometimes when you look at them, they really don’t know the
stories they’re covering. That’s because the reality of the KA community life here is that
the reporters have a lot of news they have to cover (..), and in doing their work (..), they
can’t generally cover a story in-depth. So then (..), I provide materials for them (..), just
yesterday I sent a reporter at OOOO something (..), and that’s how I keep our relationship
(..), and it’s intentional. And (..), so then (..), we’re pretty tight with the KA community
media (..), but with a few (..), media leadership we do have some disappointments. With
the field reporters, though, we’ve become very tight (..), and I’m expanding that now
with the Chinese media. So now with the OOOO Journal, with some of its reporters I’m
(..), right now we’re building up a close relationship step by step. (J, 967-987)

These efforts have contributed to provide better qualified information with more diverse
community members beyond describing the simple numbers or short facts of the KACO’s
activities and immigrant issues.

The ‘community’ also includes volunteer groups of KAs, especially youth and adults. I
actually did not observe youth activists in my research period because most of their activities
were performed outside of the KACO and the meeting sites were varied around the Flushing area. However, I had some opportunities to directly observe a regular community meeting and heard some matters about the meeting from activists. The regular meeting composed of KAs has its own contradiction in terms of limited understanding of KACO activities and the diversity in the group:

It’s not like those people really understand 100% the way we KACO staff or other people who are involved understand, not yet anyway (..), so I think there’s a bit of difficulty there. With me as well, frankly, I’ve worked here for over a year but I still don’t understand completely what kind of organization this place is or what its history is. So when a community member looks at us, there could be a slightly different point of view (..), but when they ask us for services or to campaign for activities we don’t do, it’s a bit [frustrating]. That’s why I think education is very important. Until now we have organized about 40 members, and about 20 of them actively participate in our activities. Rather than increase that number, I think we should meet more people from other diverse groups. We’re trying to expand to different social classes. Right now they are limited mostly to seniors and men, with a very small number of women. They are older (..), and all first generation. So we need to have younger age-groups and involve more people with various occupations. (C, 213-223)

Although some members of the group assist not only the law consultations of activists to KAs but also recruiting other community members to facilitate advocacy actions, overall their participation level is still low. This primary contradiction brings about a secondary contradiction with ‘object’ to empower more diverse community members.

Finally, this activity has a potential contradiction between ‘division of labor’ and ‘object.’ Most of the activists make efforts to have a dedicated approach as not a usual staff in a nonprofit organization but rather an activist in a community-based organization followed by their organizational tradition. However, they have a clear division of labor by space issues, much
workload, and professional characteristic of some work. The KACO’s space on the third floor, in fact, has an invisible line to separate between the office of activists (A) and meeting space with clients (B) (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3. The third floor of KACO

If some community members came in the A space by crossing the dotted line, one of activists always immediately said: “Excuse me, you’re not allowed in here or please wait the sitting area” (FN, 11172010). Moreover, due to busy work loads, the activists unwittingly seem cool toward community members in their daily work. At this busy time, many activists largely call the community members ‘clients.’ I observed several times that the activists have maintained power during meeting with the clients by emphasizing their professional knowledge in a limited time. In addition to this, they do not provide any space for community members on the fifth floor. Those situations seem ironic, in that they always have a tendency to say that we cannot exist without community members. Hence, I interpreted that the context has a potential to lead a contradiction with the ‘object’ because they occasionally have maintained only passive or mechanical relationship with community members in many cases, contrary to their stated desire.
Furthermore, some of the newly employed or existing activists who are lawyers or who have professional knowledge tend to consider their position as a professional job, similar to positions in other nonprofit organizations. This phenomenon shows that the KACO has further transformed—from a community-based organization having its traditional approaches and emphasizing a dedicated spirit toward community members into a more professional organization. Also the professionalism is more or less opposite the perspective of senior staff members, mostly first generations who have more power for deciding organizational direction. This distinctive perspective brings out a contradiction among activities. I will examine this issue further in next section describing the third activity.

Collaboration Activity and Inner Contradictions

The final activity, “Collaboration,” has as its object, ‘to comprehensively approach diverse immigrant issues by collaborations among activists of the KACO.’ First and secondary community leadership activities are the efforts of activists to overcome limits as a CO and KA immigrant community by strengthening external relational dimensions of community leadership. On the other hand, the third community leadership activity focuses more on internal relationships among activists to strengthen their capacity. As a matter of fact, this activity can be positioned as a sub-activity prior to the “Coalition” and “Empowerment” activities in that it is related to develop the ‘subject.’ Despite this, I set activity on the same level with the two activities, because the activists have considered internal relationships as one of the most important dimensions in their developmental history. This is largely because they believe all of their activities or social movement began with the base building within the KACO. Moreover, the KACO has had a culture of leading to staff growth by largely focusing on internal education as well as daily activities through a strong trust-based relationship with each other. The old-school activists of the KACO, in fact, were not definitely divided between education and daily practices. In other words,
they believed that learning does not occur only through formalized education but rather it is embedded in daily activities by collaborations among peers. This approach is still valid in the KACO. Furthermore, given the recent increase of newer staff by rapid organizational expansion, the KACO is very careful of internal relationships among staffs more than past years. Hence, in developing their community leadership, this activity is worth more than only a sub-activity.

To thoroughly identify the ‘object,’ I had to carefully consider why they have emphasized the collaboration among activists and what their desire is through that as well as the fundamental attribute of their activities for immigrant issues. The reason is that their emphasis of collaboration cannot be merely explained by a nonprofit organizational attribute that each staff has a lot of responsibility due to limited resources as well as convention. Namely, it was necessary to thoroughly investigate the KACO’s historical aspects.

Historically, the KACO has developed and shifted its focus depending on periodically changing political landscapes. The organization began to focus on immigrant issues in the United States and further has considered advocating for the rights of other ethnic immigrant groups. The immigrant issue actually requires that activists should broadly and comprehensively approaches to the issue beyond both a KA immigrant and a local level:

So that’s when (..), when we (..), in that kind of situation (..), frankly, for us, immigrant issue is a federal issue, isn’t it. So, it was dealt with broadly (..), actually we need to comprehensively approach diverse ethnic immigrant issues. (N, 233-235)

As a result, the change of focus naturally led the organization to expand their programs, because immigrant or civic right issues basically include diverse inter-related issues of various generations and ethnic groups such as advocacy, social service, education, and civic participation and so forth. By expanding their activities to support diverse immigrant issues, the activists were required to gain in-depth understanding of the issues to comprehensively approach to them by emphasizing positive collaborations themselves:
As you know we began to care for CA community members, and really many projects were also increased ourselves [sighing] (..), To reacting those, we should need to study (..), and must understand diverse immigrants’ issue. But, you know one person can’t perform all things (..), and also can’t know all. So, I mean we help and learn each other. It’s better (..), and actually it’s also one of the old tradition of our organization. (M, 357-362)

Moreover, through strengthening internal collaborations, they also realized that those guaranteed the sustainable growth of organization as well as their social movement activities for immigrants:

Actually it’s very hard to establish an organization. Establishing an organization requires to enormous efforts in a long time (..), however, the organization can easily collapse in an instant. That’s why we emphasize internal capacity building, internal education (..), our collaboration each other. As I mentioned before, our organization has grew by expanding our focuses on more diverse ethnic communities based on KA community (..), so, to maintain our organization, we should know about such various immigrant issues (..), and keep our current activities at least-. That’s why we must invest a lot of resources to internal capacity building with an ongoing conscious reflection. (J, 336-370)

Hence they had to inevitably collaborate with each other to broadly and comprehensively react to diverse immigrant issues by their expansion. Even if maintaining or developing organization may be considered as an object of this activity, it is inappropriate for the original purpose of community leadership building of the activists. These historically accumulated recognitions of the activists led to building a distinguished cultural habitus (see Figure 6.4).
As I described in Chapter Four, the KACO has a family-like culture based on a strong kinship with each other. An anecdote will illustrate this. When I conducted my internship there, an activist came back to the KACO around 5:30 p.m. after participating in an external seminar having lost her wallet. From her desk, she began to call several companies to cancel credit cards in advance. She then contacted other organizations’ activists who participated in the same seminar to see if they had seen her wallet. Her bad news spread fast to the KACO’s activists. Most of the activists came to the office and consoled her. At closing time, at 6:00 p.m., a senior activist said her: “Let’s go together dinner.” In his saying, a meaning that “I’ll take care of the check for dinner” was included. With another senior activist, they left the office (FN, 02082011). In addition to building a strong bond, the activists have tried to make the ideal of fairness within the organization with doing and working together:

*Figure 6.4. Collaboration activity and inner contradiction*
If we are a harmonious community group (..), that’s something we first wanted to achieve here [KACO]. So here, this is not a group where you get discriminated because of your age or position or your sexual orientation or whatever, but rather it’s a group where we put our strengths together to advance some specific public interest. It’s not a group where we gather to make a lot of money or to do research (..), and publish research results. We’re a kind of social reform group, aren’t we? So we wanted to become a model for our ideals in this place and experiment. There’s that kind of underlying philosophy (..), and if we could expand that to the local community called Flushing, this area could then become what the future could look like for the United States, right? You probably know already that the population’s demographic changes are now heading in this direction in the U.S. We don’t know exactly when this will happen, but they say it’ll happen around 2050, right?

The whites will decline from being the majority to below 50% and other minority ethnic groups will increase, and isn’t that the kind of future you can see now in Flushing? Those changes could bring more conflict, but in the midst of all that, if we could successfully achieve a model of how people could come together and work for the public interest of some community, that could have a huge political, ideological and social impact. By creating a role model, we can exert a lot of influence. Share experiences. Social change and reform can be achieved through this type of approach. So to do these things, I think the work has to start within this organization first of all, to pursue that ideal community. (I, 193-212)

And the culture that we most want to keep in this place (..), we (..), this may sound very idealistic but (..), where everyone is fair (..), you know that kind of ideal society (..), where everyone becomes equal (..), and comfortable like this (..), we call it the “Madang-jip.” I mean, like this here, in a “Madang-jip” (..), I think such space is needed. We need
to make such space (..), I think that’s our duty (..), and I would like us to have such space. I think our staff, probably a little bit at the beginning (..), when they [newer staff] first come (..), because they’re not familiar with this kind of culture (..), were probably a bit surprised. We eat together, clean together. Look, anyone can talk, but it's really hard to show with your actions. I learned in here that I have to live a life where my words and actions match. At least I’m trying to live like that, and now (..), I would like this place to become an ideal space where such people are gathered together. (N, 139-154)

In terms of financial compensation, they receive a salary between $35,000 and $45,000. A senior staff member voluntarily draws a salary of less than $20,000. Moreover, the president and vice-president do not have any salary. The salary system, thus, does not make the activists disgruntled. Moreover, the KACO has maintained same ratio among first, 1.5 and second generations in staff and board members.

Regardless of generation, most of the activists considered the culture or cultural habitus positively. In particular, several activists were satisfied with much of their own authority in their work, feeling comfortable to express their opinions, and they acknowledged that the organization was quick to consider those opinions. Although they may have some temporary challenges because of individual differences based on varying socio-cultural backgrounds, those did not become a contradiction within this activity. The reason was that most of them have a common understanding of Korean culture and further grasp the generational differences based on past experiences with their family and friends. Moreover, most of the newer staff have also adjusted well to the organizational culture, work, and rules. Instead, a secondary contradiction between ‘subject’ and ‘division of labor’ resulted from the structural dilemma (primary contradiction) of the ‘division of labor’ of the organization.

From 2008, by recruiting many new staff, the KACO began to build several organizational systems and structure divisions. The primary reason was that the organization
needs to systematically reflect on immigrant issues by expanding their programs and reducing the confusions of new staff members:

It was difficult at first. If there had been proper education at the beginning, if there had been notices, I think it would’ve been okay. But when I was hired, there wasn’t anything like that in the job description. If they had said more specifically, this organization’s activities are such-and-such, and you need to invest this amount of time. If such conditions had been expressed more concretely, I think it would’ve been okay. But without such notices, when they said you have to do this and spend so many hours, I started to have a lot of bad feelings. I had enough on my plate with just doing my own work (..), but the biggest headache was there were too many overtime jobs. Even with that, if they had said at the beginning, said clearly, here we need to do these things and about 20% of that is for you to deal with, and you need to invest your time here, and so during the working hours, do this and this and this—if there had been something a bit more systematic like that, I would’ve been okay with it. But the people [previous traditional group of the KACO] who used to work here, most of them were almost living and sleeping here, and so they had no concept of 10 to 6 work hours (..), so then they just naturally expected such things. Because that’s the way they had done it, and they weren’t here to do some regular job but rather, they had made social justice movement their life. But when we came in, we came in thinking this was a job, so our expectations were a little different, and that’s what made it hard. Now, for example, with phone banking—they’d say its election period now and we have to do phone banking twice a week, and during the week we need to spend about two to three hours in the evening for two nights. If that had some advanced planning, it wouldn’t have been so bad, but to let us know a week in advance, that just drove me crazy (..), and they said this was mandatory. But I still had my work to do (..), and then when there was a gala, well, they wanted everyone
to participate, and then there were also rallies. Now if we’d known about these, say a month in advance, it would’ve been better since we could do some planning on our jobs beforehand (..), but there was no such system (..), and often, the organization couldn’t prepare beforehand (..), then after having worked overtime, I’d have to come back and work again. So, that was the situation with the organization, where we had to participate in every event, and whether it was overtime or the weekend, there was simply no concept of compensation hours. So we insisted that we have such things. We persisted, and now there’s a system (..), because more people were recruited here. (H, 250-285)

With these efforts, the KACO was divided into a senior (director) group and a general staff group largely composed of newly employed activists. The senior group is composed of persons who served in the organization from the beginning or for at least 10 years. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, the senior group frequently had a meeting where general staff were not allowed to attend. Also three members of the group participate in a steering committee meeting. Quarterly board meetings are open for all; meanwhile, the steering meeting excludes it altogether. This structure made the senior group have more power, formally and informally, than new staff in terms of organizational direction making. All activists commonly accepted the formal and informal rules, and most new activists actually did not have complaints about such rules. Namely, all activists accepted the division of labor between the senior and the general group. However, within this structure, the groups still had different expectations of each other. The new staff group interpreted the ‘division of labor,’ which has clearly distinguished roles and responsibilities between two groups. Thus they just wanted better communication with the senior group without much involvement in the senior group’s issues:

Frankly (..), it’s because I (..), believe in the decisions of the board members, steering committee or the director-level people. It’s because I know that they have more experience than me, and their devotion and interest regarding KACO is probably stronger
than mine, not any less, and they do what they do wanting everything to go well for the organization. Because of that, I think their decisions are wise and stem from their experience, though at times I may not like their decisions. Because I believe in their decisions, I have no great complaints about implementing them. But practically, from the position of someone who’s actually on the field, their last decision came late, and because it came so late, down here (..), on the field the work was already progressing due to some miscommunication, but then the stop sign came down and now we’re just swatting flies. I don’t know what we’re supposed to do with our situation … (Q, 585-595)

I (..), little bit I’m a little bit I guess concerned (..), the vision is not clear, and it’s not shared. So, I’m saying (..), people are not we, as we say, we are not on the same page. You know what I’m saying? If we have difference, we have not much opportunity. No actually not much opportunity to discuss that (..), we’re not discussing …. A staff was gone (..), he did not come here for a month (..), he said us [general staffs, mostly newer activists] before, so we know that (..), we know a little (..), actually he had a conflict in terms of the direction of his project with seniors. But, this issue never came out. It never came out … I’m saying that the reasons for his departure (..), this was never brought up, never discussed, of course it’s (..), it affects the whole organization, but (..), it was never, it wasn’t brought up. And nobody had any kind of input and you know (..), really kind of (..), I really don’t understand. Some say you know they, they called we are family. But, such secret is not good if we really think we are family. (D, 336-372 & 436-451)

They say, let’s communicate, let’s talk comfortably, but when work has gone on for a while sometimes the directors say different things, and it’s like, now suddenly, and now, again they’ll say the organization is something we do together, we’re all in it together, but then sometimes I feel like we’re being left out, excluded.

I: In what aspect?
(..), when there’s a discussion, there are some things that they don’t let us do and so that’s a part of it. They say there’s high expectation, and there’s no hierarchy, so we try to participate a bit more but then, again it’s like we don’t know, we’re just beginners. And then they talk about their generation (..), the second generation, so sometimes it was just them talking among themselves. (H, 169-184)

On the other hand, by the traditional habitus of the KACO, senior staff members want newer activists to keep organizational traditions (working together on the same page) and to positively engage in organizational activities, even though the ‘division of labor’ was separately established. A senior activist described the thought of the senior group in detail:

In terms of succession (..), when it comes to passing things on (..), there’s a regrettable aspect to it in that some of our unique advantages seem to be gradually disappearing, like dedication (..), and regarding social movement, a certain (..), proper attitude (..), and also (..), that (..), ability to analyze the political landscape. The new staff who’ve been hired, for a lot of them this is a kind of job, and so their ideas (..), their perspective is different. Their view of KACO’s activities (..), but fortunately, the other aspect of it is that the newly hired staff members are all such good people (..), frankly (..), so the (..), practically there really isn’t a big gap between us (..), not as much as we worry. Our positions are also divided pretty much into three equal parts of first generation, 1.5 generation, and second generation staff members, and when you look at it (..), that (..), things like generational gap or cultural gap are not so big. Of course, they exist, you can’t help that. But they’re not a big factor, and we move on by collecting common consensus. Getting all the staff members to stay on the same page, now that’s a bit (..), but I don’t think that’s a big problem either. Of course it’s a bit (..), because our thinking is different (..), of course, there are challenges, but in terms of maintaining a sense of unity that binds the organization together, I think we’re at a good place, so far at least. In spite of that, the
new staff members still fall short in terms of giving their all. That can’t be helped because, first of all, they do have a lot of work to do these days (..), and that kind of internal capacity building actually requires a certain (..), effort as an activist (..), it requires that kind of commitment. In the past it was like (..), we’d have a general meeting once a week and also weekly study sessions. But with our current structure, that’s not possible. Looking at it (..), when I look at things like our current staff composition or organizational aspects, we can only do our best under given conditions. And there are still a lot of different aspects that could be a little better. So if I have a wish, it’s that our junior staff would speak a bit more actively, study a bit more actively, and that they should think of themselves as becoming stakeholders. What I’d like to say the most in terms of criticism is that they don’t really try to become a stakeholder but go home as soon as the clock hits 6 o’clock, don’t show a lot of interest in the issues normally but then respond hysterically to certain decision making. But as I always point out (..), you have to take responsibility for what you say, and to take responsibility, you have to act. In that sense the staff members have gotten a lot better, and it’s just that they need to improve a bit more. (J, 343-365 & 384-399)

As a result, the difference between the two groups from the ‘division of labor’ makes activists themselves bring about a dilemma between succession and change of the KACO. Also they began to question whether or not they are truly working together on the same page. Furthermore, the two groups are basically required to improve communication with each other because the practical work of meeting with community members is almost performed by new staff.

In addition, a structural power difference leads to a potential contradiction with the habitus, ‘together on the same page.’ Although they did not consciously recognize the power difference, they definitely have a primary contradiction in the structure. More specifically, because ‘social service’ programs have a director as a senior member, the program is protected
organizational power in terms of additional requests. In a staff meeting, the Executive Director requested more participation of the social program staff in a housing community meeting. However, the director of social program said: “I think the meeting’s still beginning step, so I think organizer OO need to progress it more. And, as you know we frankly (..), we cannot afford to support the meeting in current” (FN, 03072011). On the other hand, ‘advocacy and organizing,’ ‘civic participation,’ and ‘youth’ program do not have a director yet. Only one person, ED, managed these three programs. Moreover, all activists of the programs are newly employed staff from 2008. In fact, several times I observed an activist hesitated to express their opinions in the staff meeting and did not deny some additional requests from organizational decisions. This limited power by unequal structure creates a secondary contradiction with their habitus, ‘together on the same page’ in ‘meditating artifacts.’

Another important mediating artifact was ‘formal and informal meetings.’ As I stated in Chapter Four, they have various meetings themselves. The meetings include both formal and informal group and organizational meetings, such as staff, senior, program, steering committee, and board meeting, education sessions, annual retreat, and staff planning sessions, and a performance review meeting as well as numerous informal meeting at both inside and outside of the KACO. These numerous meetings (primary contradiction) occasionally lead to a contradiction with each task of the activists (secondary contradiction). Namely, activists are burdened by a lot of meetings in the organization (staff and department—every week, inter-department—once in two weeks, board—quarterly, senior—frequently, and so on):

Monday we spend all our time with the meeting and then Wednesday and Friday we have to do tax service, so (..), I only have Thursday (..), that’s the only day I can work … (C, 410-412)

Besides, the meetings have their own contradiction within themselves in terms of limited quality. Several activists pointed out the lack of in-depth social discussion and reflection:
When I firstly came to here (..), beginning period (..), I wish I had training programs about some issue (..), but there are programs’ purposes, but anyone didn’t let me know why are you doing this (..), I needed to deeply discuss our works as well as reflecting the programs themselves. (A 214-217)

Of course we tend to have more meetings and talks and have discussions than organizations in Korea, but I wish we could have more in-depth discussions. I mean (..), a part of it is that I don’t talk much because I’m kinda cautious, but everyone else is also so busy (..), and because they’re so busy, some of the staff think they’ve talked to me about something already and so don’t talk about it anymore, and others just make decisions on their own and then just send me a notice. It seems we need to have more in-depth discussions. Of course I learn a lot about various issues I’m not familiar with during the meetings, but (..), there’s little reflection on whether we’re doing well or not. I mean, still, there isn’t any specific problem that can be pointed out, so we can just let it pass for now and say, what’s good is good, but I am a little disappointed that that’s what’s happening. (C, 337-343)

Moreover, several education sessions were frequently canceled because of workload in 2010.
Hence the primary contradiction of various meetings brings about secondary contradictions with ‘division of labor’ and ‘object’ of this activity.

Meanwhile, ‘community’ includes educational partners and internal stakeholders of KACO such as interns, board members, and other supporting groups and these communities had a contradiction itself. Basically, there are few programs for nonprofit staff provided by external organizations or institutions. That is why the KACO has emphasized internal education. Despite this, the KACO makes efforts to positively support activists if they want to participate in external training programs, conferences, and seminars. Moreover, the KACO sometimes invites a professional for the staff education. It helped the activists to better understand their work:
For example, we once did something on organizing, community organizing. But we knew nothing about it. At that time KACO was saying, let’s do some organizing, let’s do something, and we were all for it but, with no education, we just didn’t know what to do. So we invited a real community organizer, a lady who’d been at it for a long time, learned the basic concepts, and then had role plays. Those things helped. Then while we were doing that, we wanted to do public speaking, and invited someone for that. And before we did that, we took videos of ourselves, did simple two-minute presentations, criticized each other and tried some new things. Then on skills, we did things like skill development (..), public speaking, press media, how to talk and all that. But once we did all that, of course skills were important, but I realized that it’s also important to know how to simply summary things as well. On that front I think I was rather inadequate. (H, 824-835)

With regards to supporting groups, the KACO has its own contradiction related to limited participation:

They only come out to the board meetings (..), a few of the board members actively participate in our activities but then (..), they are the ones that also attend the steering committee, OO our president and OO vice-president (..), that’s about it. The rest of the board members are almost all of them still a weak supporting group. So then (..), what we emphasize, that everybody must be on the same page (..), so, at this point (..), they (..), among the current executives there are some who are now (..), rather isolated from (..), issue updates or (..), our activities. And among our general staff members, they don’t even know about certain board members (..), because they’d never seen them. So, overall, our family … directors and staff, interns, volunteers, community members, and friends of OO (..), how these family members can work closely together in the future, frankly that’s one of the challenges. (J, 577-587)
We have “friends of OO.” You don’t know, well (..), for instance, if you leave here and get a PhD degree, OO may suggest that you participate in the “friends of OO” (..), say (..), once every two months or three months? In Manhattan (..), have dinner and talk (..), and he’ll say … there’s an upcoming gala (..), or a retreat (..), how should we do it (..), could you make some kind of contribution (..), and because a lot of people have to come to the gala to make it newsworthy, please come and help us by bringing a couple of friends. So there’s this meeting (..), and people who participate are fairly interested in the immigrant issues and they know the background of our KACO history, but if they gather once every two months, there’s no participation (..), even though it’s once every two months. (Q, 326-333)

This primary contradiction leads to a secondary contradiction with ‘object.’

Finally, the KACO is influenced by various formal and informal rules related to nonprofit organizations. For example, in 2008 and 2009, the KACO recruited two Korean activists who were neither a U.S. citizen nor a permanent resident. They were allowed to apply for an H1 visa that allows paid working in a specific period. However, they will have to leave the United States if they do not obtain a legitimate status themselves—the KACO, as a nonprofit organization, cannot support them to get a green card. Although this issue will be a future challenge of the organization, it was not identified as a contradiction since it is not a conscious issue for this activity currently. Also the activists have several work rules in terms of division of labor, various meetings, and duties to organizational activities beyond their own tasks. In terms of participation in organizational activities and events by organizational rules, some activists are a little discontent. However, it was not also described as a contradiction because most activities have understood the rule as an original approach of the KACO and took the participation for granted as one of the tasks.
As I investigated contradictions through community leadership activities, community leadership development and organizational expansion historically achieved by the ongoing endeavors of the activists do not mean that existing and new emergent challenges can be perfectly solved. There are still contradictions within each activity and all of them lead to a contradiction among the activities’ objects. These contradictions become an actual driving force for learning when activists make efforts to positively overcome them.

Learning by Negotiating Contradictions

A New Object as One of the Significant Learning Outcomes

Based on the KACO’s approach, the three community leadership activities are fundamentally inter-related:

Organizing (..), educating community members cannot be actually separated with advocacy (..), because those are based for advocacy. So, I mean we should advocacy together with community members by organizing them (..), and also educating or empowering community members are essential for organizing (..), so, we should support to make immigrants to obtain their rights (..), and then (..), further we can establish an equal society for all marginalized persons except for immigrant status. (C, 123-130)

As a matter of fact, expanding the first and second community leadership activities, “Coalition” and “Empowerment” reflects the organization’s historical developmental aspects. Namely, the community leadership activities are results of the organizational endeavors by intense collaborations among activists to overcome challenges or limits as KAs in the United States and a small organization. In this respect, the third activity, “Collaboration” serves as a basis for developing the whole community leadership of the KACO.
Meanwhile, the objects of activities always present a latent primary contradiction because of the potential to generate a future target or expanded object (Engeström, 1987, 2001; Engeström & Sannino, 2010). Several contradictions throughout three community leadership activities such as habitus of community members, language issues, competition among organization, limited capacity of partners, and federal/state laws and so on had already existed for a long time. Hence the current form of the community leadership activities reflects the activists’ lengthy efforts by creating a future target to resolve the contradictions. In this respect, the three activities have been guided by the target activists created in the past. One again I quote a part of interview related to the organizational name change. The activist said:

…. when we look at the direction we’re headed, our social service expansion targeting diverse ethnic groups in the local community (..), we’re expanding. And now (..), to build a civil rights movement that goes beyond the immigrant rights protection movement (..), an American social movement that transcends the advocacy for immigrant rights and interests, because our long-term direction is to reach such objectives … (J, 473-480)

In terms of organizational identity reflecting future direction, participant I also mentioned it this way:

It’s like we’re saying, you know the local community has community leaders, right? But the other Asian organizations can’t cover those needs so we’re covering as much as we can (..), though it’s not a lot. It’s because we are a community organization (..), it’s a community organization with KAs as the main base (..), but that doesn’t mean we’re an organization for the KAs’ own benefit. It only means we have our base here, but what we are promoting is healthy local community (..), to protect the rights of those who’ve been marginalized and speak for them. Those things are the ultimate goals (..), it’d be great if we can do more of that. (I, 336-342)
Namely, they, especially the senior staff, already established a long-term direction of advancing all civil rights for social justice (see Table 4.2). To achieve the future direction, they created an expanded object ‘to advance immigrant rights beyond KAs’ as a practical purpose in their organization’s history. This object was related to why they perform the community leadership activities. It also has led the community leadership activities and these activities’ expansion, including new practices.

However, the new practices guided by the object created new contradictions as well as revised existing contradictions. As I examined above, limited space, rules related to numbers, too many meetings, dilemma of habitus, confusion as to which community they should serve, miscommunication between senior and newer groups, and so forth were highlighted by the recently rapid transformation of the KACO. In particular, the activists need to confirm their current organizational direction and practical goal with each other, even though senior and past activists established the expanded object.

The activists experienced those emerging contradictions at any times. However, an in-depth reflection or discussion on the contradictions among activists was not frequently achieved in their daily work. That is why several activists pointed out the limited quality of meetings in their daily work practices, although they managed a lot of meetings by an organizational strong tradition that emphasizes internal education/learning together. However, the contradictions consequently became a driving force to bring about alternatives by the efforts of activists to resolve them through an intensive annual retreat, staff planning sessions, and followed several meetings. Namely, those led activists to establish a new practical/revised object among community leadership activities based on the past expanded object and future the long-term direction.

Retreat. To comprehensively respond to the contradictions that the activists recognized in daily practices, they had an annual retreat for two nights and three days at a suburban place in
upstate New York. This annual retreat or meeting had existed for a long time, as a historical tradition; however, more a systemically prepared retreat began in 2008. Past retreats in 2009 and 2010 focused on education for new staff and analyzing the political landscape under the senior group’s leadership. Meanwhile, in preparing for the 2011 retreat, new staff involvement was increased more than in the past:

At last year's retreat, we went into it too ignorant, uh, we were too ignorant, and so everything had already been planned, and we had to struggle just to keep up.  
[So last year you couldn't talk about these issues candidly like you did this year]
We barely touched on the internal issues. Our discussions revolved around analyzing the political landscape and issues with our programs, and we also didn’t know any better. But then starting from two years ago the organization started growing suddenly and those issues, now everyone started experiencing them. Then last year, more members came in and then it became more of an urgent issue. Because of the nature of this organization, many others who got hired were also in a similar position that I was in, and so I think they picked up on the issue. (..), the organization seems to have picked up on the fact that you have to explain certain things, and would have to do these things to make the workers happy, to create that kind of environment (..), I think we were much more involved in the retreat we went to this year than the one last year. (H, 1001-1011)

To prepare the retreat, activists had intensive program meetings. Based on the meetings, they created key questions they wanted to discuss (see Table 6.2).
Table 6.2.

*Key Questions of Each Program*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Question</th>
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| Development           | • How can we continue to raise this much money without overtaxing our staff?  
                        | • How much of a role should staff play in development?  
                        | • Should we make each program area in charge of fundraising for their own area?  
                        | • How can the finance and development team better communicate and involve staff and the board?  
                        | • How can the finance and development team better educate other staff and the board?  
                        | • What information would the staff and board like to know about finance and development? |
| Advocacy & Organizing | • What is the organizational structure when making decisions about organizing campaigns?  
                        | - Decision making process - Communication between board, staff, organizers, members - Guidelines that apply to organizing program  
                        | • What are ways in which we can build a more diverse base of community members?  
                        | • What is the proper relationship between advocacy and organizing?  
                        | • What kind of political “education” do we give to community members, and how will this be different from the kind of past education? |
| Social Service        | • Who do we serve?  
                        | - How many services do/should we provide for the non-KA community?  
                        | - The number of services for CA community members dropped. How can we ensure that we properly serve the CA community?  
                        | - How should we handle services to non-Asian community?  
                        | - Income guideline  
                        | • What services do we provide?  
                        | - Should we expand our services to other areas? If so, what are the challenges?  
                        | - Should we decrease our services areas?  
                        | • How does social services work align with our advocacy and organizing work? |
| Civic Participation   | • How can we continue to increase civic participation?  
                        | • What is a new project we can lead? |
| Youth                | • How can we better connect the Youth work with our other programs? With our organization as a whole?  
                        | • What is our strategy for non-high-school youth (college, etc.) and how can we create a path for them to stay involved?  
                        | • How can we better educate and engage youth (particularly undocumented students) to become leaders? |
| Education            | • How do we manage better internal education as well as providing education for community members? |
Furthermore, even though the KACO formally received interns between 2008 and 2009, the 2011 retreat was the first to allow the participation of interns. In addition to this, youth members and volunteers were also allowed. This decision was rendered by chance. An activist said:

Some interns and youths wanted to attend in this retreat, but, you know our culture is not exclusive to all (..), so we had to open to all our supporting groups including interns, youths, and volunteers (..), because we cannot allow only particular persons. (FN, 01072011)

In total, 38 persons, including several board members, participated in the retreat. As a result, this diverse participation became one of the efforts to overcoming a secondary contradiction between ‘community’ and ‘object’ in “Collaboration” activity.

By tight advance preparations, in the retreat, the activists discussed diverse issues such as the history of the grassroots movement in the KA community, a review of 2010 efforts and accomplishments, the current political landscape, and organizational direction. While there, senior staff tried to let younger generations know the organization’s traditional history and approach. A senior activist shared an episode from the beginning of the organization:

Let me introduce an episode of our founder, OOO. One day, he visited at our office. He then firstly asked whether we have a difficulty or trouble in our family (..), he was looking around our office in silent and opened a sink. Actually, it was dirty a little, especially (..), around a below part of drain (..), because of our laziness- [laughing all together]. He then began to clean sewage with empty hands-. He then tenderly said us “we must carefully consider unseen part at first … please see considerably our difficult communities in the background (..), it’s our first and primary work.” His (..), the behavior was deeply impressed in my mind and I reflected in myself (..), I think his spirit cannot be definitely disconnected with our current activities. (FN, 01072011)
Several historical examples and presentations provided younger generations with an opportunity to reflect on the root of KACO and understand current organizational approaches.

The next day, they had a discussion time for organization approach and direction by allowing all participants to speak. Diverse useful ideas occurred to resolve challenges. There was also time to celebrate their accomplishments by positive action-based approaches. A senior activist (activist A, quoted below) who is not a full-time staff but one of most importance persons participated in steering committee, said loudly: “We are activists, not researchers on the desk. We must go out into the street. It’s our base and motive power” (FN, 01082011). Until then, fundamental reflection on some challenges for internal communication between groups and organizational direction was not discussed. However, I observed an important starting point that may soon create a practical new object of community leadership activities. It was started by a statement of board member A. She asked:

Board member A: “By the way, I heard some communication problems for decision-making among staffs sometimes. Is there any problems?”

[Silent a little]

Board member B: Hey staffs [newer staffs], do you have any challenges? That’s alright if you frankly tell us your thoughts (..), so, tell me your experience at once.

[After a while, an activist hesitatingly explained his experience and then another activist carefully told her thoughts by adding the former activist’s experience. Two newer activists hesitatingly and carefully explain their thought. And then the room was wrapped up a general stir by informal talks of participant with next persons, although they concluded we didn’t have much problem]

Senior activist A responded: “Well, I also think we don’t have much problem for our communication (..), so (..),
Board member B: [with a strong tone] Please don’t say like that (..), why do you think like that? We cannot know all about things in daily work in KACO. If our staffs [newer activists] feel like that’s a problem, we must consider the issue.

[Some more discussions among participants followed.]

Senior activist B: I think (..), it’s my fault actually (..), I feel like (..), I need to consider this issue more carefully.

And then, another board member C who is one of the founders of the KACO said: “These challenges take for granted by (..), our recent change (..), expansion. I believe this phenomenon shows our KACO is really healthy (..), as you know (..), we hardly constructed this organization, but an organization can be easily dissolved (..), so, at this point, to better understand each other (..), also to develop our organization. I think we need to establish a strong organizational capacity by understanding each other more (..), and we should also strength our internal learning activity more and more. (FN, 01082011)

After that, activists positively discussed their organizational direction and practical goals for 2011. A senior activist concluded: “Today, I think we brought about so many (..), very useful discussions more than any other past retreats (..), but (..), as you know, we cannot perform all things. So, let’s discuss more in our current power to doing new something.” They then finalized the retreat with numerous informal talks with homemade Korean foods and drinks.

**Staff planning sessions and followed several meetings.** After coming back from retreat, the activists all had two days of ‘Staff Planning Sessions’ at their office, with complete participation of all staff and partial participation of steering committees and other interns/volunteers. Their staff planning preparation was guided by issues brought in the retreat. In particular, they realized that the KACO needed more internal capacity building. Hence, in the staff planning sessions, they discussed a lot of internal issues such as decision-making process, discussion among staff members, goal settings of each program, and integration among programs,
as well as related external issues for building coalition with existing and new partners and empowering community members. Also, in terms of historical political landscape for immigrants, education for newer staff and interns were conducted in the second day session led by senior activists (see Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5. Education board in the planning sessions

As a matter of fact, through the retreat and staff planning, the activists—especially new staff—reconfirmed organizational direction and ultimate purpose in terms of who is their community:

Do we serve only Koreans, only KAs? Otherwise our organization represents all immigrants? But the answer was simple. We talked our works absolutely represent immigrant issues but current our driving (..), the (..), wheel came from Koreans (..), so, we will expand our works based on KA communities (..), currently, but our future direction (..), our purpose are still valid. (G, 391-395)
Hence their past expanded object, ‘to advance all immigrant rights beyond KAs’ and future direction, ‘to obtain all civic rights for social justice beyond immigrant communities,’ still guide their community leadership activities. However, they need to add some practical goals for the near future into the expanded object by emerging new challenges or challenges:

At this retreat we had at the beginning of the year (..), and then followed staff planning secessions waked up our goal. For the past years, we were about organizational external expansion (..), so, we need internal management (..), internal capacity building-. Because we was too careless about such things (..), a lot of such opinions came out. So, we (..), at this point… we have a big challenge how we manage that in the future. (J, 372-375)

Namely, through daily various formal/informal meetings and an intensive retreat/annual planning sessions to resolve contradictions, KA activists created a new revised object as one of the learning outcomes among the community leadership activities, ‘to advance immigrant rights by enhancing community leadership focused organizational capacity building.’ This object was created in their consensus that they should build a better capacity under the current organizational situation. For instance, in terms of building a relationship with media, they considered their current capacity, even though they want to strongly expand the relationship:

We’re intentionally not sending any Chinese releases (..), because right now we don’t have the capacity to do that. We have just one coordinator who knows Chinese, and that person’s busy with social services. If we start something like that, we have to continue doing it, so we just never started. Because we don’t have the capacity, we’re just sending things in English. Also, with OO English media, OO [a second generation staff] is now (..), doing similar things … and a while ago we were on the OO news [another English media]. In the future, in terms of our relationship with the media, I think we should have a first-generation staff like me to be in charge of the KA community media, and the rest of the English media should be handled by the second-generation staff. And after me, in
the near future, what would be the ideal would be for someone who is a 1.5 generation (..), or someone who's very capable in that area (..), to be in charge of communication (J, 989-998)

The revised object led to other new learning outcomes at both social and individual levels as a major part of unintended outcomes of community leadership activity network. Figure 6.6 depicts a community leadership activity network including three activities that have each contradiction and object I identified above, a revised object among activities, and intended and unintended outcomes by networking among the activities. Bold and italic refer to learning outcomes that include a revised object and unintended outcomes at the social level and unintended outcomes at the individual level.

**Figure 6.6. Community leadership activity network**
Learning as Unintended Outcomes of Activity Network

Intended outcomes include all kinds of each activity’s outcomes. Those refer to outcomes guided by the past existing object, ‘to advance immigrant rights.’ As I mentioned before, the KACO has built a lot of coalitions with diverse partners. The coalition resulted in several visible outcomes. For example, in 2010, the KACO helped to win $53.14 million in budget restorations and 76% of New York City government funding for immigrant communities. Youth members also helped to prevent the elimination of free and discounted student metro cards of the Metropolitan—restoring about $50 million for students. Moreover, coalition building with diverse media and partners invisibly contributed to raise the KACO’s recognition in NY area and further the United States as well as Korea.

Besides, as I described earlier in this chapter, their empowerment activities by providing legal and social services, facilitating civic participation, and organizing community members brought about numerous outcomes. In particular, in 2010, the legal and social services—housing, labor, immigration, and finance—provided community members approximately $3 million in free benefits and services. Also they created mediating artifacts for community members as regular meetings of a grassroots KA group and housing/worker issues. In addition to the outcomes, the KACO tried to facilitate community members’ participation in the 2010 Census, and the effort contributed an increased participation rate in the Flushing area of 32%, which is an increase greater than 96% of all other Census Tracts in 2010. Expansion of coalition building with media and diverse education activities also contributed to empowering community members by providing exact information and useful knowledge.

In terms of organizational transformation, as I described in Chapter Four, the KACO recruited a lot of staff in recent years and established current work systems by creating organized structure, diverse rules, and several meetings for entire staff, each program, and division of labor. Also the KACO secured more stable funds by diversification of fundraising sources. Finally, the
activists not only created better mediating artifacts such as electronic newsletters, new website, and annual reports, but they also utilized diverse social media.

**Learning at the social level.** Except for turnover of newer activists, most of the unintended outcomes were learning outcomes in this community leadership activity network guided by a newly revised object as another social learning outcome, ‘to advance immigrant rights by enhancing community leadership focused organizational capacity building.’ Those included socio-cultural and structural changes of the KACO, new diverse actions of individuals and small groups, and internal individual learning. In the staff planning sessions, they first created several formal/informal rules and revised their organizational structure by thoroughly comprehensive discussions (see Figure 6.7).

*Figure 6.7. Discussion board for an overall overview of the planning sessions*
In terms of decision-making process, they began to frankly share their opinions and created a consensus. They created a formal rule for decision-making process according to issues. One of the most characteristic points was giving newer staff more input in the decision on organizational direction/position and organizing/advocacy activists. This change was made possible by an in-depth discussion at their annual retreat (see Figure 6.8).

*Figure 6.8. Discussion boards on decision-making process in the planning sessions*

They also determined that newer staff can participate in steering committee meeting by a request for either themselves or the committees. In addition, to facilitate learning of staff, they made a rule that rotated two staff members to present a specific immigrant issue in weekly staff meetings;
they decided to share each presentation material three days in advance of the meeting. By this rule, some staff has presentations related to a legislative act regarding anti-illegal immigration of Arizona (Arizona Senate Bill 1070). Also they decided to reduce the issue-update time of each program in the staff meetings to allow for more discussions and reelectations. Moreover, they changed the title of ‘Senior Meeting’ to ‘Director Meeting’ to relieve an antipathy of general staff toward the term “senior.” Furthermore, due to a good experience with each other in the annual retreat, they decided that they will consider another summer retreat allowing staff to reflect on the activities of the first half year.

With regards to organizational structure, the activists integrated three programs, social service, organizing and advocacy, civic participation, into a departmental level, partly in order to organically facilitate the participation of social service receivers in grassroots activities of politics and advocacy for immigrants. By this change and participation of the civic participation program in the program meeting, and following program meetings after the planning sessions, they decided to handle more diverse issues but reduce their meeting among three programs from twice a month to once every three weeks. Moreover, they determined to try to set a worker meeting on Sunday to resolve a contradiction that many workers cannot attend the weekly meeting because of their working hours. They expected these changes would not only expand an existing regular community meeting, housing/worker meetings by more diverse community members but also create new community meeting related to civic participation. They were also looking forward to the transformation leading to the participation of community members in their advocacy activities.

Moreover, in the planning sessions, they created a division of labor, the ‘Educational Committee,’ comprised of three senior and two newer activists. If other activists want to attend the committee meeting, they can join whenever. The committee aims to comprehensively manage the all-staff education sessions, intern/new staff orientations, and education programs for community members. The creation of the committee brought about a new mediating artifact, a
weekly one-hour community meeting. Although they had a rule that the monthly education sessions and periodic orientations should be conducted, they did not keep the rule well because of busy tasks. Besides, educational programs for community members were limited due to special issues. Therefore, in educational committee meetings, committee members decided to offer mandatory educational sessions monthly and to create an advanced manual for intern/new staff orientation. In addition to this, they choose a book, *A People's History of The United States* by Howard Zinn, as a first mediating artifact for the staff education followed by the KACO’s tradition. They also made a decision to positively utilize external spaces for community members’ education, such as a nearby public library and an external partner organization’s rooms.

With these revised and new meetings, the activists decided to make advanced annual reports and monthly newsletters that include more detailed descriptions with easy explanations in both Korean and English to facilitate community members’ understanding. Moreover, they made a decision that they would try to remember that office space is not for them but for community members. For this, as an informal rule, they promised that they would control hostile actions toward community members.

To reduce workload, they decided that they could no longer expand the number of services to community members. However, they made a decision to have closer relationships and step up and build personal relationships with funders because the service numbers are basically related to funding. Moreover, they settled on holding a spring reception annually and positively receive donations at organization events such as house parties and campaigns in order to avoid some burden from funders. In addition, they made an informal rule that they positively introduce community members including KAs, CAs, and individuals from other racial/ethnic groups to appropriate external organizations if they visit at the KACO with several issues where the activists cannot provide services. Finally, they promised to keep more accurate records of compensation days.
Learning at the individual level. The changes described above involved numerous individual or small group actions simultaneously or shortly thereafter. In particular, individual learning of activists was not separate from the changes but rather already included in the social changes, learning at the social level. In fact, their individual learning from basic work skills and related knowledge to perspective transformation occurs at any time in daily work through conversation/education among activists in the organization, meetings with community members, activity, and individual efforts.

Work, communication and leadership skills. Basically, the activists learned how to appropriately apply their knowledge to work. Additionally, they had better communication skills and leadership ability at both individual and organizational levels through conducting their daily activities:

I've personally developed a lot now (..), now that I'm working I can use a lot of what I only had as knowledge in my head. My major was different, but professional aspects of the job, like processing work or how to communicate at work (..), I've learned a lot about those things. (Q, 571-574)

… That (..), relationships with more people (..), I think personal relationships were a big factor, and how to work as a team, I mean, how to work more efficiently as a team, work well together with others—I think I learned a lot about those things. It's because, with our organization, because of its characteristics, there were so many diverse groups of people (..), and their personalities were so distinct, that they did things a certain way. So that was another big factor. And, I think my speaking and listening skills also improved a lot, too. (H, 720-726)

… right now, just simply thinking about it, I think what I've learned is something like leadership? How an organization should be run, that (..), now that I have to supervise interns, I think I've learned a lot about how to do things like supervising. And recently I
was invited to the OO University along with OO and OO [other two activists] to give a lecture, and a lot of students were interested in organizations like ours. Through such lectures I could summarize for myself what I’ve been doing until now (..), and I got to thinking that I have learned a lot about this line of work. And also, in doing those lectures, I think my lecturing skills are improving somewhat [laughing]. (E, 295-301)

**Knowledge of external social context.** The activists increased their understanding on immigrant issues, politics, and community:

And my general understanding of things like how immigrants live became much deeper, but if I'd only spent my time here as a visa student and left, I would still have no idea at all about these things. So (..), my level of understanding definitely improved, and also things related to US politics (..), I had been so ignorant, like whether the Senate was the upper house and the Assembly was the lower house or the house of representatives, but these things were all (..), if you look at it a certain way (..), I don't know if I could make use of them later on but (..), it was very educational. And I think it helped me greatly in understanding the American society. (Q, 653-663)

Definitely, as I started working here, I began to see how the KA community had these kinds of problems, and seeing those various aspects of the community, I came to know the kind of life those people had here (..), going door-knocking, you get to see, if only briefly, how they live, where they live, what kind of building they're in and what their neighborhood is like, so I think you get to learn a lot about those things. (E, 171-147)

It's a good thing for me like to know the issues, what's actually happening in the community, especially Flushing community and, what actually, what is actually they're really looking for and they need, right (..), yeah. (P, 380-382)

Their indirect learning from work experiences played an important role in planning and performing their community leadership activities.
**Better understanding organizational matters and group differences.** As I recounted above, the activists re-grasped organizational future direction, ultimate purpose, and approaches. Moreover, they have an opportunity to understand group differences between senior and newer staff through the process of negotiating contradictions. In particular, the annual retreat helped newer staff members to overcome their own prejudgment on organizational matters and senior staffs’ approaches:

In the past, it was, what can I say, too confusing, and felt like I was still in the process of learning, weren't sure of what I was doing, and there were too many questionable things like, why would they demand this? And it wasn't like I was made to understand things by being educated, but it was more like, things were always being handed down. It wasn't "oh, let's cultivate them and give them the ability to do these things," but more like one person's point of view was continuously being pushed down to us (..), so there was also a bit of misunderstanding there. I mean, this organization, when I came in, my approach was that this is a job, whereas people who'd been here for a long time thought of this work as their life, so there was a lot of conflict because of that (..), with us then, with things like the concept of over-time, or participating in events outside office hours, our views were different on those matters. Our attitude was that all that was still work, but with some people, because their approach was, this is my life, social justice is my life, there was a bit of (..), misunderstanding on those issues at the beginning. But this year, I think we got off to a very good start. At the retreat, first of all, we talked a lot about the problems, and not everything's been resolved but I think the fact that we talked about thing was very significant. And it was an opportunity for us to honestly talk about our concerns (..), we're all making an effort. But, raising the issues and talking about them, that in itself (..), of course it would've been better if it had come a bit sooner, but the fact that the conversation took place, I think provided a huge relief. And so, now, with more
explanations, many of the negative preconceptions I used to have changed, and I understand the situation better (..), and now, things really have changed for the better. (H, 981-998)

Transformation of viewpoint. Through daily activities, the activists transformed their existing perspective on community, the KACO as a nonprofit organization, and both positive and negative aspects of individual level. First, activists changed an ideological myth that most KA or Asian American communities are relatively wealthy by having higher educational level and adjusting in the United States well:

Obviously (..), I think [my thinking] clearly changed a lot. I used to think vaguely and simplistically if I could just come to the United States I would live well, that my life would improve and become more comfortable, and that's why they all want to come to the States (..), but in real life, that's not it. It's really difficult and the kind of people that I was thinking about, they were a small minority (C, 579-581).

In addition, they newly realized about the nonprofit organization and its activities:

… they changed the perspective on their organization as a nonprofit and its value:

My perception of what kind of place a non-profit organization this KACO was used to be very different. I just thought it was an organization for the immigrants and that it provided services for them. But eventually when I came and had the experience of working here (..), immigrants (..), the weight of that word changed. It's the same word (..), and I would explain the word the same way now, but it seems the weight of the word has changed. We do our activities as immigrants and to increase the political status of immigrants (..), but civic rights is really (..), it's a very high-value concept. When it's looked at as a word, it's just a word and it's difficult to explain it in words, but it's like something I tried to lift and couldn't (..), then I could say, Ah, now I understand how heavy this concept is. I suppose it's that kind of feeling (..), when you're working, you
realize a lot of things are happening in this NY city, which, if you say it's small, it's small and, if you say it's big, it's big. But going further, there are just so many problems that all the immigrants are facing and, a lot of those problems are becoming hot issues, and there are things happening right now that we can't even imagine. As I gradually came to learn about these things, I felt that these are truly heavy issues and what we're doing is something truly valuable. (G, 553-570)

I thought a lot about how I myself have to be interested in order for the nonprofit organization to develop and for the society to develop. In the past, I simply thought a nonprofit organization was a good thing (..), and then I ended up thinking that it was just an organization that does its activities with the help of the government, an organization that didn't have a lot of power. That's because it had to have government support or the support of some small number of sponsors (..), because it didn't have the capability … always plagued with financial difficulties. But once I started working here, that thinking changed quite a bit. (C, 551-560)

Moreover, they had a positive perspective on the organization itself:

… I've become better. You know the mood here is ridiculously, so very different from how it's like in the Korean society. We just say older brother! and older sister! (..), So I really like this culture, and I think there are a lot of people here who are very affectionate and passionate about this organization. Of course, at companies like Samsung or LG there are also people who work very hard because they want to make a lot of money, but here it's different. Here, the money isn't the objective but it's about people who want to do something and change things (..), and I was very much attracted to that. (Q, 640-650)

Finally, in terms of individual aspects, they broke out own limits they believe themselves: I didn't think I could work here (..), continue to do the activities (..), because it was very difficult at the beginning. My English wasn't good and I didn't have any specific set of
skills, so … I didn't think I'd last. I didn't know what the job was about, they were telling me to do these things but I didn't know what they were … like every day I wasn't getting it … but then … I felt like, Ah, if I could just change the way I think, I can do this. What I mean is … if I limit myself and do only what I think I can, I really am someone that can only do just that. But others kept encouraging me to break my own limitations, and so … I still have a little bit of that wall left standing but I've broken down a lot of it, and now, during meetings, I try to give my own input as well … of course, I often don't make any sense … but I think now I'm trying to keep hitting that wall (C, 444-455)

Some activists established their value of life through working at the KACO:

I learned about how I should live. People often say (..), and I'm so grateful to my parents for this (..), they often mention the American dream. They tell their kids to become a doctor or a lawyer. But as I worked here, I thought about what people often talk about when they say success (..), what is success? How should a person live? I think I learned a lot about that and also felt it. Really, a single act can be more important than endless words. I mean, as I said earlier, we think about things, but it's difficult to actually act. There can be fear of certain things (..), but if you don't act, nothing changes. This space is where my philosophy of life (..), now (..), where my life's direction was set. So (..), for me, this really is a very significant place [laughing]. (N, 627-639)

On the other hand, except for positive changes, several activists expressed unsolved negative aspects in terms of mannerism and frustration resulting from the lack of opportunity to have social discourse:

When you do the same thing over and over again at work (..), it seems you do become too complacent. You keep meeting a limited group of people (..), just the community members, and so you become overly comfortable with them. And you don't get to meet other people other than at organizing events, and so (..), you keep feeling like you're in a
box. If anything, the workload is increasing (..), but conference opportunities (..), for communication, those are becoming limited. (C, 458-463)

Well, to be honest with you (..), I thought why I push some critical thinking kind of decision making (..), structure or (..), some of others actually have this kind of opinions but not much express (..), We don’t have much opportunity even though we have many meetings every week (..), right now you know I’m not learning enough (..), I’m not talking about just information. Also just information actually is not enough to doing our activities. So actually yeah I think that’s because it’s been building up inside of me that I am not really learning anything (..), I feel like for me that is (..), something I’m missing. How do I develop as a human being or a professional (..), or more becoming thinking differently or thinking in new ways (..), I’m (..), I’m feeling frustrated personally. (D, 813-830)

These learning outcomes at both social and individual levels resulted in the revision of existing community leadership activities (community leadership activity network) and creation of a new agency with several intended and unintended outcomes. Therefore, the learning by negotiating contradiction throughout activities led to change in diverse social aspects including those of individuals.
Chapter 7. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

In this chapter, I first argue that learning is an ongoing social process based on the findings presented here and discuss the usefulness of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) as a practical theory for understanding community leadership and adult learning. Next, I discuss the important role of learning in facilitating community leadership with highlighting KACO’s approach. I then highlight significant features to foster community leadership and learning. Finally, I close this chapter with implications and suggestions for further research.

Learning as an Ongoing Social Process

Learning cannot be understood as an individual process, but needs to be understood, rather, as a social process including the individual process. The activists as the subject of this study collectively created learning outcomes at both social and individual aspects. By the ongoing efforts to resolve contradictions, the activists created a new revised object among the three activities. The new object results in diverse socio-cultural/structural changes. In creating these social learning outcomes, the activists experienced individual learning at the diverse aspects ranging from acquiring knowledge and skills to transforming viewpoints. The learning process did not take place separately but rather the individual’s learning or reflection was integrated into the process. The individual learning of the activists was not each individual’s process. Instead, it continuously and recursively took place during conducting activities or in the social reflection with others. In other words, this individual learning was not a prerequisite for the transformations, but rather it simultaneously/interactively occurred while performing activities through social reflections. It shows that individual learning, reflection, or transformation cannot be separate from experiences or activities socially constructed. Hence the finding refutes the assumption that individual learning must take place before social changes as a linear process distinguished from
socio-cultural context.

Although the activists learn from individual’s efforts such as self-reflection and other related individual efforts, these do not secure the transformation of collective or social activities. In fact, individual’s self-reflection was temporary and thus needs to be understood as not a separate action but rather an ongoing learning action within the social process. On the other hand, the occurrence of learning at the social level guarantees that individual learning already occurred. That is why I emphasize learning at the social level or higher-level learning. Therefore, I argue that researchers need to place more focus on learning’s social processes and outcomes even though a researcher or study focus individual’s learning.

**CHAT as a Useful Theory for Examining Community Leadership and Adult Learning**

The most important contribution of CHAT is that this theory provides a specific framework to investigate social learning and its outcomes through the concept of activity. Moreover, the theory allows researchers to identify a community based on the activity concept. It is useful in that many researchers, in seeking to understand adult learning in community, have a concern about defining the community. Hence I suggest that researchers more fully utilize this theory to investigate adult learning through activities proposed by CHAT. CHAT has the potential to cross a psychological-oriented or individual-centered approach as a bounded paradigm by suggesting a broader, alternative, socio-cultural and historical view that enhances understanding of adult learning/education in urban communities.

The second practical contribution is that CHAT can be a lens to thoroughly investigate community leadership, as a phenomenon, by assisting researchers to identify diverse stakeholders and challenges. In particular, the concept of contradiction as a structural tension and its examination have a potential that researchers provides practical knowledge for audiences. Moreover, CHAT contributes to understand community leadership and learning together. It is a
significant point in that those cannot be separated and further learning plays a pivotal role in developing community leadership.

**Reflective Social Learning: The Fundamental Basis for Empowering Community Leadership**

Community leadership is a collective or collaborative relationship building process to overcome limited capacities. The notion denies a traditional leadership concept that focuses on static individuals’ relational processes between leaders and followers based on a systemic approach within a well-bounded setting, group, or organization (Barker, 1994; Fairholm, 1994; Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Pigg, 1999). Community leadership refers to a dynamic phenomenon across a number of people, organizations, and communities.

COs basically have multiple stakeholders such as board members, staff, interns, volunteers, and external partners. In particular, COs focusing on social change movements in urban areas like Flushing confront various complicated socio-cultural and political issues by diverse stakeholders based on ethnicity, race, social status, and so forth. All of them also have unequal power and they occasionally have tension among themselves because of scarce resources. As a result, many nonprofits actually have been dissolved. Those challenges make it difficult to establish community leadership by managing the diversities and power differences.

The successful development of KACO by expanding community leadership was made possible by the organization’s traditionally strong emphasis on learning. Its approach highlights that learning is not separated from daily work and is based on reflective dialogue among internal and external people to bring about consensus. The activists believed that formal education and trainings are absolute necessities, but they are not priorities. In fact, the activists prioritized daily learning among themselves through their activities. Moreover, their intensive reflective social
learning culture helped them to understand the difference among inner stakeholders, including themselves, and between their organization and various external stakeholders. Having opportunities for social reflection through discourse absolutely enhances community leadership development and learning. Those allow activists to verify their temporary thoughts/reflections with others and reflect by themselves recursively. It also contributed to making organizational long-term direction and objectives based on their missions. Therefore, their dedicated efforts on reflective social learning were a fundamental basis to expand community leadership by creating a consensus and building trust relationships as well as developing their organization.

**Holistic Approach to Reframing Long-Term Direction by Crossing Boundaries**

The KACO’s successful expansion resulted from its strategic approaches to the organization and community leadership by constantly reflecting on what can do the best in current internal and external organizational situations and what is the unchanged core value or mission of activities of the organization. In particular, reframing appropriate organizational focus by timely establishing a long-term direction according to political landscapes led the organization’s sustainable development as I described in Chapter Four. Following a holistic approach to immigrant issues and action-based approach based on given situations helped the organization to gradually build community leadership with multiple stakeholders by recruiting more qualified internal people including new staff members and interns, positive community members, and professional partners.

Besides, the organization’s approach of crossing boundaries among programs/internal persons within the organization and outside partners without hierarchy led to develop community leadership and learning of activists. In particular, the role of seniors in terms of the facilitation and guidance of overall social movement activities—including work and the allowance of
decision-making—are significant when newer activists seek to expand boundaries for community leadership.

Meanwhile, the KACO activists’ ‘boundary-crossing’ approach to community leadership—based on a ‘knot-working’ strategy that refers to relatively loose and flexible relationships with diverse stakeholders, inside and outside of an organization, across managerial boundaries (Engeström, 2008), and built by concrete roles and mutual respect—was effective to enhance community leadership. In fact, it facilitates diverse new coalitions for activists in that they clearly perform assigned roles in a specific project with other partners by focusing on action or performance-based approaches.

However, this approach may also have a challenge in a particular project in that it cannot guarantee the outcome’s quality of coalition to achieve their common purpose if the KACO does not serve a leading role. As I mentioned in Chapter Six, an activist in the KACO did not suggest a conflicting opinion during conducting a research project due to an assigned role as a supporter or follower, brought by cultural habitus of the coalition in the local area. Therefore, COs in the area should try to elucidate roles first to better reflect their common purpose and the roles they play with each other.

**Socio-Cultural Approach to Community Leadership and Learning: Beyond Management Approaches**

Although COs operate in social sectors, they need to utilize parts of management approaches to effectively manage their organization (Collins, 2005). The KACO has tried to build clearer work systems and a systemic organizational structure. In addition, it has rotated staff into different programs to advance their capacities. In terms of budget, the KACO has maintained a stable status through ongoing efforts to diversify funding sources. Looking through the viewpoint
of marketing strategy, the organization’s positionality to the external context as Asian American organization enabled them to more receive funding from foundations and government sectors. The raised organizational recognition in the local area by increasing exposure in diverse local media, and directly meeting with community members also secure stable fundraising as well as organizational expansion. In terms of staff benefits, the organization made an effort to provide more compensation such as vacation/holiday, comp time, and personal/sick days similar to other organizations, in order to make up for relatively lower wages (than for-profit sectors) and much workload of individual staff. Moreover, in 2010, the organization began to conduct annual performance review including professionalism, understanding/knowledge of organizational culture and history, attitude/initiative, quality of work, teamwork/interpersonal skills, communications, and self/supervisors’ review. Most of them consider it a positive assessment in that they can reflect on their performance and work relationship among themselves.

Even though this organization also emphasizes staff education/learning, educational capacity to increase staff’s career development by providing diverse educational programs is still limited. In particular, this limit results from the absence of a system that comprehensively serves in planning, managing, and evaluating educational programs by considering various internal and external resources. They also need to carefully consider turnover among newer staff, although the organization has a good talent pool by managing the youth program. In fact, in 2011, three newer staff members, mostly employed around 2009, left the organization. Under the situation that the KACO cannot provide more benefits like other profit organizations, the KACO’s activists need to continuously contemplate how they manage the issue.

Although the management approach may be needed in social sectors, it is not enough to sustainably develop COs (Collins, 2005). COs have their own socio-cultural approaches over the management views. The distinguishing characteristic of KACO was that activists tried to make their office an ideally equal space by maintaining even allocation of generations and genders as
well as efforts to build an equal organizational culture without hierarchy. Moreover, their dedicated spirit and authenticity in the organizational history have played an important base role in developing the organization. Also their efforts to understand each other, especially the difference between generations or between the senior group and newer group (that resulted from the recent organizational expansion) contribute to better community leadership building and learning. In addition to endeavors to understand cultural difference among generations, the organization has made efforts to keep traditional organizational culture and Korean cultural identities such as family-like culture, working together, unique lunch time, and so on. These eventually help the organization not only to be effectively positioning its presence in the society on long-term basis, but to help activists establish multiple identities themselves with a resolute pride as a KA activist or leader for social change movement.

In terms of approaches to external context, the activists have tried to understand other partners’ culture and approaches during collations. In particular, they concentrated their efforts on building personal relationships with the activists of external partners. Those result in expanding diverse coalition with partners, as well as strong, trust-based relationship building. Furthermore, they carefully consider cultural sensitivity of community members while at the same time breaking a cultural myth, for example, most of KAs do not like door-knocking activities of unknown persons (see Chapter Six). Those all show their endeavors to break down conventional myths that impede both individual and organization’s growth, while they cultivate their own way beyond a mediocre management view.

**Balancing Power Issues**

The balance of power among activists and programs is a critical factor to facilitate community leadership development and learning. In fact, this organization has a good structure to check power imbalances and a steering committee, composed of a president, vice-president, ED,
and senior staff beyond board members, that plays a role in deciding important organization issues (e.g., organization direction, expense, hiring and firing, etc.) as well as bridging between board members and staff members. Although the organization has a good structure, the power issues can always occur whenever, in daily practices. According to Foucault (1976):

> Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And “Power,” insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement. One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society. (p. 93)

In an example of the KACO’s annual retreat, board members guard newer staff members from the power of senior staff and then higher-level learning took place by creating the revised object. According to Collins (2005), a large reason for this is that the organization has right people. Namely, the organization’s internal persons are basically ready to understand organizational culture/approaches and their difference. Also recently recruited activists largely have the highest educational attainment and qualified diverse experiences as well as interns. In particular, including the right board members has played a pivotal role in building a great organization:

> We tried to maintain that [board of directors] (..), equally a third, a third, a third... first generation, 1.5 generation, second generation (..), intentionally (..), they must spend several years with our (..), over ten years at least (..), About half of the members are persons who worked with us from the beginning of this organization. They cannot become a member if they donate a lot of money (..), have to be active in a long time (..), contribute (..), When we choose the members, it is more important (..), kinds of (..), they had several difficulties in U.S., deeply involved experience in our organization (..), so,
their contribution (..), understanding level on our organization, and a sort of old memory with us (..), than skill they have. But, you know, generally, other organizations prefer to board members who much contribute to financial aspects (..), or people who just support organizational activities without uttering any complaints (..), our board members seem to be silent, but, actually they are really strict and positively take part in voicing their opinions of our activities (..), they are core of cores. (I, 478-495)

Although the organization cannot perfectly manage all power issues, their efforts to balance power have created positive results.

Another power issue is the matter between activists and community members. As I discussed in Chapter Six, the activists have a tendency to maintain their power with community members due to limited space/time and some cultural habitus of community members and so forth. The tendency occasionally attenuates a relationship between the activists and community members. However, the community members are not merely clients who receive social services from the activists; sometimes they provide information or knowledge to the activists. They learn diverse situational realities of local area from community members. In a meeting among three programs, ‘social service,’ ‘organizing and advocacy,’ and ‘civic participation,’ an activist said:

We actually learn a lot of things from community members, even though we provide services for them. You know, actually (..), sometimes we don’t know well how they live in current, what they have difficulties, or how they are situated. Those information really help us to planning our activities. (FN, 01182011)

The positive aspect is about the parts that I miss (..), sometimes I only look at the big picture and miss the little points, and they point those things out to me. I mean, for example, we did a campaign, and they were telling me this is an issue about the budget, and this is about whatever (..), they understand but also know exactly what the regulations are and what specific actions we can take (..), how about doing this or that (..),
they suggest more detailed alternatives to me. (C, 208-212)

This learning can take place when power freely transfers from activists to community members and vice versa. Hence, despite several changes, the power balance between activists and community members is a most important factor for facilitating community leadership and learning by building deeper relationship between two groups.

With regards to this, the KACO’s activists should reflect among themselves what their fundamental role is. The activists always said that the ultimate goal is empowerment of community members with a humble approach. Their meaning of empowerment includes the community members consciously reflecting on their rights and taking action like the activists would take. However, the activists must consider whether or not they unconsciously have a wrong approach in daily practice. For instance, a senior activist made the following statement by habit in a meeting: “Hey, they [community members] don’t have any interests except their benefits [a mocking smile] (..), they are okay if they just solve own problems” (FN, 01182011). As a matter of fact, the activist is not wrong and the statement occasionally seems like a joking statement. However, a bigger problem is that no one gives the activist an advice although the activist has power that may influence newer activists’ thoughts, behaviors, and approaches. I do not have an intention to diminish the activist’s many contributions; however, I would like to assert that they also need to care for little things to achieve yhe organizational missions related their desire.

Ideally, to develop community leadership, it is very important that stakeholders take up their leadership or roles themselves by creating a social and public sphere (Habermas, 1987; Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Pigg, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 2008). Individual or organizational leaders of the local area play a significant role in reaching the level of community leadership and thus should own a responsibility for community development. The KACO began to have power as a leading organization in New York. I know that the activists want to make their organization a social and
public sphere. This refers to not a simple physical space but an open space that allows free communication and reflection with each other, among partners, community members, and themselves. Recently, they have made an effort to build a better sphere among internal stakeholders. However, as a leading organization, they should start to reflect on whether or not their approaches are making the sphere they want, including external partners and community members within their organization or at outside spaces. I observed that the activists’ social reflection for developing community leadership and learning occur when they have empathy or understand difference among themselves. However, I occasionally felt that they do not have an empathy with external partners and community members. Despite its difficulty, they always have to carefully approach the issue. Otherwise the KACO could become only an enlarged professional nonprofit organization or an elite group that monopolizes power and moves far away from their original mission and ultimate purpose. At this point, therefore, they should remind themselves their starting point that emphasized dedicated spirit and need to review how their organization had been developed.

**Implications and Further Research**

The findings of this study suggest that we need to focus more on higher-level (social) outcomes of learning through activities and a (reflective) social learning process by utilizing CHAT beyond individual foci. It is a relatively new and alternative approach in education in order to understand learning. In particular, I reconfigured CHAT’s perspective on learning to explore learning in daily activities as described in Figure 3.7 and applied my viewpoint in this empirical study. The reconfiguration on learning not only advances CHAT itself as a theory but also enhances its application in research related to community leadership and learning in daily practice. As a result, the findings imply how researchers can better adopt CHAT to understand daily or informal learning in the community while at the same time examining community leadership
phenomena. Furthermore, in terms of methodological issues of research, this study is valuable in that it shows how researchers bridge between critical ethnography and CHAT.

The findings indicate that community leadership development and learning should be understood by considering historically accumulated socio-cultural contexts across boundaries and should also more positively reflect power issues. In particular, the findings draw attention to the importance of diffuse power for encouraging community leadership and learning beyond a viewpoint of traditional leadership to both researchers and practitioners.

More practically, the findings provide an in-depth understanding and strategies of practices for community leadership development based on socio-cultural urban contexts as well as daily learning in the CO. The practical implications of this research suggest that all CO activities need to be understood as learning events. This means that programs, staff development, leadership development, decision making, relations with the community and questions of professionalism must be designed, conducted, and understood as a process of learning. Moreover, this learning is always more focused on fundamental reflection on their missions and purposes than resource-based short-term goals or myopic viewpoints. Only in this way can contradictions or challenges that arise in the complex environment of COs be resolved as well as securing sustainable organizational development. The findings also provide practitioners with a significant implication: they should establish their own organizational ways under the long-term vision, direction, or objective over the mediocre approaches of other profit- and nonprofit sectors.

Even though this study cannot be generalized because it focused on the approach of an urban KACO, as a nonprofit organization, to community leadership and learning issues, the findings may have significant meanings broadly ranging from similar ethnic or general nonprofit organization to public and for-profit organizations. The fundamental reason is that the issues are not limited to a specific setting or organization. Nevertheless, the viewpoints of the ‘community’ (partners/stakeholders) to perform activities with the ‘subject’ (activists) should be further
explored in future research. In terms of power issues between activists and community members or limited space in the KACO, how community members recognize the issues may be important for more thorough identification. In addition to this, the external partners that have associated with the KACO over time may have different thoughts about the local community and its community members, as well as the KACO’s approaches. Moreover, the voice of other racial and ethnic groups should be importantly considered more because the Flushing area has transformed into an area including largest Chinese American enclave and diverse racial and ethnic groups as well as extant KAs.

In addition, it will be necessary to further investigate external factors such as laws, ideologies, and other related trends, in that these may influence activities. For instance, in my study, I did not thoroughly consider diverse anti-immigration contexts (e.g., loopholes of immigration reform system including the DREAM Act or new immigration laws of Arizona, Michigan, and Minnesota, etc.) and the ideology or biased image of Asian Americans (e.g., passivity, economic success, higher level of education, etc.).

Finally, I would suggest that researchers examine how the activity network is rearranged by outcomes and then what new contradictions and outcomes may occur through more involving in the research site and subject over an extended period of time.
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Appendix A: The Organizational Structure
Appendix B: Key Campaigns and Coalitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Campaigns and Coalitions</th>
</tr>
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| 1990s  | • **Washington Post Ad Campaign:** A signature campaign to place an ad in the *Washington Post*, a newspaper of choice for American political policymakers. The KACO planned to bring together communities to post a full-page ad that would highlight immigrants’ contributions to society and the destructive nature of anti-immigrant laws and policies. The organization’s volunteer and staff worked for two months on efforts such as the ‘One Person, One Dollar’ fund-raising drive, and in the end brought together more than 300 organizations from diverse communities to raise money for two full-page advertisements in the *Post*.  
• **Paper Plate Campaign:** Anti-immigrant politicians in Congress began to slash social benefits such as food stamps – an absolutely critical means of support, especially for low-income people and elderly immigrants. The KACO began a successful campaign to gather signatures and stories on paper plates from affected communities, and sent these by the hundreds to Congressional politicians and policy-makers.  
• **Fix 96 Campaign:** In 1996, Congress pushed through harsh changes to immigration law, making it harder for legal immigrants to reunite their families. The policies also emphasized expelling undocumented immigrants and erected a 3- or 10-year bar on allowing them back into the country. The KACO began the Fix ’96 campaign, which joined with other civil rights and legal organizations to rollback and ‘fix’ the excesses of these harsh laws. |
| 2000s  | • **Campaign for Comprehensive Immigration Reform:** The current US immigration system is broken. More than 12 million immigrants are undocumented, immigration backlogs are decades-long, and the system allows in only a fraction of the number of foreign workers needed to support American companies. Thus the KACO has participated in diverse campaigns with partners.  
• **The DREAM Act Campaign:** The KACO has worked continuously on the effort to pass the DREAM Act, which would allow immigrant students gain proper status and help them realize their American dreams for higher education. Through petition drives, grassroots lobbying efforts, and national conferences, the KACO has played a leading role in building a coalition with other students and organizations to pass the DREAM Act.  
• **The Equal Access to Drivers Licenses Campaign:** In the wake of 9/11, Congress passed the REAL ID Act, which prevented states from allowing undocumented immigrants to register for drivers’ licenses. This was a crisis in New York especially, as nearly 300,000 people were in danger of losing their licenses. The KACO began an organizing campaign by forming the ‘New York Coalition for Immigrant Rights to Drivers’ Licenses Coalition.’ The KACO worked together with over 60 community groups, unions, and other organizations. Because of the success of the campaign, Gov. Spitzer announced a new policy allowing all New York residents equal access to drivers’ licenses, although he later changed the policy.  
• **African American – Immigrant Community Unity Efforts:** Because of social prejudices, relations between the African American and immigrant communities have often been difficult. The KACO has played a leading role in working with the New York Immigration |
Coalition (NYIC)’s ‘Building Bridges Conference,’ which brings these communities together to strengthen ties and develop joint responses to public policy issues.

- **Fighting Against Budget Cuts Campaign:** As the recent recession deepened, city and state governments began to try to cut basic, essential services for community members – right when these constituents needed services the most. To prevent these potentially devastating cuts, the KACO served as a Steering Committee member of the One New York Coalition, a group of nearly 200 organizations that engaged in large demonstrations and grassroots lobbying at both Albany and City Hall. Because of the coalition’s efforts, state and city governments changed their policies and restored a great deal of the threatened funding for these critical services.

- **Anti-Hate-Crime Efforts:** For the past several years, there have been several vicious hate crimes in New York area targeting immigrants. With other communities of color, the KACO has participated actively on efforts to combat these hate crimes that split communities apart.

- **Truth about Immigrants Campaign:** In 2008, the KACO launched a campaign to inform non-immigrant communities about the truth about immigrants – which they have contributed greatly to the mosaic of American society. The organization launched the ‘Truth about Immigrants Campaign’ by partnering with a local organization on an educational and mass media campaign to dispel myths about immigrants.

- **Voice Your Vote NY Coalition:** In 2008, the KACO co-founded the first Asian American coalition of voting groups to coordinates voter efforts to empower the Asian American voting population. The organization continues to work with the NYIC as a leading member of their ‘Democracy in Action! 2009 Civic Participation Campaign.’ The Project also continues to participate in voter empowerment coalitions as a steering committee member of the Asian Pacific American Voter Alliance.

- **Registering 50,000 Immigrant Voters:** In 2004, the organization launched its New Immigrant Voters Registration Drive – an effort that has resulted in registering nearly 50,000 new immigrant voters in 2010 since the beginning of the drive. Every week, the organization’s volunteers and staff engage in street outreach, special events, and registration drives at the Brooklyn courthouse for this notable achievement. This massive registration drive is the cornerstone of the KACO’s political empowerment activities.

- **12% and Growing Coalition:** The KACO has played a leading role in mobilizing and organizing low-income immigrant and Asian Americans to fight against potentially devastating cuts to basic social services in New York and State budgets. The Asian American community is more than 12% of the City’s population and is the fastest growing community, yet Asian community organizations only receive 0.24% of all social service funding – a shocking disparity that underlines the lack of resources for the Asian American community. In 2009, the organization co-founded the ‘12% and Growing Coalition’ – the first-ever coalition of 40 Asian-led and serving-organizations in New York - to ensure that state and city governments support the KACO’s vulnerable community members during this economic downturn, and in the long-term to ensure that the organizing’s critically-underserved communities are provided with an equitable share of resources.

*Note. Adapted from “Internal Documents (organizational history)” and “KACO’s website,” by KACO*
## Appendix C: 2011 Overall Annual Events of the KACO

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date &amp; Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>1/6 General Meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1/7 – 1/9 Retreat</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1/12 – 1/13 Staff Planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1/17 Holiday: Martin Luther King Day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1/22 Annual Board Meeting</td>
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<td>February</td>
<td>2/3 Holiday: Lunar New Year</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2/5 Jishin Balpgi (Korean Cultural Event) in Manhattan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2/10 General Meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2/12 Parade &amp; Jishin Balpgi in Flushing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2/14 Language Lobby Day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2/16 12% and Growing: Kick Off Press Event</td>
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<td>2/21 Holiday: President’s Day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2/22 Tax Issue Workshop - Korean and Chinese</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2/23 Staff Education Session</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TBD Press Conference – Albany Day</td>
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<td>March</td>
<td>3/1 Albany Day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3/3 General Meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3/23 Immigration Workshop – Korean</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3/23 Staff Education Session</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3/24 Immigration Workshop – Chinese</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3/26 Open Clinic – Free Legal Clinic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TBD 12% and Growing – Lobby Day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TBD Youth Meet-n-Greet</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>4/5 City Advocacy Day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4/7 General Meeting</td>
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<td>4/13 Staff Education Session</td>
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<td>4/16 Citizenship Day</td>
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<td>4/16 Second Board Meeting</td>
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<td>4/19 Foreclosure Workshop</td>
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<td>4/28 Spring Reception</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>5/1 May Day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5/5 General Meeting</td>
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<td>5/18 People’s uprising/Democratic Movement: Commemorative Event in Korea</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5/30 Holiday: Memorial Day</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TBD City Advocacy Day: 12% and Growing Mobilization</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>6/2 General Meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6/28 Housing Workshop – Chinese</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6/29 Housing Workshop - Korean</td>
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Appendix D: 2010 General Election Phone Baking Survey

Greeting/Intro

Hello, ________________? We are calling from OOOO. [DO NOT PAUSE BEFORE NEXT QUESTION.] IF NECESSARY, SAY: This survey will only take 1 minute.

Q1. Are you planning on voting the upcoming election?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Maybe/don't know
   4. Other answer
   5. I'm not registered (Let them know that they are registered according to our records)

Q2. What’s the main reason you don’t plan to vote? [OPEN-ENDED QUESTION – WRITE IN ANSWER]

Q3. What is the most important issue for you? [WRITE IN ANSWER]

Q4. Do you know who is running for state senator in your neighborhood? Do you know their names?
   Mentions...[DO NOT GIVE HINTS, CLUES. GIVE ABOUT 15 SECONDS FOR ANSWER]
   1. None – doesn’t know candidates’ names
   2. OO only
   3. XX only
   4. OO and XX

Q5. Do you know where your poll site is?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Don’t know/Other

Closing: If you have any questions or assistance with voting, OOOO is here to help the Korean community. Please call us at 000-000-0000. Thank you!
Appendix E: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

[PART 1]

1. Basic information of interviewees

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<table>
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<th>30-39</th>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Years with Organization</th>
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<table>
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<th>$20000-30000</th>
<th>$30000-40000</th>
<th>$40000+</th>
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<table>
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<table>
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<th>Mostly English</th>
<th>Mostly-Chinese</th>
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<th>Korean-Spanish</th>
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<th>Korean-English-Spanish</th>
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<th>Korean-English-Chinese-Spanish</th>
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</table>

1. Tell me about how you became involved in this center
2. Tell me about your first work experience you participated in this center
3. Tell me about your feelings/thoughts/beliefs about this area and the Korean American community in this area (distinguished factors with other areas or ethnic groups)
   - Why do you think about that and how do you recognize that?
   - Is the overall atmosphere of community (Flushing area and its Korean-American community) beneficial or challengeable to do your works activities of your center? - Ideologies
     - What are things to facilitating factors and challenges for your work activities?
     - Why continually challengeable?
[PART 2]

(4) Tell me about your current major work activities in this center (focusing on community leadership).
- **Ultimate purpose / collaboration with internal groups, members of other organizations, and community members – why collaboration/coalition with them?**
- **How and why the activities have been occurred? – Social issues / value to KA community (importance/contribution)**
- **How do you know the social issues and the relation with your work activities**
- **How your activities have been developed?**

(5) Tell me about how do you feel working in this center
- **Distinguished characteristics – Habitus/organizational culture, cultural artifacts/belief/norm/value/ formal & informal rules / good things/difficulties, challenges, problems / efforts to solve problems / Why continually challengeable? / learning**

(6) Tell me about your working relationship with your peers in the center
- **Habitus, cultural artifacts/belief/norm/value / formal and informal rules / good things / difficulties, challenges, problems / efforts to solve problems / Why continually challengeable? / learning**

(7) Tell me about your working relationship with other partners and community members
- **Habitus, cultural artifacts/belief/norm/value / formal and informal rules / good things / difficulties, challenges, problems / efforts to solve problems / Why continually challengeable? / learning / community education**

(8) Tell me about any positive and negative change through your work activities
- **Yourself**
- **Other members**
- **Center – development/growth/expansion**

(9) Tell me about will you continue to participate in the work activities. What make you continuously participate in the activities? Or what make you do not participate in the activities?

(10) Tell me about what do you learn through your activities

(11) Tell me about your learning/education resources to do your work activities - **What is most effective to you? Why?**
Appendix F: Letter of Agreement

To the Penn State Institutional Review Board (IRB):

I am familiar with Junghwan Kim’s research entitled “Empowering Community Leadership and Learning for Social Justice: A Cultural Historical Activity Theory Investigation of an Urban Korean American Community Organization”.

I understand our organization’s involvement to be allowing employees to be interviewed, providing archival data, allowing employees to be observed, and his participation in our activities.

I understand that this research will be carried out following sound ethical principles and that participant involvement in this research is strictly voluntary and provides confidentiality of research data.

Therefore, as a representative of ________________, I agree that Junghwan Kim’s research may be conducted at our organization.

Sincerely,

______________________________________
Name

______________________________________
Title

______________________________________
Signature

______________________________________
Date
Appendix G: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Empowering Community Leadership and Learning for Social Justice:
A Cultural Historical Activity Theory Investigation of an Urban
Korean American Community Organization

Principal Investigator: Junghwan Kim, Ph.D. Candidate
315 Keller Building
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 380-1331; jhkim@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. Fred M Schied
305E Keller Building
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 863-4399; fms3@psu.edu

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to understand the community leadership
and learning lives of Korean American (KA) activities/staff members in a community
organization by investigating their daily activities.

2. Procedures to be followed: You will be asked to participate in one interview. The first part
of interview will focus on your basic information, first work experience in your organization,
and local community. The second part will focus on participatory experiences for community
leadership for your activities and working/learning experiences. If applicable, you will be
asked to participate in one or two more interviews.

3. Benefits: You might learn more about yourself by participating in this study. The questions
might help you to reflect on your own participatory experience for community leadership and
more understand your local community. This research might provide a better understanding
of how do KA activists develop community leadership and learn in their daily activities
within socio-cultural contexts. This information could not only help to establish planned
activities for community more effective but also contribute to understand a KA and further
Asian American community in the United States.

4. Duration: Each interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes.

5. Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. Interviews
will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The data will be stored and secured in the principal
investigator’s password-protected computer as a password-protected file. Only the principal
investigator and advisor will have access to the recordings, and the recordings will be
destroyed three years following the completion of the principal investigator’s doctoral studies
at Penn State (Completion of his studies is anticipated in August 2012). In the event of a
publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

6. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Junghan Kim at (814) 380-1331 (cell) with questions or concerns about this study.

7. **Compensation:** There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

8. **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 if 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
VITA
Junghwan Kim

Education
• The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Ph.D., Adult Education (Minor in Workforce Education and Development), 2012
• Yonsei University, Seoul, M.A., Education, 2007
• Yonsei University, Seoul, B.A., ‘Education’, ‘Political Science and Diplomacy’ (Minor in Sociology), 2005

Work, Research, and Teaching Experiences
• Associate Researcher: Educational Research Institute, Yonsei University (2007–Present)
• Co-Instructor: Adult Education, Penn State (Spring 2012)
• Graduate Assistant: Adult Education, Penn State (2008–2011)
• Teaching Assistant: Adult Education, Penn State (2008–2011)
• Intern: KACO (nonprofit), Queens, New York (2010–2011)
• Instructor: Nursing Science, Kyungin Women’s College, Incheon (Spring 2008)
• Research Assistant: Korean Educational Development Institute, Seoul (2008)
• Research Assistant: Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education & Training, Seoul (2007)

Awards and Honors
• Outstanding Graduate Student Research Award: The 53rd Adult Education Research Conference (AERC), Saratoga Springs, NY (2012)
• Dissertation Research Initiation Grant: College of Education, Penn State (2011)
• Graduate Assistantship: Education, Yonsei University (2005 – 2006)
• President Award (highest honors student): Yonsei University (2004)

Selected Publications and Conference Proceedings