

THE CULTURAL LOOKING GLASS: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF KOREAN
FEMALE PROFESSORS IN THE U.S. ACADEMY

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to
my loving grandparents,
parents, brother,
and my husband.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents for their unconditional love and support throughout my academic journey and my PhD program. I could not have done this without you. Thank you to my grandparents in Houston and in Korea, brother, and Jin-Joo for teaching me about strength, hard work, and endurance; and to never give up. You have kept me strong and motivated. Without you all as my support system, the process of completing my academic journey would have been a difficult one. To my husband, who I met towards the end of my PhD program, thank you for coming into my life, standing by my side, and being the best surprise that life has offered.

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ABSTRACT

Women's representation on university campuses in general has advanced gradually, and greater efforts have been made in establishing a diverse student body, rather than pursuing diverse faculty. Through narrative inquiry, this study explored what can be known from identifying the gaps in the literature regarding Korean values and women faculty of Korean descents' lives for women who hold professional academic positions in the U.S. academy. This qualitative study's central research questions are: (1) In what ways do the notions of identity and positionality influence female faculty members of Korean descent and their experiences in the U.S. academy? (2) How do these women navigate Korean and U.S. cultural systems present in their personal and professional lives? The conceptual framework utilized two theories that guided this study including transnational feminism and positionality, and were used to better understand the ways the female participants made meaning through complex aspects of their identities that included considering social class professional identity. As such, this framework allowed for meaningfully constructed realities that were not fixed, but changing in fluid and unique ways.

I. INTRODUCTION

I was born in Seoul, South Korea in 1986, and immigrated as a young child to the United States. Much of my own cultural reflections became more and more present as I began to understand the privileges that surround my own bi-cultural and bilingual identities. In drawing on the curiosities I started to have before this study, I considered my positionality and the spaces in which I found myself every day at school and at work. My positionality as a woman, an emerging scholar, PhD student, instructor, and wife were becoming more established, and I noticed I was interpreting my experiences through my family, educational goals, and cultural experiences. As well, all these elements have impacted who I am today as an individual.

Although I have no distinct accent when I speak English, and my mannerisms, speech, and behavior may reflect *Americanism*, I am proud that I am able to communicate in both Korean and English back and forth fluently. I commit to both cultures equally, and I identify as Korean American, rather than solely Korean. While I came to the United States as a young child, my journey in the American school system started in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms in elementary school, where my instructors were unsure of what to do with me as a Korean immigrant with immigrant non-English speaking parents. In addition, teachers and students alike were unfamiliar with my cultural background, family, and language. In my early experiences as a child, I felt isolated even in a classroom filled with children who could not speak English. At the time, my father was in graduate school, while my mother worked at a donut shop from early morning hours to about 2 p.m. Afterwards, she worked at her second job at a local dry cleaner after my brother and I came home from school. Before his classes, my father

worked at a flea market selling tennis shoes to make ends meet, while supporting the family the best he could. My father, who is the only son to my grandparents, having four female siblings, became an important figure in the family because he was not only the eldest and the only male—but because he was given the rare opportunity to move his family to the States in pursuit of his graduate degree. For this reason, much of my family still resides in South Korea today. As a family, my parents, my brother, and I have come a long way from where we were as an immigrant family in the 90s. Up until I graduated with my Master's degree, my parents supported my education along with my brother's college education by owning a small deli. Although it is uncommon for me to refer to my earlier personal narrative in such a straight forward way, I write it as a response to help others understand that I, too, overcame language, cultural, gender, and racial obstacles. While I may speak and write like the everyday American, at the core of who I am, I still attempt to overcome unfair stereotyping and biases as I live my life as a Korean American female in the US.

Nearly all of my upbringing and education have been in the US. However, I was raised in a very traditional Korean household where there were gender distinctions and expectations. I grew up being very aware of the cultural divide between Korean and American values, and my parents were adamant about keeping the Korean culture and language present in the house. Like the stories of the participants, retaining the Korean language at home was a way my parents kept Korean traditions alive in the home. As such, my upbringing was always bi-cultural in a sense, and I learned early on to speak English at school and Korean at home. Growing up with a younger brother and immigrant parents, gender distinctions were obvious to me at a young age. The way we

were treated, right down to what our majors were to be in college, reflected traditional undertones. While my brother exercised his male independence and traditionally-given freedom regularly, it was expected that I take on more feminine responsibilities through chores.

In our teenage years, when we were being groomed for college, my brother took an interest in pursuing culinary training to become a chef. Because my parents felt it was unsuitable and untraditional for him to become a chef, he was steered towards math and sciences to become an engineer eventually. While he is happily an engineer today, he tells me that he still cooks for fun and hopes to do something with his cooking skills after he retires. As children, we normalized this kind of thinking, and we did not think it was truly unfair until much later in life. Now, as an adult, my brother admits to being pushed in the direction of this field in terms of career choice. Since I was not particularly gifted in math or science, it was no surprise that I gravitated toward literature, music, and the arts—but it did not matter since that was the expectation. As a Korean American female pursuing a doctorate now, I have had to overcome cultural obstacles within my own family. Although this level of educational achievement may seem admirable and ambitious to many, it was considered unusual and unnecessary to male members of my family. I am blessed to have come from a family where education was important and attending a good school was at the center of nearly every conversation. My parents were both educated in South Korea, and my father obtained his graduate degree in the US. In addition, both of my grandfathers were college-educated, my cousins have earned their undergraduate and graduate degrees abroad, and I am the only female pursuing a doctorate. In essence, the pressure to perform well academically existed from a young

age. With family members who graduated from prestigious universities in South Korea, I felt very small compared to them when I wanted to pursue degrees in literature and education.

The men in my family who have Master's degrees and doctorates appeared to scoff at the idea that I could do something of equal or more value—but in the States. Having to defend that getting this degree did not mean I was writing off marriage and having children seemed ridiculous since I was only 26 years old at the time. More importantly, I was reminded by the elders in my family that being *too educated* could cause *complications* in marriages. Most family members could not understand why doing any of this was even necessary. Luckily, my parents supported my decision to be, what they call a *professional student*, and I am so grateful for that. Their support and encouragement have not only helped me pursue my academic goals, but have changed the perception of education and women in my family. Being awarded acceptance to a program and school that I wanted to attend was a big achievement for me. While others told me that having a Master's degree was *good enough*, with this dissertation, I have bigger plans for myself so I have pushed through. However, little did I know that this part of my struggle was a very small part of what was to come for me.

In 2010, I started teaching at a local community college as an adjunct instructor of composition and English after graduating with my Master's degree in literature. As a young Korean American female, I was naïve to think that my first experiences of teaching would be filled with comfort and acceptance by my students without stereotyping and judgment. Regardless, the experiences were memorable, and the experiences have inspired so much of this dissertation and my future research. While I

felt my struggles as a new instructor were internal, I did not realize at the time that many of my struggles stemmed from the external pressures—perceptions, assumptions, and stereotyping. Everything from getting a faculty/staff parking permit, to setting up a library day for my students, and getting my ID was a hassle since everyone assumed I was student. Most frustrating was that I felt I had to prove myself to my students and my colleagues because I felt my presence had no authority. When I spoke in faculty meetings, the looks exchanged by my colleagues were unsettling and made me feel uncomfortable. And, while my students did not publicly question me or challenge me, their hesitation with me as their instructor in the beginning did not go unnoticed. Teaching got easier as the semesters progressed, and I grew more comfortable with my students. At times, I felt that my students doubted me; but at other times, I feel that my own self-doubts may have clouded how I accepted those experiences.

In 2012, I began the doctoral program. Initially, I had always wanted to pursue a doctorate, but once I was accepted to a few programs, I started to have doubts about what I would be able to contribute among students who had more experience. These internal struggles came from doubting myself and questioning my confidence because of my youthful appearance and less working/teaching experience. Walking around campus from the education building to the library, I saw many students during the day who were busily going to class, heading to the cafeteria, and retreating to their dorms after a long afternoon in classes. Up until working on my dissertation, students regularly approached me on campus asking where the chemistry building was, or what lab books they needed to get for their biology class, and questions about campus activities. I was mistaken for an undergraduate student, and amazingly, these experiences did not surprise me. Even while

working as a Doctoral Research Assistant, I had come across interesting moments with professors from different departments who assumed I was not a student in the doctoral program.

In 2014, I made my first conference presentation. Although preparing for the conference itself was a lot of hard work, I was somehow more concerned with how the conference attendees would view me. The day I presented, I was lucky enough to have the support of one of my professors and a classmate. I felt more at ease knowing they were there with me, but I felt uncomfortable and awkward in front of the room during the presentation. The piercing stares and the blank looks on the conference attendees' faces made me question whether I deserved to be there, and to make matters worse, my mind went blank here and there, even though I was presenting information on a topic I was familiar with. While I felt confident in the work itself that was being presented, I sensed people were unsure of me and I felt judged. Interestingly, nothing went wrong during the presentation and the attendees were polite and asked questions in the end. These thoughts may have only been there because it was my first conference presentation. Later, I thought to myself that it was a positive first experience at a conference, and that many of those negative thoughts and concerns were all just in my head. I wondered, much later, if this was a typical case of being nervous before a presentation, or if there was something more to these feelings I had about myself. Furthermore, surviving such an important first experience was a critical moment for me professionally and as a doctoral student. With this in mind, I gained a new awareness of myself as an emerging scholar.

The next year, I returned to the same conference and made a presentation alone. However, this time, my internal experience was much different. I was more confident in

front of my audience, I did not hesitate with what I was presenting, and I engaged with my conference attendees. I felt more upbeat, less stressed, and more comfortable with what I was doing. Although only a year had passed since my first conference presentation, I personally felt that the outcome of my second effort was much better and well-received. Perhaps all the same issues were present during my second conference; but in the end, I felt that the level of my confidence was different. This time around, it did not matter to me whether I felt accepted or not. I was confident in my work and now I look back at my first experience in 2013 as an important learning opportunity.

After these experiences, I started to think about why I felt this way—other than the fact that I looked young for my age and I was just at the starting point of becoming a scholar. During my many reflections, I suspected that my young *Asian-woman-ness* (Mayuzumi, 2011) was to blame. My short stature, petite frame, and young face confused many people; these feelings were so much more disappointing, especially at a time when academic achievement and networking among scholars was so important. I blamed who I was because no one else seemed to feel this way, and even though I was proud of my accomplishments, I believed I needed to feel more accepted. As a young Asian woman, I could not help but wonder if the Asian female stereotype was the reason for people to assume I did not belong. After many moments of reflecting, I had this very conversation with my dissertation chair, asking for advice. I realized during these conversations that I could not be the only Asian female to feel this way, and thus, my curiosity for the subject matter began to take form. There was a time after one of these conversations with my chair, when we were walking to a different building together. On our way, we ran into the dean. As my chair introduced me to him as one of her doctoral students, he replied

jokingly, “Oh, I didn’t know we were accepting 12 year olds!” I laughed off the incident, but felt it was so fitting—given that I was already feeling sensitive about these issues, but also because I knew that my area of research was being steered in the right direction.

Earlier in my narrative I stated that I identify as a Korean American. This is because I became a naturalized United States’ citizen in February, 2010, and before that moment, I never considered myself as anything but Korean. My cultural story is still developing; however, becoming a citizen was an important defining moment for me. Many have asked why it took so long for me to take that step towards naturalization, but it was because I was not ready to become a citizen before. I had plans to change my name from my Korean name to my official American name, and felt strongly about adopting an American passport. However, I started to have second thoughts about all these changes. I was concerned they would alter my cultural identity. Before embarking upon my doctoral journey, I decided to keep my given Korean name as my legal first name and made *Christine*, the American name I went by for years, my legal middle name. I choose not to hyphenate my Korean American identity because I believe that the space that exists between my two worlds is still under construction. In addition, I believe that the space should be left unaltered, for now, to allow for changes that will occur in my life which will continue to contribute to my identity’s evolution. As such, I expect my identity to become more refined and defined as I pursue my own future academic career. Because of these goals and expectations for myself, I developed my study around such curiosities. My interest in becoming a professor is the foundation for this study. And, situating myself as a Korean American researcher, my position in how I place my culture and

gender have played a major role in finding a way to contribute to the research that exists about Asian American females.

Minority Females in the Academy

My research aims to produce new insights into how this understudied and underrepresented population of female faculty members of Korean descent negotiate the different characteristics of identity (including culture, gender, race, tradition, language, citizenship, and professional/scholarly identities) as they participate in their academic environments (Mayuzumi, 2011). The purpose of this study is to know more about the experiences of female faculty members of Korean descent, and to better understand their contribution to “becom[ing] legitimate through creating alternative understandings and definitions of their academic lives” (p. iii). Because little has been studied about this population and their experiences within the academy, despite the emerging literature about Asian Americans, this study is rooted in recognizing their narratives as dialogues that mediate between self and the world they live in (Kyle, 2000).

Nelson and Brammer (2010) speculated that if minority faculty are scarce on campus, treated unfairly, and/or not properly retained, minority students may perceive that they will be treated the same. U.S. institutions are working to embrace diversity on campus among students and faculty, and the value of diversity embraces the social value of preparing both students and instructors to live in a multicultural democracy (Ng, Skorupski, Frey, & Wolf-Wendel, 2013).

Regarding cultural differences across campuses for faculty within the US, Gonzalez (1995) supported the notion of using both similar and conflicting experiences of minority women faculty members to provide support and awareness for both

mentoring and networking among the minority female faculty. As such, scholars have alluded to benefits that accrue from collaborating and participating within diverse and multicultural settings to generate ethnic and cultural research. Recently, women's representation on university campuses in general has advanced gradually (Winkler, 2000). According to Lee (2011), greater efforts have been made to attract a diverse study body, rather than pursuing diverse faculty. While Lee supported the claims of Mayuzumi (2011) that racial minority faculty members were underrepresented—especially Asian faculty—Lee (2011) noted that minority females in the academy were also rewarded and recognized less than their White/male colleagues. Specifically, in regard to Asian American female faculty members, the limited literature about their experiences suggested that perhaps there was a gap between research about women in the academy and minority women in the academy. There is much more to be studied and interpreted regarding Asian American scholars, in addition to what presently exists.

Ottinger, Sikula, and Washington's (1993) study with the Division of Policy Analysis and Research, (American Council of Education, found that in 1982, Asian women who were U.S. citizens earned 171 doctorates, while 281 recipients were Asian men and 7,690 were White women. In 1992, numbers steadily rose as 305 recipients were Asian women who were U.S. citizens, while 523 were Asian men and 9,997 were White women. Within a decade, Ottinger et al. (1993) reported that Asian American women substantially increased, by 78%, in earning their doctorates in the US. In addition, 26.6% of Asian American doctorate recipients indicated they planned on working at educational institutions in 1992, compared to 45.3% of Whites, 54.8% African Americans, and 54.1% of Mexican Americans. Between 2005-2007, the National Center for Education Statistics

(U. S. Department of Education, 2010) indicated that of the 7% of Asian faculty, 4.3% were U.S. citizens. And, in 2013, the Institute of International Education reported there were 40% more international students at U.S. colleges and universities than a decade ago. As well, Zeligman, Prescod, and Greene (2015) reported on findings from the U.S. Census Bureau in 2012, that while racial minorities make up over 41% of the U.S. population, minorities represent only 6.5% of those who earned doctoral degrees. Corresponding to statistics from research by Ottinger et al. (1993), and Zeligman et al. (2015), the steady increase in individuals who earned doctorates shows that between 2003 and 2004, Whites accounted for “28,214 doctoral degrees, while Black men and women earned significantly fewer with 2,900 degrees...[and] Hispanics earned 1,662 doctorates” (p. 67). Furthermore, Zeligman et al. (2015) specified that females earned more degrees than their male counterparts of the same race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

According to Ottinger et al. (1993), international students from China, India, and South Korea represented 49% of all international students in the US, and numbers from South Korea have declined by 2% in recent years. The growth of international/immigrant/minority students has increased, allowing for diverse and multicultural faculty to be present on campuses, which may be an important way to support and “shape institutional diversity” (Ng et al., 2013, p. 37). Additionally, Hale and Regev (2014) explained that while the “progression of women through the academic ladder” was apparent and meaningful, studies “failed to fully account for the effect that successful women” had (p. 56). Furthermore, females earned a little over 50% of all PhDs awarded to U.S. citizens, and the number of Black and Hispanic U.S. citizens who received doctorates more than doubled in the past two decades (Chronicle of Higher

Education, 2009). In 2006, the number of Asian PhD participants nearly tripled. For this reason, it is evident that over the last 20 years, the increase in women and minority females obtaining higher degrees and doctorates suggests a trend that is emerging.

Problem Statement

This study explored the experiences and values of women of Korean descent who hold professional academic positions. Currently, while research exists about the experiences of female faculty members and minority female faculty members, little is known about them in the academy despite the developing literature about Asian Americans. Additionally, the overarching problem is that there is a need to know more about how these faculty members create or develop their own legitimate spaces and their identities within the academy, in order to retain them and ensure their success as scholars and mentors. There is a need to increase diversity in faculty membership to support this diverse population through understandings their unique experiences as female minority faculty members. This study, therefore, focused on how female faculty members of Korean descent made meaning within their professional, personal, and cultural lives as a way to support their success as faculty on U.S. campuses. Presently, we do not know enough about their professional experiences to support and ensure success for female faculty members of Korean descent in the professorate. Determining how they create or develop their own spaces and their identities within the academy can identify important factors that may contribute to the future success and well-being of this group. There is much to be learned about how female professors of Korean descent thrive and survive in the U.S. academy.

The concerns that were explored in this study included: (a) the motivations and personal/professional desires of the participants, (b) the contradictions between self and culture they have navigated, and (c) the coping strategies they have employed to direct their academic lives. The main issue at the root of the problem stems from the Black/White paradigm that exists within American history. Relations among Asian American female groups, specifically, have been affected because they have largely gone unseen (Green & Kim, 2005). Essentially, Asian American females are making their presence known in U.S. academia, and to ensure their success within the Western academy, their stories and experiences need to be investigated since they confront traditional and societal barriers in their professional lives (Green & Kim, 2005). In conjunction, Asian American females feel collective pressures of professional and familial expectations to meet cultural and academic requirements since they are “under-appreciated and assumed to be less important than the men in their families” (p. 488).

Research Questions

This dissertation will examine two central questions:

- 1.) In what ways do the notions of identity and positionality influence female faculty members of Korean descent and their experiences in the U.S. academy?
- 2.) How do these women navigate Korean and U.S. cultural systems present in their personal and professional lives?

The ways in which gender, culture, society, and one’s identity are investigated can become clearer as personal histories and stories are unearthed. I elicited personal, cultural, and professional stories to evaluate the impact of culture and cultural

expectations regarding gender, identities, and positionalities through narrative inquiry. More specifically, the literature indicated that the dominant culture can affect personal understandings of role gratification, and the possibility of multiple identities that can emerge for women of Korean descent who are professors (Park & Liao, 2000). Hall (2000) theorized identity as a “continual process of becoming through identifications” (Jackson, 2010, p. 242). Individuals locate themselves best through their identities which may emerge or become submerged within (Jackson, 2010; Venn, 2006). More importantly, an individual’s connections and relations with others reveal how one might locate themselves through everyday practices (Jackson, 2010). The meanings that are created reveal practices that “are constructed through multiple layers,” and suggest that “cultural clashes” come into existence via the intersections of not only gendered identities, but multiple identities (p. 242). By reflecting on how the participants managed multiple roles and positionalities in their lives (Jackson, 2010; Park & Liao, 2000), this study investigated the ways in which female faculty members of Korean descent experience cultural expectations as well as social and cultural systems within the U.S. academy as female professors.

Theoretical Framework and Approach to Dissertation

Currently, literature about female academics in higher education suggests that organizational structures simultaneously free and limit women (Frechette, 2009) with teaching duties falling heavily and disproportionately on female faculty (Park, 1996; Schatz-Oppenheimer & Halpert-Zamir, 2010). Given this prevailing environment, issues still exist in regard to power and inequality in promotion, tenure, and acceptance of scholarly research (Mayuzumi, 2011; Schatz-Oppenheimer & Halpert-Zamir, 2010;

Winkler, 2000). Frechette (2009) added that academic institutions and areas of higher education are hierarchical and ordered organizations that offer not only rewards and status, but ultimately privilege as well. For females, advancement in position or authority “disrupts and alters” (p. 1) the dominant power constructions that have been prescribed out of tradition. Schatz-Oppenheimer and Halpert-Zamir (2010) argued that it was not just the biological differences between men and women that governed a “woman’s place in society,” but the “male-dictated social processes” (p. 366) as they built upon prescribed notions that their position and place in society existed within a patriarchal order. Accordingly, culturally ascribed gender expectations and “male-centric parameters” (p. 12) for scholarly superiority created imbalances and inequities in the academy. Furthermore, they excluded females by representing them “through normative standards of femininity” (p. 13).

The theoretical frameworks that encompassed this study were transnational feminism and positionality. Fernandes (2013) suggested that transnational feminism was developed and circulated in the ways in which we generate and distribute cultural, local, and border-crossing knowledge within the Western world. She noted that a proper understanding of transnational feminism involved both the “materiality of the worlds we seek and claim to know,” in conjunction with the “kinds of practices that we use in the process of knowing” (p. 104). The transnational feminism framework questions the in-between space of the local and the global. In many ways, this is a theory that is committed to recognizing and identifying borders and differences that assesses Western feminism. Using these factors, I built this study by specifically focusing on female faculty members of Korean descent in the U.S. academy. In addition, positionality is a

theory used to illustrate the ways in which diversity is developing and evolving in various contexts including the ways people develop and understand knowledge (Collins, 1993; Kezar, 2002). As such, positionality looks at a person's experience (e.g., gender, culture, religion, race/ethnicity, social class, or power conditions) and acknowledges "multiple overlapping identities" (Kezar, 2002, p. 96). By using this theoretical framework, the ways people make meaning through complex aspects of their identity "including social class [and] professional identity" (p. 96) allowed for meaningfully constructed realities that were not fixed, but changing in "fluid and dynamic" ways (p. 96). For these reasons, encompassing transnational feminism and positionality theoretical frameworks assisted in uncovering valuable stories of experiences for female faculty of Korean descent in the U.S. academy.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review is to evaluate the impact of culture and the expectations regarding gender, race, and identities created by those expectations, by examining personal cultural and professional narratives of female faculty members of Korean descent in the U.S. academy. A deeper understanding of the intersections of culture, gender, race, and identities for these women may allow for meaningful experiences to influence not only gender roles in their professional lives, but to also address their cultural belongingness and the development of their cultural and national identities. Present models of acculturation, and the notion of the cultural self, seem to be in place to demonstrate how identity may be impacted through immigration, assimilation, and the evolving national identity outside of one's native traditions (Park, 2001). It appears that with resources for Korean and Korean American women to obtain higher degrees, achieve professional employment, and gain a sense of personal independence in the United States, these women can experience a changing sense of self as they navigate Korean and non-Korean cultural influences. This change, or evolution, is called cultural shaping by Park (2011), and refers to how an individual's culture can transmit itself through shared personal stories, reflecting on the changes resulting from the events in one's life, and understanding the ways in which one makes meaning in their lives. Ultimately, this permits the formation of multiple identities as both Korean and American identities take shape within the lives of women of Korean descent, as they adopt multiple roles such as being a mother, a wife, a scholar, and a faculty member (Li, 2006; Yoon, Lee, Young, & Yoo, 2010).

Furthermore, Li (2006) and Yoon (2010) suggested that by forming multiple cultural identities, changes in values and attitudes can occur which can lead Korean and Korean American females to re-sculpt their identities by living in a dual cultural context in the US. Such experiences can be further studied through the stories of these women and could contribute to valuable ways to better evaluate the cultural standards and norms within their lives. More explicitly, understanding the interactions between the effects of the dominant culture, the women's native culture, and the ways of the academy can help identify aspects of challenges, successes, role gratification, and emerging of multiple identities (Park & Liao, 2000). In addition, the multiple roles they assume (e.g., such as being a mother, a wife, a scholar, and a faculty member) may reflect a differentiation of the self and racial identity (Gushue et al., 2013). Research suggests there is little knowledge about the backgrounds and experiences of minority faculty females who "are entering the male-dominated institutions of higher education in modestly increasing numbers" (Johnsrud, 1995).

As such, the problem is that in addition to the little knowledge we have regarding minority female faculty members, even less is known about the experiences of Korean and Korean American female faculty members. More importantly, how these women create or develop their own legitimate spaces and their identities within the academy is unfamiliar, as well. This literature review provides an overview of what scholars have already researched within the topics that surround females in the academy, minority females in the academy, and the small body of literature that contains the experiences of Asian American, Korean, and Korean American females in the academy. In addition, this literature review focuses on cultural expectations and social systems that are important

elements for these women and their identities (Yoon et al., 2010). Thus, the experiences of Korean and Korean American female faculty members in the academy who hold professional academic positions are at the center of how we can learn to recognize and better understand who they are and how they live their professional academic lives.

Diversity in U.S. Institutions

The notion of culture addresses its connection to diversity as it establishes the abilities to connect teachers and students at all levels within organizations to “educate children and adults who will in turn serve and lead their nation’s communities, schools, and societies in a diverse and multicultural environment by practicing their intellectual knowledge, skills, and commitments” (Chen & Yang, 2013, p. 3). Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey (2008) support multicultural and diversity in classrooms and campuses by stating that the cultural and personal positionalities of students and teachers greatly affect how “emotionality” can impact learning (p. 45). As such, they were critical of how Whites did not recognize their privilege as our diverse society continued to grow. The Western “cultural norms of individuality” (p. 46) devalue and diminish the evolving knowledge of others that continues to marginalize minority students and faculty. While all teachers are responsible for functioning in a changing world, many are not “experts in change processes” (Essed, 2000, p. 892). As well, educators and scholars from diverse backgrounds play important roles in bridging achievement gaps among minority students. Thus, engagement and learning can have a stronger effect for students when they are “comfortable in environments that include people with backgrounds and characteristics similar to theirs” (p. 4).

Faculty Diversity and Organizational Culture of the Academy

Allowing for diverse faculty members is a critical way for minority students to gain mentors who inspire them, motivate them, and function as role models (Chen & Yang, 2013). Specifically, with respect to Asian Americans in higher education faculty, the culture of the academy and its organizational structures were examined in Mella's (2012) study that explored whether the model minority myth prevented Asian Pacific American (APA) women from achieving leadership positions. In addition, she also evaluated whether APA female leaders who were presidents or chancellors discovered their notions of leadership despite the constraints of the minority model. Through these women's experiences, Mella established that societal barriers may interfere with APA females obtaining leadership positions in the higher education systems, and determined they were detrimental to opening doors for diverse faculty. For these reasons, many Asian American female faculty developed strong professorial/professional identities to survive (Loo & Ho, 2006). This is described as a way to better understand and thrive within the characteristics of U.S. society and the U.S. academy.

Greater efforts have been exerted to acquire and maintain a diverse student body, rather than pursuing diverse faculty (Lee, 2011). Literature about minority female faculty members suggests that if they are treated unfairly and not properly retained, minority students may infer that they will be treated the same (Nelson & Brammer, 2010). Within the academy, women and minority faculty are promoted slowly, and they are likely to achieve tenure less often than White men (Obeng-Darko, 2003). Essed (2000) raised concern for the lack of women of color faculty, and wrote that the academy needs them to be mentors as well as to "bring multiple life experiences to the classroom" (p. 891). The

culture of the academy enforces students who are accustomed to accepting dominant White norms; this culture may inadvertently support the traditional hierarchy of the field of academia (Li, 2006). Additionally, the impact of critically understanding the demographics of diversified faculty members can greatly enrich the student body and the campus as universities move forward to promote “critical thought and explore to new and diverse perspectives” that are now needed (Akombo, 2013, p. 5).

Race and Ethnicity in the Academy

To ensure faculty diversity, accepting the experiences and knowledge that minority faculty may bring are critical elements in recognizing the landscape of diversity in the US. (Adams, Solis, & McKendry, 2015). Gonzalez (1995) wrote that ethnic minority scholars should contribute to the new standard being created for cultural research. In creating their own “knowledge base” (Gonzalez, 1995, p. 113), ethnic researchers differ from majority researchers by: (a) associating with different philosophical frameworks; (b) having different research objectives, implications, and applications; (c) being motivated by different interests and experiences; and (d) having differing professional, academic, and personal identities. While more females of color have joined the academy, minority males still dominate and have a stronger presence in higher education (Harvey, 2003; Hune, 2006). In contrast, while many female faculty members have reported being “invisible or just marginalized” (Hune, 2006, p. 30), some minority women faculty have stated they are made “hypervisible” by being “paraded out for diversity events and being responsible for diversity matters” on campus (p. 30). Moreover, immigrant and international scholars are “likely to experience fragmentation, confusion, and ambivalences through their daily lives,” (Mayuzumi, 2011, p. 55),

experiencing discriminations which caused them to feel that their authority and credibility were under challenge.

Dei (2002) raised questions regarding what “indigenous knowledge” (p. 3) really meant for both the dominant and minority cultures, and attempted to place where indigenous knowledge rests within the academy. As for academic colonization, Dei conceptualized such knowledge as a way to “continually influence each other to show the dynamism of all knowledge systems” (p. 3). Today, we can attest to the “hybridity of knowledges” (p. 5) that exists to influence the different bodies of knowledges that need to be taught in the academy. As such, Dei proposed that the “...indigenous human condition is defined and shaped by dominant Euro-American cultures,” and emphasized that conventional and Western knowledges were repeatedly related to shaping current academic practices. hooks (1994), in relation to empowering African American females in the academy, noted that an equitable environment can only be created when we view education as a way to practice freedom and liberation. Both racial and ethnic differences within scholarly research and the professorate make space for faculty of color to expand and vocalize new epistemologies and ideas (Essed, 2000). As well, minority female scholars have “shifted frameworks while generating self-reflection on the part of White feminist scholars” (p. 891). As campuses seek to support and retain faculty of color, informal networking among colleagues (Fries-Britt & Kelly, 2005), and mentoring to collaborate with one another, they can establish “a new era of equality and diversity in the educational and social system” (Gonzalez, 1995, p. 123).

Lin, Kubota, Motha, Wang, and Wong (2006) understand that White females also play a big role in serving as “power brokers” within the “hierarchies of knowledge” (p.

60) in the field of education. The power of White women faculty is often evaluated by whether the “decentering of power” is challenged (p. 60). Lin et al. wrote that even White female faculty members feel threatened when their privilege is in question, and despite good intentions, some will aim to prevent female faculty of color from taking part in making decisions, having leadership roles, and teaching advanced courses because it will “threaten their [own] status in power” (p. 60). Even though women’s lives, much like men’s, are structured by social relations, discursive practices of gender and race are uniformly connected to the histories of colonialism and conquest (Lin et al., 2006).

Gender in the Academy

Admittance into the academy is defined by key players who perpetuate the culture of the academy and its members (Ewing, 1999), and the field of academia has long been considered to be the “domain of men” (Obeng-Darko, 2003, p. 4). The key players are often identified as faculty; hence, they not only generate and preserve knowledge, but they also “transmit academic values, model the roles of the professoriate, and provide practical assistance and advice to students” (Ewing, 1999, p. 11). General trends in higher education lead us to believe that women have increased their participation in, and contribution to, higher education, and despite men dominating full-time faculty positions, females are increasing as faculty (Hune, 2006). Gender influences, in many ways, have determined how women are socialized within the programs and departments on campus. While the academy has come a long way since the increase of women in the student body, Obeng-Darko (2003) explained that since the 1980s, women have become a greater presence in higher education as faculty and leaders. However, she explained that the general trend in academia allows for a small percentage of women faculty to rise in ranks

as tenured and/or full professors. Collins' (1993) study on women who received doctorates over the past 20 years determined that while the number of women who earned advanced degrees had been steadily rising, female faculty members have remained in lower ranks. Obeng-Darko (2003) posited that females were "more likely to be found in lower-status institutions with teaching missions than in high-status institutions with prominent research missions" (p. 10).

Ewing (1999) found that gender differences on a societal level distinguished how men and women are separated by: (a) power, (b) access to power, and (c) the potential to control resources that fund power. With regard to higher education, "considering that women are silenced culturally implies that researchers must make special effort to unfold their systems of meanings" (Ewing, 1999, p. 21). Gender inequity documented in the literature proposes that gender, along with scholarly achievements, plays a big role in salary, productivity, and job satisfaction (Obeng-Darko, 2003; Xu, 2012). As such, Xu (2012) revealed that the unresolved gender gaps in rank and position should take into consideration research productivity, career age, and family-related factors. In addition, female faculty experience the academy differently from their male colleagues. This may be because denial of reappointment, lack of promotion, or limited access to tenure could be seen as an "excuse" or "crutch" in regard to low scholarly productivity or poor teaching performance/evaluations (Winkler, 2000). Regardless, the "gendered divisions of labor" that distinguish "men's work" and "women's work" create institutionalization of organizational roles and certain tasks may be gendered-typed as masculine or feminine (Park, 1996, p. 47).

It is evident that many scholars have identified that female faculty invest more time in teaching and service, while male faculty devote more time to research and publications (Frechette, 2009; Lee, 2011; Park, 1996). Other scholars have reason to believe that gender differences in academia are a result of “self-selection” (Lee, 2011, p. 58). The patterns for self-selection reveal women may feel more comfortable with teaching and service because they are “more satisfied with interaction with people” (p. 58). Obeng-Darko (2003) explained that “lingering stereotypes” may be a barrier for women as well (p. 16). She stated that because men are portrayed as leaders and women are perceived as followers, this assumption may hinder women’s abilities to become faculty leaders and full/tenured professors. However, it may be that female faculty members may generate low-levels of research and publications because there are comparatively fewer women trained to conduct research and hold doctoral degrees (Lee, 2011).

In a modern sense, educated women have become active participants as professionals in the workforce and could be considered equal to men; however, cultural and social assumptions lead many to characterize women according to existing stereotypes (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Halpert-Zamir, 2010). For these reasons, the notion of equal worth remains debatable. Within the academy, social perceptions and gendered social codes have created many barriers for females related to their status and their roles in modern Western society (Frechette, 2009; Schatz-Oppenheimer & Halpert-Zamir, 2010). Consequently, for females to adopt powerful and confident behaviors goes against normativity, often resulting in intellectual and professional confidence being perceived as “selfish, ball-busting, [and] power hungry” (Frechette, 2009, p. 14).

Asian Female Faculty in the Academy

The academy needs minority and Asian female intellectuals to “challenge uncultural perspectives in predominantly White colleges and universities” (Essed, 2000, p. 891). According to Hune (2006), the “dominant order of Whiteness and maleness maintains the spaces of difference between its members and ‘others’ in order to ensure the continuation of their higher-ranked positions and privileges in society” (p. 17). Asian female faculty have been understudied, underrepresented, and unconsidered despite their contribution to the U.S. population (Hune, 2006; Mayuzumi, 2011). Hune (2006) established that multiple spaces are affected by incorporating gender in organizing the hierarchy in society: epistemology, knowledge, language, theory, and research methodologies. Essentially, gender is embedded through cultural values, education, and family. However, domination by men is a frequently accepted perception by Asian American females, who have been socialized to consent to their devaluation and unfair perceptions through existing gender and cultural stereotypes (Chow, 1987). Accordingly, Mayuzumi (2011) found that the stereotypical image that people on campus understood was that Asian female faculty must be “reserved, compliant, and nonthreatening in the eyes of the students” (p. 52). Furthermore, “being small and looking young” (p. 96) did not resonate with others as having “authority and knowledge” (p. 96). This intersection of race, gender, and age seemed to be deeply connected to positions of power and authority, and consequently, where issues with power are raised.

Adult Identity Development

Given that perception that faculty members can be categorized via race/ethnicity, gender, and culture, identity plays an integral part in associating how these intersecting

elements influence the development of an individual's identity. Personal identity refers to a "unique and distinct personality of an individual that changes through time depending on the events that happen" (Yelich Biniecki & Conceição, 2014, p. 40), and is linked to how the multiple contexts of adult learners impact their development (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Identity development is influenced not only by life experiences and events in a person's life, but also their connections with others and their community, along with their social settings and environments (Yelich Biniecki & Conceição, 2014). They stressed that identity should connect with development and experiences.

Specifically regarding Korean American identity development, Park's (2007) study demonstrated the construction of transnational identities of Korean-born women immigrants. Park explained that her participants' stories revealed "their unspoken understanding that belonging to a nation had layered definitions and that citizenship and national identities could mean different things in different situations" (p. 217). More importantly, she found that the complex and intricate ways of creating these multi-layered identities and moving between multiple communities resulted in "cognitive border crossings" (p. 201). A person's identity, therefore, cannot be "abandoned or subsumed by new identities," but instead, can be "woven together to become something new" (Yelich Biniecki & Conceição, 2014, p. 42). As such, a major component in adult identity development is that experiences build upon previous experiences and our understanding of those collective experiences and ourselves can change and continue to evolve as time goes on.

Cultural Influences on Identity Development

In general, the concept of culture loosely refers to “historically based values, beliefs, practices, symbols, meaning systems, languages, and artifacts” (Drayton, 2014). More specifically, culture is closely related to “orienting power in the construction of individual identity” as well (p. 18). Cultural logic, in relation to cultural identity, refers to how people use culturally meaningful ideas and values to process and represent their behaviors (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). As gender has influenced identity development, in many cases cultural influences have contributed vital inputs as well. Therefore, the existence and power of the dominant culture and the notion that identities become more complex as individuals distinguish membership outside of their heritage groups was an important theme to address throughout the provided literature (Dong, Gundlach, & Phillips, 2006; Drayton, 2014).

Cultural identity is described as identities “that form in relation to major structural features of society: ethnicity, gender, race, nationality, and sexual orientation” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 7). Based on research provided by deKoven (2011), the dominant culture understanding in the United States is a “multifaceted history of racial oppression,” (p. 155) and refers to, by standard, the experiences of White, middle-class, able-bodied, Christians. He emphasized that White students, as members of the dominant culture, often underestimate and misjudge the experiences of people of color, international students, immigrants, and minorities (Alfred, 2009; deKoven, 2011) because they have been socially conditioned to do so.

Cultural influences on identity development may begin with barriers that pose as cultural and language barriers. Often, these elements are viewed as a struggle to

assimilate by the dominant culture. Frequently, these barriers are used to unfairly judge those who are culturally-varied (Alfred, 2009). Examining identity recognizes that “socio-cultural issues are interwoven with individual feelings, thoughts, and fears” (Misco & Lee, 2012, p. 23) that allow people to behave a certain way either toward themselves or toward others. Typically, identity development regarding minority groups progresses in stages: (a) conformity and acceptance, (b) resistance, and, (c) reflection and integration (Gushue et al., 2013; Misco & Lee, 2012). Accordingly, Drayton (2014) explained that the negotiation of cultural identity stemmed from the process that combined gains, losses, and the exchange of one’s abilities to interpret the complex world around them. Because there is usually a great deal of pressure on assimilation, dominant cultural influences on minority/immigrant identity development force certain social expectations. These expectations of the dominant culture and the limitations of social institutions’ policies and practices are all parts of “cross-cultural contact” (p. 23). Moreover, the three stages provided by Gushue et al. (2013), and Misco and Lee (2012) support that “cultural retooling” (Drayton, 2014, p. 23) is a part of negotiating the experiences of being accepted, rejected, and adapting to different cultural contexts.

Race/Ethnicity Influences on Transnational Identity

Yelich Biniecki and Conceição (2014) suggested that ethnic identity composed of experiences influenced by perceptions regarding international and border-crossing issues foster transnational identity. They wrote that in many ways, both adult learning and development engage the transnational identity by using experiences as “building blocks” (p. 39) to process how individuals will perceive themselves in unique and meaningful ways. In regard to Park’s (2007) study on Korean-born women immigrants’ cultural and

transnational identities, she wrote that membership or a sense of belongingness in American society was highly coveted because of their race and ethnicity. She wrote that such evolving identities were “far from being locally confined” (p. 207). According to the research, transnational identities were “anchored in familial obligations” (p. 203) and structured within involvements in transnational communities for social mobility. Additionally, it was believed that adapting to American society would allow for some form of upward social mobilization. Patterns of transnational identity construction were embedded in traditions and other cultural contexts that required “hybridization” (p. 216) to ensure a pathway to acceptance by American society. It appeared that social constructions for personal identity were impacted by two important factors: citizenship, and national identity. Thus, it appeared that both the native and dominant cultures played important roles in the formation of identity, and that it was important to the women to link their “status markers” to their “mobilized identity” (p. 208).

While social mobility and status were essential parts in socially constructing a strong identity, Liu (2007) found, in her auto-ethnography, there were “considerable conflict and tension” (p. 109) outside of the usual social pressures while she was in graduate school. In her personal reflection, she confronted issues with her identity as a Chinese Canadian and suggested that her voice became more audible and her life more visible only after she learned to learn about herself. While the social parameters of cultural pressures and stereotyping existed for her, she discovered that females who sought out higher education and more occupational choices valued their social and personal development more. In addition, she revealed that the multiple roles of being a

mother, wife, and student proved to be a struggle when trying to negotiate the demands of pursuing an education and balancing domestic responsibilities.

Much like the multi-dimensional identities of the Korean-born female immigrants in Park's (2007) study, Liu's (2007) auto-ethnography illustrated that being "interculturally competent" played a big role in the process of "cultural adjustment" (p. 110) in the academy as a student. As she reflected on her race and ethnicity, she remembered the shock of being in a classroom where students led discussions and spoke before the professor. In China, her "culture and beliefs did not allow [her] to ask questions directly because it was considered both impolite and shameful" (p. 115). Before she understood the "goal of Western methodology...to promote an exchange of ideas and information between students" (p. 116), Liu found that her classmates were not interested in what she had to say because they did not have any knowledge about China or the Chinese culture. For Park (2007), the Korean female immigrants placed their identity practices on post-migration experiences and language learning; in essence, these identity practices became a "part of [the] women's survival strategies in the multiple communities which have become the contexts of their lives" (p. 216). In both cases, ways to cope with cultural difficulties impacted the ways in which the women viewed themselves. They compared cultural differences and adjusted their identities to fit in socially. For Liu (2007), however, cultural learning inside and outside of the classroom arose as essential parts of constructing her cultural identity. The cross-cultural transition and adjustment to Western teaching methodology allowed her to consider her lived experiences in challenging her personal and professional capabilities. As she listened to male and female students in class "loudly asserting their opinions," she "felt a sense of being pushed out of

the discussion” (p. 120). What she learned was that by expressing her “authentic voice,” (p. 120) the process of her identity development and self-protection was a part of overcoming limitations and responding to the changes within herself. All of the experiences expressed in Park’s (2007) and Liu’s (2007) studies revealed the importance of how society perceived the participants and how identities were formed in ways that were unexpected.

Bi-Cultural Influences on Identity

While gender, race, ethnicity, and culture contribute to the ways in which identities may be constructed, scholars have also taken into consideration the processes of immigration and one’s self-perspective in regard to identity development. As such, these identities can be seen as bi-cultural identities, which may often be developed by others, and the “others” as individuals become a “mirror which reflects both self and others in a way that can prevent understanding their true identities” (Misco & Lee, 2012, p. 23). In this sense, bi-culturalism relates to both collectivism and individualism, and bi-cultural competence becomes the “combination of knowledge, attitudes, and skills used to promote equal access and opportunities” (Drayton, 2014, p. 24). Literature regarding bi-cultural identity and the process of immigration has revealed that many individuals do not want to limit themselves or confine themselves to a singular culture (Park, 2005). However, the challenges that many face are the struggles of feeling rejected or unknown by the dominant culture, and these critical issues have posed as obstacles that have had consequences. While Dong et al. (2006) wrote that ethnic identity, cultural identity, national/transnational identity, and social identity are interrelated, Huh (2011) discussed bi-cultural identity explicitly as the hyphenated identity, or the in-between identity—an

identity that is yet to be known. Although bi-cultural individuals may “feel the unique pressure to navigate between two conflicting sides even though they identify with both sides,” (p. 356) this pressure may extend to feeling forced to choose one culture over another.

Stepney, Sanchez, and Handy (2014) suggested that people of multiple ethnic backgrounds “simultaneously navigate multiple ethnic identities and their related cultures and belief systems” (p. 1). Hence, the bi-cultural self could be defined as one who recognized two distinct cultures to be a part of (Huh, 2011). By blurring the lines between cultural identity and bi-cultural identity, in this aspect, we need to consider that an “individual’s integrated identifications with a particular race, gender, place, history, nationality, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and/or ethnicity” are key components (p. 356). Therefore, it may be perceived that bi-cultural identity is not necessarily bi/multi-racial—but may be related to bilingual natives who are “negotiating two cultures [as] an inherent way of living that directly feeds the essence of being” (Ung, 2013, p. 10). In essence, the bi-cultural individual, regarding the self, is situated in one’s identity that reinforces, enables, and supports adaptation for both immigrants and nonimmigrants who identify with more than one culture. As well, the bi-cultural identity is common among individuals who integrate themselves into the mainstream American culture while preserving their original cultural values (Dong et al., 2006).

Aside from the idealized perspectives of the Western culture’s context of stereotyping, both acceptance and rejection seemed to be a part of being “culturally colonized” (Ung, 2013, p. 238). In support of research by Dong et al. (2006) concerning views on bi-cultural identities and the self, Ung (2013) felt that those who accepted more

than one culture were “seen as a vehicle...for transporting dominant discourse and thought to communities that are foreign” (p. 11). As such, re-claiming one’s own identity by (Ung, 2013) acknowledging Eastern values of respect for tradition, humbleness, and “having few desires” (Dong et al., 2006, p. 71), and navigating between the Western values of individualism, competition, and ambition were issues that emerged within the literature for Asian Americans. In addition to changing and adapting values, “progressing” from the “old culture” to “cultural marginality, to adherence to American culture” (p. 71) appeared to be a common pathway by which individuals accepted and explored themselves based on their changing identities and culture.

As with many dual-culture individuals, bi-cultural identity refers to the assumption that immigrants and minorities “can maintain their unique cultural identity while adopting the host country’s values and ideals” (Dong et al., 2006, p. 63). The construction of bi-cultural identities may begin upon the moment of naturalization for some immigrants, and Park (2007) explained specifically that “Korean immigrants must relinquish their South Korean citizenship because South Korean government does not grant dual citizenship” (p. 214). Additionally, a sense of emotional loyalty is strong for naturalized Koreans even though they have officially become Americans (Park, 2007). Historically, South Korea has been considered to be a monoethnic country, and it is often understood that both ethnicity and nationality are “to be one” (p. 214). The females in Park’s study “unequivocally understood themselves as ‘Korean’” (p. 214), and she posited that the dimensions of culture could have become problematic when there was not a “perfect fit to describe their identities” (p. 215). For these women, being Korean meant an intentional oversight and forgetfulness of their American identities. It appeared

that by standard, “identifying with Korean ethnicity and not with a hyphenated identity reflected an awareness of their marginal status and cultural incompetence in the U.S. society” (Park, 2007, p. 215).

Asian/Asian American Influences on Identity

Asian American is a “racial category” (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010, p. 79) in the US that consists of 30 different ethnic groups and may also be composed of many more relating cultural groups as well. As a result of this broad racial category, Iwamoto and Liu wrote that there is often much confusion about Asian Americans, their individual cultures, and the problems that come with interchangeably using their race, culture, and ethnic identities to describe this population. Asian influences on Asian Americans’ identities begin with how cultural values impact their behaviors and perceptions. Despite efforts to dismantle the “model minority” stereotype, Xin (2004) explained that being “diligent, agreeable, flexible, modest, polite, soft spoken, and non-confrontational” (p. 161) continues to allow Asian Americans to be viewed as nonassertive and passive (Kawahara, Pal, & Chin, 2013). In addition, “Asian cultural values of compassion and having a genuine concern for others’ well-being” (p. 241) may contribute to keeping Asian Americans from being perceived as skilled leaders or assertive individuals. However, the most damaging perception is the way Asian females are portrayed as “victims of a patriarchal ‘traditional’ Asian culture” (Kawahara, 2000, p. 13).

Therefore, identity is heavily impacted by culture, cultural values, and cultural perceptions. Kawahara, Pal, and Chin (2013) noted that their Asian participants were “shifting and integrating” their identities, and eventually developed multiple identities to “negotiate aspects of themselves as an iterative process with their experiences, roles,

changes, and contexts that they found themselves in” (p. 244). For example, one respondent said that “stepping in and out of identities” (p. 244) was all about being willing to adapt between one’s Asian identity, school, and work. As such, “achieving authenticity” is continuously in limbo with struggling against the mono-cultural views set by society and the pressures of cultural conformity (Oliva, Rodriguez, Alanis, & Cerecer, 2013, p. 92). Regarding the role of cultural values, such as personal values, beliefs, and views on self-expression and feelings, the Asian culture remains at the center of Asian Americans’ identities and is considered to be a “multidimensional construct” (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010, p. 82).

In this sense, the “culturally authentic self” can only come to be as Asian Americans’ identities are meaningfully “managing the multiple and intersecting axes of culture, language, gender, and race within their lived experiences” (Oliva, Rodriguez, Alanis, & Cerecer, 2013, p. 99). Thus, mindfully recognizing that cultural spaces cannot be identified as a singular space containing a single culture, it is important to establish that Asian values influence Asian identity in many ways.

Gender Influences on Identity

Gender influences for females can be complex. Sykes (2014) noted that ethnic identity and gender influences could become more and more complicated as our society continues to grow more diverse. Thus, terms such as self-understanding and self-culture (Patton, 2001) helped to contextualize identity via the environments and surroundings (Sykes, 2014). For Liu (2007), combating cultural norms about her gender and what it meant to be a Chinese female with White male and female students affected how she participated in classroom discussions. Her “cross-cultural learning sojourn” (p. 119) led

to reflecting upon the socially and culturally prescribed (Kim & Merriam, 2010) images of gender, and therefore, perceptions of the Western culture impacted her emerging identity greatly.

It seemed that through Liu's (2007) auto-ethnography, many of the gender perceptions came down to how she viewed herself culturally first. The challenges and struggles appeared to be largely based on negative experiences and memories that questioned who she was as an individual. In the end, her successes were measured by the level of acceptance from her peers and colleagues. As with any major changes that go against the social norm, resistance has been part of coming into one's identity. Rejection and resistance are largely connected to challenging and possibly completely going against the majority culture (Misco & Lee, 2012). In this aspect, a sense of independence for individuals is a way of integrating "one's culture and dominant social values into one's own identity" (p. 23). Thus, cultural influences on identity development can range from challenging society's expectations, the multiple roles that contribute to a person's identity, and navigating the experiences of both acceptance and rejection within the dominant and native cultures (Alfred, 2009; deKoven, 2011; Drayton, 2014; Misco & Lee, 2012). As such, gender influences play a critical role in the ways in which we view the histories, traditions, and cultural struggles of individuals who are essentially ignored or discounted by those of the dominant culture because they are unaware of the cultural variances of the United States (Razfar, 2012). Hence, the reasons for further understanding these unspoken experiences can be an important way to recognize that identity development for many individuals can be influenced by both culture and one's gender.

Korean and Korean American Women's Influences on Identity

Historically, Confucianism “has been the dominant force that shapes Korean cultural values and establishes Korean social structures” (Louie, 2005, p. 176). While it was designed in the Choson Dynasty in 1392 to shape “human relationships,” loyalty for the parents, devotion for the “master” of the house, and “chastity for one man” became the pillars of tradition for women in Korea (Louie, 2005, p. 176). Under the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910), Korean women “were modestly educated in feminine morality and virtue upon Confucian doctrines that strictly limited their roles to the domestic household” (Kim & Rowe, 1997, p. 31). However, in modern-day South Korea, Korean and Korean American females with dual influences—the traditional and the contemporary—have been emerging as a result of higher education/advanced degrees, and identifying as those pulling away from the limiting restraints of tradition and cultural expectations (Yoon et al., 2010).

South Korea's extensive history of both colonial and neo-colonial domination and control supports Choi's (1998) argument that the perception of women is that they have been “doubly colonized” by “the colonizers and by men of the same race” (p. 14). As such, women are also “doubly oppressed” through national masculinity of the colonized nation (p. 14). A more contemporary South Korean society exists now due to increased independence in females, and a growing number of women in the Korean workforce which has caused many shifts to occur in women's identity development (Bernard & Park, 2010). Higher education is one reason for many Korean females' urge for independence, and with more education, women are more likely to “reject meanings traditionally associated with neo-Confucian motherhood” (p. 352). Choo (2013) along

with Bernard and Park (2010) attributed this dismissal of traditional gender roles to increased divorce rates, declining birthrates, and a delay in young females getting married. Perhaps this movement can be viewed as a protest to culture as Korean and Korean American women attempt to develop their sense of identities outside of these expectations.

In addition to the break from traditional gender roles, post-immigration to the US and subsequent cultural experiences of South Korean females can be used to identify Americanized gender roles, cultural belongingness, and the development of cultural and national identities for Korean female immigrants (Park, 2001). Based on these changes, Korean and Korean American women have become seemingly divided as the evolving self is influenced by multiple identities (Park & Liao, 2000). Furthermore, taking into consideration their lived experiences, these women have reportedly had mixed feelings about their commitment to both American and Korean cultures (Choo, 2013; Park & Liao, 2000). Therefore, the difficulties associated with going against traditional roles may have made some Korean and Korean American females feel that they were abandoning or neglecting their native culture (Park, 2005). As a result, the work-family conflict, along with the burdens of either abandoning or neglecting Confucian roles or values, these women's developing identities may be influenced by these changing notions.

Professional Identity Development

Professional identity development is the progression in which individuals in a workplace reach "an understanding of her or his profession in conjunction with her or his own self-concept, enabling the articulation of occupational role, philosophy, and

professional approach to people” (Healey & Hays, 2012). Additionally, professional identity affects engagement, participation, and behaviors in an individual’s work setting, and can determine a person’s level of confidence as well. Professional identity for females refers to how their identity is built “within the ever-changing context of professional relations that characterize the work world,” which includes the spaces of self-reliance, management, skills development, production, and competition (Cardu, 2007). In addition, females cannot escape the reality of identity-building because it is so closely connected with the retention of their professional skills and building networks. For women in gendered professions, their professional identity is a response to a male-dominated workplace that results in a sense of self and belonging within the workplace to be questioned (Hatmaker, 2013). Furthermore, a female’s professional identity represents how she sees herself within her professional environment, how she interacts with colleagues, subordinates, and superiors, and how she feels she is represented within her workplace (Cardu, 2007; Hatmaker, 2013; Healey & Hays, 2012).

Gender and Professional Identity

According to Hatmaker (2013), a woman’s professional identity is centered on “becoming an insider and gaining a sense of belonging in [her] circle of colleagues” (p. 383). Because gendered professions comply with the cultural and societal norms that exist regarding gender and the workplace, Hatmaker wrote that acceptance into this majority may be contingent upon how well-constructed a female’s identity is and how she may be perceived. Identity construction at work considers not only gender stereotypes, but also puts a great amount of pressure for females on the “value on being a man than a woman” (p. 383) in their professional working environments. Interpersonal

interactions and workplace gender beliefs are important components to consider about identity and one's culture. This may be because people are "agents of their identity" (p. 384) and they negotiate their identities through the personal interactions that they may have. Because females are seen as "'too female' to be professional or 'too professional' to be feminine," the tension between their professional and personal identities needs to be consciously managed (Pfaffman & McEwan, 2014, p. 202).

Accordingly, a woman's professional identity is complex and has potential for change with respect to the work environment she is in. Although gender affects their professional identities, knowing if these gender expectations are affected by her culture may influence her self-perceptions and professional obligations as well (Healey & Hays, 2012). Because of the social stereotypes that depict men as natural leaders, females' career choices may be limited by the variety of fields they have to choose from for work (Hatmaker, 2013; Healey & Hays, 2012). Hatmaker (2013) suggested that workplace or professional identities function as assimilation strategies for females who "position themselves as similar to men" or they "actively distance themselves from other women" (p. 385). For example, in her study with female engineers, she found that this traditionally male-dominated field made women feel that they had to go to extreme lengths to "prove themselves capable and competent" (p. 389). The women in the study felt that they were viewed as being a woman first rather than being an engineer. Many also felt that "imposed gendered expectations" (p. 390) left little room for the value of their technical competence since their professional identities were submerged into their identities as wives and mothers. In many ways, gender influences the ways in which masculine characteristics are favored in Western workplaces, and organizational structures support

the “Western gender norms” that prefer polite, feminine females (Pfaffman & McEwan, 2014, p. 203). Identity, therefore, becomes a way for women to manage and navigate the difficult terrain of gender influences in the workplace. Overall, it appears that the image women project at work often means a great deal in how others see their abilities and validate their work. However, role conflicts and issues with professional engagement remain at the crux of problems females face with developing their professional identities (Healey & Hays, 2012).

Minority Females and Professional Identity in the Academy

In the academy, racially underrepresented and minority female faculty are “dually burdened because of their race and gender [while] constructing a space in which they are doubly minoritized” because of both their race and gender (Chang, Welton, Martinez, & Cortez, 2013, p. 97). Among female academics, the U.S. Department of Education (2011) reported that White females represented 85% of full professors with 80% of them at the associate professor level, while non-White female faculty represented 13.5% of full professors with only 18% of them at the associate professor level. Chang et al. (2013) found that minority female faculty were “intellectually segregated” and separated from their colleagues because they were “marked” by their social positionalities, racial/ethnic/cultural identities, and their gender (p. 98). Likewise, their intellectual abilities and scholarly credentials were questioned when they needed to navigate their “academic space” as there were usually few academics around them who conducted research regarding social justice and equity issues (p. 98). Given that underrepresented female faculty were often “othered” by students because of distinguishing features, such

as hair and skin color, these women were also “othered” by colleagues as advising students and mentoring fell heavily on them as “mothering work” (p. 98).

For minority female faculty members, their professional identities relied heavily on how they were perceived as academics in their institutions. While generally, gender and their professional/academic identities were compared to those who were White males, minority female faculty appeared to be concerned with their White female colleagues as well (Chang et al., 2013). In addition to feeling “othered” by students and colleagues, participants in Chang et al.’s study “were frequently put in the position of having to verify that they deserved to be in academia” (p. 106). Much like Hatmaker’s (2013) participants who had to work harder to feel validated and accepted as female engineers, the strain of not feeling worthy was a constant reminder for the underrepresented female faculty with their “lack of power, status, and privilege” (Chang et al., 2013, p. 106). In addition, an underlying “cultural climate” (Morley, 2014, p. 121) remained an important concern regarding organizational culture and cultural gender norms. Identifying the cultural component in these gendered perceptions brought upon an understanding that power was a “contested term...[that was] emotive and value laden” for minority faculty (Burke, Cropper, & Harrison, 2000, p. 301).

Along with gendered and cultural differences, identifying the notion of power within the academy appeared to be critical for better understanding how professional identities were constructed. The concept of power, as defined by Black feminist scholars, is referred to as a way to “make sense of the public world as well as explore the private world of family, groups, and communities” (Burke et al., 2000, p. 301). In essence, the social and cultural oppressions that minority faculty feel rest on the institutionalized

oppression that uses social divisions to dictate positions of both power and powerlessness (Burke et al., 2000; Chang et al., 2013). Similarly, racially underrepresented female faculty may develop their professional identities as a strategy or coping mechanism to survive and thrive in the academy (Chang et al., 2013). These “navigational strategies were self-taught” through experiences within the classrooms and beyond, and became a valuable tool in “establishing themselves and creating a space for their multifaceted identities, including their academic identity” (p. 112).

Asian American Females and Professional Identity

Within the body of literature regarding Asian American female scholars in the academy, it has been identified that many minority female scholars have indicated that as “newcomers in academia,” many challenges and barriers are faced (Li, 2006, p. 118). Although the broad notion of identity development can be linked to how race, ethnicity, and gender can profoundly impact identities, the significance of culture has continued to play an important role within this organization of literature. Addressing the negative aspects of how stereotyping can affect these spaces has been a theme in studying females, minority/immigrant females, Asian American females, and females of Korean descent as well. Li (2006) has brought to attention that language, race, and gender are “socialized into different discourse” (p. 119), and Holland et al. (1998) posited that an individual’s cultural background directly correlates with two ideal types of the self: the “Western” concept that leans towards autonomous, abstract, and independent; and, the “non-Western” notion that both socially defined and context-dependent (p. 21). Historically, both Asian and Asian American females have been exoticized by American popular culture and the dominant society (Mella, 2012; Shrake, 2006). Along with the media and

social expectations of the dominant culture, American media has associated Asian and Asian American females as the “lotus blossom,” resulting in a racialized sexual image that underestimates their humanity and intellectual abilities (Shrake, 2006, p. 187).

As a result of these issues, professional identity development for Asian American females can begin with cultural assumptions and societal expectations that halt professional ambitions. For example, some people view them as the “dragon lady, being too strong...” (Wilking, 2001, p. 80). In contrast, others assume that they are considered “too young” and “too pretty” to be the dean or have a position of authority (p. 81). In addition, familial obligations and traditional expectations can affect professional responsibilities, since “...in our culture family is heavy on the woman” (p. 108). Because many female faculty of ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds are perceived to be different, these differences are “often equated with intellectual and cultural deviation or deficiency by both colleagues and students” (Shrake, 2006, p. 178).

Stereotyping in the academy is connected to racism, sexism, and ageism—which have all contributed to discounting Asian and Asian American females’ academic credibility and intellectual authority (Mayuzumi, 2011; Mella, 2012). Thus, their professional identities can be influenced by these kinds of discrimination. Professionally speaking, coping strategies are essential to avoid stress and other emotional tolls, and masking can become a strategy used to disguise the difficulties that impact females based on racial and gender statuses (Shrake, 2006). In this sense, masking is related to a behavior that is common in individuals who want to show how they camouflage themselves to others around them. It is not only an act of defense, but is also a public disguise that is deeply affected by an individual’s minority status in the academy.

Particularly for women of color, the process of masking can assist in avoiding unpleasant challenges and can be used to “present a face” (p. 179) that is more acceptable to the dominant public. While this can be perceived as both an act of subordination and insubordination, it is also the “site of (re)negotiation for...racial and gender status” (p. 179). Furthermore, Asian female faculty members experience feelings of powerlessness in the classrooms—such as speaking with an accent and receiving negative responses in the classrooms and poor evaluations from students (Mayuzumi, 2011). For many of them, “speaking English with an accent was perceived negatively and was associated with their academic/teaching incompetency” (Mayuzumi, 2011, p. 52). In these cases, English is a colonial language that encompasses “cultural imperialism that suggests one is worthy of being heard only if one speaks in standard English” (hooks, 1994, p. 174). The “colonial assumptions and implications about how one looks and how one speaks are intertwined in the faculty member’s case implying their (il)legitimacy” (Mayuzumi, 2011, p. 53). Given that the issues of power and powerlessness have been associated with the “appearance and physical space” (p. 53) of culturally diverse women faculty, these negative experiences have impacted professional identity.

In this sense, professional identity development for Asian American faculty may be less apparent than other minority female faculty because of socio-cultural practices and gendered belief systems that can function as barriers for women’s progress (Morley, 2014). A Chinese participant in Morley’s study stated that “educated women fell outside traditional norms,” and that educated women could be the “third sex because she transgressed cultural and age-appropriate norms” (p. 123). Because there are strong cultural biases toward women with a PhD, the participant noted that pursuing “higher

degrees [meant] that you [did] not have virtue,” thus educated females were classified as a “third gender” (p. 123). Additionally, a Japanese participant referred to educated women as “unmarriageable” and that it was less risky to be conventional (p. 123). For these reasons, if Asian American females make it to the academy, they are there with negative cultural assumptions attached to their existing identities. Playing the role and looking the part of the professor create frustration due to being “marked through [their] gender and race” (Chang et al., 2013, p. 107).

As professional members of their discipline, the expectation of recognizing their multiple roles of being a mentor, faculty member, woman, wife, mother, etc., may contribute to establishing some form of upward mobilization within the academic workplace (Li, 2006; Loo & Ho, 2006). As such, Asian American female faculty often “enact different social identities [to] make sense of [their] experiences” (Li, 2006, p. 125). The discourse of “dual cultural frames in gender roles” (p. 125) occurs because “academia becomes a highly contested terrain” (p. 126). This terrain can reflect that generally individuals from other ethnic and racial groups may unintentionally support the White male structure since this is the working environment that they are used to.

Korean and Korean American Female Faculty Members and Professional Identity

As with perceptions of educated Asian American females, Korean and Korean American females who lead professional/academic lives are seen as threatening and unnecessary based on traditional cultural standards (Park & Liao, 2000). Choi (1998) demonstrated that gendered relations were represented through the “metropolitan Self” of the West, and the “colonized Other” of the “primitive” East, and that these representations affect the professional identities of Korean and Korean American women

(p. 14). In many ways, the image of postcolonial South Korea contradicts traditional Eastern thoughts, and has created a sense of equality and nationalism that may threaten male authority. Choi (1998) found that Korean male nationalists turned “misogynic eyes to educated women” (p. 25) they believed these women could “challenge traditional patriarchal authority” and could be led to “American culture...to collaborate with dominating foreign forces” (p. 25). Along with White/Western models of masculinity, traditional Korean patriarchy is culturally-situated and is a major part of Korean cultural identity. Kim (2006) explained that “managing women’s otherness” (p. 72) is a sign of recognizing that South Korean patriarchy is resilient even in contemporary times.

Gender roles, ultimately, continue to be a critical aspect regarding these women and their identities. By professional standards, Park’s (2007) participants revealed that maintaining multi-dimensional identities became a significant tactic to avoid feeling like they were in a “lower class,” yet feeling like they were “intellectually...as good as any American” in the workplace (p. 208). Gaining “social prestige” (p. 208) was ultimately a major factor in maintaining their identities in front of Americans, especially at work. Additionally, the age-hierarchy and gender-hierarchy in Korea results in teachers and elders having more power and authority than students and the younger generation (Kim & Merriam, 2010). Therefore, Korean and Korean American females’ professional identities may be on hold during this evolution process until they feel it is appropriate to emerge, and for this reason, it is difficult to locate specifically how they manage their professional identities. In fact, a part of the silence with this population may be connected to not having a space in which these identities can emerge.

Korean and Korean American Females' Experiences in the Academy

South Korea's rights, by law and policy measures, have fostered the cultural and traditional norms that limit women's professional, personal, and academic opportunities (Choo, 2013). Education for females has been evolving for some time now, and Ahn (2014) found that there has been an increase in higher education for South Korean female students. Given that the movement towards female independence has begun with education and training for women, the strict roles and obligations for men and women have been slowly changing as well (Johnsrud, 1995). In July 1947, education for women in South Korea gained momentum under the Principle of Equal Opportunity of Education (Ahn, 2014). Ahn found that while other developed countries enjoyed a 9% increase in female participation in the labor market during the late 1970s to late 1980s, Korea estimated only a 1.1% increase based on education/degree attainment. In addition, he found that as women were steadily receiving higher education into the 1990s, "society became more aware of the gap between education achievement and labor participation of women" (p. 61).

As of 2010, Ahn (2014) found that South Korean females received 49.4% of all bachelor's degrees and 49.1% of master's degrees in South Korea. Women earned 31% of doctorates, with 5.5% of them attending graduate school compared to 7.1% of men. In South Korea, Ahn (2014) also revealed that females with doctorates "rose steadily from 9.8% in 1990, to 23.6% in 2000, 28.6% in 2005, 35.8% in 2010, and to 40.4% in 2011" (p. 63), and since 2005, South Korean females were studying abroad to earn their doctorates as well. This meant that women "accounted for 40.4% of all overseas doctoral degrees in 2011," making a leap from just 9.8% in 1990 (p. 63). Moreover, South Korean

females now make up around 30% of new doctorates. Ahn understood this phenomenon in two ways: first, South Korean women were investing in international experiences and degrees because it “can raise the chances of becoming a professor,” and second, South Korean women were looking to study abroad because they wanted to “increase their value as the number of Ph.D.’s rises” (p. 63).

Ahn’s (2014) research indicated that while 2,481 doctorate degrees were awarded in 1990, the number jumped to 10,542 by 2010 for men and women. As for domestic female doctorate holders, their journey into the job market was “not as smooth as that of men,” which posed a major problem since women doctorate holders were being under-utilized in South Korea (p. 59). In addition to job challenges for females, Ahn revealed that they also had a hard time finding professor positions; and, with limited options despite a doctorate degree, they took on more non-tenure and part-time jobs than men. Because of patriarchal gender norms and beliefs within the Korean culture, females who were professors or in higher education were viewed as challenging traditional gender roles at home and being neglectful of gender-specific duties (Lim, 1997).

As a result, the South Korean government enacted “correct labor market conditions” (Ahn, 2014, p. 61) such as The Law for Nurturing and Supporting Female Scientists in 2001, Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), Women in Engineering (WIE), and The Women Employment Quota System from 2003-2007. In 2003, The Female Professor Quota System was established to “increase the number of women in the management positions such as principals, vice-principals, and professors” (Ahn, 2014, p. 61). However, despite these measures, the gender imbalances within the labor market persisted, largely due to the “long-lasting perception that housework is the women’s

responsibility” (p. 62). As such, it appeared that gender roles and professional identity contributed greatly to cultural identity, as female professors in Korea are continuously seen as a privileged and fortunate group with a position that can defy male authority and the traditional familial structure (Park & Liao, 2000). And, while the concentration of female doctorate holders is on the rise, their difficulty in finding jobs, especially at the professor-level, forced women to seek part-time lecturer or non-tenure track positions due to job security (Ahn, 2014).

Ahn (2014) found that 43.2% of newly hired South Korean female professors were in non-tenure positions, while 38% of males were in non-tenure positions in South Korea. Because of these issues for women doctorate holders in South Korea, some of these women may have immigrated to the US to find jobs as faculty in the American academy. In 2005, Ahn found that there was an increasing number of women who were earning their PhD’s overseas. Women accounted for 40.4% of all international doctorate degrees in 2011, and he concluded his study by acknowledging that women were willingly investing in their international degrees. Immigrant women may be pursuing their education in the US for these reasons as well. While American-born Korean American females who are in the U.S. academy, along with those who have immigrated, may be likely to have unique experiences in the U.S. academy based on their historical, political, and certainly Korean cultural influences. According to Park and Liao (2000), married Korean and Korean American female professors in the US reported a “role strain” (p. 573) when it came to combining academic work and family; and, all associated these difficulties with the expectation of fulfilling cultural gender roles in addition to their scholarly obligations. They hypothesized that career role strains were inevitable

when multiple roles are expected, and described women's multiple roles to consist of being a worker, mother, and partner. The burden of housework, childcare, and family development make balancing doctoral coursework, dissertation writing, and/or attending to projects and conferences difficult for women doctoral students (Ahn, 2014). Female professors, both in South Korea and the US, specifically married ones, feared that they had to "choose between overworking themselves or giving up a part of their life as a woman and [end] up marginalized as single or childless" (p. 73). However, Park and Liao (2000) found that the multiple roles of women professors and their professional identities who were married "tend to be salient simultaneously, whereas men's roles operate sequentially" (p. 572).

Although contemporary Korean society both in South Korea and the US has loosened its grip on restrictive cultural and traditional practices, married women professors have endured stress due to the inadequate amount of time they have to manage their multiple roles/identities (Park & Liao, 2000). Role conflicts for these women center on managing their personal and emotional "conflicts as to whether or not to obey the traditional role expectations" (p. 572). Additionally, Korean and Korean American female faculty indicated that while their workload and teaching requirements may be equal to their male colleagues, women "asserted that [they] must work harder than their male colleagues to be successful" (Johnsrud, 1995, p. 29). With family responsibilities, the cultural component with gender roles was distinct when it came down to household obligations. Females were central to household roles, while "male supremacy" was largely set up to be keep "distance from family life...[leaving] women in charge of the household" (p. 31). Nonetheless, the findings in Park and Liao's (2000) study suggested

that married female professors, as a whole, experienced a “greater degree of role gratification and role strain than did the group of housewives” and a boost in professional identity (p. 573). Unsurprisingly, Park and Liao’s study also supported international academic experiences, travel, and exposure to the Western culture, which created optimistic results concerning role gratification among women professors. Ahn (2014) explained that women do not received career guidance as much as men in graduate school, and felt that the lack of mentoring and not knowing how to manage their careers after graduation were overlooked issues. Also, he feared that professors had “lower expectations of female students undertaking the doctorate courses,” since Korea’s patriarchal system “continues to encourage beliefs that men are the breadwinners and women are the caregivers in a household” (p. 71).

In conclusion, the literature suggests a variety of elements. Much like the studies surrounding the notion that minority faculty reflect lower numbers in tenure, tenure-track, and full professor positions, the research also suggests that underrepresented minority women faculty are indeed invisible (Frechette, 2009; Johnsrud, 1995; Mayuzumi, 2011; Schatz-Oppenheimer & Halpert-Zamir, 2010; Winkler, 2000). In addition, gender roles, family obligations, and feelings of belongingness impact the ways in which Korean and Korean American females not only navigate their professional spaces, but find their places within the academy as well (Ahn, 2014; Johnsrud, 1995; Park & Liao, 2000). Despite Korean females’ gains and achievements in education and degree attainment, obstacles for them as a doctorate degree holders continue to present major barriers in their professional and personal lives (Ahn, 2014).

II. METHODS AND OVERALL STUDY DESIGN

Epistemological Position: Social Constructionism

My epistemological position is rooted in social constructionism, which centers on the idea that knowledge and meaningful reality are “contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). In essence, this practice is developed and distributed within a social context, suggesting that “meaning is not discovered but constructed” within our individual worlds (p. 42). Gibbs (2007) understands social constructionism as examining both the social and cultural worlds to create unique meanings developed through human interactions and socially constructed experiences.

From the constructionist point of view, I believe that the world is capable of being open to interpretation; more importantly, individuals have the ability to accept the world in the ways they experience it, which allows people to construct their own meanings and truths. Crotty (1998) proposes that “human being means being-in-the-world” (p. 45), and that both imaginativeness and creativity allow for “re-vision” and “spirit of openness” (p. 51). This dissertation is framed within social constructionism to allow for interpretations and meanings to develop, as participants engage with their worlds to make sense of their own feelings of belonging. In addition, Crotty stated that constructionists believe that “all reality, as meaningful reality, is socially constructed” (p. 54). Therefore, I believe that it is important to focus on understanding and analyzing the participants’ socially constructed meaningful realities to better understand the lives of the female professors of Korean descent and their experiences.

Conceptual Framework

I employed two theories in framing the study: first, the Eurocentric model, which has dominated the field of higher education; and the transnational framework which supports the significance of social structures within colonialism and nationalism (Mayuzumi, 2008). I used positionality and transnational feminism to focus attention on the multiple ways in which women can identify across the roles and interactions in their lives, and the relationships between power, culture, gender, and scholarship in women's lives in the academy, as knowledge is produced within U.S. academia and distributed across national borders (Fernandes, 2013). This study aims to take a closer look at the unique voices of female faculty members of Korean descent and their transnational positionalities, as well as their professional, academic, and scholarly contributions to the Western academy and the U.S. society.

Positionality

In understanding transnational feminism, a discussion of positionality is first warranted. Positionality theory emerged from postmodern feminist theory and "claims that individuals have a position that impacts how they socially construct the world" (Kezar & Lester, 2010, p. 166). It is considered to be a constellation of race, class, sexual orientation, nationality, and gender (Harley, Jolivette, McCormick, & Tice, 2002), and categorizes the "social value that is assigned to individuals according to various components," (p. 216) such as their beliefs, cultures, concepts, traditions, and other elements that are classified as social practice. Positionality theory posits that fixed identities do not exist, and that people develop an understanding within their lives by uniquely experiencing the world (Takacs, 2002). Therefore, this theory stresses the value

of the constellation of positionalities that “legitimizes either indignities or privileges” (Harley et al., 2002, p. 216). Kezar and Lester (2010) explain that because identities are both complex and fluid, it is almost certain that race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and nationality must intersect. This intersection suggests that identity is influenced by historical and social changes. Therefore, positionality theory encompasses not only the complexities of a person’s unique experiences, but also focuses on the “dynamism of social life and the fluidity of identity” (p. 166).

Feminism

Feminism argues against speaking with one voice that represents the world and its experiences as defined by patriarchy (Crotty, 1998). The “feminine consciousness” is a way to integrate selfhood, knowledge, and language that is not mediated and articulated by men (Crotty, 1998, p. 161). As well, a current force behind feminist research can be “oriented toward identifying new sites of cross-border phenomena” (Fernandes, 2013, p. 112). Feminist research intersects with postmodern, postcolonial, and post-structural critiques as a “challenge to the injustices of current society” (Creswell, 2013, p. 29). The goals for feminist research are to establish collaborative relationships that are non-exploitative in nature, and to place the researcher within the study to produce research that is transformative (Creswell, 2013), while keeping identity and culture intact.

Transnational Feminism

Transnational feminism requires including both global and international feminisms to embody a paradigm that aims go beyond the “territorial boundaries” of the US (Fernandes, 2013, p. 10). In viewing the varying contexts across borders, nations, and the world, transnational feminism looks at the interrelationships among women and how

they perceive problems that occur via differing experiences which transpire in diverse places. Furthermore, transnationalism “captures particular kinds of processes and a perspective on the world that is embedded within relationships of power” (p. 10). Thus, the distribution of transnational knowledges is a response to the “multilayered ways” (p. 10) in which power shapes knowledge production, inequalities, and the complex systems of patriarchy.

As such, positionality theory and transnational feminist frameworks helped me to address the experiences and stories of women faculty members of Korean descent, and assisted me in navigating the different realities regarding their histories: language, race, gender, culture, sexuality, tradition, citizenship, identity, academic/professional expectations, personal, and family values. Accordingly, place, history, and culture are ways to understand the social, political, and cultural norms associated with power dynamics (Fernandes, 2013). Because an individual’s multiple positionalities and identities can be acknowledged through positionality theory, it is important to note that this theory delivers the “theoretical underpinnings for creating an...environment that acknowledges and accepts diverse [cultural] beliefs” (Kezar & Lester, 2010, p. 165). In essence, identity is “constantly being reproduced through a process of social construction,” and an individual’s experiences are a “manifestation of [her] multiple and complex identities” (Kezar & Lester, 2010, p. 166). By using positionality theory and transnational feminist frameworks, the experiences of women faculty members of Korean descent can be further explored by interpreting who they are and what the effects of their positioning reveals.

Cultural Narratives

Cultural narratives offered a conceptual means by which to engage the use of these two theories in this study. While individuals all have narratives that encompass their lives, characterizing these stories as personal and professional offers nuanced understandings of the ways in which the participants incorporate meanings across their lives that are culturally-related. Additionally, cultural narratives are used to demonstrate how an individual's internalized cultural beliefs, traditions, lifestyles, upbringing, and culturally-prescribed gender roles have consequences or benefits (Yuen, 2008) regarding assimilation, rejection, and/or acceptance into mainstream U.S. society. Participants spoke about experiences that specifically allowed them to engage with cultural lessons that were learned—therefore, it was important that culture and positionality remained a strong factor in capturing personal narratives. Experiences regarding cultural/language barriers, stories of assimilation/immigration, and examples of understanding oneself through the eyes of one's culture(s) and other cultures allowed for these stories to have a deeper connection to the individual who identified with more than one culture. This meant that these cultural stories were deeply rooted in heritage culture or home/native countries.

Researchers understand that “stories imitate life and present an inner reality to the outside world” that can be understood and interpreted in multiple and contradicting ways (Lieblich, Tubal-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 7). The examination of text is at the center of understanding sequence and coherence (Linde, 1993), and since Asian Americans negotiate their experiences within their host and home cultures (Wang, Koh, & Song, 2014), their cultural narratives were used to analyze and understand their developing

identities. In this sense, host culture stands for the dominant U.S. culture because it is a culture that is often still foreign or unknown to minorities and immigrants; home culture, then, is that which is common to one's native homeland and can be described as a place from which one has originated. In this study, professional narratives refer to stories related to professional/academic experiences within the work field, in this case, Western academia. Specifically, this was an opportunity for those who "ha[d] been traditionally underrepresented, marginalized, and disenfranchised in higher education...an opportunity to tell their personal stories...to challenge and question the dominant white, male, Western research ethos in the university" (Nash, 2004, p. 3).

Professional narratives can reveal experiences with students, fellow faculty/colleagues, and workplace politics that may have had a personal impact on an individual. As a result, these narratives were elicited to discover what the workplace was like for them, what their experiences have been so far, and what personal strategies were used to better understand and work in the environment in which they found themselves. From a professional standpoint, these narratives were understood as a way to recognize, with a degree of confidence, that they justly matter. These professional narratives entailed work relationships, identifying as a scholar, and the challenges and successes that came with working as a faculty member. The ways in which these elements intersected with the participants' personal cultural narratives became an important way of identifying how my respondents' cultural experiences impacted their professional identities.

For the purpose of specifically understanding how female faculty members of Korean descent in the academy develop their identities, narrative inquiry via storytelling was used as the research strategy. The process of using narrative as an analytic tool to

understand experience has been limited in regards to the Asian American population (Wang et al., 2014). Through this qualitative study, rich data were collected from the participants to discover not only how female faculty members of Korean descent identified, but how they expressed their experiences through forms of narrative to define their experiences (Hattatoglu & Yakushko, 2014). The narrative method uses self-narrated lived experiences in order to find meanings and roles in one's life (Yoon & Park, 2012).

Research Problem

Currently, research exists about female faculty and minority female faculty members, however little is known about Korean and Korean American females and females of Korean descent in the U.S academy, despite the emerging literature about Asian Americans in this setting. Studies that do currently exist, however, indicate that identities are potentially evolving for females because they are developing knowledge about who they are and are gaining a sense of independence and professional mobility (Choo, 2013; Li, 2011; Park & Liao, 2000. Additionally, we need to know more about how female faculty members of Korean descent create or develop their own legitimate spaces and their identities within the academy.

There is a need to increase diversity in faculty membership and to support this diverse population through understandings of unique experiences as minority faculty members. This study, therefore, will focus on how female faculty members of Korean descent make meaning within their professional, personal, and cultural lives as a way to support their success as faculty in U.S. campuses. Presently, we do not know enough about their professional experiences to support them adequately, and ensure success for

females of Korean descent in the professorate. Determining how they create or develop their own legitimate spaces and their identities within the academy can be important factors to develop our understanding of their unique position. The issues to be explored in this study are what the motivations and personal/professional desires are, what the contradictions with the self and culture are, and to determine what the coping strategies within their academic lives are. Furthermore, the primary problem is that there is more to be learned about how female professors of Korean descent create or develop their spaces and their identities within the U.S. academy.

Research Questions

This dissertation will examine two central questions:

- 1.) In what ways do the notions of identity and positionality influence female faculty members of Korean descent and their experiences in the U.S. academy?
- 2.) How do these women navigate Korean and U.S. cultural systems present in their personal and professional lives?

Research Design

The design for this study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is grounded in understanding not only the experiences of the participants, but also meanings they construct from their experiences, values, and cultures as well (Hattatoglu & Yakushko, 2014). Kim and Green (2012) suggest that along with the existing literature, the researcher's interest in a particular phenomenon and the significance of the research problem define the study. The qualitative method that was used in this study was narrative analysis, or narratology.

Narrative Inquiry

Humans, by nature, are storytellers—thus, storytelling has played an important role in our ability to communicate with others. Ambiguous representations exist because there are no singular or universal meanings for an individual's story; these representations stem from experiences that include reflecting, remembering, observing, and understanding (Reissman, 1993). Yuen (2008) defined narratives as “both a mode of representation and a mode of reasoning, shaping our perceptions of ourselves and impacting our lives, culture and society in general” (p. 298). In this sense, narratives in this study were elicited to learn more about how participants internalized cultural beliefs and gender roles and how these processes had consequences regarding assimilation. Reissman (1993) suggested that the creation and the development of any work “bears the mark of a person who created it,” and that interpretation is expected since narratives are depictions of constructed pasts, actions, and identities (p. v). She noted that by locating oneself within the construction of the work, it is the “story metaphor” that reveals the order and context of the work presented (p. 1). Therefore, narrative analysis is the investigation of a story and the evaluation of real-life issues that were restored using real-life measures, and referred to the embodied-self birthed from disordered experiences (Lieblich et al., 1998; Reissman, 1993).

Patton (2001) wrote that narratology extended beyond the traditional qualitative method of including in-depth interview transcripts, personal narratives, and historical memoirs as forms of rich data. Narrative methodologies require the act of sharing through personal storytelling; its unique ability to uncover an individual's life-meanings, such as one's needs and goals through the process of meaning making, can reveal that a

participant's cultural identity is an important part of cultural narrative inquiry (Wang et al., 2014). Chase (1996) expressed that narrative research acknowledges both the vulnerability of the participants and the researchers' interpretive power. Narrative research is linked to the understanding that participants' stories are inter-woven through both their social and personal lives and experiences, thus human beings have an innate need to narrate, share, and interpret (Robert, 2014). Furthermore, narrative researchers have come to recognize that probing and further investigating the ways in which our participants "story the world" adds to how meaning is created and shared among the participants, the researchers, and the readers of the study (Mishler, 1995, p. 117). Interpretive authority requires the narrative to change ownership (Chase, 1996). As such, determining who is in charge of the interpretive process is important for the goal of the research. In many ways, giving voice to the participants is a major part of the interpretive authority (Chase, 1996; Josselson, 2004), while distinguishing between a faithful representation of the participants' experiences and the interpretations of the researcher.

Taking into consideration one's interpretative authority and power is significant and must be something that a researcher can both claim and own. In this sense, the interpretive authority is a way for the researcher to maintain her interpretations and writing through methodological decisions she has made for the analysis (Chase, 1996; Reissman, 1993). By identifying how female faculty members of Korean descent perceived their own selves from their narrated stories, we learned how identity was then constructed through narrative reflections via the cultural and personal experiences (Wang et al., 2014). Through narratives, the participants were able to use examples, stories, and memories to present a clear understanding of their experiences through their own cultural

contexts and systems. In examining the lived experiences of female faculty members of Korean descent who are in the academy, data were accessed and collected via personal cultural narratives and professional narratives.

Participants

Feminist research involves “women’s diverse situations and the institutions that frame those situations” (Creswell, 2013, p. 29). Not only does feminist research allow researchers to “see gender” as a way to organize what shapes and conditions females’ lives, but it also highlights the issues that feminist researchers challenge that are related to the “centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness” (p. 29). Therefore, I found 6 participants for this study who identified as female, and who were faculty members at the tenured and tenure-track levels (See Appendix A for Participant Information Sheet). They also identified as Korean or Korean American, and were of immigrant status, permanent residents, or Korean citizens. One participant was an American-born citizen.

The sample size was context-dependent (Mayuzumi, 2011). Merriam (1998) suggested that sample size depends on “the questions being asked, the data being gathered, the analysis in progress, the resources...to support the study” (p. 64). In addition, this acknowledged that, there is in fact, an underrepresented population of female faculty members of Korean descent in U.S. academia. Patton (2001) stated that “qualitative inquiry seems to work best for people with a high tolerance for ambiguity...[and perhaps] nowhere is this ambiguity clearer than in the matter of sample size” (p. 242-243). Since “the sample [was] illustrative not definitive” (Patton, 1990, p. 173), this allowed me to “describe some particular subgroup in depth,” by eliciting in-

depth information about this sub-group (p. 173). My intention was to achieve data saturation, where my “data set [was] complete” (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013, p. 11). Hence, saturation was obtained when I gathered data “to the point of diminishing returns, when nothing new [was] being added” (p. 11).

Participants were recruited through a process of searching through faculty websites and online resources at various institutions within the US. First, I began by exploring universities in the Southwest, and then I searched for faculty members by departments and on-campus Asian American organizations. A spreadsheet was created to organize potential recruits, and included their Korean names, and faculty e-mail addresses. Participants were identified via purposeful sampling, since ethnic/racial identification was an essential part of this study. Individuals selected for this study were chosen because “they [could] purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). To locate the participants, I looked for faculty who fit my participant criteria using various university and college campus websites. I prepared for potential difficulties in finding participants, and relied upon snowball sampling. Snowball sampling identifies information or groups “from people who know people” (Creswell, 2013, p. 158). Access and rapport was also a crucial part of this narrative study. I sought recommendations from professors with whom I worked or studied, and after IRB approval, I generated an e-mail that was sent out to recruit participants.

Through this process, I gathered 59 names and e-mail addresses from faculty information provided on campus websites. Of the 59 possible participants, 47 e-mails were sent out because some faculty members did not have their e-mail addresses

available online. For these 12 potential respondents, I contacted their offices by phone and left a message. The initial email included an information sheet and background regarding the study. The first three responses from potential candidates happened within the first few hours of the recruitment process; however, many faculty members responded solely out of curiosity without intention of participation. Initially, 14 female faculty members agreed to participate in the study. Subsequently, I selected participants based on their availability, since many of them had travel arrangements or conflicting schedules between March and August of 2015. Because the interviews were mainly taking place over the summer months, I selected the first six participants who were able to confirm their first interview dates. The final study sample was comprised of those who could commit to the first interview and by those who were flexible in scheduling their second interviews.

In addition to the information sheet describing the study, I was in direct contact with respondents to answer any additional questions they had prior to requesting their consent to participate. As the study progressed, my Korean-born status and gender positioned within the U.S. academy as a then third-year doctoral student became a critical factor in interacting with the Korean women. Maintaining trustworthiness and building relationships with my participants provided a sense of “sisterhood” (Kim & Green, 2012, p. 243). As well, regularly communicating with the selected participants and re-confirming appointment date and times for their interviews was a critical component.

Participant Confidentiality

Participants had full disclosure regarding the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2013). Interview meetings were set up via e-mail or through phone contact, and when an

agreement was made to participate, I secured dates for when official interview times would be scheduled. During the interview process, I wanted to make sure respondents had an open, safe place to share their honest stories and experiences without the fear of retribution. Additionally, along with the consent form, I reminded participants throughout the interview and meeting processes that confidentiality was guaranteed.

For this very specific research project, confidentiality proved to be a critical component. Because the population of the participants was distinct in racial/ethnic characteristics, it was understandable that the women had concerns that their unique stories would expose them. I assured them that notes, transcripts, and audio recordings would be safely secured on a password-protected external hard drive, and drafts of the study and additional notes would also be in my locked office. Pseudonyms were used to further protect the identities of the participants, and any identifying factors were protected in my personal files.

Data Gathering

According to the notion that “multi-storied dimensions of life” were situated within time and place, it was equally important to respect the creative process of participants’ self-expression since narrative inquiry relied on selective realities (Yu, 2014, p. 682). Chase (1996) described an in-depth interview procedure as one that is an interactive process. The aim of eliciting narratives is to take the everyday aspects of storytelling and use cultural processes that were attached to the stories to answer difficult questions and interpret complex meanings. As such, the process of data gathering was designed so as to avoid anything that might appear to impose, challenge, or threaten the meanings participants attributed to their stories.

Structure of the Interview

Kim and Green (2012) recognized the process of interviewing as “social encounters under a set of circumstances in which an interviewer and interviewee interact[ed] to construct knowledge and share personal experiences as active agents” (p. 242). Because these social encounters were essential parts of the study, how and when the interviews were conducted were important components of the data gathering process. There were two interviews that were one-hour to one-and-a-half-hours in length with each of my six participants. The interviews were open-ended, semi-structured, with a set of questions to help guide the conversations. I offered the option of conducting the interviews in Korean or English. All of the participants chose to use English in their interviews; however, at times, some participants used Korean words, which is referred to as code-switching.

The first interview elicited cultural narratives for the purpose of understanding stories to illuminate how personal and culturally-based experiences helped shape who these women were, and ultimately, how they understood their lives as adult women. The second interview aimed to produce professional narratives to focus specifically on their experiences in the academy, and to further explore how identity, positionality, and both Korean and American cultural systems impacted their academic lives as faculty. Interview protocols were sent to the participants prior to the scheduled interviews in order to encourage reflection beforehand. In addition, participants were also asked what strategies they used as faculty members in order to survive/thrive in the American academy (Mayuzumi, 2011).

Interviews and questions were structured this way to prompt rich and appropriate information regarding how the women faculty members of Korean descent identified, and why they identified in a particular way. The first interview informed the second interview by allowing the personal cultural narratives to function as a foundation to build upon as we investigated the women's experiences before their professional lives as academics. For the first interview, questions were asked in a way that focused on cultural sensitivity and phrased in such a way that encouraged personal reflections from a cultural perspective (see Appendix B for the interview protocol). The personal cultural narratives informed me about how the participants viewed the world around them through their personal experiences as former students, and what their perceptions were as they have navigated their way within/around heritage and dominant cultural expectations. These narratives also provided information on how the participants grew up, what their surroundings were, who impacted their lives/studies, and how family and their upbringing influenced their current and future decisions and roles. Within the second interview, professional narratives were conducted to shed light on what their work and scholarly experiences had been thus far (see Appendix C for the interview protocol). These narratives revealed past, current, and future goals, how they have interacted and experienced interactions with students and colleagues, and the ways they perceived their professional work lives as female faculty members of Korean descent.

For participants who resided in Texas, the interviews were recorded and conducted face-to-face. For those located in other states, the interviews were conducted via phone and Skype, and were recorded on a digital recorder and an iPad. All interview

recordings were transcribed following each meeting with the participants. Data were backed up onto a password-protected external hard drive.

The purpose of each interview was to “enframe” the original stories of the participants/narrators, and to be invited as the researcher to understand the rich and complex understandings of their stories (Yu, 2014, p. 688). Participants were encouraged to tell their stories in whatever way they felt comfortable. However, for clarification or elaboration, follow-up questions were asked including requesting further examples from the participants. Additionally, this process of sharing yielded opportunities to “create the old, to reconnect relationships, and to recreate our humanness” (p. 105). Thus, the purpose of each interview was to provide opportunities to reflect upon “blind spots” (Yu, 2014, p. 690). Kim and Green (2012) also noted that this kind of qualitative research was conducted to preserve the voices shared within the study, and to provide an accurate account that reflected the participants’ experiences thoughtfully and respectfully.

Data Analysis

Polkinghorne (1995) described two different kinds of narrative analysis: (a) where the researchers collect participants’ stories as data to analyze them so that they can determine the “themes that hold across the stories;”, and, (b) where the researchers “collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesize or configure them by means of a plot into a story” (p. 12). Therefore, conducting interviews that elicited powerful, rich stories was an important part of this dissertation. Since “living, telling, retelling, and reliving mark the qualities of life” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 187), I used both of Polkinghorne’s (1995) techniques to analyze the data.

Holistic-Content Mode Analysis

Lieblich et al. (1998) suggested that analyzing narrative data via holistic-content mode allows for data to be managed through texts as a whole to uncover the emerging themes. The narrative story using holistic-content mode can be a way to understand similarities and differences among participants, and established the themes in which data were analyzed (Iborra, 2007; Lieblich et al., 1998). The holistic-content perspective allowed for the self to emerge from each of the interviews, and further assisted in uncovering clues within the participant's responses regarding their meaning-making. I also attended to these clues to uncover what the participant concealed from herself, including any gaps and contradictions within her experiences. Themes emerged to unearth "memories [as] personal creations," and posed as "choices, distortions, and inventions of past events" (p. 79). In essence, my analysis entailed holistically examining the women's overarching understandings of their lifestyles, identities, and beliefs centered on memories and ordered events.

Steps for Holistic-Content Mode Narrative Analysis

Lieblich et al. (1998) wrote that to see patterns and emerging themes, the stories of the participants need to be read multiple times to "sketch out" an outline, and to recognize the details the interviewee has provided through stories (p. 89). Then, the foci of the stories as a whole should be identified. As the researcher, I read empathetically and open-mindedly in order to gain a strong understanding of the context of the whole story. Next, as I wrote up my impressions during the analysis process, and I took note of the exceptions and unusual features in my respondents' stories—such as, her contradictions and unfinished descriptions in her experiences. I looked into the number of times details

were given, how much space each theme took up within the text, and looked for details that were left out by the participants. By using a specific color that was assigned to each participant and colored tabs that associated with them, themes within text were marked and re-read separately. Finally, results of common themes were tracked in several ways. Each theme throughout the story was carefully followed and concluding thoughts were written in an attached document. Where themes emerge and where they ended were marked as well, and this organization process allowed me to “approach...the teller’s inner world via the contents of her...story” (p. 110). This organization allowed me to pay closer attention to the respondents’ moods, along with the content of their stories. It was important for me to take specific sections of their analyzed texts to be able to recognize that there were unique elements that shed light on their story as a whole.

Because “preserving the essence of the stories” was crucial to holistic-content analyses, it was important to keep the experiences as genuine and intact as possible (Iyengar, 2014, p. 62). Additionally, “preserving the [participants’] intentions without distracting the reader from the spirit of the story” (p. 63) was a critical component in using holistic-content analysis.

Table 1

Holistic-Content Analysis Steps as adapted from Iyengar, 2014 and Lieblich et al., 1998

| Holistic-Content Analysis |
|--|
| Step 1: Read text multiple times until a pattern emerged |
| Step 2: Noted initial overall impressions |
| Step 3: Documented the foci/themes presented in the text |
| Step 4: Color coded the themes |
| Step 5: Organized the themes as they occurred |

Table 1 refers to the steps for holistic-content mode analysis. As Iyengar (2014) and Lieblich et al. (1998) suggested, reading the text multiple times and taking note of overall impressions and patterns were important in addressing the emerged themes and the organization of data. Using the first step, the transcribed interviews of each of the participants were read multiple times. All transcripts were printed and organized in a binder that included dividers with each participant's pseudonyms. As the participants were interviewed twice, their experiences were separated into two parts: personal and professional. The process of reading the transcribed texts was two-fold: (a) each interview was read multiple times, and (b) the transcribed texts were read alongside the recorded audio of the interviews. During the course of analyzing and writing the findings, emergent themes, participants' quotes, and the tone of the participants' experiences were checked multiple times as well.

The second step of the analysis process required reflecting upon what was read and interpreted. Any initial impressions and overall thoughts regarding the participants' voices, behaviors, mannerisms, and any clarification were noted in a researcher's journal. While reading the transcripts, any impressions and ponderings were noted in the margins. As well, notes taken during the time of the interviews were also taken into consideration, as they functioned as a reminder of what took place prior to the analysis process. During this step of the analysis, I referred to the first step for any additional clarification.

For Step 3 of holistic-content analysis, all foci/themes presented in the text were documented initially during the read-through and reflection process. Notable sections of the interviews were electronically highlighted or underlined to show significance. Additionally, direct quotes were copied and pasted into a new document followed by the

participants' pseudonyms for identification. All direct quotes were highlighted in a pale yellow color throughout the transcripts.

In Step 4, themes were identified and color coded for reference. These codes were highlighted in different colors to distinguish between the participants. Each participant was assigned a color at the start of the study.

In Step 5, the assigned colors that identified each participant corresponded with the following themes and were organized as indicated below. The themes were italicized for each participant, and on the printed transcripts, colored markers and pens were used to distinguish the themes. During the analysis process, the themes were then copied and pasted into a new document to further understand the patterns that emerged from the provided stories. Additionally, direct quotes were then extracted from this document and associated with themes for data support of the interpretation.

During the analysis process, each participant's major themes were organized on a grid to visually show the results. These visual representations were followed by headings that featured an analysis that identified emotions, feelings, mannerisms, body language, and facial expressions. Within these headings were sub-themes that also contributed to each of the participant's stories. Direct quotes from the transcripts and color-coded themes were used to interpret these experiences using the holistic-content mode analysis.

Analysis of First Interview Data

The first interview focused on personal cultural narratives and was used to ascertain how the women's experiences were used to construct a sense of identity, and it made up the core themes that allowed additional stories to be generated (Iborra, 2007).

According to Stake (2010), thick description is referred to as “a description [that] is rich...it provides abundant, interconnected details” (p. 252). Creswell (2013) confirmed that thick description should mean that the researcher provides thorough details when describing data and interactions with participants. He explained that rather than considering reliability, dependability should be sought after regarding results that could be subject to alteration, change, and instability. Major themes that emerged through analysis across the participants were organized in a matrix; direct quotes along with field notes were included in the matrix. The matrix I used was created in Microsoft Word as a table. This table consisted of columns and rows that allowed me to organize my participants’ pseudonyms, supporting quotes, and commonalities in interview questions/answers. Common themes in relation to the answers provided by the respondents were color-coded in preparation for further analysis.

Analysis of Second Interview Data

Before the second interview, I synthesized personal cultural content to first analyze the preliminary interview for emerging themes. Those themes were applied and expanded in the second interview through the professional narratives. For the second interview data, markers indicated hardships, stereotyping, challenges/successes, strategies/coping, and support. For better understanding of the data, I read the interviews as a whole before addressing specific parts (Creswell, 2013; Lieblich et al., 1998).

The matrix was then extended to make room for data collected from the professional narratives of my participants. An additional section was generated to align the personal cultural narratives with the professional and allowed me to see if there were common threads across the participants. The goal of the matrix was to visually see what

themes emerged, and to better understand how the participants made meaning of their experiences through their own senses of self, positionality, and culture.

Field Notes

I used a notebook for field notes. The notebook was divided in half to contain two different sections. The first half contained notes that I took during the interviews with my participants; the second half contained my personal reflections after each interview. In keeping up with my field notes during this process, this became an important tool for me because it functioned as valuable information that I referred back to frequently in reflecting on and investigating my own experiences. Because the “the process of reflection helps to bring the unconscious into consciousness” (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 698), using my field notes to reflect upon my research practices provided me with the opportunity to facilitate new understandings as data; this process was a way to represent my experiences as a researcher to give meaning to my study, including every day commentary, direction of data collection, and inspirations regarding analysis (Gibbs, 2007; Lamb, 2013).

Also, field notes were taken while engaging in my research setting (Gibbs, 2007). Although Gibbs suggested that field notes can be taken while in the field or immediately after—I believe that having incorporated both ways was important. Additionally, thoughts and perceptions regarding my participants, first impressions, observations, reflecting on the interview processes allowed me to add onto the richness of the data (Creswell, 2013; Lamb, 2013). Because these notes were “descriptions of what people said and did...not simply a recording of facts...” (p. 27), keeping up with my field notes was a solid way to record my memory of events.

Additional Notes on My Narrative Method

As the interpreter, it is the descriptions in the text about which researchers can be most exact. In studying narratives, the researcher has the access to identities and what they mean to an individual including the narrator's culture, life, and his/her social worlds. This access may contain the narrative truths that Lieblich et al. (1998) posit exist "in the hidden domain of inner reality" (p. 8). In many ways, narrative research is viewed as "co-constructions within a context," since elements exposed in narrative studies are "by-products of the relationships of researchers to respondents" (Gergen, 2004, p. 279). The vulnerability of the participants revealed not only pieces of the story that must be questioned, but also the distinction between what was misleading and what was telling (Chase, 1996). Because participants can be vulnerable from the exposure of their stories, Chase suggested sharing transcripts with them and asking permission to use certain parts of their stories in advance. This would give the participants a sense of control and comfort, despite the uneasiness that may be connected to sharing personal and private stories. Nonetheless, in order to reduce participants' vulnerabilities, I made an effort to take great care and consideration as I went into the interpretation and writing processes. During the data gathering process, creating a safe space during the interviews created an atmosphere where culture-sharing (Creswell, 2013) emerged. I believe that in spaces like these, carrying on conversation and dialogue was a vital strategy in sharing sensitive information.

The social process of narrative exchange must cross various ethical and moral boundaries. Li (2011) advised that the meaning of what is told and the interpretative process of understanding what is told are ultimately shaped by the relationship between

researcher and participant. Moreover, it was easier to make sense of the lives lived when there was a safe space for these sensitive dialogues and interactions. Kim and Green (2012) posited that the role of the researcher in qualitative research was being “an additional instrument” (p. 246). Therefore, with regard to the safety of the participants, I avoided being the political activist or exposé (Mayuzumi, 2011). Reassuring anonymity prior to the interviews was a comforting factor for the participants, along with a sense that I would take pre-caution to secure their identities. Furthermore, along with the respondents’ perspectives, the “researcher changes the paradigm from which the data are viewed” (p. 246). Not only did this research become an exploration process alongside the participants for me, but I also became responsible for (re)constructing their stories by acknowledging and accepting that I come with personal biases too (Kim & Green, 2012). It was my goal to be authentic with my interpretations in this dissertation, and to encompass my respondents’ voices accurately and honorably.

Validation Strategies

Perspectives on validation exist to stress the importance of establishing credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative researchers recognize that “we seek a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility, which allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations, and conclusions” (Eisner, 1991, p. 110).

Credibility

Eisner (1991) discussed that the credibility of qualitative research is constructed through structural corroboration—which means that there is a sense of “consensual validation” (Creswell, 2013, p. 246) in supporting, contradicting, and interpreting the

data. Eisner further defined consensual validation by stating that it is “an agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation, and the thematics of an educational situation are right” (p. 112). Furthermore, within qualitative research, “trustworthiness or goodness” of research (Angen, 2000, p. 387) acknowledges that practical answers to questions are being uncovered; and, the research that is conducted should have “transformative value leading to action and change” (Creswell, 2013, p. 248).

As Creswell advised, considering validation within qualitative research relied on my abilities to use recognized approaches to document the truthfulness and precision of the study. Because my diverse sources for the study included multiple forms of narrative (e.g., personal cultural and professional) and analysis methods (e.g., thematic and holistic-content analyses), themes across cultural identities and feminist/gendered themes allowed me to stay on track with analyzing individual participants. Then, data were analyzed across all participants. Credibility was obtained through data triangulation and member checks.

Data Triangulation

Data triangulation was a way to use multiple and diverse sources, methods, and theories to provide evidence that is corroborating (Creswell, 2013). The multiple types of data that I collected were the first set of interviews (personal cultural narratives), the second set of interviews (professional narratives), and field notes. It was important for me to apply all my sets to “reinforce conclusions” during the analysis process (Gibbs, 2007, p. 94).

Member Checks

While the respondents played a major role in being essential components to this study, they were invited to participate in examining initial drafts to provide corroborative observations and interpretations to the analyses (Stake, 1995). In case they changed their minds, misremembered, or had “intervening events [that] have altered the situation” (Gibbs, 2007, p. 95), member checking and looking over rough drafts of the transcripts and analysis were useful for clarity. I found that it was important for the participants to be invited to re-engage with the data they had provided me because accurate analysis of the data was essential.

Additionally, member checking allowed for clarification of the data gathered. Because some participants felt more comfortable using some Korean words, or code-switching, it was important to refer back to the participants with these translations.

Clarifying Biases

These steps for credibility were implemented as a way to challenge the researchers’ own thoughts and preconceived notions that were taken into consideration to avoid any personal biases (Kim & Green, 2012). I found that this was an important element for me since culturally and socially I was close to my participants. Keeping with the genuine aspects of the participants’ experiences was important.

Additionally, clarifying biases meant that as the researcher, I needed to comment on biases and prejudices “that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Some biases and prejudices that I acknowledged and which were intentional throughout the study were to avoid: (a) assumptions that my immigration and assimilation experiences were the same as my participants, (b) having

expectations about traditional and familial experiences that may or may not align with my participants, and (c) not probing a participant's answer due to my own suppositions. Along with data triangulation and clarifying my own biases, member checking was "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314) regarding my own biases. Furthermore, I believe that by implementing these strategies, I ensured that I produced a credible and trustworthy study.

Exploring Cultural Contexts within Stories and Identity Development

As social constructionists, narrative researchers noted that narratives influence human life by taking shape through the cultural repertoires that make people create their own conceptions of reality (Gergen, 2004). In Clark's (2001) study, a dynamically changing identity was strongly supported with unspoken ideas and emotions being shared through narratives. Beyond the scope of gendered perceptions and shared assumptions from all the participants, both a sense of belongingness and separateness are likely contributing factors in their lives (Lieblich et al., 1998). Zong (2006) wrote that the "interconnectedness of identity, power, lived experience, writing, and reflection" (p. 252) was an interpretive way to situate oneself within one's culture as well.

Josselson (1996) referred to mirror transference as a way to take into our possession the stories and experiences of other people. As we collect stories, the writing that is produced becomes readable when the researchers act as "carriers of core aspects" of the participants they interviewed (p. 64). Through this transference, what the participants have said becomes what the participants come to know. Given that understanding the significance of experiences required knowing how they were communicated, my job was to question the content of the respondents' stories on a deeper

and more complex level to be thorough and comprehensive. For this dissertation, my ability to zoom in on important moments in the participants' lives was an important factor. More importantly, how those moments were connected to their identities ultimately revealed the focus of this study. I believe that embedded within these personal, professional, and cultural stories were representations of identities and how they developed over time. Reporting on what the respondents said, how they described their experiences, and how they socially and culturally interacted with others disclosed a dynamic way of making sense of their lives, experiences, and identities (Creswell, 2013; Reissman, 2008). For these reasons, having explored the cultural contexts within the participants' stories was a strong way to further investigate their identity developments.

Ethical Issues Regarding the Study

As a researcher, I was constantly reminded that "language can never contain a whole person," so when writing about someone's life, everything is "inevitably a violation" (Josselson, 1996, p. 28). Reissman (1993) supported these indications by noting that the teller was fundamental to composing narratives, and, that the nature of the audience was just as important as the relationship formed between the teller/participant and the listener (Lieblich et al., 1998). For both the participants and researcher, narratives remain an important form of social resource and critical components for creating identity (Linde, 1993). In addition to keeping up with interpretive authority and participant vulnerability, I maintained multiple responsibilities while working in the field (Chase, 1996; Gergen, 2004), including protecting the stories and identities of the participants, securing my written work and files, and ensuring that my analyses and interpretation were accurate and truthful.

Finally, Gergen (2004) reminded researchers the issues surrounding the flexibility and the firmness of narratives cannot be contained—but can be a way to make real connections outside of the participants’ private worlds. Because I was given “the privilege to manipulate all the stories” (Mayuzumi, 2011, p. 75), it was especially important that the respondents felt that outside of being given the opportunity to share their stories, they were also contributing to the scarce literature regarding women professors of Korean descent, and to equality and social justice within the U.S. higher education system (Mayuzumi, 2011).

IV. FINDINGS

Nash (2004) briefly refers to a great American writer, Ralph Waldo Emerson, as he once said that “it is impossible to utter even two or three sentences without letting others know where you stand in life, what you believe, and which people are important to you” (p. 24). Participants of this dissertation were asked a series of interview questions that prompted raw stories of their lives through personal cultural, and professional narratives. Specifically, these narratives were analyzed to understand more clearly the experiences of the female faculty members of Korean descent.

Introduction

As a way to introduce the participants, I interpreted my impressions of each participant through an amalgamated vignette, formatted in italics, to provide the reader with an introduction to each woman. Using the original transcripts from each interview, I pieced together a glimpse of the individual using their words to preserve authenticity. However, for the purpose of being grammatically and contextually correct, some minor parts of the original transcripts were changed, as indicated by brackets. Following the introductory narratives of each participant, an analysis of their stories and their experiences follow.

Table 2

Participant Demographic and Identity

| Age | Pseudonym | Children | Born | UG/College Experience | Master's Experience/ PhD Experience | PhD Degree | Tenured/ Tenure-Track | Cultural Identity |
|-----|-----------|----------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 41 | Yoon-Mee | 1 | Korea | Korea | US/US | Geography Education | Tenure-track | Korean |
| 38 | Soo-Bin | 2 | Korea | Korea; final year in US | US/US | Political Communication & Political Science | Tenured | "in-between" |
| 49 | Jae-Young | 1 | US | US | US/US | Gender Studies/Asian American immigrant women/labor | Tenured | Asian American/ Pan-Asian |
| 55 | Kyung-Sun | 1 | Korea | US | US/US | Korean history, Korean contemporary history, immigrants | Tenured | Korean-American |
| 36 | Ji-Min | 1 | Korea | Korea | China/US | International Studies; Sociology | Tenured | Korean/ "Americanized Korean" |
| 45 | Mee-Na | 0 | Korea | Korea | Korea/US | Housing/ Interior Design | Tenured | Korean/ "globalized Korean" |

As seen in Table 2, the female participants range in age from 36-55, teach in diverse departments and disciplines, and have completed their academic works in Korea, the United States, and/or China. All participants were married. All but one participant immigrated to the US, and for the five women who were born in Korea, English is their second language. Notably, the term *identity* is complex. Table 2 indicates that it was not as simple as stating a participant was only Korean, American, or Korean American. Many of the respondents elaborated on how they self-identified, and the stories that followed described what their identities meant to them in self-revealing ways. As such, the participants' realities emerged through their stories because "we live in stories about reality" (Nash, 2004, p. 33).

Recognition of the Participants' Experiences as Stories and Memories

The purpose of the current research is to understand the following the research questions:

- 1.) In what ways do the notions of identity and positionality influence female faculty members of Korean descent and their experiences in the U.S. academy?
- 2.) How do these women navigate Korean and U.S. cultural systems present in their personal and professional lives?

In this interview-based study, I analyzed the personal and professional narratives of female faculty members of Korean descent who are professors in the U.S. academy. It was my understanding that the experiences of these female respondents were reflected as stories and memories from different areas of their lives. The participants drew upon their remembrances from their childhood academic experiences, family upbringing,

undergraduate stories, immigration, graduate school understandings, and recollections from the U.S. academy, thus far. As well, I considered the female respondents' Korean and American cultural lenses, their personal and professional settings, and the context of how they understood who they were as Korean women living and working in the US. Finally, the conclusion of the analyses suggests that the multiple stories from these female informants have many differences in addition to similarities that draw on paralleling experiences.

Yoon-Mee

I was born in Korea in Busan, which is a second largest city in Korea. And, I was there until my middle school years. Then, I moved to Ulsan which is a little bit north, but still a big city so I could complete high school. That's where I lived until I graduated...because it was basically boarding school. For college, I went to Seoul, which is capital city. I finished my undergraduate degree in the Seoul National University. I came back to Busan for the first job to be a geography teacher in the high school level. So, I taught Geography, Social Studies, and Korean History for five and a half years. Soon after, I came the United States for Master's, which was 2005. Basically I lived in Korea about 30 years. I should not forget that I'm Korean. I live in the United States, but I don't feel like I'm part of this country, I don't think. I see a lot more differences between myself and the people who born and raised here more than similarities. Although I work with Americans, and I study with them...I have my daughter in United States, I still see myself as foreigner. In graduate program, I had actually a hard time at beginning because it was first time I was studying in United States. So, first year I really

struggling for my English and for my writing. It is different from just reading at home, like most of graduate classes is like discussion-based. And then, even during lectures, the expectation is to ask a lot of questions, like participate in oral discussions and presentations. I felt the need to learn more about this country now after my daughter being born. I have most of my family in Korea, but my daughter is technically American citizen, even though she is dual citizenship. She goes to school here, and I remind myself I better learn more about the United States—even history and political things—because my daughter is raised in this culture. I feel I need to get to know myself better and also for my identity for her sake. For my professional survival, I didn't think cultural barriers really important at first. Later, I notice how barriers affected me. Now, I just want things share with my daughter because she is growing up in America so fast. Things are different being mom and professional here. There must be some compromise since I have 24 hours in day like everyone else.

Yoon-Mee is an assistant professor in a tenure-track position at a university. She seemed very shy admitting she has been speaking English for only the last ten years. She is a Korean citizen and identifies solely as Korean. She stated, “I’m still Korean...even though I’ve applied permanent residency, I’m still Korean because it’s not a U.S. citizenship.” When we spoke about any potential reasons to become a U.S. citizen in the future, she said, “I don’t know, unless it’s really necessary for my future life, I wouldn’t for now.” Yoon-Mee was quiet during all of her interviews, and she took long pauses while she thought deeply before carefully answering any questions. Because she had a young daughter at home during the interviews, she frequently checked her phone and her

messages. Each time she did this, she apologized and said that her husband was currently working in Korea. We met at a coffee shop for both interviews, and spoke outside so that the audio recording would not be compromised. When we met for our second interview, she came with her personal notes on her iPad because she “wanted to be prepared with stories.”

As the eldest of four girls in her family, Yoon-Mee grew up with three sisters and no other male figure other than her father. She explained that she was like the “second mother” in her household, as she regularly looked after her sisters and her father when her mother was busy. She understood her role as the “unni,” or older sister, as equally important as her mother’s role in the family. She referred to memories of walking with her sisters to school, making sure they got on the right buses, and helping to make sure everyone had their packed lunches before leaving their home. Because she came from a big family, Yoon-Mee explained that she had to “yang-boe” many times in her childhood. To “yang-boe” meant that because she was the eldest, she often would let her younger sisters “have the best snacks” or “have the last piece of lunch.” This “kind of sacrifice” and ability to think of her sisters before herself was expected from the eldest, and for Yoon-Mee, she learned early that she “needed to be there to help with siblings.” Social pressures for Yoon-Mee included finding a high-positioned job, providing for her family, accepting familial obligations before her own, and performing well in school for these reasons. Additionally, Yoon-Mee put much pressure on herself to be a strong student while in school because the weight of finding a good job to support her family was greater than she had expected. Because she came from a family of daughters with no sons in the family, as the eldest, she felt that these pressures were “normal” and were “things I

had to do.” However, Yoon-Mee was not saddened or troubled by recalling the memories of such pressures because as the eldest in her family, she knew that she had to choose wisely when it came to scholarships, colleges, and her future job. She explained, “I considered it to be a part of what my duties were. My father wasn’t in good health and it was important that I did well in school. Without that, I wouldn’t have been able to apply for scholarships.” Yoon-Mee’s childhood memories reflected abilities to look beyond her own needs for the sake of her family. As well, she felt that she “developed maternal instincts early.”

Due to Yoon-Mee’s father’s health, she put pressure on herself to excel in school to obtain scholarships for college. Because of his illness, her father was unable to work. She knew that her family would have some difficulties supporting her in school without scholarships. In addition, she felt that it was necessary to take on that burden because her parents and sisters relied on her to lead and set an example. She explained:

I was good at school anyway... my parents didn’t say anything about choosing major. My sisters were all young and only pressure that I had was pressure that I put on myself. I guess, generally, my parents didn’t put pressure on me directly, but I just felt it...I just realized it.

Yoon-Mee reflected on her young middle school and high school years and explained that compared to her friends who endured gender pressures for even choosing a college major, she now felt grateful that her parents encouraged her to “do whatever I want to do.” Her parents’ attitudes eased the pressures somewhat, and Yoon-Mee decided to study geography education because she was inspired by teachers she had in the past. Topics related to geography genuinely interested her and she felt that she was a strong

student in these subjects. Despite the cultural expectations that she follow gender roles in picking a college major and future job “meant for girls,” she said, “I was grateful my parents let me pick something I felt I was good at.” Yoon-Mee explained that by having to “to choose something I felt was little uncommon at time,” she was able to see that she could make opportunities for herself that she did not dream of before. Furthermore, her confidence in herself as a student outside of her family home began to grow when she “knew that I had the support of my parents.”

Self-Growth and “Adjustments” to Western Ways

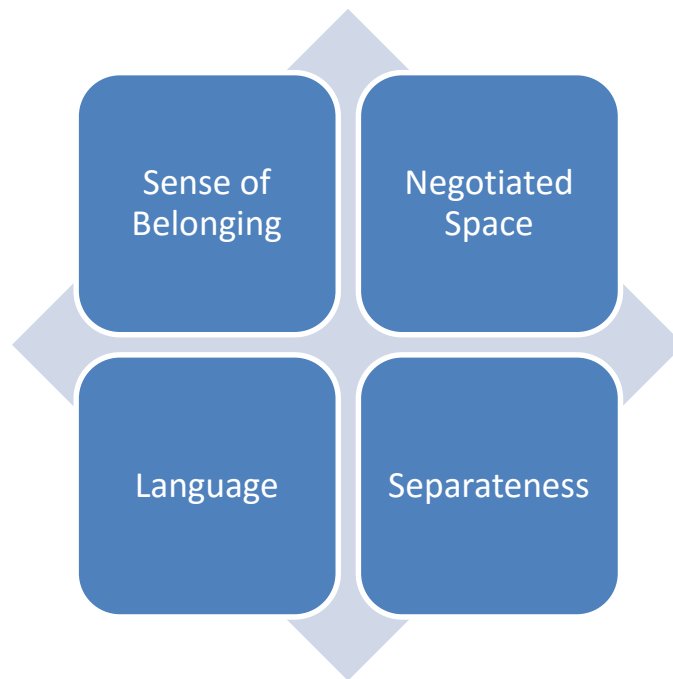


Figure 1. Yoon-Mee’s Emerged Themes.

Yoon-Mee’s stories suggest four themes throughout her personal cultural and professional narratives. Sense of belonging, separateness, language, and negotiated space were the themes that reflected Yoon-Mee’s experiences. For her, a sense of belonging was more than just a connection to the physical space of the US or her workplace. It determined how she felt about herself in the different spaces of her life, such as at home

with her family in the US, her family in Korea, her colleagues at work, and with her daughter. In that aspect, separateness provided Yoon-Mee a way to remove herself from both the American and Korean cultures when she needed to. She “willingly created distance” when she became uncomfortable, and she explained that discomfort came from “being unsure of where I really fit in.”

As well, the distinct separation and the distance between the US and Korea allowed her to be flexible in her ways of thinking and her “adjustments.” For Yoon-Mee, language created that separation between her two cultures, which formed a distance between her and her daughter. She explained that she has felt the need to “adjust in different ways,” typically when it came to language and mannerisms in the US. Yoon-Mee referred to “adjustments” as “thinking of new ways to do...and say something” when she was misunderstood. Because of the importance of using English in the US, Yoon-Mee’s abilities to communicate in English affected her confidence at work and at home with her daughter. She felt that her daughter was at risk for losing her Korean heritage through the American culture. More importantly, language was used as a divide that continued to separate her from her sense of belonging in the US, at work, and at home. For these reasons, negotiated space was a theme that emerged to conclude that Yoon-Mee had a variety of elements that revealed who she was as a Korean female, mother, and professor. Her identity, thus, was part of a space that was continuing to evolve. In many ways, her sense of belonging and positionality were related to each of these themes.

Across her experiences, Yoon-Mee noted that she felt that society – whether that was Korean or American – was “very much changing.” While she explained that she was

educated around the time that she felt these social and cultural changes were occurring in Korea, Yoon-Mee made certain to emphasize that “times were changing” in Korea and that was important. She referred to this phrase many times when describing a memory in Korea that she knew was different in America. For her, she believed that Korea had become more willing to “adjust to Western ways.” Yoon-Mee interpreted these changes as Western influences that allowed society to change, such as women obtaining higher degrees, motherhood being delayed, and the Korean government becoming more supportive of international education. She said that rather than sticking with prescribed gender roles and norms in Korea, a “more inclusive...thoughtful society was beginning to happen.” While Korea has been known to have a strict education system and has been stereotyped for excluding females in professional fields, Yoon-Mee felt confident when she explained she did not feel that she endured those kinds of oppressions because of the changes that were occurring in Korea at the time she was a student.

Sense of Belonging

Yoon-Mee implied that her sense of belonging was strongly tied to the American culture because of her daughter, and not necessarily through herself. The Western influences she referred to described a culture that was much more individualistic than the traditional Korean culture, and she explained that “being an American meant you more vocal about things.” She explained that connection to her daughter through the American culture was important because her daughter was born in the US. Because she and her daughter “would inevitably have different upbringing,” she admitted to feeling anxiety and uncertainty around how her daughter would grow up. Yoon-Mee had grown up and gone to school in Korea, her sense of belonging “did not necessarily belong to US,” and it

worried her because she was raising her daughter in a country with which she still felt unfamiliar. In essence, it was as though she felt that she needed to belong here for the sake of her daughter, rather than belonging in the US for herself. Her willingness to share both cultures with her daughter was important; however, in order to “belong” successfully to the US, she believed she would have to continue to want to learn more about the American culture in the US for her daughter. She described scenarios “of horror” if she were to “find myself unable to understand my daughter,” and believed that her motivation to “accept America” would be because of the child she knew would be raised speaking English.

Yoon-Mee put a great deal of pressure on herself as a mother because she was separated from her family in Korea. She recognized that her “situation is unusual” compared to Korea, since she worked full time with her husband working abroad. She explained that she “rarely receive help,” but knew that “it would be different in Korea because my family can be around to help.” Because of this separation between Korea and the US, Yoon-Mee explained that her daughter “may be at a disadvantage” because she was far away from her grandparents and other relatives. She understood that it was solely up to her not only to raise her daughter, but to provide a solid cultural upbringing that would satisfy the expectations of both the Korean and American cultures. She stressed that this meant “using both English and Korean” at home because she did not want her daughter to struggle learning English as she did. Additionally, Yoon-Mee did not want to lose her daughter to a language and country she was still trying to understand. For these reasons, Yoon-Mee feared being apart from her daughter and applied “Korean rituals” to

her daughter's everyday life. It was important for Yoon-Mee to speak to her daughter in Korean, and for her daughter to understand that she still has a Korean mother.

Language

Yoon-Mee offered:

I feel like going back and forth between Korean and American culture is strongly influenced by the parents of many Korean children. They kind of force that upon children in some extent and it's hard to keep both cultures closely together, especially with dealing with the kids. My daughter sometimes speaks English with me, and that's because that's what she learns in school. She's getting used to that now, and sometimes I know bothers me. When she wants to tell me what she learned in school, she tells me story in English because she learned in English context. Sometimes she translates me. She knows I understand anyway, and the point is that I want her practice Korean more with me. Sometimes I ask her, "Could you tell me that in Korean?" And she sometimes says, "Mmm, let's see...I don't know."

This example of Yoon-Mee interacting with her daughter in a dual-language context shows that there is a strong motivation for Yoon-Mee to learn more about culture in an American context. While she understands that differences of the Korean and the American cultural systems, she makes extra efforts to "keep Korean available" for her daughter. For Yoon-Mee, her sense of belonging is directly tied to her daughter and the use of the English language. She feels that without learning more about the American culture and language, she will be separated from her daughter culturally and linguistically.

Although Yoon-Mee had been speaking English for ten years, attended graduate school in the United States, and had been teaching in the American academy, she did not feel that she was comfortable, or at home in the US. She said that this discomfort came from “the stress of thinking about adjusting all the time.” Yoon-Mee implied that her “freedom was limited” because she was “constantly thinking about what to say...and how to say things.” In addition, the language barrier was becoming more of a burden, and it was a sensitive area for Yoon-Mee since that meant a cultural and mental distance between her and her daughter. Although she felt close to her emotionally as a mother, Yoon-Mee was fearful of losing her daughter to a solely American sense of identity due to the American school she was attending, her every day interactions with American children, and speaking English among her American friends and teachers. Yoon-Mee quietly said, “I just don’t want to be left out.” This comment was powerful in that both her sense of belonging in the US and her abilities to communicate effectively in English were causing her to feel left behind.

Yoon-Mee explained, “I stress out about English...but I also stress about making sure my daughter learns Korean.” She described her Saturday mornings as “Korean school days” because she enrolled her daughter in a local Korean-language school. As well, Yoon-Mee offered, “My daughter has Korean friends there and there are other Korean parents at the language school. I think it’s important she plays with the other Korean children too.” Yoon-Mee is in many ways ‘anchored’ in the United States through her daughter, but pays close attention to incorporating “Korean elements” in her and her daughter’s lives. Thus, Yoon-Mee’s cultural identity is closely tied to the experiences she shares with her daughter. It is difficult for Yoon-Mee to minimize the

cultural separation she feels, and that is why engaging in the Korean culture and language was an important part of her life with her daughter in the US. Essentially, this interaction of navigating her way through her own sense of belonging, identity, and language learning has established a way for her to feel a connection with her daughter where they share the same culture and identity.

Yoon-Mee referred to her “set of survival skills” as “something I had to do and understand” in order to “belong temporarily.” Her survival skills became a set of ways that has evolved into functioning as a lifestyle for her. She goes back and forth between the American culture and the Korean culture to create a pathway for her relationship with her daughter to remain intact. She knows that she cannot keep a singular culture as long as her daughter is becoming more and more acclimated with the American culture. It was evident that this was a major struggle for her and the cause of stress when it came to accepting this type of bi-cultural and bilingual lifestyle. Additionally, Yoon-Mee’s husband, who is also a professor, lives and works in Korea and visits once every few months. This long separation from her spouse adds to the stress of “living like a single mother.” Yoon-Mee described this way of life as “a difficult situation that I learned to adjust to.” The physical and emotional distance that she was enduring for the sake of working in the States had created a lonely discomfort for her, and it contributed to the anxiety that allowed her to grow more attached to her daughter for fear of losing her to the American culture. Thus, Yoon-Mee belongs temporarily because she travels to Korea between fall and spring semesters to be with her family and husband. She clarified that she is “only in the US for the fall and spring semesters.”

Yoon-Mee's notion of belonging temporarily in a literal sense exposed that she prefers to travel back and forth, rather than re-locating to Korea. Yoon-Mee explained that she enjoys keeping her daughter grounded in both the Korean and the American cultures. However, her sense of home is not established because she sees herself temporarily working in the US, and then she returns 'home' to Korea afterwards. Furthermore, her willingness to work as a professor in the States offers her the opportunity to reside here rather than Korea. Yoon-Mee's sense of home is lacking in the US because her support systems, such as her family, husband, and friends are located in Korea. Because she belongs temporarily in the US, she has internally accepted that the US is for work, and not a place where she can reside permanently. The sense of staying in the US provisionally demonstrated that everything regarding the US is temporary, which includes culture, language, and work. It provides Yoon-Mee with an outlet where she can re-gain her sense of comfort and home elsewhere. When she mentioned that she would "consider staying longer in the US if my daughter wanted to," it meant that the purpose of being in the States was for her work and her daughter. As well, because the Korean culture positively acknowledges an American education and the abilities to speak English well, Yoon-Mee believes in "all the benefits my daughter is able to gain through experiences...by living and going to the school here."

Separateness

In many ways, every memory of Yoon-Mee's was disconnected from a blended understanding of both the Korean and American cultures because they were either labeled a "Korean" memory or an "American" memory. For example, when Yoon-Mee offered that she belonged temporarily in the US, she was expressing that there was a distinct

partition she had intentionally placed between her experiences in the US and her experiences in Korea. Yoon-Mee completed her doctoral degree in the US, and even though she was away from friends and family when she was a graduate student, there was some degree of comfort knowing that she was going to return to Korea eventually. She explained:

Well, cultural barrier is unique thing to me. It's because I don't know lot about United States history. Even at elementary level, I still don't know much. Also, I don't know about celebrities or pop culture in United States. So, often I can't understand jokes or funny stories, even if they're easy like someone else to understand. I feel like kind of hindered me in most of my social interactions with others, like my daughter's friends' parents and teachers. I think that's why I didn't go out much because I was scared. I feel more comfortable in Korea...I think I worry less when I'm there.

She continued:

You have to understand. Basically, I lived in Korea for about 30 years. As you may already understand, English is really important for the college entrance exams. I'm still foreigner; I am not American. The way I see it, I'm from Korea...I have people there I love the most, such as my parents and sisters. I'm the only person in my family lives in United States. My family makes me feel like I'm more Korean, because in Korea, I have places I can go on regular basis.

While the physical distance between family in Korea and her home in the US depicted a physical separateness, Yoon-Mee suggested her traditional responsibilities were also separated as well because she does not live in Korea. Yoon-Mee referred to her

traditional responsibilities as visiting and taking care of her in-laws, in addition to working and taking care of her own family. She explained, “Of course, this is still the expectation somehow women just know how take care of everyone including themselves.” Even though she alternatively stated that her mother-in-law is a “really understanding person,” she continued to credit the change in Korean society that she believed is the reason why she has been relieved of some these traditional pressures. “My mother-in-law lives in Korea, and if I were in Korea, I would have visit her more often.” To clarify, Yoon-Mee offered a further example of her sister’s life and explained:

My sister is a middle school teacher in Korea, and her in-laws do not expect lot from her as housewife. They know she works full-time. With her job, two children, and husband, I think they understand that extended family obligations less important. It depends on family and their traditions. But, still there are many families in Korea who expect lot from women...this is not always the case. I’m very lucky.

Yoon-Mee considers herself lucky because she does not have to abide by the cultural pressures, and she was not to be held to traditional Korean familial responsibilities since she lived in the US. She believed that her family, including her in-laws, respected her accomplishments and future professional goals, and that is why she can “remain working in the U.S. without feeling obligated.” Thus, Yoon-Mee finds comfort in knowing that she can retain her sense of individuality in the US. She did not express feeling guilty, but rather lucky because she was aware of what cultural expectations may behold for her if she were living in Korea.

While initially one might question why she continues to live in the US, it became clear that her American sense of self is taking shape. Her sense of independence and individuality—which would be considered “American characteristics” have progressively grown since she immigrated, and because she has become “accustomed to” and “adjusted to” the ways of life in the US, Yoon-Mee asserted, “I couldn’t go back and live in Korea 100%. I prefer to visit frequently.” However, Yoon-Mee admitted to feeling distant from Korea and her loved ones, yet she still feels a sense of disconnectedness from her resident country as well. She said, “There’s so much Korea has to offer, and I’m blessed to been there so long.” However, as she shifted multiple times in her seat, she replied, “I think it’s best that I stay in US for my daughter.” In many ways, this disconnectedness by the physical distance between herself and her home country, and the separateness she feels from her heritage culture because she stays away for long periods at a time, has created a sense of “being left outside everyone else’s lives” in Korea. However, for Yoon-Mee, she explained that her family in Korea believes that she and her family are the “lucky ones” to be living and “working freely” in the US.

Negotiated Space

The “freeness” that she feels is why she considers herself so lucky. In addition, she has the same expectations for her daughter, in that she hopes her daughter will “appreciate her own freedom...develop sense of individualism” as she grows up in the US. Yoon-Mee, despite declaring such support for her daughter to embody some American values, says she “strongly encourages” eating Korean food, speaking the Korean language, and interacting with Korean children. The struggle for Yoon-Mee revealed a dichotomous internal space. On the one hand, she has established a place

where she can appreciate and celebrate her freedom as a Korean woman with fewer traditional familial expectations and responsibilities by living and working in the US. On the other hand, she feels fearful of her daughter becoming “too American” through her American environments, and attempts to re-connect the Korean culture through the Korean language, food, and friends. Furthermore, language was an important theme in Yoon-Mee’s analysis because it created the divide or the separateness between herself and her daughter. Earlier I noted that language was the dominant fear regarding her growing relationship with her young daughter, but it also mediated if she belonged to, or felt separated from, a number of different environments. Within these spaces she negotiated, she found it was difficult to determine if she were becoming an American. As such, language became the divide between Korea and the US, home and work, and ultimately, the space between feeling confident or uncomfortable.

For Yoon-Mee, being deeply connected to her daughter and her home in the United States was the source for her happiness, yet also her anxiety and discomfort. Furthermore, because she remained uncertain and doubtful about the space to which she firmly belongs, she justified ways to move through her Korean and American experiences. It was clear that she was uncomfortable with some traditional Korean expectations, but she was also working hard to instill in her daughter favorable cultural components to “give her Korean upbringing.” In addition, Yoon-Mee’s guilt was the result of what she might be depriving her child of “her original culture” because she felt that she “has a choice if she wants to be Korean and/or American,” but daughter was born in the US. Yoon-Mee explained, “My daughter doesn’t get choice because by birthright, she is American citizen...hopefully that’s what she wants.” She clarified by stating that it

was not her daughter's choice to be born in the US, it was something that she wanted for her daughter. However, she admitted uncomfortably that her daughter's identity would be "up to her." While Yoon-Mee is becoming more open to integrating the ways of American life because her daughter is a U.S. citizen, the fear of losing her to a culture that she is still "trying to get used to" reveals that her developing identity is closely tied to her daughter's.

Professional Experiences in Understanding American and Korean Cultural Systems in the Academy

When Yoon-Mee was interviewed for her personal narrative, her facial expression and physical mannerisms demonstrated her discomfort with how she was describing her experiences in the US thus far. She apologized frequently when she became distracted by messages on her phone since her daughter was with a sitter, and she rubbed her eyes and face occasionally as she squinted. She sighed deeply and shifted multiple times in her seat when describing her home life and her daughter's "love for her new American friends." There was a sense of hesitation and uneasiness around topics that were deeply personal to her. One and a half weeks later, we met again for our second interview. The atmosphere was the same, in that we agreed to meet once more at the same coffee shop. However, what was different was that she came prepared with her own personal notes, and she expressed excitement for discussing her job as a professor. She smiled more, seemed more relaxed, and she was rarely distracted by her phone.

In discussing Yoon-Mee's professional narrative, she was able to uncover many professional memories that were both positive and negative. However, she worked hard during our interviews to understand and justify to me the positive aspects, even with the experiences that had negative connotations. Many of Yoon-Mee's experiences were

masked underneath racial microaggressions she experienced while in her workplace. Furthermore, she was careful to clarify, so that I, “wouldn’t misunderstand intentions.” It was evident that she did not want to be “disrespectful towards the department or superiors,” but she also did not want to conceal what her true experiences were. As well, Yoon-Mee further mentioned that she “didn’t mind little problems here and there” because she had internalized her negative experiences as “things that needed to happen” to become more successful.

Yoon-Mee noted that recently her department chair said, “You know, you’re very convenient because you’re an Asian female...we need you.” Yoon-Mee added, “I know that it was just joke...but it was strange that my chair mentioned that I would ‘fit diversity criteria’...which made me feel like maybe wasn’t really joke.” In that faculty meeting, Yoon-Mee said that she felt that it was important to be a committee member on a variety of projects because it would help her professionally by opening more opportunities for her and her career. While she did not forget how that moment made her feel, Yoon-Mee went on to serve as a committee member on this project and many other projects after that. Furthermore, she was invited to collaborate with other colleagues and their connections, and from that experience, she believed to have gained more responsibilities. Although Yoon-Mee made certain to state that she knew her department chair was in the wrong, she was not “entirely offended because it was just joke.”

Yoon-Mee regularly spoke about recognizing the diversity in her department. It was evident in that while she was the only Korean faculty member, she indicated that she was not the only Asian faculty member. Yoon-Mee’s comfort level with her colleagues seemed positive as she spoke about her professional relationships. With an additional five

faculty members from Asia, even though she was the only Korean, the “interesting mix” of people in her department was fun and dynamic for her work environment. With other faculty members from different racial and ethnic backgrounds present, Yoon-Mee understood that everyone was open about their own struggles and challenges with their students and their experiences in the American academy. Likewise, she believed that their personal stories aligned well with hers, as she responded to how she felt supported in language learning and challenges with understanding American cultural systems. Additionally, Yoon-Mee referred to many colleagues as people whom she spoke with regularly about professional and personal matters, and she mentioned that giving and receiving advice, while providing support during issues at work, were all important parts to positively manage her relationships at the university. She believed there was a mutual sense of respect between her and her colleagues. Most of all, she referred to them as people who had helped her the most while she had been at this particular institution.

I think I’ve been treated pretty fair since I work in a big department. There are so many different types of people and different ethnicities. We have faculty members from South America...from Europe...from Asia...so the department is pretty diverse. I think people open about difficult situations, and they are used to this kind diverse working environment. I didn’t feel negativity here just because of my race or ethnicity. I know other students a little bit of bias towards me because my English not perfect. I have colleagues who come from other countries, but they speak English so good. Also, physically, I’m small...and not tall like American colleagues. I know students notice I look and sound different; I think it’s mostly because of English or accent. I know that sometimes I get teased for that.

Yoon-Mee's comparison of herself and her colleagues did not reflect envy, but rather people whom she looked up to for their "smooth English and charisma that students enjoy." She laughed frequently when referring to those she worked alongside, and mentioned that she respected everyone individually as people and professors. She said, "I've learned so much from them, and I'm so grateful they have helped me learn." Yoon-Mee's acceptance of how she has contributed to a diverse working environment has created a sense of comfort in a place that is traditionally known to be competitive among men. Working in the academy and feeling accepted among her peers is the result of their pride and "honor" for her.

Yoon-Mee's diverse work environment has established an atmosphere in which she believes she belongs, which is a different attitude than how she approached the stories regarding her personal life. Yoon-Mee was very open to discussing her colleagues and her work responsibilities, and she freely described what her experiences were like thus far in clear detail. She offered:

I felt like there's a specific role expected of me as female and minority, along with being assistant professor in department. I don't think there's any barriers for me...for my research or my ability to contribute to department because of my gender. For me, when I publish something I always have kind of go through a lot of editing and the re-writing. There is some days I spend more time re-writing than writing something new. Sometimes I stress how my writing sounds or looks compared maybe to the other professors' work. I know these things American professors don't have to do. I check and I double-check to see if I have

grammatical and the technical errors in my writing. As far as barriers go, it's just I know I have issue with the language.

Yoon-Mee's professional identity is rooted in her pride of feeling that she "is good at what I do." While at first she said she would "identify as a geographer first...then identify as a teacher," she quickly decided they were one in the same and laughed. She stated, "Maybe it's better say I'm geography researcher or an educational researcher." Yoon-Mee's self-pride speaks to how she views herself at work as a professor and scholar. Her tone resonates more confidently when she speaks about her work life, and it is evident that she had pride in her accomplishments and goals. She believes that being a part of a diverse department is "a positive thing for me and my work," and yet explained that "things might have been different if I been a part of different department."

When Yoon-Mee first started working at her university, she remembered feeling "out of place" among her colleagues. Her establishment of her place among American cultural systems allowed her to "expect to feel this way." She recalled the faculty members in her department making extra efforts to help her feel welcomed in the department at the start of her career. It was not until a few years later, Yoon-Mee indicated, that she felt that she legitimately belonged in her department. Because her department and colleagues were so diverse, Yoon-Mee explained that her sense of belongingness became more established after she felt more comfortable in her working environment. She noted:

One time, one my colleagues told me I'd better speak up more. She told me, "People want know what you think about specific agenda or topic." She reminded me people are curious about what I think at meetings. So, for me, it was more

recommendation—a suggestion, since I was really cautious in beginning. I didn't want to speak too much because my rank and my position...simply because I wasn't in tenured position yet. I didn't want to...overstep my boundaries and disrespectful to anyone. But I guess even now, I think they expect me speak up a little bit more.

Yoon-Mee felt understood by her colleagues because they were all understanding of what she was going through as a new professor. She was aware of how students perceived foreign professors and felt cautious when dealing with challenges in the classroom. For example, she offered:

We have a male professor from Africa who speaks native English perfectly.

However, because he speaks in different accent, students complain about him a lot on evaluations...even though they are performing poorly in class. For me and some my students, they just tend blame my English and my accent too...even though that might not be actual issue. When I first started teaching, I was really self-conscious my English...I think it affected how I explained things in my classes to my students...I was so worried about what they were going think of me if I say something incorrectly. Now, I just speak...if I pronounce something wrong, then I pronounce wrong. It's okay!

As a female professor, Yoon-Mee explained that she was warned by friends that it may be difficult to be an authoritative figure in the classroom. In addition, her accent and “inevitable mispronunciation” sometimes kept Yoon-Mee from “enjoying my job because I was so worried.” Yoon-Mee joked about how being a female, however, did not affect her relationships with her students. She did not shy away from explaining herself

and stated, “Often, it’s funny when some students expect me to be soft-spoken and compliant. I think they think my class going be easy because the way I look.” While Yoon-Mee lightheartedly laughed, she firmly explained, “The point is that my students often look at me and have wrong impression.” Yoon-Mee further explained, “Later, when the semester gets tough, they being complain about small things make me feel guilty.” She smiled and concluded the story by saying that it “surprises my students when they have to work in class.” While Yoon-Mee noted that her young appearance and the fact that she is an Asian female may give her students these pre-conceived notions, she steadfastly remained true to her profession and challenged her students in ways she felt appropriate.

Language and Separateness

While Yoon-Mee said that she “cannot ignore what my students may say about me,” she further clarified about her relationship with them by stating that it has been “a really pleasant experience for me to interact with my students.” However, through language, she mentioned feeling “apart from” her students at times because of language challenges that “allowed me to be misunderstood.” Yoon-Mee described these challenges as events that would permit her to question her abilities as a teacher, and she referred to miscommunications as the reason why students would feel frustrated.

Yoon-Mee noted a strategy to help her students feel more comfortable with her language learning process. She explained that she was comfortable asking for help when she “had a feeling my English was incorrect.” For Yoon-Mee, it is important that her students understand what she says because “they were the ones learning from me.” For this reason, if there were any questions about a lecture or an example in class, she wanted

to be “thorough and helpful,” so that they would do well on exams. She further explained that being fluent in English and “sounding like a native” meant being a better “native professor.” Her goal in achieving this was to include her students in “developing my own fluency.” Yoon-Mee explained this approach provides her students with opportunities throughout the entire class to correct her English, and often, after a long explanation, she will ask, “Does everyone understand? Yes? No?” She said now her students feel comfortable enough with her to “pitch in” often, and she feels a sense of comfort knowing that they “don’t mind helping me in class.”

Negotiated Spaces and Spaces in Negotiation.

Yoon-Mee’s negotiated spaces are underpinned by the fact that her cultural well-being is tied to “space-claiming” (Koshy, 2006, p. 762). For now, she owns the professional space in which she is currently situated and has accepted that language, in many ways, symbolizes the cultural reality of her foreign status in the US as a professor. At home, language is used to determine how close Yoon-Mee feels with her daughter, and whether she feels connected to her despite the bilingual environments of her daughter’s life. Additionally, the multi-linguistic and multi-cultural classroom context in which she works continues to prove that perhaps “language stands for belonging to one specific culture among others” (Siber & Riche, 2014, p. 276).

Yoo-Mee explained that a way to claim her identity was to be fully comfortable and confident in all of her different areas of her life. Currently, she believes her professional space is successfully negotiated as she has developed ways to better navigate the experiences and interactions of the American cultural systems present in the academy. However, Yoon-Mee’s support systems in her personal life are weaker and more distant

than her professional support systems. Interestingly because of the lack of access to her personal support system, such as her family, husband, and the Korean culture, her sense of belonging within the American academy is much stronger than might be expected. As well, her abilities to find strategies to better maneuver the cultural systems present in the academy help her to accept her own personal struggles better in her workplace than at home.

The cultural systems that Yoon-Mee regularly navigates in work are the spaces she shares with her students and with her colleagues. She opens up a dialogue among her students in the classroom about language learning and her struggles with overcoming embarrassment and shame. She stresses less about her imperfect English because she knows that she is supported and accepted by her students as they help her navigate this space. With the space for dialogue open, Yoon-Mee has also created a reputation for herself that allows her to be perceived more positively with students. With her colleagues, Yoon-Mee has gained acceptance through collaborating and contributing to her department's meetings, committees, and projects. As an important cultural system to understand within the American academy, Yoon-Mee has opened herself up to others, in order to work alongside them professionally. In doing so, she has also opened a space for personal dialogue with them. This development of mutual understanding and acceptance allows Yoon-Mee to engage in multiple roles in her life both personally and professionally.

The multiple roles of Yoon-Mee reveal that her humility and vulnerability buttress her development of her personal and professional identities. Furthermore, the ways in which she sees herself through the English language shows that her sense of

belonging is much more critical in her home-life than in her work-life. In some ways, language functions as a barrier that creates a divide for Yoon-Mee in her professional and personal spaces. However, in other ways, using the vulnerability of language learning has crossed over into creating opportunities at work that allow her to grow as an individual and connect with her students and colleagues. As well, while she presents herself in a very secure way regarding her Korean identity in her professional space, she is separated from her Korean identity as a mother at home. The space in which she is currently negotiating is the space at home and within herself.

Soo-Bin

I was born in South Korea's 4th largest city called the Dae-Gu. It's city known to be very ...educationally and culturally conservative. There are still arranged marriages that occur there. Nowadays, it's probably considered to be more modified arranged marriage through people's parents or through their parents' social networks. My sisters got married by this way because my parents thought it was important be matched through social or political connections. In fact, all my family members got married through these ways—so I'm sort of rebel in my family and conservative relatives. I understand my native city's policies, and I respect the rules that we should follow. I respect all of it because I believe in being part of a harmonious process. However, I know I'm different. I behave differently. I'm a Korean citizen, but I'm pretty open to becoming American citizen in future. My two daughters were born in U.S., so I guess I'm technically in-between being Korean and being American for my daughters. I don't feel my citizenship defines or describes who I am, or that I think it will make me feel I

need change. It doesn't affect my family or my profession, so the way I live is in-between most times. My father, like most Korean men, wanted me be a literature major or choose something feminine because I'm female. But I knew since middle school I wanted change my life. I wanted be political scientist. I wanted study that subject more than anything. I felt I could contribute in politics. I was very strong student, even when I competed with male students. My father was upset, and he didn't agree with my choice to go to university more than three hours away. He didn't support that and was upset with me for first two years of my studies. Luckily, I got scholarship so I could survive without my father's support. Even when school offered scholarships and internships, my father said, "No, how could you go without me?" I went anyway. When I was offered to study abroad, everybody celebrated and thought it was great opportunity for me. Of course, my father said no. He was still mad, but he changed his mind when I graduated my Master's degree. He saw how much I accomplished on my own. He never expected that his daughter could work outside of the country. It took six years for him change his mind, but he did. And when my parents came to visit, I was doing two different doctorate degrees at same time. For me, I was unhappy growing up being part of such conservative family. I felt forced to play feminine role in family, and I was expected I just marry someone. That's kind of life my parents wanted for me. For some time, my father didn't want me to go to education workshops and travel. But I wanted to do it; I just wanted to volunteer to do things just to do them. I want to see different things and people. I know he wanted to protect me, but I always wanted to jump out of that protection.

Soo-Bin is an associate professor who is tenured at a Southwestern university in the US. Her personality revealed that she was outspoken, decisive, and she was animated as she spoke about her life and her experiences. Her English was not perfect, but she spoke confidently and did not mind that she stumbled over words and pronunciations occasionally. Despite the tough memories she spoke of growing up with a strict father in a conservative city, she still lovingly described her parents as “good but traditional people.”

Soo-Bin was straight forward about the notion of privilege and the privilege she came from through her parents and family in Korea. She explained:

Honestly, my parents were privileged; they had enough economic and social status in Dae-Gu, so as family, we were doing pretty good. I knew as a child some of our relatives and some of friends were not like us, and I felt a moral attachment to people who were different from my family. Of course, I respect those differences and who they are; I respected and I learned from differences because it makes me who I am. Because I didn't have financial help from my father that my sisters got, I studied hard in the U.S. and pretty much ate rice. One of my sisters, who were also considering studying in the U.S., later changed their minds after they visited me. My sister didn't consider the way I was living a better way of life. My family saw a lot of negatives sides to me living and studying in U.S., however all this became good experiences for me and I enjoyed it.

Despite Soo-Bin's privilege, she accepted giving that up to fulfill her own dreams and curiosities. Often, she dodged questions from her family members who would ask: “Why don't you follow your older sister and do what you're told?” Or, “Why don't you

just follow what we expect for you to do?” Soo-Bin offered a story of her sister who got married after graduating, and married a good man and into a good family. Because this was the expectation, she was considered to be a “good woman.” For Soo-Bin, her sister’s label of being a “good woman” did not have much meaning for her because her interests were elsewhere. She was curious about the world around her and wanted to go abroad to chase those interest. Upon arriving in a southern state for her job in the United States, she assumed that she had come across yet another conservative area. She thought: “I’m here in a new world and in a different part of the country. Therefore, I was surprised that people seemed a lot more open and a lot more accepting in terms of diversity and differences.”

Early Experiences and Personal Understanding of Culture Before the American Academy



Figure 2. Soon-Bin's Emerged Themes.

Soo-Bin's stories reflect four themes throughout her personal cultural and professional narratives. Across her experiences, she expressed that being comfortable and establishing a sense of belonging was important to her. Many times she considered herself "lucky" and praised the city and the state she lived in because she appreciated the diversity. Soo-Bin interpreted her arrival in the US as a "new part of my life," and she voiced happiness about being a part of "a country she felt close to." Sense of belonging, guilt, self-awareness, and communication and relationships were the themes that reflected Soo-Bin's experiences. As such, where she lived and worked were meaningful because it established a sense of belonging, and she frequently noted her fondness of her "home city." Furthermore, these feelings determined that she felt comfortable with the life that she had established outside of her home country. Soon-Bin was keen on developing and maintaining a strong sense of self-awareness, and she believed that being conscious of

who she was and her surroundings helped her “fit in and understand people better.”

Additionally, language was identified as a theme that impacted her self-perception with her students and colleagues, and it determined how confident she was teaching and communicating. Soo-Bin’s negotiated space ultimately revealed that, for her, there are internal and external aspects to how she has established her identity because she moves between her two cultures.

Sense of Belonging

For Soo-Bin, feeling that she rightfully belonged to a country and a state was an important part of feeling accepted. While she was raised in a conservative family, she associated “being conservative” with “being Korean.” Additionally, Soo-Bin distanced herself from this part of her upbringing, and she was enthusiastic about her life in the US. She identified strongly with personal independence and freedom in the US. Her “in-between” identity spoke strongly to how she saw herself as a Korean woman in a non-Korean world. Her sense of belonging is rooted in her personal and cultural freedom, and the distance between Korea and the US has allowed her to create a new, American identity far from the conservative upbringing she experienced. Although she stated that, of course, she loves her family and friends in Korea, she is “content and happy” living and working in the US. Her sense of belonging to Korea exists, and her Korean identity continues to be meaningful to her because of her family. However, because she spent time as an undergraduate and graduate studying abroad, she has gained a wealth of cultural knowledge that extends beyond “being Korean” and “being American.”

Motherhood was a critical component of Soo-Bin's developing identity. Her deep-rooted self-awareness was apparent in establishing her sense of belonging as she described her in-between identity:

I was in Korea until I was in early 20s. And then, the rest of time I was in the States. I'm almost 40 years old now, which means I've spent half my life in Korea and the other half here in America. Most of the time, I see myself as more Korean, but it's only when I talk about my family. But when I discuss topics like social norms and professional ethics, I identify myself as American. When I go back to Korea at almost 40 years old now, I find that I don't connect well with other Korean women in Korea. I feel closer to a woman in America. I value more of my personality and what makes me different. Both of my little girls are growing up as Koreans in US, but it does not mean that I deny Korean identities just because my identity is in-between. For example, my daughters both have Korean first names just like me; but just in case they complain in the future that people can't pronounce their names, I gave them American middle names. I think this will empathize with their Korean identities because we look like Koreans. I want to say that we have Korean identity, but it's also important to respect who my daughters will become. I leave their identities up to them.

As a mother, Soo-Bin admitted that she adjusted her ways of living according to her daughters. She explained that her children speak only Korean at home and said, "It's my policy...it doesn't mean that I isolate their American identity from them...it's my way of trying to remain close to the Korean culture through language." Her eldest daughter who is five says that sometimes she is American and sometimes she is Korean.

Soo-Bin appreciates her daughter's two identities and finds nothing wrong with going back and forth. Her sense of belonging at home through her Korean culture remains strong, and she makes an effort to help her daughters connect to the Korean culture as well. She explains further by saying, "My husband and I live here and work here. That means the US is our home. Our children were born here too." Soo-Bin's sense of belonging in the US is oriented in the closeness she shares with her family, and she acknowledges that they live a "co-existing life between both cultures." More importantly, the lifestyle her family has adopted to "co-exist" in the US is an important element to consider given that there is a conscious effort made to maintain the Korean language and culture at home.

For Soo-Bin, sense of belonging and having a sense of comfort was established in her family, as seen by how she speaks of her daughters. She said, "I wasn't typical middle school and high school girl in Korea, so I like to appreciate my girls for who they are." Soo-Bin stated that even though her extended family members live in Korea, the separation from her parents and sisters has allowed her individuality to come through. Because she has a strong sense of support in the US through her children and her husband, she does not struggle with a sense of belonging at home and within her native culture. Furthermore, Soo-Bin connects with the cultural permissions for a woman to be independent, educated, and able to make her own decisions. These decisions include the freedom and desire to speak English and Korean, to name her children both English and Korean names, and to travel between both countries.

Soo-Bin's openness to accepting changes within her home and her daughters leads me to believe that she is aware of the inevitable impact the American culture will

have on her family. “I’m lucky I’m not typical Korean woman,” said Soo-Bin. She elaborated by saying, “That’s why I didn’t meet typical Korean man either.” She proudly, yet humbly stated that she and her husband were aware that “Korean men typically work outside of home, while Korean women stay home. That’s your typical scene.” Soo-Bin clarified and explained that her husband said she could do whatever she wanted from the very beginning; if she wanted to stay home and take care of the children, she could. Although that option was open for her, Soo-Bin’s husband did not have an issue with her working a full-time job as a professor. She mentioned that when she is teaching evening classes or traveling for conferences, her husband—“like untypical Korean man”—will wash dishes, cook, and clean the house while she is away. In addition, she explained that he never wanted her to give up what she enjoyed doing, and he offered support even before their children were born. Soo-Bin’s husband, who she met while she was studying in the US, has been supportive of her career choices and her academic background. Her husband is also a professor and understands her professional interests. For Soo-Bin, she considers this a benefit within her marriage because he has a unique understanding of her job.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is described in this study as an individual having conscious knowledge of her abilities to understand fully who she is as a person, along with a keen sense of their feelings, desires, and both personal and professional motives. Soo-Bin’s self-awareness is high, as she is in-tune with her understanding of her challenges and struggles. While she occasionally poked fun at herself, she said, “It’s my reality. I know sometimes people don’t understand me,” to make light of the stories surrounding

language barriers. While maintaining her calm and composed demeanor, Soo-Bin expressed that there are moments when she realizes that “people can’t understand what I’m trying to say.” However, because she is aware that misunderstandings have occurred, she takes into consideration these challenges and offers an explanation. Additionally, she asks questions if she needs something repeated and said, “No, I don’t feel embarrassed when this happens. It happens often.” When asked about her graduate school and teaching experiences, she responded by saying:

Coming from Korean education system, it was difficult to adjust to American education system. For example, in Korea there are many lectures to pay attention to and many nights dedicated to memorizing textbook information. Here, professors encourage critical thinking and having important discussions with your peers is part of graduate school experience. When I started my doctoral program, I was grateful for way the program was open to accept me. I felt they appreciated my differences and ideas about topics I was interested in. I learned to be more analytical, which was something I wasn’t used to. Even now, I’m still learning from students. I know I mispronounce things and times my English isn’t perfect. I just ask, “Is this how you say it?” And they help me. At beginning of semester, I also say, “If you can’t understand me, let me know.”

Soo-Bin’s approach to the way she interacts with students begins with being aware of and open to her language barrier and the limitations it brings. She suggested that she could be afraid of the language barrier and “hide from her students,” but instead, she chooses to embrace it and uses it as a way to interact with her students.

Soo-Bin's navigation of cultural systems with her students helped learn to become more approachable in the classroom. Her carefree natural approach permitted her students to see her vulnerabilities and they engage with her to be helpful. Soo-Bin says, "I am open to mistakes and rather than getting embarrassed by that, I enjoy the presence of my students." When she thinks of her students, she thinks of her daughters in the future. This connection with her daughters, and a desire to help develop their bi-cultural identities has brought her much closer to accepting the limitations that both the language and cultural barriers can bring. Additionally, Soo-Bin was pleasantly surprised at how patient people were in listening to her, and she felt they were honest with what they could understand and what they could not.

Soo-Bin's acceptance of language and cultural complexities, along with her well-established self-awareness stems from positive and supportive experiences since her graduate school days. Through positive experiences of being mentored in graduate school, how she teaches and the ways in which she interacts with her students come from an encouraging standpoint. She remembers her mentors, advisors, and professors from her years in graduate school, and speaks of them fondly because they made her transition to the US meaningful. She recalled "feeling like I was not just another international student" while she was a graduate student. For these reasons, she uses these experiences to positively influence and encourage her own students. She said, "It makes a big difference having a good advisor. For me, I had two and it made me a better student." She explained:

I studied political science, which is known as male-dominated. I didn't spend much time in social settings with my peers, since I was mostly trying catch up on

assignments and readings. It took me long time to understand what I was studying because sometimes I needed look up words in dictionary. Since class discussions were mandatory in American education system, I spent a long time preparing for those as well. It was frustrating the first couple of years in my graduate programs, but it gradually got better with guidance. Because I was studying political science and communication, I moved between two different departments and two different buildings. I didn't feel like minority at all because there were so many international exchange students. I enjoyed freely expressing myself as foreigner during this time.

Soo-Bin's positive graduate school experiences later were able to provide a positive presence among her students because of her experiences. While she was surprised that "being different sometimes gave you more attention," she took advantage of the help and guidance she received from her mentors. The relationships she had with faculty members when she was a student, along with the relationship she had with her dissertation chair, strongly impacted the ways in which she viewed how she should teach, mentor, and interact with others in the academy in the future. Yet, she considers herself a "rebel in academia" because her interests "deviated from the mainstream study." Gaining support and trust through establishing these relationships allowed her to seek out opportunities and resources.

Professional Cultural Systems

For Soo-Bin, even though she teaches political science, she acknowledged that being in a traditionally male-dominated field has not affected her. She said that her "identity has been challenged" while working in the American academy, but more often

than not, she has indicated that she feels “people tend to be more careful what they talk about in America.” She explained:

I think for Americans, it’s important they respect people at work. In U.S. academy, I haven’t felt discriminated, even though there are people who feel this way at other institutions. I think it makes difference where you live and in what environment you teach in. I feel like here in US, because population is so diverse to begin with, people welcome differences more than they do in Korea.

Despite her gender and cultural backgrounds, Soo-Bin felt that she was at a campus that was “culturally and morally diverse.” She sensed that this was the reason why her experiences had been more positive than negative, and immediately recognized that this was generally not what she heard from other faculty members at different campuses.

I’m very lucky to be a part of this department and institution. I don’t see any difference in how my colleagues treat me compared to how they treat other male middle-aged American faculty members. I feel I’m treated well and feel I’m equally contributing in meetings and gatherings. All of us just drop by each other’s offices and have discussions...to us, that’s normal and I feel like I’m included here. Maybe some female faculty members are a little bit more sensitive and more self-conscious about how they are treated, but not me.

Soo-Bin’s self-possessed attitude is reflected strongly among her colleagues because the relationships she has with them are positive influences in her work atmosphere. Furthermore, because she values openness and honesty with them, she relies on them for their support as colleagues. To her, having informal discussions were just as

important as the formal discussions she would have with her fellow faculty members. She felt secure in her tenured position and the classes she teaches; she finds that it is never too late to ask her colleagues what they think about something.

Communication and Relationships

With students, Soo-Bin's approach to interacting with them is similar as with how she interacts with her colleagues. While she admitted that dealing with "older male students who are political" can be particularly challenging in a political science class, she found that some students were surprised that she was "not vulnerable" as Asian women faculty are often portrayed. The biggest challenges for Soo-Bin are language barriers, stereotyping, and physical preconceptions. She mentioned:

Yes, there are times when a student challenge me...about grading or during discussions. They think I am vulnerable and this typical among older students. They think they are stronger since I'm young female from different country. I think a lot of times it's because I speak with accent and my English isn't perfect. I know it confuses some people. I always say to my students, "Tell me if you don't understand something. I will explain it in different way for you." Sometimes I tell them, "I will practice that new way of pronunciation so that you can understand." My students are helpful.

When asked how she feels when situations like this arise, she stated that she used to feel vulnerable in the beginning of her teaching career. However, she has found that difficult situations arise from students who "get upset when they find out I'm not that vulnerable...and I'm strong, sturdy about what I said and how I meant it." In her

experience, “people get mad when their expectations are wrong.” She expanded on this by offering:

I’m getting older and getting to know more about American students in my classrooms. I understand more of their values and their habits now. Maybe I understand who they are better and their psychological expectations. So I’m learning from experience. I believe in being strong and consistent.

Additionally, Soo-Bin’s open approach to learning about and with her students has led to fewer angry discussions in class. She explained that she has encountered students who stereotype and “they try to judge me based on how my looks. However, she continued by saying, “I know there are some things I have to do differently than some American professors. For example, the way I wear something or my physical appearance needs to be professional all time, so I don’t wear short sleeves or shorts in classroom.” In some ways, accepting the burden of stereotypes has allowed Soo-Bin to be extra conscious of how her students may perceive her. Aside from language barriers and “speaking with an accent that makes [her] sound foreign,” Soo-Bin explained that stereotyping and physical preconceptions can be damaging to many females in the academy. However, she also said that even though she makes mindful efforts to “not be too casual” in how she dresses or speaks, she admits to feeling exhausted by thinking of “these petty things all the time.” For Soo-Bin, these challenges center on issues associated with language and how it makes her feel. Although she appears to be foreign in front of her students, the added language barrier and speaking with an accent highlights her foreign status and leaves her exhausted through her efforts to combat these discriminatory spaces.

Guilt

Relationship-building is an important part of how Soo-Bin establishes support systems in her personal and professional lives. Her identity, in some sense, moves with fluidity among her different environments whether it is across cultures or languages. Soo-Bin's multiple spaces relies on support systems and relationships she has with the people around her. As long as the support systems are strong, it is easier to sustain a sense of belonging for her. These support systems reflect how she perceives herself as a professor, a mother, and a wife. For Soo-Bin, how she perceives herself within her multiple roles is connected to how well she belongs to these spaces. Her working space and her professional role as a professor are embedded in her positive experiences she had when she was a student herself. Therefore, she reflects in her teaching space with her students. This space is not only rewarding for her, but has become the place meaningful memories for her as well.

In addition to her teaching role, Soo-Bin's role as a mother and a wife establishes a sense of purpose, and she has experienced motherhood while being a working mother balancing her professional role. In balancing her work life with her family life, Soo-Bin discovered that she "brings work home often," and that there have been times when she has "missed my daughter's class trips during the day because of having to teach." She spoke frequently of the guilt she felt when she was able to attend a class trip with her daughter. She noticed other children who did not have a parent present because they were working, and she explained that "it hurt" to think of her daughter alone as well. She said, "I instantly felt guilty about my own child when I saw those children. Some of them ate their snacks alone and sometimes after activities, their clothes and faces were dirty." As

she explained this story, Soo-Bin became emotional because she thought of her daughter eating and playing alone when other children had their parent on these trips. She said, “I was on only one trip with her and I was able to wipe her face when she got dirty.” That memory was powerful for Soo-Bin, and it revealed that sometimes she chooses work over her family and she feels guilty about it.

The space Soo-Bin negotiates between her work and family life has been challenging, but she expressed pride in her work and her role as a professor. She also expressed pride in being a mother. Furthermore, the ways she perceived herself as a wife was described to be “unique” because Soo-Bin stated that she “wasn’t a typical wife” either. She admitted to “not giving my husband more credit,” but explained that she was “grateful for his understanding and his help.” Between these spaces, she is fluid with her identity because she feels that she “needs to do what’s right” for both herself and her family. Soo-Bin noted that “sometimes it’s not just about cultural, it’s about what’s convenient.” This statement, in connection with these memories, revealed that her American identity was backed by her Korean identity, despite the guilt she feels surrounding her multiple identities. As such, these spaces determine that the support that she received as a student and the attention she gives and receives at work and at home show that these support systems play an important role in Soo-Bin’s spaces.

Although the challenges she has encountered are complicated, she takes imperfect situations and uses them to connect with those with whom she works. Soo-Bin jokingly says, “I have thick skin now,” to indicate that her many years in the academy have prepared her to continue to stay there for many more years to come. She has not felt that her gender or her “in-between identity” has affected her negatively in her personal and

her professional lives. Much like the freedom to move between spaces between her Korean and American identities, Soo-Bin's negotiated space reveals that there are both internal and external aspects to how she has established her identity. Moreover, her internal negotiation of balancing both cultures, languages, and a work-life balance show that she has, in many ways, dealt with the internal and emotional conflicts that arose by working, living, and becoming in both Korea and the US. For her, the emotional conflicts associated with guilt, stem from her experiences of more freedom and less limitations when it comes to both the American and the Korean cultures.

Soo-Bin negotiated for herself through the efforts she made to find her own way. She did so by navigating the spaces she finds herself. This negotiation applies to her personal and her professional environments, and is certainly evident in how she uses her support systems and the shared spaces of overcoming cultural barriers with her colleagues. More importantly, her relationships with others have shown that the struggles and challenges she has overcome contributed to her identity development. By raising her family in the US, she has made the choices to understand and participate in her bi-cultural worlds that continue to challenge her.

Jae-Young

I was born in New York City. My father was a professor and a minister, so I grew up around knowing what an academic's life was like. Unfortunately, when he didn't get a reappointment, we moved to Indiana for a little bit because that's where he decided to teach. And then after that, we moved to St. Louis. That's where I grew up with my brothers and sisters. I moved around a lot as a kid, and that kind of lifestyle wasn't always easy. It was difficult to grow up in a large

Mid-Western city because there were very few Asians around. It was a very segregated city with a lot of contrast —very Black and White. My family lived in the first suburb outside of the city, and it was considered to be a very wealthy suburb at the time. As pretty much the only Asian family in a segregated White neighborhood, I had to cross that Black/White barrier because I didn't technically fit in anywhere as a Korean or Asian. We did know Korean families around the area because my father was a minister. And as you know, Korean ministers are the center of the Korean community. Once a month, my father would preach in Chicago, so that gave us the opportunity to travel. He would take us there—driving for hours in the car filled with Kimchi and Geem. I will never forget the smell of the car! At the time, he was involved in Korean peace movements...which was very much ahead of its time. Because my father was at the heart of the Korean community, everyone always congregated at our house. For the most part, we were fairly high profile Koreans in the area...sometimes I felt like that posed problems since we were always in the public eye. Later, my grandmother came to live with us to help my mom out because she was a stay-at-home mom while my father worked. Since my grandmother was my primary caregiver...I grew up speaking Korean at home. Unfortunately, I pretty much lost it when I started school because that's when English became my dominant language. Then, I started learning Korean again in college, but it's still not great and nowhere near where it used to be. I can get by, but I'm not fluent. My grandmother was really insistent about doing a lot of Korean things, like traditional things for a long time at home. She wore her Hanbok, and she was pretty resistant to

Americanization. When I was young, there was a time when my father went back to Korea to find work. He left the church we were at because of political differences, and because of his position within the church, this caused a lot of tension between him and my mother. When I was in my last year in high school, my parents separated but later officially divorced. We really didn't have much contact with the Korean community after that. You know how Koreans are about that...we were having financial problems and my mom ended up going back to graduate school. She started working, which was a big adjustment for my brothers and sisters and I. Even though my mom was a stay-at-home mom and a very traditional Korean homemaker, she was kind of like a pro-feminist at the same time. Going back to school and getting a job in social work really empowered her. That was great to see. When I got accepted to Harvard, my mom did everything she could to send me there. After my parents' separation, when we would run into some Koreans at the grocery store, she would say things like, "Well, I'm getting a divorce, but my daughter is going to Harvard." I guess if I really think about it, for me, my identity is more Asian American because of the way I grew up...sometimes I think I always felt more Korean in some ways, but not always. Partly because discrimination within my own Korean community when my family fell onto hardship; I never felt completely accepted.

Jae-Young is an associate professor who is tenured at a West Coast university in the United States. Her interviews revealed a unique perspective on being a Korean American female who was born and raised in the United States. Unlike the other respondents in this study, her dominant language was English, and her ability to speak

fluently created a sense a comfort between myself and her. She was outspoken about the ways in which she shared her stories, as she did not spare details and the emotions she felt in her stories. She spoke passionately about her views on how she was living her life in the US, as opposed to living in Korea. She did not shy away from topics that were politically and culturally challenging. She was opinionated and straight forward about how her experiences impacted her life now as an adult, and she encouraged me to “keep digging because there’s so much more out there.” As she took thoughtful moments to reflect on distant memories, she was direct when she describes prior challenges in her life that influenced her family and upbringing. Yet, she invited controversy into our conversations, and provided details voluntarily with honesty and consistency.

Negotiation of Space, Representation, and Belonging

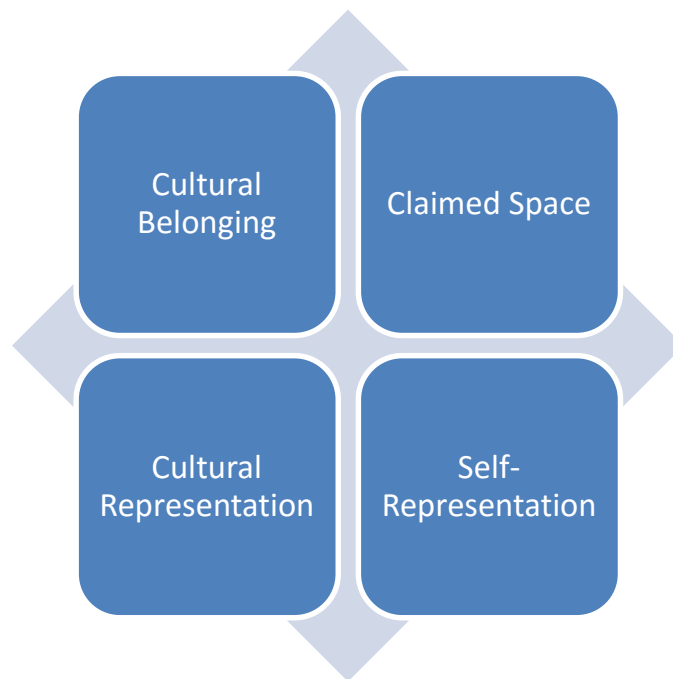


Figure 3. Jae-Young’s Emerged Themes.

Jae-Young’s stories reflect four themes throughout her personal cultural and professional narratives. Across her experiences, she noted that her perspective on her life

changed immensely in college and that her representation of herself through her culture became more important to her after her college experiences. Cultural belonging, self-representation, cultural representation, and claimed space reveal that managing her spaces and the experiences associated with these themes demonstrate important parts of her personal and professional lives. In addition, the ways in which she viewed her “very Americanized lifestyle” expressed her level of comfort in the United States. For this reason, cultural belonging for Jae-Young reflected that while other participants struggled with a sense of belonging as a Korean in the United States, she felt “too American” within the Korean community. Therefore, the notion of self-representation and cultural representation were strongly tied to her upbringing that depicted a traditional Korean household with a stay-at-home mother and a working father. She was deeply affected by the disruption of this tradition when separation and divorce occurred between her parents, and when she and her family separated from the Korean community at home. However, Jae-Young’s claimed space revealed an identity that was very much connected to both the Korean and American cultures.

Cultural Belonging

Jae-Young’s views on her upbringing were described as “traditional only at first.” She explained, “Growing up, there were so few Asians in my area so the discriminating and stereotyping was constant. In an attempt to fit in, I would make these self-deprecating jokes.” Her unique survival strategy was centered on being able to poke fun at herself, but she internalized how she felt toward her community by trying to blend in with other minorities. She said, “I laughed at jokes that were hurtful” when talking about how her friends would say “ching chong” in front of her. She admitted that she did not understand

how to deal with those comments at the time, and because racism was focused more on the Black/White perspective, she did not believe she endured racism until much later in life. Even though she did not voice her hurt feelings, she “went along with it” so that she would not “stand out any further.” While this memory was distant for Jae-Young, it was the first story she expressed. She mentioned how looking back on her experiences now she can “probably uncover more memories of racism,” but felt that “they were buried under confusion” because she was so young. Because there were few minorities in her predominantly White area at the time, Jae-Young struggled to be recognized for her hard work amid affirmative action during a time of “racial turmoil” with Blacks and Whites. Again, she referred to the Black/White perspective and explained that “many Asians were faced with this kind of racism,” but it was just that “people didn’t know what it was at the time” because she felt that “no one knew what it was and what it was called at the time.” She said, “I felt like getting into Harvard was minimized because I was Asian, and because of the “model minority stereotype,” it was an “expectation rather than achievement.” Jae-Young said, “I worked really hard and I was smart, but to others, it was convenient that I was accepted because of my race.” This experience highlighted how she felt about her identity as well:

I didn’t identify as a “person of color” so much in the beginning. Now it seems that being a person of color doesn’t apply to Asians. However, it’s a big part of my identity because I see being Asian American as being within that group. My husband is Vietnamese and we have a daughter together. For that reason, I’d see myself more as an Asian American rather than solely Korean American. We have a very Pan-Asian kind of community, so that would be how I identify. When I

was at Harvard, it was definitely a time in my life after high school when I was around the most Asian people; it was still small numbers given the size of the campus.

Jae-Young's unique perspective of including "Pan-Asian" communities and identities is highly influenced by her daughter and her active role in the Asian American community. Her teenaged daughter enjoys Jae-Young's work, as she follows her to conferences and reads about her mother's work as well. Jae-Young feels that it is important to show her daughter the many opportunities that she has. In addition, her daughter is part Vietnamese and part Korean; she enjoys exploring all aspects of both cultures, and she is highly encouraged to be curious about all parts of her identity. For these reasons, Jae-Young made extra effort to allow her daughter to take control of her learning "by doing things and reading about things that she enjoyed." She reflected on her own "traditional, but not so traditional upbringing," and mentioned how her father "untraditionally" contributed to partaking in many household chores and helped her mother when he could. However, the state of her parents' marriage was problematic, according to her memories. Jae-Young knew that a troubled marriage would be harshly criticized by the Korean community at home. It was frowned upon to discuss these difficult topics, but more than anything, she knew that divorce would make her family "look bad in a traditional sense." Her parent's eventual divorce and this separation from the Korean community as a teenager affected Jae-Young's perception of being and feeling accepted by her own culture.

Jae-Young had a desire to be around those who could contribute to her identity, and this was an important part of her development as an undergraduate student. She

craved this because she grew up in the Mid-West with little contact with a community she felt accepted by. By being able to work among other Asian Americans, Jae-Young's interests "took a global turn." She said, "I was getting more interested both intellectually as well as personally with Asians. I wanted to connect with Asians." She explained, "Luckily, when I was at Harvard I knew a lot of international students. I became more global-minded, and I liked having good friends from Peru and Germany, as well as from Asia." In essence, her identity broadened as she began to explore different communities and cultures around her when she left home. She described her college experiences as "definitely transformative" because she went from "a small town to interacting with people from all over the world." This was an essential way for her to develop her identity, cultivate her cultural representation as an Asian American/Pan Asian, and to secure a sense of belonging and identity. Even though it was a completely different atmosphere, Jae-Young felt a stronger bond with those who shared differences in ethnicity, language, and perspective. She felt that she belonged among others who shared similar challenges, and their "extensive sense of understanding people" opened her to experiences she "never thought she would have." Her representation of herself through her Korean and American cultures allowed her to gain a "broader sense of what it meant to be Asian American" through these college experiences. This development of her identity and representation of herself through her ethnicity played a major role in her life as she obtained access to a more multi-cultural and multi-ethnic life through her campus. She flourished into a compassionate person who became more empowered through understanding people in ways she could not in her previous environment. Around other diverse individuals in college, she felt more accepted because everyone was different.

Jae-Young's passion for activism work helped her to see the struggles of Asian immigrants and refugees, particularly the problems for Asian women. She explained that that "by the time I went to graduate school, I was a completely different person...because I worked on issues ranging from sex trafficking to sexual tourism in Asia." She expanded on her interests and stated she was also interested in environmental issues too:

I've been an activist and organized community work. As an Asian American, I was very aware of issues that were going on in Asia and Asians in the United States. It was also important for me to recognize how Asian connected with other Asians. I find that we have to be careful with certain stereotypes specifically when people are condemning Asian men or Korean men for being too patriarchal. A lot of people are always like, 'Oh, no! Patriarchal Korean men! That's rough!'"

Jae-Young explained that her father "was very encouraging, and he had high expectations of all the kids." However, she did not think much of those high expectations because all parents have high expectations of their children. She reflected on how it made her feel with such high expectations and constant academic pressures, but ultimately said, that the challenges "weren't because of my Korean heritage, rather, it was just because my father just wanted what was best." Jae-Young now realizes how the cultural stereotype of "controlling and demanding Korean men" can be "damaging," but further clarified the term "damaging" by saying, "I'm not trying to water down what is traditionally believed in, what I'm saying is that both men and women are changing." For Jae-Young, the presence of growth and progress in both Korea and the US are important to her, and she felt that she was "caught in between when I was growing up." Furthermore, the notion of "cultural upbringing" meant that she did not necessarily want

to “leave behind or shut out” her experiences. Jae-Young said that it is because of these memories she is able to see the world in the ways she does today.

Cultural Representation

Jae-Young’s problems with connecting to the Korean culture specifically were closely tied to cultural expectations and connections to gender sexualization for girls and women. She further explained that she found some customs “hyper-feminine” because of how there was so much emphasis on giving Korean men credit for “running the house,” when it was the Korean women who were really the ones “running it.” To her, it was not a proper representation of the Korean culture she knew. More importantly, the lack of “credit” that her mother received left this memory in Jae-Young’s young mind as a child. She clarified by stating:

It’s the stereotype out there. Culturally, I think Asian women are perceived as hyper sexual as opposed to Asian men being perceived as asexual. The expectation is that Asian/Korean women should be quiet and shouldn’t be opinionated because that can be seen as being argumentative or difficult. I think that’s why my parents’ relationship ended up in trouble as my mother became ‘more Americanized,’ if you want to call it that. She went from being a homemaker and stay-at-home mom to going back to graduate school. Then, she became more assertive and started making decisions at home. I think this is fairly common in that my mother was getting more power in the family, while my father was very distant and struggling to find a stable job. He couldn’t get a job for a while and that affected him. All these things led me to fight a lot with my parents after college. They had sent me to Harvard, and here I was, doing activist stuff.

My father had been involved all sorts of peace and reunification movements in Korea, so he was very supportive. My mother wanted me to get married and have kids. I think because of their divorce, and in some ways, the non-traditional way my siblings and I grew up, my parents were less judgmental or less heavy-handed about telling us that we had to do things a particular way. My father, for example, had to play a less patriarch role because I only saw him once a year.

Jae-Young's story of her young life was not necessarily plagued with Korean or Asian cultural stereotypes. Instead, she was aware at a young age that these issues existed and saw an empowered change in her mother that impacted her own perceptions of cultural representation. As she craved cultural belongingness as a young teenager, she found a secure way to represent herself as an Asian American/Pan Asian in college. These experiences were supported by a unique set of memories from college that shaped her identity in a global sense, which positioned her among other Asian Americans. This position was an important part of her developing identity, since it allowed her "to gain access" to those who were "more similar to her." Because of those instances in her life, she was inspired to work as an activist in a variety of Asian communities. As well, she lacked a "traditional patriarch or father figure," which was "technically un-traditional." Jae-Young took all these elements in her life to "re-craft" herself, and she felt that activist work was "important in the Asian community because this is the one group that won't ask for help." Moreover, as Jae-Young witnessed her own mother's evolution into "an educated, self-sufficient lady," it was an important detail in her life that triggered a distinctive way for her to see the world that was "in some ways really un-traditional." With her mother "surviving divorce," returning to school, and raising children nearly on

her own, Jae-Young's view of her mother was an "early glimpse at what power really meant."

Professional Space Negotiation

Jae-Young's professional identity was confidently claimed within her professional working space. She is in a department for gender and sexuality studies where the dynamics are unique because of the "interesting mix of people." For her department, only women are professors there and over half of them are women of color. She explained:

I'm in a small department with all women. I haven't had problems that people may have had in other larger departments where I feel they really are marginalized. I feel that there isn't a real sense of power hierarchy. As for my research, I feel like I am not justifying the research that I was doing; as an Asian American who focuses on labor and gender, I just do what I know I'm good at. I'm in a pretty straight forward field, I think. I felt pretty secure going through my tenure process here, and I had a very supportive chair as well as encouraging colleagues. I consider myself really fortunate because I know not every department is this way.

Jae-Young described her colleagues as "kind of like a family because there's a lot of love." She was keen on explaining the roles each professor plays. She stated that the "founding members of the department kind of built a very democratic structure and everything was very transparent." She said she felt lucky because she is part of a supportive team. During faculty meetings, Jae-Young believed she was included and admitted to being "too involved" as everyone sits together to make decisions. Despite the fact that the "department is shifting right now" because of a new department chair, she is

confident in her colleagues even though she's "not entirely sure what direction it's going to go in." Because everyone was trying to figure things out right now, Jae-Young was even more proud that she felt lucky in her professional environment. She further explained:

Talking to other Asian American women faculty, I think that the department I'm a part of is very rare. For me, I was lucky that the department wanted to build the kind of research that I was doing, so I've always felt that they were invested in what I've been doing. That kind of support means a lot. I understand that there are struggles associated with race and gender, particularly in the classrooms. You're always trying to make yourself legitimate both in terms of legitimate scholarly production and legitimate courses that you want to teach. There's a number of studies that show that women of color—particularly Asian women—who get lower evaluations from students. It's kind of a catch 22; if we're seen as passive, we're not legitimate, but if we're not, then we're seen as too aggressive. There's a really fine line that people have to walk, but I feel pretty confident here. It helps that the student body here is pretty progressive, so I don't really have to deal with a lot of push back.

Jae-Young's work atmosphere is comfortable and she is confident in the space in which she works. Her professional environment is unique, in that unlike other participants and their departments, Jae-Young's colleagues are all women and many are women of color. This setting provides a distinctive way to view gender and race in the workplace. While Jae-Young feels confident at work, she also finds it less-threatening because gender-related competition and discrimination are non-existent. However, she

credits her and her colleagues' works and says they are all "legitimate and open for critique" among the group, and she feels that the support this creates is something that has been very helpful in her career and her experience of her work life. Additionally, the closeness she feels with her colleagues not only produces a sense of support, but it also maintains an exclusive way of viewing what equality looks like among her colleagues and peers.

Self-Representation

Glaveanu and Tanggaard (2014) associate representation with identity because "representations are the very substance of our identities" (p. 14). Social, cultural, and self-representations are ways to mediate social meanings and become the "material to the construction of identities" (p. 14). Because identities are composed of these representations, it is important to consider the multiple ways in which Jae-Young's identities are fostered. For her, her professional identity came to be because she was culturally re-affirmed on her college campus, and she was able to re-claim herself and her culture through the activist work in which she has participated. Additionally, her workplace setting has provided ways for her to develop her identity through her position as a scholar and professor.

For these reasons, Jae-Young also praises the diversity in the university campus where she works. The environment in general is set up to welcome more diverse thoughts because of the diverse students and faculty present. She alluded to the distinctive ways in which students are more accepting of diverse faculty. She explained that if students have not really had much contact with people of color or women, they may be unsure of how to interact with them. This may cause problems because then people can get insulted or

they may feel like their authority as a faculty member is being challenged. Despite not feeling culturally accepted and appreciated in her young life, she now recognizes that her positive outlooks on her ethnicity and race have helped her feel accepted. Through this process of affirmation, Jae-Young has “re-connected with who she was in my past,” and this suggests that she has shaped and re-shaped her identity as she has developed relationships and experiences with her diverse colleagues and students.

Jae-Young’s level of comfort within her department, campus, and her classrooms are evident in the ways she speaks about them. She considers it an advantage to be among her fellow colleagues and her students because it allows her to “see the world that gives me certain kinds of awareness and perspective that is different than most people.” She feels that this “allows me to teach well and to do the research” that she feels most passionate. Additionally, because she sounds and writes like a native English speaker, she connects well with her students because there is no language barrier. Jae-Young has been proactive in the process of re-claiming her culture after having been distant from it in her childhood and into early adulthood. As such, having people and situations shape her life and her interactions have intentionally directed her life since entering college in ways that have helped her to develop more confidence in her identity and her Korean cultural representation. This progress in her identity continues today through her work and interactions in her department.

Claimed Space

Jae-Young has claimed this space that she works in because she is connected to every part of her professional atmosphere. For her, this space is not where she negotiates if she belongs or not or if she feels legitimate or not. It is a work and life space that she

can positively claim as her own because her sense of belonging as a professor and faculty member are strongly related to how she represents herself. Jae-Young is physically represented among other minority women faculty and “does not feel singled out.” She feels that she is part of a “well-working team” and acknowledges that there is support where she works. She also sees herself represented in the courses she teaches because she connects with topics culturally, ethnically, and by her gender. Jae-Young expressed her excitement for the topics she teaches, and further explained that “it [was] easier for [her] to teach something [she] was passionate about and close to.” Her students see her as a legitimate culture and gender studies professors because of this as well. She says:

Our program provides a very intersectional perspective. For us, we teach race and transnational issues so if students have self-selected to be here, the topics and matters we discuss in class aren’t a surprise. Sometimes young White women come to class and think that they understand what these kinds of classes are about. Many students don’t realize that all of these issues are surrounded by complexities. It’s not just that women can be in hierarchical positions or about equal pay. Some White middle class women get uncomfortable when they realize that it’s not just about saving the world, or about White women becoming the saviors of ‘other’ women in the third world. Once in particular, I had a student come in and say that she thought I was anti-White and that the class should celebrate the women’s movements instead of being so critical of it. I’ve noticed that some female students tend to personalize these things. I think students assume that an Asian professor is an Asian immigrant. So I think they’re surprised

that I don't have an accent or I speak English fluently, and that I have opinions on the issues that exist for Asian women.

For Jae-Young, these interactions with students speak to how she feels about herself as a professor. Even though she jokes about being a “tough professor,” she is mindful of the hard work that many of her students put forth. She admits to “loosening up now,” but says it was not until after she gained some years of teaching she began to feel this way. She is situated firmly in knowing and understanding herself in both aspects of her personal and professional identities. As well, how she projects herself as a professor in her department is largely dependent on how she viewed herself as a student before. Her views and the ways in which she teaches are influenced by her Korean and American cultures. She identifies with her abilities to use her cultures to teach successfully in her department because the courses she teaches are centered on gender and sexuality studies. As such, she finds herself “looking back often” when she teaches, since she finds it “a great way to gain more perspective” as she “influences a new generation of students.” Jae-Young further developed her identities in early adulthood upon experiencing a new way of life in college. Likewise, the development of her scholar identity developed later into adulthood because she admittedly overlooked flaws in her culture and community. While she explained that her multiple identities have “developed over time,” it took many decades of struggling between her high-level of self-awareness and her desire to feel confident about herself to understand that she was a work in progress. More importantly, increasing her sense of belonging within the Asian community was an important part of feeling not only accepted, but ultimately determined which department and field she became interested in as a young scholar.

Jae-Young spoke of the difficulties of “feeling rejected by the Koreans” in her community because of her parent’s divorce. In many ways, the stigma regarding divorce within a Korean family was so strong, and she endured the repercussions of that trauma and internalized how she felt that she did not belong. Jae-Young explained “feeling shunned and ashamed” for actions that did not necessarily have anything to with her, yet she “felt responsible because of her siblings” and the “expectations to pave the way” for them. Now, she feels that “with age and experience” she feels that she can “engage in dialogue freely” and does not feel that she is afraid of how she is perceived. She looks back on her upbringing occasionally, but she does not “feel bitter or hurt” any longer, and while as a child the lack of belonging in her neighborhood and community affected her perceptions of her Korean culture, her university experiences opened new doors for her to feeling accepted. As well, she felt she belonged to a community of like-minded people and adjusted well “to a new environment with so many different people from all different places.” As she re-examined herself in this new cultural context at Harvard, she opened herself to others as she welcomed the diversity of races/ethnicities, thoughts, and opportunities. For these reasons, her teaching is greatly impacted by how she understands her students and their surroundings. Her unique perspectives on how she began to accept her own cultures and identities speak to the students who are often “wandering like myself.” Jae-Young jokes about her outspoken nature because she feels “it tends to catch people off guard.” However, even speaking out like this is something she called “a recent development” both in her personal and professional life. She explained:

I’ve been at the department a long time. Now I have a lot of institutional knowledge to contribute, and I think that some people are very taken aback when

an Asian American woman challenges them. There's a stereotype that people believe that Asian women professors are kind of playing it safe with every student until they become tenured. It's like you're not trying to rock the boat. In my case, I was always fairly outspoken to begin with, but I think some people post tenure kind of find a voice.

Jae-Young is open to talking about being fortunate, in that she has “found different niches” professionally. Because both her Korean and American cultures and identities connect so closely with her profession in the academy because of the topics she teaches, she does not feel the need to choose one culture over the other. More importantly, the ways in which she feels that she belongs in her place at the academy is rooted in her early experiences as an undergraduate student on campus. Those prior memories revealed not only challenges she overcame before attending college, but the complexities around her developing identities upon entering the college atmosphere for the first time. Additionally, the sense of comfort and feeling safe at school provided a foundation in which she developed into who she is today. Many of her accomplishments that she is most proud of occurred on campus when she was either an ungraduated or graduate student. While Jae-Young's young past exposed cultural struggles that stemmed from “feeling that I did not belong anywhere,” she later found herself in a collegiate environment that welcomed her curiosities and emerging identities. Later, she found her voice as an individual, a woman, a scholar, a mother, and an activist through the contributions she made in a space she felt she belonged to. In essence, the sense of “home” happened to be the academy all along, and from understanding this pivotal

moment in her life, Jae-Young's internalized complexities of not only past challenges and fears, but the will to succeed despite these issues, is who she is as a person today.

Kyung-Sun

I was born in Korea, and I grew up in Korea until age of 15. I came to the United States on February 11th of 1975. I remember that particular date; I don't remember other things, but for whatever reason, I seem to remember that date. I'm a U.S. citizen now, and I was naturalized in 1984. Growing up in Korea and being a teenager, I liked school very much, and I was a very active and strong student. I pleaded with my mother if I could stay in Korea because I didn't want to leave my friends in Korea. I really didn't want to come to the States. But it was such a big deal to go to the U.S. Everyone wanted to go...at the time, if you wanted to go somewhere, you went to the U.S. For that reason, my mother thought that coming to the States was going to be the best way for her to provide for us. As a single mom with very little educational background, it was very difficult for her to find a job. I went through the infamous public school system in Chicago, and I remember being very unhappy with the whole experience. I cried every day because I didn't want to go to school. I was kind of small girl, and I remember all these other kids being so much bigger and taller than me. It took me a while to get adjusted to life in the States because I couldn't speak any English, and I couldn't even understand anything at school. I was bullied a lot in school—it was the 1970s—so, it was a combination of cultural and racial discrimination. Since I was also physically small, I think that was another reason why kids picked on me. And the fact that I couldn't speak any English probably added to the

problem, so I was just picked on all the time for everything. My sense of identity has changed a great deal from the time I was a child in Korea, to when I was struggling as an immigrant student in the States, to when I became a college student and then graduate student. When I went to college and many years after that, I felt the need to contribute to the South Korean democratization movement because I was still very close to my Korean culture. I worked very diligently with women's groups as well. I wouldn't be here without my past experiences, so I can't say which memories are more important than others. I wouldn't have gone into graduate program had it not been for the activism work that I've been very passionate about. It all started when I went back to Korea after I graduated college, and right before I started my graduate program. The experience was life-changing and it really awakened me because I hadn't been back to Korea since I immigrated. I was very conscious of the fact that my English was not good enough to be able to fully express myself for a long time. So I always wrestled with that issue, and I think that made me a very shy person. Of course, now I'm fluent and I don't worry about that kind of stuff. But for a long time, as a child, that really left me re-thinking my self-worth. At the time, my identity was very undefined because I was still learning who I was, and I was struggling to see who I was becoming at a time when I felt I had little direction. I had a nickname though. I was called 'smiley' because I would just smile and not articulate myself because I had grown afraid of not being able to speak correctly. I was always afraid that I would make a mistake with my English.

Kyung-Sun is an associate professor and co-director of the Center for Korean Studies at a university on the West Coast. I found her English to be fluent with no indication of hesitation or an accent, and she sounded confident and well-spoken during our Skype interviews. Her first interview, where she described herself as a timid and scared child, revealed that her language and sense of presence had come a long way since those days. She is a Korean-born American citizen and identifies as a Korean American. As well, Kyung-Sun is married with children whose dominant language is English, and her second-generation Korean American husband “speaks English better than Korean.” She explained, “I have two children who are in college. They grew up speaking English more than Korean.” In addition, Kyung-Sun has two siblings and has mixed emotions recalling memories of attending high school and college in Chicago. She considers “trauma to be very much a part of [her] childhood,” and she expressed that despite the hardships, she accepts the challenges and understands that they are important parts of who she is today. Kyung-Sun also explained that she has retained the Korean language and her abilities to communicate effectively in Korean. She prides herself on being able to speak both languages well, and visits Korea frequently for work, research, and to see her family. Furthermore, Kyung-Sun now looks back on her upbringing and childhood and said that “it’s been a long time since I’ve thought about some of these stories.”

Her recollection of memories that were both buried and distant seemed to surprise her to some extent; she made careful efforts to provide clarification about her emotions since she realized she had not considered them before. She explained that sometimes she does not remember details right away because previous memories were upsetting or “hard to think of” because of the length of time that had passed. Her upfront responses and

descriptive images of her experiences paved my path for understanding her life; Kyung-Sun's specific and complex stories highlighted the challenges, trauma, and immigration of growing up and living life in two cultures and countries that have contributed to her personal and professional identity development.

Early Understanding of Cultural Systems

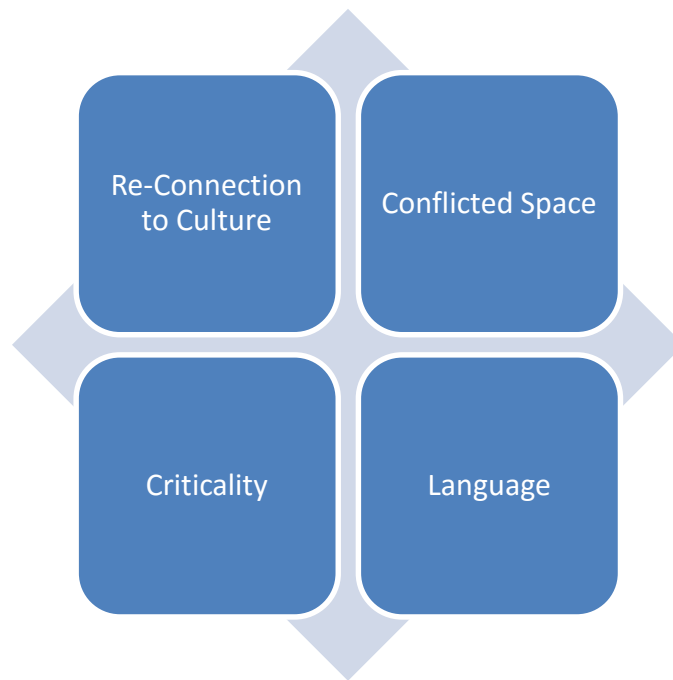


Figure 4. Kyung-Sun's Emerged Themes.

Kyung-Sun's stories reflect four themes throughout her personal cultural and professional narratives. Across her experiences, she noted that she was "so conscious of [her] own limitations and it was burdensome to the point where [she] restrained [herself] from doing things" outside her comfort zone. The limitations she encountered were caused by her concern about language, communication, physical differences, and cultural contrasts she slowly overcame as a child. Kyung-Sun's memories of difference took a toll on her self-confidence, and she believed that because "there were few Asians

around,” it was “somewhat normal” to be “afraid of what [people] didn’t know.” As such, these memories pushed her to conform and cope with these attitudes.

Re-Connection to Culture

Kyung-Sun stated that she “was still very much connected with the Korean culture and the language, especially because my research is focused on Korean history.” She described “trauma” connected to her childhood that resulted from language difficulties and issues with being bullied at school. At a young age, she became very aware of her ethnic and racial differences in Chicago, and she realized that she had more than just a language barrier to overcome. Socially, she felt she needed to “blend in” because she “didn’t want to really be noticed.” Academically, she was a strong student and she “excelled very quickly.” In her youth, she felt she needed to disconnect from her Korean background in order to assimilate into the American culture, but as an adult she was “fighting to hang onto” what was left of her Korean identity. Additionally, these childhood and adulthood experiences of learning to accept, adapt, and learn from these challenges have influenced who she is now, as well as her research. She has become “more focus[ed] on the issues that had to do with immigrant life.” Kyung-Sun’s research interests are centered on topics related to contemporary Korean society because her Ph.D. is in Korean contemporary history and Korean immigrants’ lives. She explained that she “had always kept my interest in Korea, the Korean culture, and the history.” While there was not a program that was specifically for Korean studies at the time she wanted to study this topic further, Kyung-Sun gained support from her committee members to pursue a subject that genuinely interested her. She said, “I couldn’t even entertain the possibility of doing anything that wasn’t related to Korea. For these reasons, we can see

that the connection with who she is as a Korean is “stable” and intact. As such, her Korean culture continues to drive the way she conducts her research. She offered:

In the beginning, the Korean-part of my identity was inconvenient because it affected learning a new language, fitting in, and generally everything that I was attempting to do in America. But now, it’s a major part of my identity because nearly all of my work is partial to the Korean-part of my cultural identity. I still identify very strongly with my Korean identity, and it makes up the bulk of who I am now. It would be unfair to not acknowledge that because the challenges and encounters I had due to my immigrant status has made me into who I am today.

Kyung-Sun’s upbringing in both Korea and the US has influenced the specific professional choices she made. Her scholarly research is based in her heritage cultural experiences. Kyung-Sun identifies personally with her research topics, with her participants, and with the data she collects. She began her journey in the US as a young immigrant, who was forced to come to the US because of decisions her mother made. As well, she was required to learn the English language and expected to thrive in a school environment that was not only hostile, but discriminating because she was a non-English speaking Korean immigrant. Kyung-Sun characterizes these experiences as traumatic because she believed her Korean culture was the source of ridicule, pain, and oppression as a young girl. However, later, she gravitates back toward her Korean culture after she “gains acceptance” by learning the English language and attending college. While she believed she had to give up her heritage culture that once caused so much pain in the US, she returned to that culture because she realized that it is in fact the Korean-part of her identity that reflects who she is. Furthermore, the ways in which she had incorporated her

home culture into so many parts of her adult life suggests that Kyung-Sun simply could not ignore it. Instead, she can now embrace herself as a Korean American woman. Across her many roles as mother, spouse, professor, and American citizen, she calls upon her Korean identity to “balance and live my life fully.”

The American-part of Kyung-Sun’s Korean American identity encourages her to live bi-culturally in the US with her English-speaking children and husband. Because her children speak English at home, and she is married to a second-generation Korean American man, maintaining the “American side” of her identity is an important way for her to move between her two cultural spaces, and for her to preserve her relationship with her family. For Kyung-Sun, living fluidly with both her Korean and American subjectivities has allowed her to preserve unique relationships with her family and friends both in Korea and the US. She negotiates the different spaces she inhabits in her life by being adept at tapping into both her Korean and American selves. While she stated that “there are times she feels more Korean,” she chooses to live and work comfortably in the US. Additionally, her bilingual abilities now allow her to connect with people of both cultures in a way that would be difficult if she were monolingual. Before she became fluent in English, it was “intimidating to attempt to connect with people.” However, now that her language skills have made her more confident, her bilingualism “distinguishes me in both cultures.” For Kyung-Sun, what was once challenging and intimidating has now become an important tool for her in all areas of her life. On a personal level, she prides herself on having a wide circle of close friends who speak different languages and are from different parts of the world. On a professional level, while she conducts research

and publishes in English, she often finds herself “gaining access” to her participants and research topics through her abilities to speak both Korean and English well.

Criticality

Kyung-Sun’s experiences mirror common struggles that young immigrants have, such as language and cultural barriers, issues fitting in at school, and feeling lonely because of difficulties making friends. However, her “level of acute consciousness” was both a “curse and a blessing” because she felt that she was “aware of too many things so young.” Kyung-Sun explained that she “saw the ugly sides” of making friends at school and believed that discrimination and racism were more than “just a shock factor for people” during this time. She realized that those around her did not understand racism as she did, and she recognized that discriminating experiences were often inflicted by others unintentionally. She also believed that there was an “incorrect definition of racism at the time,” because there were many people who thought that Asians were immune to racism.” This level of criticality was an important survival strategy for Kyung-Sun, and through using this strategy of analyzing her surroundings, she was able to gain a deeper understanding of why she felt misunderstood. Not surprisingly, these early experiences also made her “very critical of people.” She began to wonder why people reacted in negative ways towards immigrants and thought of ways to help those who were in need. Because she could relate to their struggles as a young immigrant herself, she began trying to aid other immigrant students. Later, these beliefs and experiences led her into activism work and allowed her to interact closely with other immigrants and women. She saw herself as different among her peers when she was growing up which shaped a sense of re-connection to a culture to which she wanted to belong as an adult.

Looking back on her young school years, Kyung-Sun explained that she did not have the kind of cultural upbringing that her fellow classmates seemed to have. She and her siblings did not have opportunities to travel or go on typical family vacations “like American families did.” She explained, “My mother was always working. There was never time or money to go on vacations. She was a single mom and that was unique for people to see in the Korean community.” And, because her mother was taking care of three children on her own, she said, “My family was poor. Being poor and being one of the few Koreans in Chicago at that particular moment was very difficult.” Kyung-Sun lamented that “there was always a pre-conceived notion that Asians were somehow better off.” Unfortunately, her teachers and friends assumed that she and her family were financially stable. She remembered believing she “had to overcompensate” for being both poor and unable to speak English which led to her working diligently in school to “make up for all the other struggles.” Kyung-Sun rejected the notion that these attempts to endure were out of bravery; instead she revealed that it was out of fear since “it was the only way to survive.” Being aware of the prejudice and her family’s “shortcomings” meant that she wanted to “get noticed” and be known for more positive things in her life.

Kyung-Sun’s understanding and critical analysis of race, ethnicity, and immigrant status in the US came at a young age. In addition, she began to see how her gender affected the decisions made in her life. She was compassionate for other women who had to overcome similar obstacles in their lives. She explained:

I started working with women and friends who were working on the issues with victims of domestic violence. We founded this organization in the Chicago area. My self-identity as a Korean American woman took shape around this time

because I experienced so many things that changed my life. It's not so much that I was a woman that influenced my thinking, but in my late 20s, I had gone to Korea for three months and had a very empowering experience there working with people. When I started my graduate program in the States, I completely changed my major to Korean history from European history because of the experiences I had while working in these organizations. Now, pretty much all of my research is around these topics.

Kyung-Sun's experiences working with women through these organizations helped her to understand that immigrant life had many variations, and that it could not be "just about the trauma I knew." These experiences exposed violence and harassment against women in both countries, and the many disadvantages that immigrant women suffer. She clarified that in addition to language and cultural barriers, she learned about issues of sexual violence, lack of resources for mental healthcare, and domestic violence that many American and Korean women endured. Kyung-Sun explained that being able to speak fluent Korean helped her assist with Korean women who needed her help. Additionally, working with women from all over the world allowed her to see and hear the stories from women who were Filipino, Japanese, Vietnamese, Latin American, El Salvadoran, and Guatemalan. Importantly, she felt that these experiences shaped her sense of self and allowed her to "feel accepted by many different women." She expanded on these memories by offering:

The women I helped, helped me think about who I was every day. I thought to myself, "Oh, I'm not as different as I thought," especially when I knew that I could help these women. Sometimes being Korean helped, other times it helped

that I was Asian. I think overall, women were able to receive help from me because I was a woman too. I think I would have to say, it's not so much that I was a Korean American woman per se, but I think it was because I had gone through these experiences in the 1980s. Contributing to helping these women became very important to me. It's made me different from the rest of the Korean American community because I wasn't afraid.

Kyung-Sun believed that many in the Korean community "turned a blind eye" to women who "were considered to be at such a disadvantage." She explained that she "wasn't afraid" because learning about and working with these women meant she "had to come from a place with an open mind and heart." Furthermore, she recognized that "not coming from a place of fear" illustrated her abilities to "look at these women as people," rather than only by their immigrant status. Kyung-Sun further emphasized that she spent so much of her childhood in fear that "it may have done more harm" than good. While Kyung-Sun did not experience violence herself, she knew that it was common not to discuss violence and to "pretend there wasn't an actual problem." She explained that she got negative attention from the Korean community for having an absent father and a working single mother. As a result, she was not afraid to see the differences in people, and did not want distinguish them "based on situations they could not help."

Additionally, Kyung-Sun's perspective on how she viewed herself as a woman came from an entirely different place since she worked so closely with these women. She explained that when she let go of her self-prescribed limitations, such as language barriers and her immigrant status, she found herself in new experiences among women who changed her life in so many ways. Kyung-Sun realized that while much of own life

and the stories of these women differed, there were similar parallels that allowed her to be relatable to them, and vice versa. As well, she began to consider her own privileges over the trauma she had experienced as a child. The privilege of having options and resources, which seemed limited at the time for her “was an important and eye-opening moment for me.”

Kyung-Sun’s identity as a Korean American woman is enhanced through her understandings of women from all over the world. These unique understandings that came from working with women helped her believe that she could not see the world in “just black and white” because there was “so much more to people than that.” She explained that she knows that there are many people who do not have access to these kinds of “adventures.” More importantly, she believed that it was fear that separated these women from the community, and she refused to be fearful and isolated.

Language

Kyung-Sun’s graduate school experiences strengthened her understandings of herself more. While language had always been an issue for her, she grew to learn the English language well. Initially, when she referred to her struggles of communicating in English, it seemed there was a great deal of stress and trauma associated with language learning. During our interviews, it was nearly impossible to detect that at one time she had struggled with English and that she had felt her language struggles held her back in her life. She explained:

Honestly, I was very naïve and graduate school was a very alienating experience. My adviser was supportive and was someone who was very well-known in South Korea for his political work. As a Korean American woman, I felt like I wasn’t

adequately prepared for the graduate program. And, I felt very inadequate again and again throughout the program. Looking back on it now, I wish I had more theoretical background and rigorous academic writing practice. English was always the problem up until this point.

For Kyung-Sun, she felt that she needed to “work extra hard,” and it affected the way she viewed herself as a student because it influenced her identity development. Language learning was the root of negative memories for her because it closely tied to her being bullied as a child. In adulthood, she realized she needed to put forth effort to retain her Korean language since English had become her dominant mode of communication. After having children, she wanted to preserve the Korean language and culture in her own family. She wanted to pay special attention to helping her children to learn deeply about the Korean culture and the Korean language. She offered:

I can’t separate myself from just the Korean side of me or the American side. My husband is also Korean American, but it’s different for him because he was born and raised in the United States. As a second generation, English is his dominant language. With our children, that’s one thing I really regret—is that as a mother, it would have been perfectly okay for me to speak English and Korean to our children. However, I felt that I didn’t want their father to be excluded from conversations.

Kyung-Sun offered, “As an individual the way that I identify now definitely has changed because I’m a mom.” She credits her two college-aged children for changing her perspective on her life and her role as a professor, but she also explained that because English is the dominant language in her home, it affects the ways in which she has

maintained and enacted culture with her children. She admitted, “Of course I wish I had spent more time teaching my children Korean. I regret that.” However, she also recognized that “sometimes I find myself being more comfortable in English,” so she “uses whatever language that comes out of my mouth.” As well, she knows that it is important to include her children and husband in conversations at her home, and she understands that if English “is easier, then it’s okay.” Kyung-Sun incorporates Korean foods, Korean pop culture, and the Korean language in her family life. Because she does not want to isolate her English-speaking husband by solely using the Korean language at home, Kyung-Sun’s issue with language became an essential component in how she moved between two cultures with her children and then for her husband. Indeed, language influences Kyung-Sun’s life personally, academically, and professionally. She cannot eliminate either of the languages, and she chooses to “use both,” which creates a sense of comfort for her in being able to choose “which language applies.” Likewise, having the dominant language be English at home and at work is an important part of maintaining a communication that is acceptable in both spaces. Kyung-Sun said, “I like that I don’t have to choose. It’s less traumatic that way.”

Navigation of Cultural Systems in the Academy

Kyung-Sun’s professional identity is profoundly rooted in her cultural understandings of herself. Much of her work is culturally oriented, and it is advanced by her past experiences and memories. In addition, Kyung-Sun relies on her experiences as a mother and a wife to make meaning of her career, as well. She acknowledges that her college-aged children influence the ways she now views her undergraduate and graduate students. While she jokingly admitted that “they’ve made me more understanding in

some aspects,” she has found that through her children, she has come to relate to her students’ personalities and challenges.

Conflicted Space

Kyung-Sun’s role as a mother has molded not just her space at home, but also her roles as an activist and a professor. For Kyung-Sun, she “prefers to look through my children’s eyes” when considering her work because she thinks “it helps me recognize things from a different angle.” Kyung-Sun strives to relate with and be relatable to those with whom she interacts at work. She is interested in aiding those who seek support which is an outcome of her own experiences as a young child. As such, “being available” is a way for her to establish relationships with those around her.

Furthermore, Kyung-Sun mentioned that before her children, she “didn’t really plan things and things just sort of happened” when it came to work. After having a family, she learned to understand what “making time” meant. In addition, Kyung-Sun’s approach to leading a successful professional life was enlightened by doing things on her own. As an individual who “often found myself finding my own way,” Kyung-Sun did not find it necessary to “seek out help” when she needed it. She admitted that she found herself in activist work because she wanted to help those “who couldn’t ask for help;” however, ironically she admitted to being someone who needed to do things on her own. She remains conflicted about “always doing work” during the time her children were growing up. Although Kyung-Sun does not feel she has “risked” being unavailable for her children, she believes that the world in which they live as a family has been greatly influenced by the choices she made as a scholar and activist.

Furthermore, Kyung-Sun recognizes the convenience and feeling of being “less restrained” in an American career. She adds that the responsibilities in her household are to be “taken care of by whoever is available.” While she hesitated to admit that this situation was “quite untraditional,” she believes that between herself, her husband, and her two children, there are four adults “who are capable of doing things at home.” Kyung-Sun’s “untraditional” beliefs are a part of her conflicted space because while she accepts them as such, she conceded feeling a sense of guilt for leaving her children and family to “non-Korean things, while she focused on her academic career. Additionally, while the start of her young life in the US began with turmoil and pain, she recognized that assuming an American identity and approach to schooling have had a meaningful impact on her current identity.

Kyung-Sun’s experiences in the American academy have been in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures and said that her department is racially and ethnically diverse. Within her workplace, professional identity is reinforced by a group of faculty members who share a “common bond.” She referred to this bond as something that extends beyond being ethnically diverse individuals, and explained that it has been helpful that the workplace environment has been “supportive, inclusive.” She further described her department as one that “consisted of faculty members who come from all parts of the world.” And, particularly, since many of the professors are from Asian countries, such as Japan, Vietnam, and China, she feels that the differences that she has observed come from those who were born in the States and those who were born abroad. However, in terms of gender, there are not many women with whom she works. She recalled a recent memory regarding a conversation she had with her department chair:

I'm in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, and we're not necessarily known for gender diversity. I would definitely like to have more women in my department, but at the same time, I don't want to think of myself as someone special in terms of my gender. I was recently asked to be the vice chair. He didn't come out and say that he needed me because I was a woman; but in so many ways, it felt that's what he meant since he's a White man in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures. I've found that again and again, there's a sense that as women we are sort of looked at as a double standard. If we are aggressive that's a bad thing or if we are not aggressive enough it's not good either. My department chair means well; it's not a bad thing that institutionally speaking, he wants equity.

Kyung-Sun's work environment is culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse. And, while she speaks highly of her colleagues because she believes that "everyone has a unique way of contributing to the department and to their students," Kyung-Sun questions being a part of a diverse department that lacks gender diversity. Working with mostly men, Kyung-Sun has learned to recognize that "things are not what they seem." She believes that the few women professors "take the wheel" in departmental functions and meetings because they, too, are aware of the gender gap within their department. Kyung-Sun's humble nature underpinned her sentiments that she does not see herself as someone special just because she is a woman. Additionally, she felt that her race, ethnicity, and gender have been advantages regarding her research. Rather than critiquing the ways that they could be disadvantages, she chooses to conclude that working within this space has allowed her to feel secure in the work that she produces,

and she feels supported as well. She believes she “lucked out” since she knows of other professors who do not share these feelings. Interestingly, Kyung-Sun is not willing to critically analyze her work situation through a feminist lens as she has in her previous activism. Instead, she revealed that culturally and experientially, she has established a single, strongly grounded identity, as she has melded both the Korean and American cultures together professionally. She clarified this statement:

I tend to be not confrontational. I don’t like rocking the boat. It’s strange because I don’t mind demonstrating in front of the Korean consulate office; but when I actually meet with the consulate I might have a different sort of interaction. I think this part of my personality extends to my professional life. I am not as assertive in terms of asking for a raise, even though I do a lot more work than any other faculty members in the department. But I don’t necessarily make this argument even though I’m just overwhelmed with work. I accept my personality because it just means that I know that I work a lot...I see that my culture has cultivated my research as well.

The way that Kyung-Sun claims her space at work is by challenging the way that the department is functioning to herself, but accepting the status quo and focusing on her loyalty to her profession and department. She explained that as a non-confrontational person, it is easier for her to “focus on what’s important to me because that’s what counts.” Additionally, she does not feel there is extreme, harsh discrimination and prejudice, and Kyung-Sun resigns herself to believing that her place of work is “reasonable” and “as it should be.”

Additionally, she puts a lot of pressure on herself because she feels she works more than she needs to. As she mentors her students and works with them with their research, she has a place within her work life that brings her satisfaction. While the load may be large, and she explains that her stress level is high, it is evident that how she contributes to her department, academic discipline, and her students are important components of how she makes meaning in her professional life. Because these experiences create such meaning for her, Kyung-Sun's "quality of life is determined by...all these parts of my life working well together." She has developed a professional identity that is strongly grounded in her cultural identity, her (uncritical) loyalty, and the ways in which she feels accepted and relatable in her workplace. Kyung-Sun feels conflicted between these feelings she has and the realities of how her workload has affected her life. She admits that her work responsibilities have caused some strain at home and says:

I'm always falling short of my husband's expectations—not so much the children's expectations, I think. I work a lot and I work all the time. I feel like I'm not fulfilling anything because I'm at work working or I'm at home working. When I say that I see myself as falling short of my husband's expectations, to me it's not purely a cultural thing or even a Korean thing. In this case, my husband is very unique. I often feel like my role in the family has been completely switched, like I'm what other people might consider the distant dad. Sometimes I call myself a backstage manager. It's not that I don't do things with the kids; I do everything like, most of the cooking, the grocery shopping, the cleaning, and things like that. But it's true that my husband does a lot too. He has picked up the

kids and has gone to all the school meetings, school concerts, and things like that. When I'm away for conferences, I would forget about some of these things, even though my husband would always call me. I'm happy to forget sometimes. But the tension is always there even when I forget. I used to feel guilty about these things, particularly when my children were much younger. Now, I try to tell myself to not feel guilty anymore.

While she has lived much of her professional life choosing not to enact many of the traditional positionalities of Korean women, Kyung-Sun has decided to concentrate on the fact that her work, research, and relationships with her students bring her joy. She endeavors to help those in the academy, and she appreciates being considered for a leadership role beyond her tenured position. She works more than anyone else in her department yet feels discomfort in asking for a raise. As well, she experiences conflict at home based on guilt and shame--from being away from her family often, for not meeting her husband's expectations of being a more present wife and mother. She associates guilt with unmet cultural expectations because her husband and children's expectations of her do not align with her own desires. Kyung-Sun settles instead for a sense of security and confidence in discussing her work and in her contributions to her department and her students. Thus, she lives with the guilt but is aware of whom she is; she has situated herself in meaningful experiences professionally to feel fulfilled and satisfied with her life.

In conclusion, Kyung-Sun's work life is meaningful and her interactions with her colleagues and students have had a significant impact on her life as a professor. It is evident that she goes above and beyond her usual work expectations. She is aware of the

strain that it has caused on her family and marriage, and she feels much guilt for abandoning what she believes others expect from her. As the interviews ended, my final question to Kyung-Sun was about advice she would give to other women faculty members. She laughed and said, “To be protective of their time.” Kyung-Sun’s final statement helps us in realizing her own approach to self-preservation: to protect one’s time in the ways that make sense to the individual, and to forgo “parameters that dictate” aspects in life that “don’t appeal to you.” Both her personal and professional identities are intensely impacted by her cultural identity as a Korean American woman; however, she chooses her American identity over the other to experience more freedom.

Ji-Min

I was born in Korea, and I grew up in Dae-Gu. I came to United States in 2008 to work on PhD. Right now, I’m Korean citizen, and I’m staying in States because of my job, but that’s about it. I have two siblings who are both in Korea, and I’m oldest of the three. Since I’ve only been here since 2008 and not a US citizen, my identity is pretty much Korean American. Growing up in Korean education system, it was really competitive and really stressful. I grew up working really hard and spending a lot of time studying feeling discouraged. I was raised in very traditional Korean household, which meant many academic expectations. We came to United States because my father was enrolled graduate school. Things were difficult financially, but there were more difficulties with learning English. Still, I have gaps in my own knowledge where I don’t know certain American cultural references. When it comes to my own cultural background, a lot of times, I feel that it’s very mixed—very “Konglish.” Dae-Gu is very conservative place.

It's place where gender roles are not just cultural; they're distinctive expectations toward females and males and girls and boys. Pretty much it's frowned upon for women go abroad, whether for school or marriage. It's common to believe you should stay within your own Korean culture. Of course, this is all a part of my parents' generation. I came from really conservative, traditional background in terms of gender expectations. But I think I'm different. So, I put a lot of pressure on myself because I'm oldest of my siblings. The pressures to do well in school, get a good job, and visit my mom and dad more often were always there. But I think I put upon myself. When I was in school in Korea, I didn't really feel pressures because of my gender; I went to all-girls school until I went to college. The expectation was to just be strong student. But, I know that many of my friends had some shock going into labor market after graduation because they weren't used to environments where men and women were together. Later, I went to China to do my Master's degree because I majored international studies. I had many difficulties as international PhD student in U.S. because of class discussions and participation—all because my English wasn't good. I felt rather than visible discrimination that can be seen and felt in the classroom, I endured more of what I call a "perceived unfairness." What I mean by is I noticed [that] there some professors who take extra care of international students; they would listen more carefully and be patient. In that way, I felt I was being cared for as student. However, there other professors who ignored me, and I felt they didn't want me to speak up in class because it was inconvenient. I say inconvenient because it would take longer to speak, express myself, or provide examples during

discussions. If students and professor couldn't understand me, it would be inconvenient there was lot of re-explaining to do. It would take too much of class time for me to correct mistakes or grammar. I felt intimidated by that, and I was uncomfortable by experiencing kinds of "perceived unfairness." It still made me hard worker, and I didn't want disappoint myself. Sometimes I felt uncomfortable because I knew the professors who acting unfair towards me knew they would have work harder with me. I participated more in classes where I knew professors would be supportive of language problems. When I participated less in classes I was uncomfortable in, my participation points was not as good.

Ji-Min is an assistant professor on tenure-track in the psychology and sociology department. She has been at her current university campus for a few years, and said that this was her first time being interviewed for any study. Although English is her second language, she was comfortable being interviewed in English. She spoke confidently and quickly. She was expressive with her hands and facial expressions, despite our interviews being conducted on Skype. She volunteered many details and stories, and she was forthcoming with her answers because she "wanted to be genuine." When Ji-Min expressed that contributing to work with "people who are like us" was important, it was a moment that was meaningful to me because I was not expecting to be grouped with "us" so early on in meeting with her.

Personal Understanding of Culture and Resilience

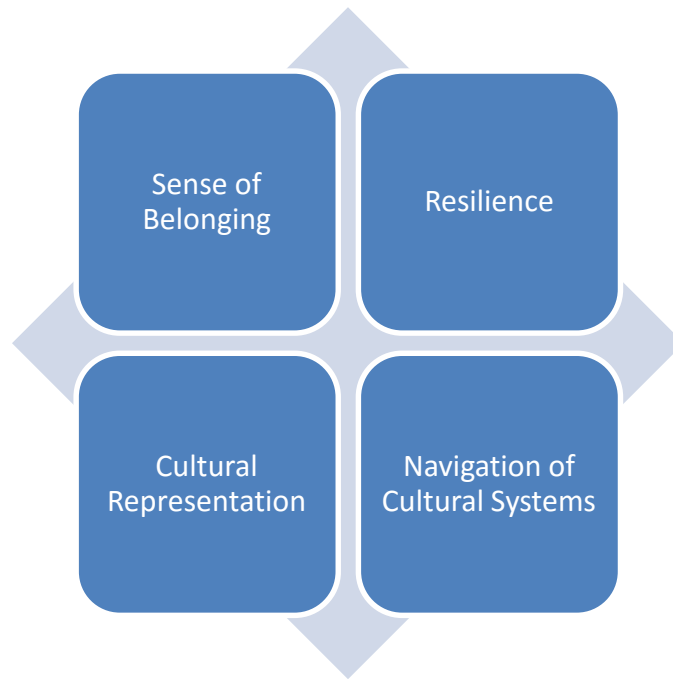


Figure 5. Ji-Min's Emerged Themes.

Ji-Min's stories reflect four themes throughout her personal cultural and professional narratives. Across her experiences, she explained that she has "lived most of [her] life thinking about feeling isolated." In understanding her traditional Korean upbringing to her brave immigration to the US for graduate work, Ji-Min's reflections on isolation ended up turning into stories of resilience and empowerment. For Ji-Min, sense of belonging, language, resilience, and cultural representation contributed to important contemplations made by an individual who grew up "traditional and conservative," who later turned out to be "unremorseful and not regretful" of the choices she had made. Furthermore, Ji-Min's conscious efforts to better understand the complexities surrounding her bi-cultural identity showed that her many moments of feeling isolated were often overshadowed by her internal desire to overcome the challenges and risks that

stood in her way. Ji-Min's experiences reveal that "it takes more than leaving something behind" because "it's about...re-inventing yourself throughout time." For her, the life that she has created for herself in the US is something she feels "is more me," and she is proud to "claim my identity as Korean American."

Sense of Belonging

In our meetings, perceptions of feeling isolated and being isolated emerged many times during our interviews. Whether it was geared towards describing her personal life, work life, or the life she remembered when she was a student, she referred many times to "feeling alone" and "uncertain." Although she felt that the act of immigrating can cause immigrants to feel some degree of isolation, Ji-Min's immediate environment was filled with uncertainty when she first came to the US. For her, her American experience started much later compared to other participants of this study because she came to the States for her PhD. She was born and raised in South Korea, and she completed high school, college, and her Master's degree in South Korea as well. Furthermore, she said that since she had "spent most of her life in Korea," she "definitely can't help I identify more with my Korean culture at times." In many ways, she explained that these feelings of "fitting in only some of the times" affected her relationships with her classmates during her Ph.D. program. She explained what this experience meant to her:

I think rather than saying that I was mistreated, I feel it's better to say it was really hard to assimilate. Or, maybe I should say fit in. Mainly, language was big issue, and it definitely still is. But it leads to cultural things that are different in U.S. versus Korea. There were many times I wanted to have conversations with classmates in U.S., but it's hard to talk with each other when you can't express

yourself on personal level. We just talked course assignments and class-related topics, and I can imagine it was pretty boring. I felt I didn't have problems communicating, but of course, I say things may not be understandable to some people. I think biggest problem was cultural barriers because it was difficult to decide what I share with them. My classmates didn't invite me anywhere, but I wasn't comfortable going out with them anyway. But sometimes I felt hurt by that.

Ji-Min's sense of belonging was in question from the start of her American life in adulthood. For her, rather than immigrating and assimilating to the American culture and language earlier on in her life, Ji-Min experienced these moments as an adult coming into her PhD program. Her "first American memories begin with this program," and she felt "intimidated many times" regarding her fellow classmates and faculty members in her department.

Up until these first experiences, Ji-Min had grown up in Korea "regularly defying" gender and traditional barriers on her own. She immediately followed this thought by saying, "I don't think what I was doing was that unusual, but I grew up knowing I was doing unconventional." She said, "If my younger sister had been boy, I'm sure my mother would've stopped having children." Because there were already two girls in Ji-Min's family, including herself, a third child was born later. Ji-Min said, "My brother is the youngest in the family. But it was important to have boy because of traditional and cultural reasons." Ji-Min's sense of belonging as a child was established within traditional familial roles because she accepted the responsibilities of being the first-born, even though she was a female and not male. She was comfortable assuming

responsibilities and understanding what they meant to her and her family from an early age because of her acceptance in this role. Since she normalized these expectations and responsibilities, to Ji-Min, these memories were not perceived as challenges. She recognized these experiences as “normal and regular” because it was not out of the ordinary to take on such familial responsibilities as the eldest of her siblings. Her traditional responsibilities consisted of looking after them, helping her parents, doing well in school to set a good example, and to be a “second mother” at times in the house. This often meant that she “did motherly duties when my mother wasn’t around,” such as cooking, and helping her father, while “not getting into trouble.” Instead of feeling resistant towards this role, Ji-Min simply referred to these memories as “the way I grew up.”

In addition, Ji-Min grew up in an all-girls school atmosphere. In this academic environment, she said her schooling created “a weird but sheltered sense of being in world” because there were no male students. Ji-Min explained that it was not uncommon for boys and girls to be separated in school since “it was a way for them to choose the topics they were to study.” She explained that this meant that boys were “sent off” to study math and science, while the girls were to take courses such as literature, art, and music. As well, she further elaborated on the school system for children and offered, “Girls took classes like literature and humanities, while boys took math and science classes.” Ji-Min said that this “wasn’t unusual because that’s just way things were.” While gender-related issues arose within her family after her youngest brother was born, her early academic experiences did not reveal that she felt marginalized because of her gender. Up until the birth of her brother, Ji-Min was “used to having girls around”

because of her sisters, her girl friends, and female classmates at school. When her brother was born, it disrupted her all-female environment as gender expectations and roles began to emerge within her family. She said, “It’s different when there is a boy because after he was born, he was the one who got most attention. Later, when my brother grew up, he was one who was considered strongest or fastest.” It was an “adjustment when he came along,” but it was a “blessing for my parents,” which I understand more now as an adult. At the time, “I felt that I did so much,” only to be “overlooked sometimes.” Ji-Min concluded her thoughts on the birth of her brother by explaining that she gets along with her siblings, and the maternal role she played with them “just came” because she was the eldest. However, she learned to “fully understand” what gender roles meant after her brother was born because she became more aware of how he was treated within the family. She expressed that she “assumed it was because he was the youngest,” but later understood that it was because her family felt that “it was a big deal to finally have boy in family.”

While Ji-Min did not sound upset telling this story, it was apparent that in many ways, her efforts as the eldest were not only overlooked, but seen as an expectation and “maybe nothing that special.” For her, it was an early sense of “feeling pushed out” because all the focus and attention were on her brother. Likewise, the rest of her sisters felt the same way “as girls in the family,” and it later resulted in competition among siblings. However, Ji-Min’s understanding of this early memory revealed that while the competition did exist, she explained that there was “a big age difference” between herself and her younger brother. She said she accepted the gender roles “for what it was,” but

because she was a college student when he was young, she “mothered him” rather than competed with him.

Ji-Min’s sense of belonging when speaking about her “American experiences,” as oppose to her “Korean experiences” were clearer as we spoke about the differences between Korea and the Korean education systems and the United States. However, while Ji-Min thrived academically in graduate school, receiving approval and affirmation from her peers, colleagues, and professors were important factors when determining why her sense of belonging often suffered during that period in her life. Through our conversations, she revealed that her “sense of belonging became an indicator that determined how I felt about myself,” and that “sometimes I thought that I had to represent entire Korean culture on my own.” In Korea, she felt more secure because she was more aware of how she understood her role in her family and as a young student.

Additionally, because she did not learn to question these roles while she was growing up, she accepted the complexities of her identity because it did not occur to her that her sense of self was in the process of developing and changing through these experiences. In tracking her narratives across her lifetime, she lacked a sense of belonging in her family as her brother was born, and later, felt that same sense of isolation upon enrolling in her PhD program in the US. For Ji-Min, establishing a secure sense of belonging was determined by feeling accepted in her place by those around her. As a youngster, she questioned this when gender roles were unconsciously established by her parents when her brother was born. In her adult life, as a PhD student, she felt less accepted by her peers and professors because of perceived cultural differences and English language communication difficulties. Across her lifetime, Ji-Min has struggled

with feeling accepted by those around her. Her feelings of isolation and uncertainty began in childhood when she realized that being a female child was inferior to being a male child and continued in her experiences in the US with cultural and language barriers that separated her from her peers and professors. For these reasons, a lack of a sense of belonging and cultural underpin her identity development from Korea to the US.

Cultural Representation

Ji-Min's cultural representation, in many ways, determined how she situated herself as a Korea woman in American society. She explained that "people think, 'Oh, she's an Asian lady. She's probably really quiet.'" While Ji-Min is aware cultural stereotypes in the US, she admits to feeling "confused by Americans' descriptions of 'the Asian lady'" because she knows so many other Asian women who do not match those stereotypes. Prior to teaching at her present institution, Ji-Min felt "singled out" because there were no other Asian instructors. She became "acutely aware" that she was different and that she "sounded different" as well. Additionally, her colleagues consisted of those of the dominant culture, which often made her feel like she "was the only one" who was different among faculty members who "all looked alike." Although Ji-Min expressed some discomfort with the notion that she was the only Asian female professor in her department, she followed with jokingly saying that she "wasn't that surprised [and] welcomed the challenge to beat them." Ji-Min's approach to narrating her experiences is to name the oppressions of Korean and US cultures. However, she quickly discounts them and tries to portray herself as accepting the terms of "what it is," and therefore, allows herself to be apathetic about these cultural distinctions. As well, she goes back and forth frequently about her views, which indicated tensions in her perceptions of these

experiences and her abilities and inabilities to affect change. In her heritage culture and her experiences in the U.S. academy, these tensions have reflected harshly on her identity development because she became skeptical of her purpose as a non-U.S. citizen living and working in the States. As well, this skepticism that emerged in childhood has affected how she navigates her professional space because her identity and positionality have been influenced by a lack of belonging in either the Korean or U.S. cultures, and have revealed that the status of her visa has left her feeling ambiguous.

When Ji-Min spoke about the cultural influences on her identity, she went back and forth describing what it meant for her to be Korean, and as a Korean woman living and working in the US. She noted that she tended to use her “visa status to define myself,” and that she would “like to comfortably also be American.” Like for many women who have had their children in the United States, Ji-Min stated that she can only say that she is “part American” because her son, who was born in the States, is a U.S. citizen. She said she is re-considering her visa status as her son is growing up in the U.S., and she mentioned that it was important to her to “feel that I can share something with him.” She clarified what this meant by offering:

I know that I will become more exposed to American education system and culture through my son when he starts school. In future, I think I apply for permanent residency since he will be going to school. I don’t know if it will help with anything, but I would feel more comfortable knowing I am able share that part of my identity with him. I know that it’s inevitable he will adopt American culture and language better and faster. I know his experiences will differ from mine because he will grow up in American education system speaking English. I

also know he will have American friends, and I will need learn to speak with parents of his friends. I predict that, in terms of my own identity, it will change a bit through my son as he continues to grow up here in U.S. Of course, I'm still Korean, and I know that will never change. I guess now, since in the U.S., I consider myself more of Americanized Korean. At first, I didn't. But mainly, through my job and my working environment, I enjoy saying I am both Korean and American. Maybe I'm not exactly 50-50. I find it best to follow culture here, and I'm more used to it now. My responsibility as Korean professor working with such diverse body of students means that I, too, should be more Americanized.

Cultural representation for Ji-Min is still a work in progress. She acknowledges that "there are good and bad sides to both" the Korean and American culture. For Ji-Min, the expectation of being "more Americanized" requires a willingness to consider necessary changes to her lifestyle that may or may not fit with Korean values and culture. Like all of the participants who are mothers, Ji-Min's identity is heavily influenced by her son and his upbringing in the US. While she considers "how he may feel," she is concerned about how the "American way of life" will disrupt the Korean upbringing to which she is accustomed. However, despite these concerns, she explained that she "has determined that it's better here," and that "it wouldn't have mattered if I had a daughter first." Reflecting on her own childhood and how she felt when her brother was born, Ji-Min understood that the birth order of her children "had nothing to do with gender," but with how she wanted to "offer opportunities for better life" in America for them. In addition, being a mother to a U.S. citizen son has another set of responsibilities that she believes is complex. Because she feels "he is already in a double culture" setting, his bi-

cultural identity has already been established for him. This form of representation comes with many cultural obligations because she does not want to “misrepresent Korean people” or a “cultural upbringing” for her son. Moreover, the expectation of raising her son in a bi-cultural context is admittedly “difficult with having to teach him two languages, two cultures, and two ways of thinking.” Because her son was not given a choice on how he would eventually identify, Ji-Min harbors guilt in many ways as she feels she can “predict the difficulties he will soon have.” She laments feeling “overwhelmed thinking about school events in case I do not fit in with the other mothers.” Despite these concerns, Ji-Min then explained that she finds herself lucky to have completed her education in the US and to have found a job that she enjoys. She hopes that her son will understand the “privilege of being born here,” and will recognize that growing up in a bi-cultural setting will have its “own advantages and disadvantages.”

As with Ji-Min’s earlier childhood memories, she identifies the problems she has experienced that are influenced by the complexities of the cultural differences between Korean and American cultural systems. As well, she dismisses these perceptions after identifying them and renders herself as one to focus on her career. This attempt to ‘accept’ these circumstances reveals that the situations in which she finds herself are results of troubling the oppression. Likewise, these attempts to justify her back and forth meaning-making and resulting responses reflect the tensions between the two cultural systems in which she situates herself. For Ji-Min, these uncertainties leave her uncomfortable and *unsituated* in how she is represented as a woman, and as a Korean woman in the US.

While Ji-Min has made efforts to “follow the culture” in the States, she finds that it is difficult at times with America being “so diverse.” Her sense of belonging is uncertain because she is still unsure about where she fits with the Korean and the American cultural values and expectations. Her journey of self-definition is strongly tied to her young son, who she expects will “grow up to be American.” Ji-Min indicates an uncertainty about her own identity and her cultural representation, as she anticipates how her son will evaluate and acknowledge his bi-cultural upbringing. This ambiguity allowed her to feel less secure with her own identity development because she felt unsure about how to apply the cultural systems of both Korea and the US in raising her son. Although Ji-Min recognized some “degree of relief” that her son was still young and how “their home is still very Korean,” this was an indication that it was inevitable that difficulties would emerge when he starts school. She said, “I’m sure he’ll make American friends, and of course, I want him to.” However, in making this statement, she was unsure about her comment as she followed with stating that she expects him to have many Korean friends as well. For Ji-Min, the sense of going back and forth has resulted in the hesitation she has towards claiming an identity that fits both herself and her son. As well, she fears that she may someday be separated from her American-born son as she expects him to acclimate quickly to American customs, language, and friends. These tensions throughout her stories reflect that she understands the complexities around living in the States, however, she is reluctant to be more comfortable with the changes that will affect her relationship with her child.

Understanding of the U.S. Professional Space

Ji-Min's professional identity is profoundly connected to her cultural "Americanized Korean" identity. While trying to represent herself as a Korean woman in America allows her to learn more about this Western culture, she has realized that there are many other cultures present in the US that she needs to learn about as well. She explained, "I guess this is what everyone means when they call America the 'melting pot.'" Moreover, Ji-Min felt that acknowledging her own Korean culture and her newfound American culture were important ways to relate to those around her. She wishes she had known about learning to relate to others more when she was a PhD student. Looking back on those experiences now, she suggested, "It would've made my life so much easier if I had known how to connect with my American classmates better."

Now, she has found that when interacting with Hispanic/Latino students, her connection to her Korean culture, tradition, and family has resonated with them. Ji-Min finds herself having to "adjust accordingly" while interacting in the many environments she finds herself. She acknowledged that "adjusting to my surroundings" can be "anything from reading something funny on Facebook, and laughing at a pop-culture joke, and smiling even though I didn't understand something fully." She explained that "if I could have things my way," there would be no need for adjustments because "people wouldn't care if I spoke with accent," for example. While Ji-Min repeatedly explained how difficult it was to understand American jokes and puns, she said that "having a good sense of humor" and asking "for help or clarification" is often a "great way to get people to start talking to you." For Ji-Min, these adjustments are not just wishful thinking, they are strategies that she believes are essential to Americans.

Ji-Min expressed concern for how she has felt in American society because of her small stature and “young appearance,” in addition to her accent and immigrant status. She explained:

As Korean woman, I’ve found my colleagues warned me early in my career about how people, students, and my colleagues may see me. I was told many specific stories from other professors of experiences they had with the students because of their gender and race. For me, I knew being Asian female, not just Korean female, would make students think that I’m easy teacher. I’m petite; many of my students and colleagues are taller and bigger than me. Because of this, I try to use loud and authoritative voice and make myself sound more powerful. I feel many students think I’m easy person because of way I look. But, I feel they feel this way at beginning of semester. After a few weeks in the term, students start see that you have to work in my class, and there will be consequences not turning in work on time.

As a member of the psychology and sociology department on campus, Ji-Min is constantly looking for new ways to understand herself more to become a better instructor. She came to recognize that she has had to understand herself as an individual better in order to become an instructor who was more flexible to the “adjustments” she needed to make. Culturally, Ji-Min wanted to use her Korean identity to resonate with her students. However, she also felt a great deal of stress trying to overcome the struggles of cultural and language barriers between herself and those who attended her lectures. For Ji-Min, self-perception and the perceptions of others played an important role in developing an understanding of herself and the cultures in which she inhabits that are still developing.

Furthermore, she makes extra efforts to overcome the stereotypes her students and colleagues express.

Navigation of Cultural Systems

Ji-Min's navigation of cultural systems reveals that rather than investigating the workplace itself, she describes behaviors and understandings of the American academy as uncomfortable because of the differences across its faculty, the expectation of American professors to be older, taller/bigger, and White males who speak native English without accents. As well, based on these cultural influences, she behaves, looks, and speaks differently from the traditionally acceptable professor in the American academy. Ji-Min's physical appearance had impacted her personal narrative by shedding light on the fact that it was more than just an insecurity for her. However, issues related to her physical appearance revealed itself again through her professional narrative as well. She said, "In Korea, everyone looks like me. My family, my friends, my teachers." She noted that because "it's much more diverse here in the US," she has to take into consideration how others may judge and how she judges others. Ji-Min acknowledged that her physical appearance sets her apart from those who works with and socializes with. English is not Ji-Min's first language and she speaks English with an accent. Although she recognized that the issues with the language barrier could cause her to feel less confident, she noted that her department provided resources for other faculty with these concerns:

I feel it's different, depending on which department you're part of and what part of country you're located in. For me, I started teaching in Philadelphia at liberal arts college where it was nearly all White. In terms of having more cross-cultural experience teaching, I think I have access to much diverse group here at this

university. The majority of the students and professors here come from variety of backgrounds, cultures, languages. So now, instead of dealing with just my culture and White/American culture, I have much more to learn. I don't see problems with students I have now. I feel like they try understand me, and when they can't, they're comfortable enough to ask for clarification.

Ji-Min jokingly added that "there was a time when an older student didn't think I was the professor" in the classroom. She said that "at first I was embarrassed by it," but after much thought, "I determined that it was unfair assumption made by students." She explained that while "there is little I can do about my height," she knows it is something that is noticeable. Her strategies for allowing herself to feel more comfortable and accepted begin with her physical appearance, per the recommendation of her colleagues and friends:

I fear I may come off having less authority or something, but I think lot of Asian women feel this. It's not I'm mean professor, but I know of colleague who won't smile lot in class because she'll be looked like less authoritative. I have friend who is also teacher, and she always tries wear heels to work because of height. Not just to appear taller, but because she feels people will respect her more if she seemed bigger. You have to think about it this way— it's just way of protecting herself in some ways, so I understand. For me, I don't necessarily think in these extreme measures. Even though I given this kind of advice, I'm self-conscious of my accent. Everyone always tell me to not smile much, especially on first day of class. They say because many people think Asian females look very young and nice. Also, having accent makes things worse.

Because English is a second language for her, she has worked hard to learn the language well. However, she believes that the frustrating part about “trying to be good at English” is that “no matter how hard I focus on learning English well,” her accent cannot be corrected. She explained that “it’s one thing to not look like an American, but I don’t sound like one either.” For Ji-Min, these expectations that she understands of the American academy has indicated the ways in which she navigates the cultural systems in her professional workplace as uncertain and uncomfortable. As well, she views these beliefs as “how things are here,” and she attempts to accept them as such. Furthermore, Ji-Min’s perception of how her students view her indicates that the cultural systems present creates a space where stereotyping and making unfair cultural assumptions are the norm.

It is clear that Ji-Min feels she needs to be cautious with her students and colleagues, and she believes that her accent and language skills hinder her from establishing meaningful relationships. She feels a distance from her students and colleagues and is self-conscious when experiencing either her authority or place in the academy is in question. While she does not feel as isolated at work as she did in her PhD program, she understands now that perception and language are equally important in the professorate for her to establish a safe sense of place in the academy. While her personal and professional stories depict a unique string of events that reveal isolation and determination, her resilience assist her through these events.

Resilience

Ji-Min’s reflections on how she views her academic surroundings was an important part of our second interview, in which our conversation focused on “bouncing

back” and “re-gaining spirit.” When speaking about her “work family,” she explained that she and the other faculty members have “a pretty close bond,” and that her “interactions with other Asian students were good.” She is not the only Asian professor, but is the only Korean professor in her department. For these reasons, the pressure she puts on herself to be a “cultural representative” of Korea plays a central part in her job as a professor. She expressed the importance of getting to know individuals and their cultures in her classroom, and that she did not “find it burden to take the time to this.” She feels this way because her students have told her that they have appreciated this gesture, as it has helped them to feel more comfortable and supported in the classroom. As such, she reflects frequently back on the times she felt she did not have this support when she was a student herself. Therefore, the “extra time I commit to better understanding my students” has played an integral role as a professor. Thus, this is a positive outcome to navigating cultural influences in her work.

However, despite these efforts, she reminded me that there are some students who get frustrated when she allows an international student to join the class discussion. Ji-Min said, “I find it important be polite with all students. I know I can’t please everyone.” Speaking of this prompted more memories of her own struggles as a PhD student when an individual in her class complained about her “taking too long during a presentation.” Likewise, Ji-Min uniquely understands both sides of how students may feel, but firmly believes that “it would be unfair to leave out students.” Here, Ji-Min is taking a stand on her experiences of American cultural expectations in the academy, and she knows what it is like to be excluded in class discussions and refuses to let others be subjected in the same ways. While her work as a professor is admirable, she referred back to stories of her

family and the occasional difficulties it has caused with her working so much. It was clear that Ji-Min enjoyed her job and felt strongly about contributing to supporting her students. She offered:

Sometimes I think my colleagues have strong charisma or authoritative presence in classrooms. I try to stay true my personality despite advice I've received by my friends and colleagues...I try to kind of make things in class simple give a hands-on experience to students because I think they will learn better that way. We have lots of discussions and projects to work on; I think it makes difficult concepts easier, and I think it definitely allows to participate often. I'm also open with my office hours and encourage everyone come to my office to talk or get extra help on assignments. Lately, I've been getting to class little earlier to provide time to talk with students about issues.

Ji-Min strives to be an interactive and approachable professor, even with the challenges she regularly faces with her language skills. Although she received some advice from her friends and colleagues that she thought "were questionable to some extent," she believes that her experiences within the campus culture are more positive. Ji-Min balks at some of her colleagues' advice, rather she "dresses comfortably, but professionally" and "smiles at students often." She finds this to be an important part in being approachable. Ji-Min sensed that some of her students identify with their own language struggles, and these discussions often created a "bond" because there was a mutual understanding with regards to language learning. Likewise, she expressed that she "felt grateful" towards the students who were patient with her during lectures and class discussion. She said, "I used to be embarrassed by my mistakes before. I'm not now. If I

don't know something, I just ask class and they always respond." Furthermore, Ji-Min's approach to engaging with her students has created a sense of safe space with many international students. While she takes time to "make sure they are supported," she also finds this kind of interaction important for other students, specifically those of the dominant culture, to understand and see. She said, "I hope students of the American culture will learn from what we are doing in my classes. I think they're learning valuable lesson." Ji-Min spoke about "bouncing back" because it was important for her to use her own struggles as a platform to engage with her students. She uses her past experiences to cultivate a culturally-sensitive and support learning environment for all of her students. In many ways, taking the negatives moments in her life and using them for something positive has resulted in more than just a safe learning setting for her students. These choices have resulted in Ji-Min's creating a comfortable and culturally-relevant space for herself as a professor.

Ji-Min's narratives show her resilience not only to survive the American cultural influences on the American academy, but ways to thrive professionally as well. She has learned to form bonds quickly with those around her by using common experiences or challenges, and she has allowed herself to be vulnerable in front of her students and colleagues. Her upfront and honest nature permits and helps her to relate and able to be relatable to her diverse group of students. While Ji-Min considers her colleagues her "work family," she distinguishes that there are many instances where she has felt that it was "no one's intention to single her out." She feels that the other faculty members have made efforts to be inclusive by inviting her to work-related discussions outside of meetings. In addition, Ji-Min believed that "everyone was doing what they could to help

her.” She spoke passionately about being a professor and described her job to be a “true calling.” Furthermore, despite feeling alone at times, she had respect and compassion for her colleagues. Ji-Min’s approach to contributing to her department was an important matter for her, and “bouncing back” from cultural and linguistic challenges and struggles with oppressive stereotyping. This has revealed that being resilient and spirited were coping responses to navigating international cross-cultural professional experiences in the academy. She has come a long way in the last few years and gave this example:

Now I’m done with school, and I’ve successfully gone through the job market. I feel lot better about myself and what I’m capable of. Before this, I felt isolated from the rest of world here in space of United States. For international faculty members, like myself, there is no umbrella to protect you from things that make you feel unwelcome. In graduate school, even though I didn’t fit in, I was among supportive advisors and faculty members. But, in job market there are so many uncertainties regarding future...I worried about all kinds things, such as institutionalized marginalization, equality, my immigrant status...these kinds things are not part of White person’s world, but it is usually discussed among minorities in general. I’m still physically living the United States, and I feel that now there is place for me.

Regardless of Ji-Min’s internal struggles with the language, her accent, and feeling self-conscious of her physical appearance, she credits the number of years that have passed to allow her to get more comfortable with life in the US. Additionally, the essence of her experience lies in her abilities to smile and keep pushing forward, and to challenge the status quo in her own way by offering patience, support, and a voice to

international students. As well, students who speak English as a second language have also benefited from her support, as she models these approaches in class with students who hail from the dominant American culture. Ji-Min now allows herself to smile, to learn about other cultures in order to create bonds with her students, and she puts a lot of energy in learning English as well. While there are still continued communication issues due to differing accents, it is a challenge she welcomes in the culturally-sensitive and relevant environment she has created for her students. She said, “You have to remember these things take time...no matter where you are.” Her admiration for the few faculty members who made “such a positive impression on me” has allowed her to “not give up” on her endeavors.

Ji-Min’s identity and various positionalities are complex and influenced by both Korean and U.S. cultures; she considers herself to be a “work in progress,” and that is evident in her current still-in-development stage. Her first memories of being in the US are about being a graduate student; but “the roles are reversed now.” The uncertainties and isolation she routinely felt as a student are inherently deeply ingrained as she makes meaning of her current academic life. In addition, her son and the guilt she feels that she has given him and his development given no choice but to be in the US weighs heavily on her. She believes that “for now, I have made right choice,” and she hopes that her son will see his life in the US as “a good life.” Furthermore, her guilt extends beyond understanding the cultural systems present in her life. Ji-Min’s uncertainties of how her son will grow up to understand the cultural systems himself plays an integral role in how she is trying to rear him. While she feels guilty about not giving him the choice to choose

where he wants to grow up, she feels that “America is where everyone wants to be.” As such, she believes the privilege with which her son was born may “help him in his life.”

While in many ways Ji-Min can name oppressive and discriminatory practices in the academy, she also indicates a resignation to these behaviors that are present at work. Ultimately, her resilience represents her success. In a professional context, cultural representation and her resilience refers to the ways in which Ji-Min connects with students on a cultural level. She wants her students to know that she can relate to issues through culture and language. She passionately explained that she is “loyal to my Korean culture” because it is who she is. Furthermore, “keeping up with my students who have ...grown up in the American culture” encourages her to recognize that it is essential to understand her students through their culture as well. She strives to represent her Korean culture to her son and her students, while maintaining an American understanding of living her life as “a foreigner.” Ji-Min does not have an abundance of hope for change and thinks that making attempts to turn away from cultural insensitivity and discriminatory stereotypes is the best option.

While Ji-Min continues to consider who she is in spaces influenced by both Korean and U.S. cultures, her willingness to “adopt American belief systems” shows that she needs a “survival strategy” as she continues to work and lives in the US. While Ji-Min is still learning and growing herself in the US, her abilities to identify both the advantages and disadvantages of the Korean and American cultures have proven essential for her professional success. Her complex bi-cultural identity is something she is beginning to accept as she watches her son embrace his. As well, the risks she took to leave Korea, obtain her PhD, work in the US, and have her child be born in America,

have required specific navigation of both cultures as she “attempts to do and go where I want.”

Mee-Na

I was born in Busan, Korea. I'm not a U.S. citizen, but right now, I'm permanent resident as of five years ago. I've never really thought about my identity. If I had to choose I'd identify as just Korean. I wouldn't say that I'm Korean American though. Not yet anyway. I'm the oldest one in my family, and I have one younger sister and younger brother. My mother told me all the time I was special when I was growing up because I am always very independent as a female student. I didn't think it was that unusual, but I guess for my parents' generation, I was unique. My entire family still lives in Korea; I'm here by myself with my husband. He's the one that identifies as Korean American. He was born in Houston, and he has lived there his whole life. In fact, his Korean is so bad that we need to communicate English. I feel bad because sometimes I think he feels left out of conversations, especially I'm speaking with my family. For me, I'm still Korean, but sometimes I call myself globalized because I have knowledge and experience in global sense. Maybe I'm neutral. I guess I'm somewhere in between the two—American and Korean—but not exactly. Compared to my husband—he's like an American, and I'm more like Korean. Right now, I'm pretty happy with my job, and I'm still open to almost anything. That's why I decided to come here to study and work here instead of staying in Korea. I'm 45, but compared to my age, I very recently got married. I came to the United States in 2000 to get my PhD degree, and I travel back and forth between here and Korea to see my family and friends.

When I came for my PhD, I spent six years in Virginia studying, and after, I started teaching in Tennessee. After that experience, I moved here and that's where I met my husband. Honestly, I'm not really a social person, so when I was getting my PhD, I was okay studying by myself or eating by myself. But I found that after about two years, I wanted to make more friends since I was in U.S. alone. Because I was surrounded by non-traditional, pretty mature students in my PhD classes, it was difficult for me to talk to them. But, I think besides that, there were many differences between me and them. They were also much older than me, and many of them had children they would talk about. Although I know English and I can read it, I always felt that I had to study harder than most my American classmates. I had to re-read things two, three, sometimes four times to understand, so it made studying difficult [and] frustrating at times. I'm still happy I had the decision to come here, and I enjoy working here in U.S.

Mee-Na is a tenured associate professor, and she teaches classes related to interior design and structural housing. She was timid and reserved, and was most confident when talking about her family and friends in Korea. She spoke English quietly with uncertainty, yet she corrected herself and laughed when she stumbled with her words. As English is not her first language, she learned the English language while she was a student in Korea. She joked that she “got a lot of practice speaking with her husband,” but indicated that there are many times “I second-guess myself when I speak in public.” Occasionally, Mee-Na asked if what she was saying was correct or if I understood her joke.

In narrating her lived experiences, she was not able to entirely separate her understandings discretely between her personal and her professional lives. While she provided rich details in telling some stories, she appeared distracted at other times which impeded the telling of her lived experiences. Unlike the other participants in the study, Mee-Na did not have children, and she did not express any interest in having a family. However, like the other respondents, the relationship she had with her husband was an important element to understanding her experience in the US.

Mee-Na had early experiences of isolation, and she did not speak fondly of her early memories in the United States when she came to work on her PhD. She eagerly admitted that it “wasn’t always fun” because there were “many times of feeling alone.” Mee-Na admitted feeling “miserable at times because I was lonely,” but explained that she felt appreciative toward her advisor and mentors because she knew that she “was always taken care of by them.” As well, she was physically far away from Korea, and at the same time, she felt emotionally far away from the culture she had always known. She said, “It was a time when the internet was getting popular. I had access to the Korean news and Korean media, and I was able to call my family. That helped when I was here by myself.” While she noted that it is “more convenient now with smartphones and apps you can use overseas,” Mee-Na explained that she struggled socially when she came to the US. She referred to her family often when talking about her graduate school experiences because she was apart from them for so long. They functioned as her main source of emotional and mental support, and she was “happy to feel connected to them” even though she was so far away.

Mee-Na's mother played an important role in her life at an early age, and her support became a foundation for the rest of her academic journeys that followed. Mee-Na's relationship with her helped her gain a sense of independence, since her mother encouraged her to "be special in my own ways." Her mother was also an outlet for Mee-Na because she felt understood and validated by her mother. She explained:

I was very independent as a child. My mother thought it was unique, and I think because of her, I never felt I didn't get to do something or have something because I wasn't boy. I liked being independent because it allowed me just do things. I never questioned anything like some of my other girlfriends because I enjoyed my sense of freedom. There are typical female perceptions in Korea—female roles that need to be satisfied. For example, it's just preferred someone in charge, like a department chair or principal, should be a male and not a female. That's just expectation and norm. In many instances, I always volunteered to be a part of something in school—like in organizations and clubs—especially when men were preferred for position. It's the rebel in me. I would tell myself, "I can do whatever I want if I really want to." Personally, I didn't really feel like I endured gender pressures because I learned early enjoy and expect freedom.

Mee-Na attended an all-girls' school growing up, and she attended an all-women's university in Korea. As the eldest of her siblings, she said she always considered her family before making any major decisions in her life. However, she revealed that the Korean cultural expectation of putting them first because it was the "typical responsibility of the eldest child" was not something that she experienced.

In school, Mee-Na felt that “any pressure was good pressure,” and because there were no male students in her academic environment, she offered, “there was no competition between the boys and the girls, and I didn’t even know there could even be something like boys versus girls.” Even though there were culturally-prescribed academic expectations to do well in school, Mee-Na described them as pressures she put on herself and did not feel that it was forced upon her by her parents and teachers. These expectations meant she needed to well in school, be accepted into a top-performing university, and ultimately, work hard to achieve her academic goals. As well, she understood these notions as the norm and believed that there was little competition among her peers at school because it was the overall expectation that all the students performed well. She clarified, “It’s just because I wanted to do well in school and not because of my parents.” She admitted that because she was so dedicated to her studies however, that she “missed out on a lot in her middle school and high school days.” She laughed as she mentioned she had “enjoyed college because she didn’t study that much... that was okay.” However, when she started her graduate studies in the US, there were many challenges to overcome.

Along with cultural differences and language barriers in the US, Mee-Na was in an academic atmosphere with men for the first time. While she did not mention feeling any sense of discomfort with this situation, she explained that she worked extra hard to keep up with her peers. This was a new experience for Mee-Na because she it was then that she first experienced gender competition in her academic environment. She noticed that having “male classmates present made [her] concentrate more” because she did not want to “fail around them.”

Cultural Influences Upon Entering the Academy

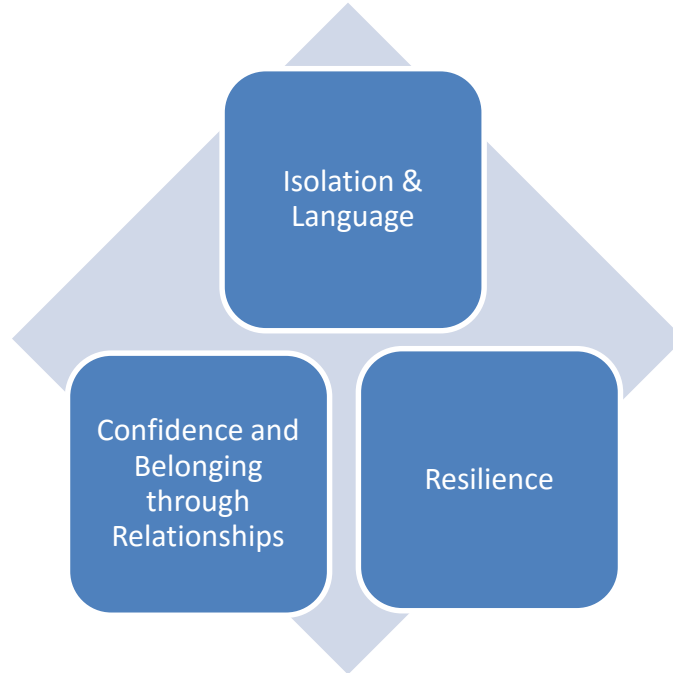


Figure 6. Mee-Na's Emerged Themes.

Mee-Na's stories reflect three themes throughout her personal cultural and professional narratives. Across her experiences, she explained that she often felt uncertain of herself and her purpose in the US because she was far from what was familiar. Mee-Na came to the US to pursue her PhD in Housing and Interior Design. She was interested in learning about developing and designing homes for blended families, and she researched housing structures for construction in Korea before coming to the US. Additionally, before immigrating to the States for her doctoral program, she worked among male peers who were architects and engineers. Learning from these mixed-gendered interactions, Mee-Na spoke about the "unfairness was connected to a work force" that either overlooked women or left "highly qualified and educated women in lower positions." She expressed that she did not fully understand what this "unfair

treatment” meant until she began to work professionally in a field traditionally dominated by men. She reflected on how this made her feel, and admitted that she shied away from applying to positions with “fancy job titles” that are traditionally reserved for men because she felt uncertain about how she may be culturally perceived by others in the organization. Furthermore, Mee-Na explained that “it wasn’t surprising” that male-dominated fields remained so gendered given that male students in Korea are “conditioned early” to pursue more math and science courses. In addition, she “never knew if [she] was doing a good job,” and that left her feeling doubtful and unsure about her position and career while in Korea. The isolation that she began to feel at work was rooted in Korean cultural customs where expecting that men would occupy higher positions, and respecting those men, was an important part of “maintaining your status at work.” For Mee-Na, “following the rules was important.” She did not consider applying for higher positions and consequently did not feel content with what she was doing with her life.

In the US, as a graduate student, Mee-Na said when she “got frustrated with school work,” she often questioned herself and felt a great deal of self-doubt because English was not her first language. In many ways, she worked hard to “keep up in class,” and there were many times she felt discouraged and intimidated by others. Isolation and language, invisibility, and resilience emerged as major themes in Mee-Na’s analysis as they depict a complex set of experiences that lead to the development of how she currently self-identifies. For Mee-Na, the lack of belonging and the challenges she faced with language learning contributed to a great deal of stress and feeling alone during her PhD program in the US. In addition, a distinct cultural and generational barrier between

herself and her classmates added to feeling isolated from those with whom she interacted in her program. These experiences caused her to feel invisible in her academic environment, and being so far from her family created a deeper sense of separation from what was most familiar to her. Furthermore, Mee-Na's self-doubt was heightened as she struggled as a PhD student since she "was so used to doing well in school" in Korea. Mee-Na needed began to need external validation to recognize that she "was doing the right things," and she needed this sense of validation to feel that she belonged. However, despite Mee-Na's narratives of struggles and challenges, her stories are ultimately those of resilience as she pushed forward to establish herself as a successful, tenured professor in the American academy.

Isolation and Language

Threaded across Mee-Na's interviews were stories about language. She revealed that language has "caused major stress in all areas of my life." In her personal life and in her marriage, she uses English as her dominant language because her husband cannot speak Korean. For Mee-Na, the added stress of having to use a language with which she is not as comfortable, even at home, suggests that English is a source of strain and struggle she experiences daily. Before marriage, she was freely able to switch back and forth between English and Korean, depending on which language was needed and what was most convenient for her. However, now she needs to constantly rely on English whether she is at home or at work. Because she cannot "turn off my English," she considers speaking and using English a "persistent tool for communication." Language and communication combine to form the basis of how Mee-Na feels about her sense of belonging in the US, the academy, and at home. For Mee-Na, unless she is in Korea with

her family, comfort and safety are always in question. She continues to experience isolation in situations when it is difficult for her to communicate and express herself. For many who immigrate to other countries, while pressures of communicating in another language may be present in work settings, often the home offers a space of linguistic familiarity and therefore comfort. However, for Mee-Na, English is required at work and at home.

Mee-Na speaks highly of her husband and in a loving manner, and it is evident that he plays an important role for her as her support system. She also describes him as someone who understands her job and its expectations. The comfort she feels with her husband is safe and validating because he provides her with the emotional and mental needs she has lacked before in her life. Although he has Korean-cultural heritage, he has “very little traditional expectations of me” because “he is more American.” However, while her husband is the source of validation at home, his Korean American identity is also the root of discomfort and guilt. Because he does not speak and understand Korean, Mee-Na often functions as the bridge between those who are Korean and her husband. As such, her efforts to keep him included in conversations with her Korean-speaking family and friends have proven to be a task that can also be frustrating for her. Because she does not speak Korean often since she uses English at home and at work, her connection to her heritage culture and language does not exist as strongly as she would like. This means that she is constantly living in a state of discomfort and uncertainty in her personal life.

As well, Mee-Na’s introversion has compounded her experiences of isolation both in Korea and in the US. She described herself as someone who “keeps to myself,” and she indicated many times throughout her interview that she “felt miserable” particularly

in her doctoral program. Her introverted behavior was exacerbated by her struggles with English, and while having issues with communicating and writing for her classes, Mee-Na felt “distant” during class interactions as well. Feeling invisible was not a new concept for Mee-Na, as she fully disclosed she “felt uncomfortable [in] social situations anyway.” However, she expressed that “this kind of invisibility” at school was different because it was expected that she would write papers and participate in group discussions. She remembered,

I would stay up late at night wondering what I would be discussing during the times I needed to participate in class. After I would read assignment, I would focus on an area that I could understand well. I made notes and paid extra attention...really know that section. That way, when it was my turn to speak, I knew exactly what I was going to say and have proper examples ready for my class. It was stressful. Sometimes I would think about it all night and all day until class began.

Mee-Na stated that it was difficult to connect with her classmates on a personal level because she “spent so much time concentrating” on “staying on top of school work.” Furthermore, the separation she felt with her classmates made her feel “invisible and far away” because she did not communicate with them outside of the class. She did not expect them to “know about Korean culture or language.” She explained that she felt that she “had very little in common with everyone,” and she recognized that she needed to keep to herself. While she expressed that she was fully committed to school work and research, being isolated and “miserable” made her “feel trapped” and often distracted.

Mee-Na explained that her advisor and mentors played a critical role in her graduate school life because they supported her greatly and “certainly made things less miserable.” A deep sense of connection was built through her relationships with her professors. She said, “In Korea, there’s a lot of respect for someone who is your chair. It’s kind of uncomfortable because you need to respect them so much.” She expressed that she felt that her relationship with her dissertation chair was casual, but it was also respectful. She and her chair spoke often about personal matters, alongside school work and career options. She expressed that this type of “bonding” with her mentor allowed her to feel comfortable, and that it was much easier to “ask for help even if it was something small.” Mee-Na was pleasantly surprised how her relationship was so different with her chair in the US, versus the relationship she had with her chair in Korea. She stated that while she respected both individuals, in Korea, you did not discuss personal matters or “joke around much” with someone who was the chair. Mee-Na spoke highly of the professors who made a difference in how she felt and ultimately how she experienced graduate school. She also explained that she “felt understood by them,” even though her English was not perfect. She posited:

Of course everybody has lot of pressure in graduate school. For me, I also had language barrier, and I was always trying to be perfect. I compared myself to lot of other international students who I felt like were better writers and researchers. They also seemed to have better personalities too—people wanted to talk to them, but they didn’t want to talk with me. When they did something good, everyone paid attention to them. I appreciated my professors and my advisor; they were all mentors. They kept track of me and were always helpful. Maybe I was lucky.

She felt motivated through the encouragement that the faculty were providing, and she was grateful that many took the time to “make sure everything was okay.” She was encouraged to speak up more and participate, which allowed her to come out of her comfort zone with support. This allowed her to “slowly feel comfortable,” and she was able to “consider making American friends.”

When we discussed her graduate school experiences, she brushed past her emotions when talking about this a number of times. She sighed frequently and looked away when recalling these experiences. Often, she looked disconnected from these memories because she yearned for a connection outside of merely school work with her peers. Thus, Mee-Na said, “It wasn’t because I didn’t want to be a part of the group or anything like that. Maybe it’s just because we didn’t really have anything to talk about.” Mee-Na’s experiences in her PhD program reflects inner conflicts she had while struggling to maintain relationships.

Yearning for a place to belong affected how Mee-Na understood her experiences in a new country and in a new school. In essence, language and belonging were closely tied together because she felt that she was not included because she “didn’t sound like a native English speaker.” She believed it was important for her to “communicate properly” to be accepted by her peers, and it affected her self-confidence when she was unable to do so. Mee-Na hinted at the fact that had her English been “more perfect,” she may not have “felt like a foreigner all the time.” She recognized that the loneliness she felt while in graduate school made a significant impact on her, and she came to acknowledge how far she had come with a strong support system.

For Mee-Na, the isolation that she endured developed into a deep sense of critical awareness that later began to help her professionally. As a professor, she identifies students who need some extra help and empathizes with international students whose struggles are so familiar to her. Furthermore, she finds it “important for me as an instructor, to take these kinds of students...and pay attention more.” She has learned to listen to others and their own experiences very closely, and she found that bonding with them through similarities in shared stories was a comfortable approach for her to relate with others. As well, she became interested in helping others through sharing her own struggles, and now, she believes she is able to have meaningful relationships at work because of the learning and growth she experienced in her doctoral program. The ways in which she had found herself through these difficulties demonstrate Mee-Na’s abilities to overcome obstacles and be resilient in an effort to build her self-confidence and her purpose in the US. Before, she was “unsure of where [she] was going,” but currently, she understands that her “calling” is here in the States.

Confidence and Belonging through Relationships in the Academy

Mee-Na’s professional experiences are centered on the relationships she has with her colleagues and pride in the work she contributes and in which she participates. Because she has now found ways to connect with others through her own experiences, she has discovered that she has “learned much more about my colleagues” and peers. This communication has not only “opened doors” for her since she has opportunities to collaborate with others, but it has also allowed her to be more approachable and feel validated among other faculty members and students. As such, Mee-Na’s continued approach to developing relationships has lessened the sense of isolation and loneliness,

specifically at work. For Mee-Na, this is an important component that distinguishes how she feels about herself, her work, and her job as a professor. She feels confident discussing work, and she believes that feeling good about herself through her work makes her happier. Feeling accepted in these relationships has provided a more positive perception of how life is for her in the U.S. and in the academy. Mee-Na described her workplace environment with these sentiments:

I kind of enjoy kind of pressure at work. My husband and my colleagues have taught me to manage time better. They all call me workaholic, but I would take it as good thing. I feel without any work, I wouldn't be happy... I enjoy researching global trends about housing and coming up with design ideas. Typically, my work is on what is happening around Asian populations and housing for the elderly. I look at perceptions of behavior and family; I study home environment, sustainability, technology for homes, and things like that. This is very important to me, and now I enjoy collaborating with my colleagues and friends.

For Mee-Na, her professional identity and positionality are positively supported by her work and her passion for contributing to her field. She has a sense of pride in her work and feels that she is making a positive impact among those in her department. Although Mee-Na sensed many professors “push hard to prove themselves,” she stated that she has been “lucky enough to be surrounded by those who are helpful and engaging.” She explained that she works hard and feels that others appreciated her work, and in turn, she makes efforts to be supportive of her colleagues.

Mee-Na's professional experiences come from feeling a sense of validation in the U.S. academy illustrate a different tone because she is clearly more comfortable and

confident now than she was before. Memories of isolation and feelings of loneliness are not apparent in her professional narrative because of the learning and growth she endured. She explained:

I had to learn about myself. It's good time to learn when you're realizing something isn't working. For me, there were a lot of things that weren't working. I had to find way to come out of my shell, and that was difficult for me to do. When I became more comfortable around people, I didn't think too much about my language problems or accent. I think I spent too much time when I was younger worrying about that. I can't change my accent, and I learn to accept that. Things got easier when I became professor. I learned to not worry so much about what other people think about me.

For Mee-Na, the issues from her life leading up to her experiences as a professor have changed drastically. Mee-Na, in some ways, re-invented who she was upon entering the academy as a professor. She felt that she needed to learn much more about herself, and she made the conscious effort to present herself differently from how she had when she was a graduate student.

Mee-Na wanted to respond to the fear and misery from her doctoral program and channel her efforts in a more positive way for her own students. She made clear choices to initiate a change within herself, and she accepted the responsibilities of what it meant to work in another culture and language. Mee-Na's professional narratives demonstrate an environment that offers support and validation from her peers and colleagues. After Mee-Na's tenure and promotion, her sense of purpose and belonging were finally established.

Resilience

Mee-Na described herself as a “resilient person” and said that her “job was something really important to me because I worked hard to achieve my goals.” She explained that she “didn’t always feel resilient,” however. With time and “more exposure” with those she worked closely, she gained a sense of confidence after having overcome language and cultural challenges. While her first moments in the US, the academy, and PhD program revealed hardships and issues underpinned by cultural and language barriers, Mee-Na believes that she “had to overcome those obstacles” to get to where she is today. Although she said that “the battle isn’t over yet” because she “has many goals for [the] future,” she explained that she is not regretful of the past. Her willingness to “look back and then look forward” indicates her strategies continued growth.

The positive overtones in Mee-Na’s professional narrative depict a critical acceptance of the barriers she overcame, and that she has found ways to navigate the American cultural system that differs from that in Korea. While she still struggles with language issues and her accent, she no longer considers these to be reasons to avoid interaction. As a student, she acknowledged, “I didn’t think too much about being alone because I’m not social to begin with. English a practical tool to me.” Now as a professor, she appreciates the efforts made by her former professors when she was an international student, and she recognizes that communicating with and being open among her students has created a learning space that has helped her professionally. When considering her career and her future, she disclosed:

I've worked hard to get here. But I knew I wanted to find my own life. It's important I know I'm doing a good job; and I feel that I am here. I have good colleagues around me and I'm tenured. I wouldn't say I'm a perfectionist, but I like be prepared. I think what helps is I can separate my personal and work or professional lives easily. I try to not work on weekends, and I want to enjoy myself and my time with my husband...I really like my job. It's important to me, and I think it shows who I am. There's nothing wrong with being proud of that.

The support she feels in her work now is in stark contrast to the patriarchy and gender oppression she experienced in Korea. The cultural systems she navigates on a daily basis are revealed as a way for her to exceed the limitations she once felt before. Mee-Na navigates the cultural systems in place in the U.S. academy engaging in language and communication with her peers, colleagues, and students through English, advocating for international and bilingual students, and establishing a cultural identity that allows her to research and teach using components from both the Korean and American cultures she identifies closely with.

In addition to her self-learning and growth, Mee-Na's support systems have functioned positively in her life in two ways. First, the support she receives from her husband in the US and her family in Korea have contributed to her meaning-making and the choices she has made to live and work in the US. She has created meaning in her life through recognizing that the support she receives from her husband is a deep understanding of what living bi-culturally means through language. As well, the support she gains from outside of the country allows her to stay connected to the Korean culture and language through her family and friends as they discuss Korean pop culture, overseas

politics, and social media outlets to maintain a cultural association that does not require the American culture. During her past experiences of isolation and loneliness, she relied heavily on this support system as a way to re-connect with cultural elements, people, and other familiarities that are physically far away. Second, Mee-Na's support system in the academy comes from faculty members and colleagues who respect her and her work. This support has created a space in which Mee-Na has been able to feel more comfortable with herself as a Korean woman, a scholar, and a professor in her department. She feels a sense of purpose using the cultural systems of Korea and the US across her life's experiences. However, Mee-Na admits it has not always been "easy and straight forward." She explained:

In beginning, it was hard—before I was tenured, before I graduate, and before all of this was going on. I mean first few years, I remember having a lot of arguments about work with my family and my husband. They would ask me what was more important and what my priorities were related to work or my personal or family life. I had to learn, but I'm glad I did because I've done lot of things differently now that I know better.

For Mee-Na, her familial and spousal support systems helped her stay connected to what was most important to being herself, but also having a meaningful career. She believes that her husband is a connection to the Korean part of her identity; he is a "reminder of home" even though it is not necessarily through the Korean language—a cultural link between herself and "what was so far away." Her mother, who had always encouraged her independence and creativity as a child, was an important part of her support system as well. It was important for Mee-Na to understand her past experiences

as learning opportunities, and she learned to realize, with her mother's support, that these "hardships had occurred for a reason." After arguing with family and reflecting deeply about what a work and family life balance should mean, Mee-Na explained that she learned to "prioritize better" after feeling guilty about being neglectful towards her personal needs.

Mee-Na's cultural identity development is not complete; she has endured and continues to experience many transitions during her stay in the US. Perhaps it will remain flexible while she becomes more confident in her choices and interactions. While she plans to continue to live and work here, her expectations for "being better" suggests that she is flexible and open to new experiences in the future. As well, she has most recently learned to adapt to professional cultural systems that exist within the American academy. In the U.S. academy, an important part of the professional cultural system is to build relationships of support and collaboration. These were initially hard for Mee-Na in her doctoral program, but she has worked hard to force and strengthen herself to work with herself and her anxieties about language and culture. In addition, working with her own introversion allowed her to find a way to create these affiliations as a professor. For many reasons, it is difficult for her to label her identity as a singular culture. She gives herself the space to roam freely across U.S. and Korean cultures in order to discover the connections she longs for. Mee-Na is currently still navigating the spaces in which she works and continues to find spaces to which she feels she legitimately belongs. Mee-Na's view on how she lives her life is "much more casual than Koreans," as she puts it. Mee-Na's use of both the Korean and U.S. cultural systems reflect that her resilience and abilities to create ways to overcome boundaries has allowed her to gain acceptance and

access to feeling more confident and happier at work. Mee-Na has found purpose in her work and life in the US, a quest she has been on since arriving for her PhD program.

Cross-Participant Findings

Holistic-content mode, which analyzes textual data as a whole to uncover the emerging themes (Lieblich et al., 1998), was also applied to the cross-participant analysis. As the researcher, it was essential that I read through the interpretations of my analyses empathetically and open-mindedly in order to expand upon a strong understanding of the context of the whole story. I identified patterns and themes through the participants' individual narratives by reading the transcripts multiple times to "sketch out" (p. 89) an outline, and to recognize the rich details the data set provided through recollection of respondents' stories. Then, the foci of the stories as a whole were identified. As mentioned in Chapter III, Polkinghorne (1995) described two different kinds of narrative analysis. First, he stated that where the researchers collect participants' stories as data to analyze them is important because this determines the various and layered themes across the stories. Second, where the researchers gather the descriptions of events helps to "synthesize or configure them" (p. 12) in order to develop the plot of the story. In this current study, I applied holistic-content mode analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998) and Polkinghorne's (1995) analysis processes to identify themes across the participant data set.

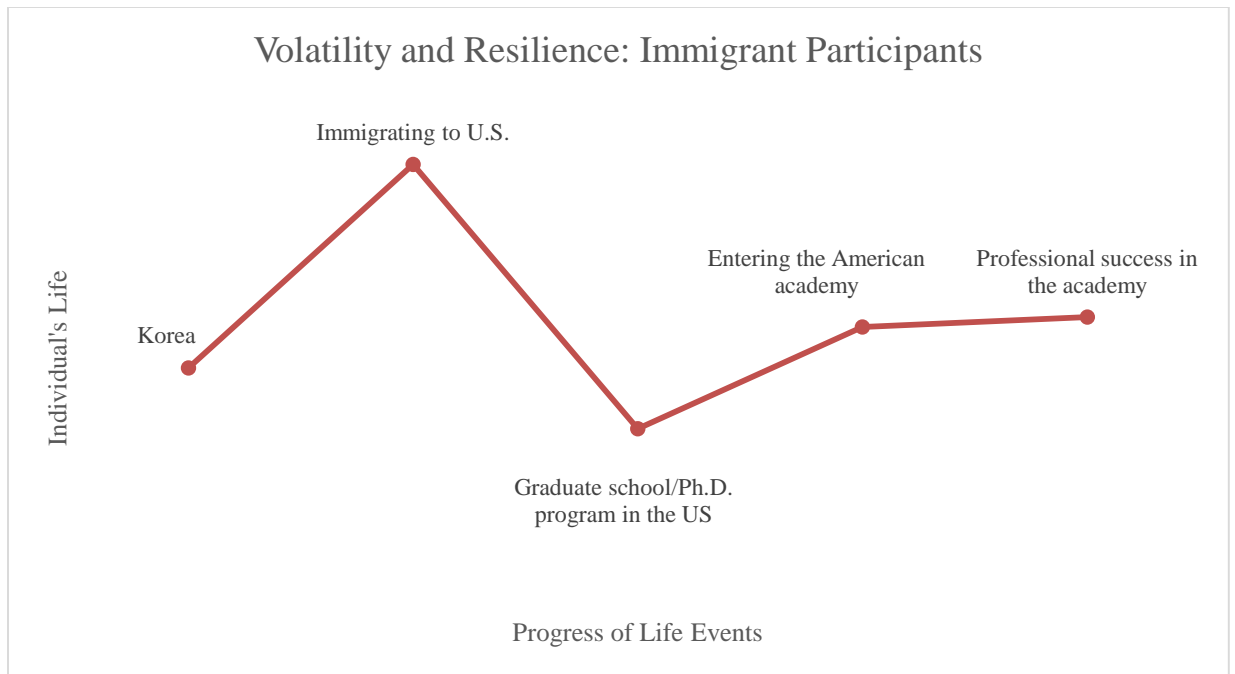


Figure 7. Volatility and Resilience: Immigrant Participants.

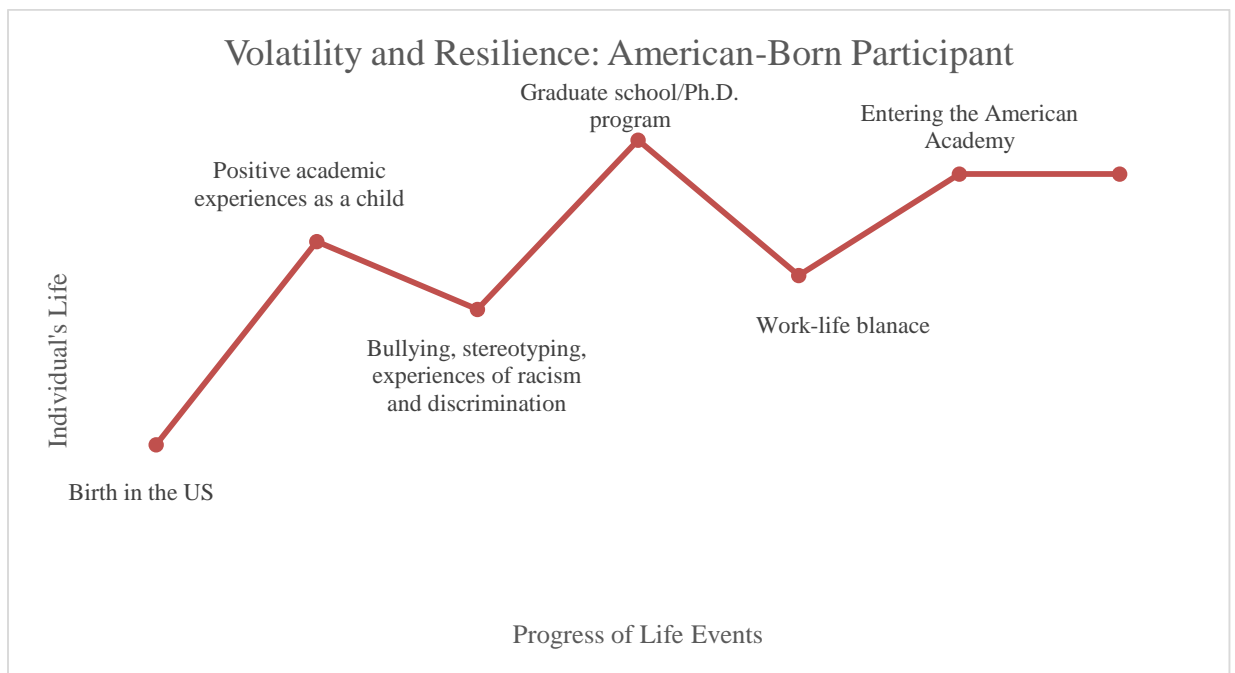


Figure 8. Volatility and Resilience: American-Born Participant.

Lieblich et al. (1998), in explaining holistic analysis form, in which narratives are viewed as a whole, suggest different phases of individual lives can be “identif[ied] on the axis of each stage” (p. 89). As such, the thematic focus and progress of life events are identified as “dynamics of the plot” (p. 91), and are viewed as “narrative of progress,” “narrative of decline,” and “steady narrative” (p. 90). In these cases, positive progress in life might be plotted on a graph as an upward-sloping line, while a narrative decline is shown as a downward-sloping line. Alternatively, a steady narrative, where an individual is remaining in a singular place, is a straight line.

Graphing narratives on plot points is, in itself, an interpretative process because the points are not assigned specific numeric value. As well, the points on the graph simply indicate ways to depict emotional inclines and declines. I determined the progression of the plot points by determining the places in their stories in which the respondents’ indicated times of highs and lows in their lives. Plot points that designate life events go up and down as individuals are at “crossroads, turning point[s]...route, [and] progress” (p. 91). The participants in this study revealed that the plot points in their lives went up and down as they experienced successes and challenges in their early lives, in their schooling, and as they now live and work in the American academy. Moments of decline are recognized as the women experienced challenges, stresses, and issues across their lives. Times of feeling isolated, guilty, and uncertain are points in their lives where declines were occurring. Instances of positive progress indicate that the women were enjoying success, getting promoted, and experiencing positive outcomes in their professional working spaces. With their successes in the American academy, their

“steady narrative[s]” (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 90) showed that the women were content in their work spaces.

Figure 7. Volatility and Resilience: Immigrant Participants

In Figure 7, the plot points depict the lives of the immigrant participants in this study. Out of the six participants, five were South Korean immigrants. Of those five, one participant was a naturalized U.S. citizen. The first plot point begins in Korea, which is where five of the participants were born and is considered a neutral starting point in their lives. The upward angle indicates that their lives in Korea were progressing relatively positively, up until the point where they immigrated to the US. At this point, the participants were feeling secure and confident enough to make the life-changing decision to immigrate. Once in the US, and during their doctoral programs in the US, respondents experienced stress, anxiety, and challenges with language and cultural barriers. Across the participants, experiences in graduate school were the lowest point in their lives. Therefore, the plot point appears lower than the neutral point of Korea, where the plotline begins. Additionally, these moments in their lives were fraught with cultural complexities as they continued to develop as adults; the downward angle illustrates that these memories were not as fulfilling as their experiences in their home country. However, the gradual upward slope explains the experiences the participants had as they entered the American academy where turning positive. As well, this is where they experienced a great deal of satisfaction, began to realize opportunities for self-actualization, and sensed happiness in their professional workplaces. By achieving professional successes in the academy, the stable horizontal line demonstrates that the participants are in a place of

comfort and that their journey onward will determine their successes and challenges in the future as their lives progress professionally.

Figure 8. Volatility and Resilience: American-Born Participant

In Figure 8, the plot points portray the life of the only American-born participant in this study. The two sets of life journeys had similarities and differences. The first plot point begins with birth in the US, and then portrays an upward slope with positive academic experiences as a child. However, she withstands bullying, stereotyping, and experiences racism and discrimination as she enters adulthood. After experiences of bullying and discrimination, the upward slope toward graduate school depicts how the participant felt a sense of security and confidence as a student. She maintained positive relationships among her peers and professors, and established a sense of purpose while working with her community before graduate school. Additionally, she struggled with work-life balance once she began her doctoral program that created turmoil, self-doubt, and challenges in her life. Upon entering her doctoral program, her school work was compromised early due to these issues. From that plot point, the upward angle represents positive experiences associated with entering into the American academy, and ultimately, beginning a fulfilling and satisfying career. Since experiencing issues with work-life balance, she persevered onward as life in the academy proved to be fulfilling and satisfying. As such, she reached a stable point in her life where she is enjoying her family, her job, and her commitments as a professor at the university.

Racial Microaggressions

Scholars have proposed that microaggressions are “subtle forms of discrimination, often unintentional and unconscious, which send negative and denigrating messages to

various individuals and groups” (Nadal et al., 2015, p. 147). Furthermore, racial microaggressions have been identified as a manifestation of prejudice and discrimination that have changed over decades and generations from a “predominantly overt form to a more subtle, subvert form” of racism (p. 147). Experiences of racial microaggressions became evident in this study as participants referred to interactions that were discriminating, but they did not understand, or choose to name it as such.

Sue (2010) identified three types of racial microaggressions as: (a) microassaults, which are “violent attacks such as racial slurs”, (b) microinsults, which are “insensitive and rude comments demeaning people of color’s identities,” and (c) microinvalidations, which “disregard the lived emotions and experiences of people of color” (p. 29). Initially, the concept of microaggressions was first acknowledged as non-verbal or subtle exchanges. However, these “put downs” have more recently been made distinct as exchanges that can occur as “daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental” communications and interactions which can be intentional or unintentional and conscious or unconscious (Nadal et al., 2015, p. 147). Endo (2015) explained that racial microaggressions are indeed complex because the multilayered experiences come from individuals who are multilayered as well. In studying Asian American groups and identity intersections, Asian American women were identified as those who were “especially prone to experiencing racial microaggressions that have gendered dimensions because of how...[Asian women] have been fetishized and objectified in the West” (p. 605).

Nadal et al. (2015) have determined that racial microaggressions communicate verbal and non-verbal exchanges that are hostile and derogatory, and they are often “negative slights and insults” that “lie beneath visibility or consciousness” (p. 147).

Perceptions of racial microaggressions and individuals' multiple identities have been taken into consideration to further understand one's place in society, experiences with oppressions and racism, and world perspectives that have been influenced by one's multiple identities (Nadal et al., 2015). The authors noted that "participants with multiple identities [are] able to identify various microaggressions in their lives, while also being able to label how their multiple identities may influence each of these experiences" (p. 149).

In their research, Nadal et al. provided examples of racial microaggressions such as African American women who get "compliments on their hairstyles" (p. 159), Asian women being exoticized by White men as "mail order brides" (p. 153), the assumption that "all lesbian women are masculine" (p. 155), and experiences of sexism for Muslim women based on their racial and religious identities (p. 158). In addition, Nadal et al. suggested that gender microaggressions and other forms of sexism are results of uncovering participants' complex identities. In the current study, classroom experiences and teaching methods were similar across the participants, and these stories offered many instances of racial microaggressions. However, while they shared similar memories of feeling stereotyped as an Asian female professor and fielding a variety of microinsults and microinvalidations, they explained that they did not feel overly offended. Because the participants did not realize these behaviors to be oppressive, the participants have internalized these forms of racism and sexism and have chosen to consciously live with them. Furthermore, these women revised their choice of dress, their speech, and even their teaching styles based on students', and some colleagues,' microaggressive interactions and comments.

In most of the university settings in this research, the student body was described as ethnically diverse, and all the participants were employed at institutions that supported multicultural learning and environments. Many of the participants indicated that they felt lucky to be where they were, and acknowledged that friends who were faculty members at other campuses did not always have positive experiences. However, these respondents have also undergone experiences that reflect insensitive professional practices. An example of this experience includes “being convenient” to serve in departmental committees or decisions to signify “diversity” because the participant is an Asian woman. These comments were subtle and likely did not intend harm, and the participant herself spoke of the matter nonchalantly. She decided to dismiss it because it was still an opportunity to serve on a committee. Because the comments made were intended to be flattering, such as being invited to serve on a committee, she internalized this behavior as culturally normal. She did not want to argue or bring up the comments made for fear that the invitation would be retracted. Consistently, participants in this study chose not to be offended by these behaviors.

Nadal et al. (2015) posited that women of color experience racial microaggressions for their physical appearances as well. “Exoticization” is mentioned by the authors as one of the ways in which women are in situations that they feel “objectified or dehumanized because of their race or ethnicity” (p. 152). Many of the participants in this study discussed how their petite stature and young appearances often affected how they felt they were treated and looked at by students. Nadal et al. explained that “biased compliments” (p. 153) such as saying that a professor “looks young” or “pretty” reveals that these kinds of comments make participants feel uncomfortable. In addition, getting

compliments on one's English capabilities, such as saying, "Oh, your English is so good," is an "unintentional microaggressive compliment" (p. 153) as well.

Language for Cultural Understandings of Belonging, Guilt, and Motherhood

Language, for the participants, was an essential part of determining a sense of belonging and feeling/being legitimate. Park (2007) suggested that "native language fluency can be construed as a cultural resource," and that it usually "grants greater access to the ethnic community" (p. 404). Moreover, the influence of native/heritage language fluency is an important element especially within the family, as it provides a base for "socializing influence on native language usage and fluency...in diverse cultural contexts" (p. 404). For the participants, whether they were born in the US or not, they had emotional experiences with language. While many of the participants used language as an indicator for establishing a sense of belonging, at work with English or with Korean at home, others had a great deal of stress because their American-born children spoke English more fluently than the participants, themselves. As well, many of these women feared their children's Korean proficiency would not be as strong as their English.

Five of the six participants had children, and all of those participants' children were born in the US as American citizens. For these women, their central role as a mother revealed that claiming their sense of mothering was rooted in how they felt about using the English language at home. English was viewed as a way to separate mother and child, and the participants anticipated a divide or disconnection with their school-aged children. This anticipation was a result of recognizing that their Korean children would be attending American schools, making American friends, and using English to communicate. If the mothers were already fluent in English, they did not have this type of

stress because they were bonding with their children via the dominant English language. However, participant mothers who did not speak Korean at home, feared they were enabling their American-born children to be less Korean, with lessened Korean values and traditions. For these reasons, language was also associated with guilt because the participants expressed that sometimes they “wished [they] could have done more” to teach their English-speaking children more Korean. Five of the participants explained that English was not spoken at home because, they, as mothers, spoke Korean more comfortably.

Liu, Benner, and Lau (2009) researched how mothers and their children experienced heritage language proficiency, and they found that children who were regularly undergoing “heritage language maintenance” at home were associated with positive academic and social experiences, along with higher math achievement scores, higher GPAs, and fewer depressive symptoms (p. 572). Additionally, they determined that language acculturation was critical for distinguishing peer groups and their social-emotional functioning. The authors suggested that with regard to family functioning and child adjustment in immigrant families, “the extent to which parents and children are able to communicate in English and/or their native tongue” regulated positive familial relationships and less communication difficulties (p. 573). Furthermore, “maternal English proficiency” (p. 574) was positively associated with academic and social well-being for children and adolescents.

According to Shen, Kim, Wang, and Chao (2014), “language brokering,” or deciding when and how to use a particular language, impacts child-parent relationships, as it is a process in which children and adolescents were found to have increased

understanding of, and respect for, their parents. They were more aware of their immigrant parents' sacrifices, and less likely to internalize problems. Thus, both heritage language maintenance (Liu et al., 2009) and language brokering (Shen et al., 2014) suggest that children of immigrant families act as language brokers to help with their families' language issues, and they significantly retain their heritage/native language through their parents because English is not their first language. These notions reveal that there is indeed a connection between children and their parents through language, and it further clarifies that the women in this study were likely feeling emotional stress and guilt with regard to the use of both the English and Korean languages. For children in immigrant households, the use of "parental language" has been identified as the main influence in attaining bilingualism (Kang, 2013, p. 431). Moreover, mother-child open communication is an important factor in developing mutual understanding between mother and child, and it can result in increased opportunities for communication and decreased parent-child conflicts (Shen et al., 2014).

Kang (2013) explored Korean-immigrant parents' language ideologies and practices with regards to their American-born children's language development. She found that the Korean-immigrant parents "have a strong desire to pass on their mother tongue to their American-born children, largely derived from their language barrier and perception of language identity" (p. 431). Additionally, the children's bilingual development would ultimately serve as an "identity marker" should the family return to Korea for economic opportunities or family obligations (p. 431). It is evident that the fear of losing a part of the Korean identity is an important factor in why Korean immigrant parents focus heavily on retaining the language at home. Kang's (2013) findings

suggested that “home language” was often used in informal contexts, therefore, few children of immigrant parents “achieve complete acquisition of their home language” (p. 431). As such, “language loss and shift” are often observed in many immigrant homes (p. 431). Likewise, the women in this study endured a great deal of stress regarding their bi-cultural identities and the development of their children’s identities. While Kang (2013) found that the Korean mothers in her study felt insecure about their English, and they believed the parents’ language barriers would be like “segregation,” their “perception of language as a cultural identity marker” (p. 434) was the most important aspect that emerged within the findings.

In addition to language and motherhood, the theme of guilt emerged in another way. Guilt was deeply connected with the participants’ desires to fulfill both the roles of “being a good mother” and “being present and engaging at work.” The women alluded to feeling that they were not successfully mothering if they were too engrossed with work and research. Furthermore, when they were busy with their class schedules, meetings with students and faculty members, and their research, they felt guilty when they found they could not be home more often. Yet, if they were “at home too much,” then they feared their research and school work were falling behind. Two of the participants expressed their husbands’ disappointment when “things were forgotten because [they] weren’t around,” and all of the participants mentioned being distracted or feeling frustrated when they felt guilty. However, the women explained they generally had supportive partners and were grateful for any additional help.

While some of the women had husbands who were also professors, other participants expressed that their husbands, who were not professors, were just as

supportive and understanding. For these women, guilt played an important role in how they negotiated their professional and personal spaces. This notion goes back to Korean cultural expectations that are in conflict with the American concept of professional dedication. As such, while having a supportive partner was an important component of negotiating this space, some participants indicated that they harbored guilt over being away at conferences for too long, traveling frequently for work, staying at the office late, and missing the opportunities to cook dinner at home on a regular basis. Often, guilt mediated the experiences between work and home and influenced in ways the participants would make decisions.

Overall, their self-perceptions and their identities were heavily impacted by guilt. While these women were fully prepared to take on the risks and challenges of studying in the US and entering the American academy, they seemed less-prepared to deal with the guilt that living and working in two very different cultural systems presented. For them, negotiated space at work ultimately led to becoming aware of their “shortcomings at home” and to which they made efforts to “make up for it when [they] could.” While some of the women explained that they “still had time because the children were young,” another participant with teenaged and college aged children expressed that she “assumed everything was fine because [her] children knew what was going on at work.” As such, the women spoke confidently and proudly about their scholarly endeavors, but seemed to lack the same confidence and pride when discussing how these professional successes affected their lives at home. Furthermore, despite their expressions of guilt within the spaces they lived, the participants were adamant about “continuing” and progressing in their professional work.

The Cultural Looking Glass

The cultural looking glass through which the participants view and interact with the world is similar to a photographer approaching a new subject, scene, or object. Akin to language brokering described above (Shen, et al., 2014), the participants in this study engaged in what can be considered *bi-cultural brokering*. Bi-cultural brokering was recently identified as important in understanding “second-generation ‘heritage migrants’ and the importance of social capital within unequal transnational social fields” in a recent article on Turk-American and Turk-German returnees in the homelands of their parents (Grasmuck & Hinze, 2016, p. 1). In this case, bi-cultural brokering suggests that given a particular relationship, interaction, setting, or story, these women negotiated their different spaces of life and work by deciding through which culture—Korean or American—or an amalgamation of both—they wished to live the experience. A metaphor may assist in understanding this important finding. We know that photographers use varying angles, lighting, filters and lenses, in their work. They also take into consideration ways to crop, zoom in on a focal point, and zoom out to capture a wider angle to get the shot that is meaningful for them. For the participants in this study, they too, found ways to apply cultural filters and lenses to understand and interact in the world, while revealing that a single experience could be interpreted through the Korean lens as well as the American lens. As well, in making the metaphorical connection between the participants and the cultural looking glass they used to view the world around them, the ability to interact in different cultural settings allowed them to know about those cultures and their respective languages in meaningful ways.

In addition, my analysis found that the participants developed ways to manage, cope with, and communicate different spaces and situations through their intimate and developing knowledges of the Korean culture, American culture, and the Korean American cultural consolidations. Furthermore, the different lens choices for the participants range from being perceptive towards stereotyping by students and dressing differently, or feeling the need to smile less frequently in order maintain authority in their classrooms. By entering into microaggressive interactions at work, the women chose to in some ways fall back on their Korean gendered value systems of not fighting sexist and racist oppressions, but instead, to resign themselves to and deny a reality they did not feel comfortable addressing directly. As many women have done in similar situations (Nadal et al., 2015), my participants have chosen to go along with the status quo and accept the stereotypes and microinsults in favor of finding the positive in their workplaces. On the other hand, when interacting with family, spouses, and sometimes sociopolitical and socioeconomic situations, they often relied on what they valued in the American culture, indicating that independence, individuality, non-traditional gender roles, and outspoken activism as elements that made them more comfortable and happy. However, while reflecting upon their mothering behaviors and choices, these women utilized an amalgamated Korean and American visual film to make their meaning.

The ways in which the participants in this research have navigated the spaces and cultural systems of Korea and the US revealed they have learned to use different cultural lenses to live their lives, connect in relationships, and be successful at work. The filters they choose to apply to view the world allow these women to experience American cultural experiences with a particular lens that helps them distinguish which elements of

this culture works for them. Likewise, through the cultural looking glass, they are able to recognize which cultural components from both cultures they would like to alter or leave behind. Thus, this cultural cache of bi-cultural brokering creates a way to blend mechanisms of both cultures to make progress in their lives and in their self-development. As well, through their narrative reflections in relation to their culture, identities, positionalities, and the process of their self-understanding, the women have also revealed that an important component in creating meaning in their lives is through professional success.

Furthermore, I found that these women were committed to the progress they made in their lives personally and professionally. It was essential that they continued with this progress for the sake of their American-born children, as well as for themselves. The different bi-culture brokering the women employed to make decisions and interact with others offered them unique and important methods for negotiating culture, expectations, values, and relationships. I argue that this research demonstrates that a flexible way of viewing one's culture paves a way for these transnational participants to develop their identities in ways that differ from those who do not incorporate multiple cultures in their lives. This rich cultural cache, possessed by each participant, results not only in a bi-cultural identity for the women, but also a blended way of recognizing and acknowledging the changes that need to occur for the success of their children, who live across two cultural systems, as well.

V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

I begin this chapter discussing the theoretical framework that underpinned this research. Then, I provide a discussion of the research questions that frame this study. In this study, the lives and experiences of the participants who identify as women of Korean descent demonstrated that their identity development has been complex, and that their perceptions of culture reveal that their current understandings of self are bi-cultural. The discussion of the research questions will show that the women's personal and professional experiences contribute to their positionalities as professors in the American academy, and their understandings of these experiences displayed the unique ways in which the women blend their Korean cultures with their new American selves and lives. Finally, I offer implications for practice, as well as limitations to the study and future research directions.

Introduction

Stories are produced within one's own culture and are used to sustain a reality that may need to be formed/transformed (Gergen, 2004). In this study, the participants' cultural selves revealed in narratives emerged when their personal stories illustrated "common thoughts and behaviors as prescribed by both the host culture and the home culture" (Wang et al., 2014, p. 2). For these women, cultural selves refer to how they see themselves as Korean and Korean American females in the US. Additionally, the notion of cultural selves is also used to consider how the women understand themselves in Korea after having lived and worked in the US. Therefore, the women's current cultural identities rely on how these beliefs influence their experiences and the decisions they make as individuals who primarily live and work in the US.

In this study, the cultural narratives of the participants were elicited to identify how the respondents made meaning in their lives in relation to their sense of belonging, identity, tradition, and society as transnationals outside of their heritage cultures. Siber and Riche (2014) posit that “each and every culture is called to negotiate its proper space without treading upon the main culture” (p. 276). Additionally, Holmes, Bvieri, and Ganassin (2015) stated that individuals “engage in meaningful practices of communication which engage people, of multiple identities, [and] culture becomes shaped and reshaped” (p. 18).

The ways in which the participants in this study have shaped and reshaped their identities and the spaces in which they live and work suggest that their understandings of themselves are in the process of continuing reconstruction. Misco and Lee (2012) argued that an individual’s reality is continuously evolving and multilayered; understanding the realities of the participants in this study required a process that analyzed their multidimensional experiences through the intersection and overlapping of their Korean and American narratives. These women depended on their bi-cultural identities and a sense of blending both cultures to come to a unique and individualized understanding of who they were becoming as women. Their continued negotiation between cultures and spaces was due to their continual transforming, evolving, and multilayered identities (Misco & Lee, 2012). Consequently, much of the discomfort they experienced was as a result of their progression through this development. Their cultural values were guiding standards that they practiced throughout their lives, and I found that distinct value systems were associated with cultural identities that were an extension of their multiple selves (Orbe, 2004; Stelzl & Seligman, 2009).

Overlapping and mixed identities exist because the ways in which people identify serves as a way to mark their places in society, culture, and community across cultures (Misco & Lee, 2012). Indeed, identity negotiation is a complex and multidimensional process (Orbe, 2004); not only does it take time, but it also takes a willingness to examine one's world. While identity in a cultural sense may be a reflection of an individual's self-concept and well-being, enacting one's identity to others as a form of expression can be an important part of how one's identity materializes through relationships with others (Misco & Lee, 2012; Orbe, 2004).

Positionality and Transnational Feminism

In Chapter III, positionality theory was explained as a way to understand diversity. It posits that the concept of diversity develops and evolves in various contexts including the ways people develop and understand knowledge (Collins, 1993; Kezar, 2002). As such, positionality considers a person's gender, culture, religion, race/ethnicity, social class, power conditions, etc., and acknowledges "multiple overlapping identities" (Kezar, 2002, p. 96). This theory acknowledges the complexities and intersections of the ways individuals identify in society including race, class, sexual orientation, nationality, and gender (Harley et al., 2002). Positionality also acknowledges the "social value that is assigned to individuals according to various components," such as their beliefs, cultures, concepts, traditions, and other elements that are classified as social practice (p. 216). For this study, the positionality framework allowed me to consider the participants as women, mothers, wives, professors, scholars, immigrants, citizens, and individuals of Korean descent.

Transnational feminism was also used to frame this study. This theory is often employed to investigate the ways in which we generate and distribute cultural, local, and border-crossing knowledge within the Western world (Fernandes, 2013). Transnational feminism is embedded in post-colonial theory, and it helps us navigate the in-between spaces of the local and the global. Specifically, feminism argues against speaking with one voice that represents the world and its experiences as defined by patriarchy (Crotty, 1998), and transnational feminism is understood as including both global and international feminisms that have traditionally viewed the world from a dominant culture's colonialist perspective (Fernandes, 2013). Transnational feminism helped me to identify the relationships immigrant women have with others, with themselves, and with their understandings and connections with their heritage culture and the American culture.

Participants contributed their stories to disclose how their identities as professors and scholars fulfilled a sense of belonging, and how they navigated the cultural systems present in the American academy. As well, feelings of isolation, guilt, and overcoming barriers and challenges associated with language and foreign cultural systems revealed that the women, in every sense, needed to traverse from one culture lens to the other frequently. The findings in this study resulted in the necessity of the two theories being linked in order to better understand the lived experiences of immigrant and bi-cultural women who are living and working in the US. Viewing them as females who are educating themselves, living rich lives, and pursuing their own careers became essential elements to consider when examining their senses of self and positionalities outside of their home countries and heritage languages.

Transnational feminism and positionality theories allowed me to conceptualize and analyze the data by considering how the women see their experiences, what their memories mean to them, and in what ways have they learned to survive and thrive despite discomfort, challenges, and barriers. The women offered stories from their childhood, their upbringing, the differences in their home culture they recognized early, and understanding how they navigated the culture shock they experienced as doctoral students in the US. By exploring these stories, I found that the respondents moved fluidly from one culture to the other frequently, and sometimes melded the two together to navigate through their lives. In every sense this depicts how transnational feminism helps us to understand the space between borders and the boundaries that define local and global (Fernandes, 2013). Furthermore, this study situates itself within transnational feminist literature by challenging the notion that migrant women are “victims of patriarchy power” (Jung, 2012, p. 194). The stories of the respondents in this study are worthwhile because they prompt dialogue linked to real-life examples of experiences and positive change for the future. As with recognizing feminism as “pathways of thinking-in-progress,” the commitment to understanding the ways in which the female participants understood themselves and their lives through their stories provoke thoughts on how international faculty members may situate themselves in the U.S. academy (Bibby, 2014, p. 48). Furthermore, transnational feminism highlights the global “portrait of situations within and between...overlapping entities” (p. 50). This research dislocates the negative perceptions of experiences by many minority female faculty members and attributes positive professional understandings.

This study suggests that when studying immigrant and bi-cultural women, both transnational feminism and positionality theories are useful together in understanding their unique and complex experiences. Language is a common challenge, career success is a fundamental aspiration, and the sense of shifting to and in between their cultural selves to come to who they are today plays an essential role. These participants illustrated how they identify and position themselves culturally, personally, and professionally in order to define who they are as female professors, but also to refuse to accept the social norms of the cultural systems they navigate regularly.

Situating this Study within the Current Literature

The literature supports my participants' experiences of racial microaggressions, motherhood and careers, and guilt of not fulfilling either motherhood or Korean cultural expectations (Kang, 2013; Liu et al., 2009; Park, 2007; Shen et al., 2014; Sue, 2010). The women of Korean descent who participated in this study have highlighted the importance of their relationships and interactions between and among their colleagues and circle of intimates. They have also emphasized the continuous internal dialogues and exertions necessary when living a transnational life. Their stories have unearthed the multiple ways they use their complex cultural identities to ground who they are in order to navigate their spaces across their professional and personal lives. Language, culture, and identity are linked closely for these women as they have made meaning in their lives. The Korean culture remains at the heart of the women's work, family lives, and who they are as women. However, the added American cultural lens provides them with options and opportunities that they believe cannot be obtained otherwise.

From the analyses provided, it was clear that being successfully situated in the US was closely connected to being able to recognize Western values/cultural systems and integrate them with beliefs that were already a part of the women's lives. However, this American approach did not translate easily or seamlessly in these women's personal familial relationships and Korean cultural responsibilities. The women of Korean descent who participated in this study have experienced different journeys to construct and maintain their identities both in their personal and professional lives. The ways in which they are developing their identities have been demonstrated through the richness of their stories and experiences.

Currently, research exists about the experiences of women faculty and minority women faculty, as mentioned in Chapter II (Burke et al., 2000; Chang et al., 2013; Hatmaker, 2013; Healey & Hays, 2012; Morley, 2014; Pfafman & McEwan, 2014). However, the literature review confirmed that little is known or has been studied about female faculty members of Korean descent in the academy despite the developing literature about Asian Americans in such settings. Importantly, the narratives of the women in the current research have been used to learn more about how they create their own legitimate spaces to provide a firm grounding of who they are, and to understand how they navigate the multifaceted sociocultural influences in which they live and work. These are important elements to consider in order to support their success within the Western academy as scholars and mentors on diverse campuses and institutions.

The women associated their feelings of success with how they felt about their "dual cultural family life" at home, and how they managed to balance work-related responsibilities alongside their home and family expectations. The use of the participants'

personal cultural narratives greatly influenced how their professional stories were told and interpreted. It was impossible to separate the personal from the professional, and vice-versa. How they navigated their professional experiences within the academy indicated that both their personal and professional identities overlapped, and that the women relied on multiple roles (e.g., wife, mother, scholar, professor, colleague, friend) to move in between the spaces in which they belonged. By moving between the spaces, the women were adept at utilizing parts of the Korean and American cultures that suited them best. Additionally, they made decisions to live a particular way that made them comfortable based on the interchanges between both cultures. They felt more comfortable in staying loyal to their heritage language and home country; however, their lives in America were built on incorporating their Korean selves into an existence they appreciated through the American notion of independence, autonomy, and individuality.

Essentially, the professional experiences for these women, in addition to their scholarly work and research, were closely tied to their cultural identities as Korean, Korean American, or Asian. Their research aimed to work with and for those in Korean communities, and many of the women collaborated with scholars in Korea, as well. They used their classroom spaces to connect with and support international and minority students, and they found that opening up their own challenges and language learning allowed for many students to identify with them culturally. Finally, building relationships with other immigrant and minority professors created a safe space among those with whom they worked closely, and the participants revealed that their sense of comfort at work was because they were working in diversity-valued environments.

Research Question 1 Discussion

In what ways do the notions of identity and positionality influence female faculty members of Korean descent and their experiences in the American academy?

Moss (2010) indicated that people use their culture or cultures as more than just a group affiliation. In addition to feeling connected and belonging to a particular group, this form of identification is developed in various ways over a period of time. For the participants in this study, their citizenships and descriptive characteristics of whom they are as women functioned as important ways of how they made meaning in their complex and often difficult lives in the US. Oliver (2011) suggested that belongingness and citizenship are interconnected because establishing a sense of belonging does not come from one source. He explained that in order to better understand identity and belonging, it was often important for immigrants to “re-imagine” foreign-born identities because they had been “translated” and “transplanted” from all over the world (p. 16). Furthermore, the concept of using citizenship to establish identity comes from spatial, situational, and relational components that stretch across time, space, and place. Therefore, identity and belonging cannot be uniform, and culturally speaking, are “always in the making, always on the move through our rootedness and connectedness of shared interrelations” (p. 17).

My study’s findings relate to both Moss (2010) and Oliver’s (2011) works. Moss (2010) explained that culture cannot be represented by a single characteristic, and the women in this study concur that their bi-cultural identities were a result of both Korean and American influences. Cultural identities are “multiple and overlapping” (p. 375), and are intra-personally and socially conditioned in complex ways that include how one sees oneself and how she feels others see her. As well, “the women’s narratives positioned

cultural identity as an element of the self that develops over the life course as each individual examines and comes to understand her experiences” (Lucero, 2014, p. 16). It is evident that identities are not singular and static. The meaning of cultural identities for the Korean women in the current study were also overlapping and intersecting; these women’s understandings about themselves and their work were influenced by both the Korean and the American elements of their lived experiences. As such, their lives in both cultures reflected how they responded to and interacted in life in the US as well as in the American academy. The women’s citizenships or the position of their foreign-born status played an important part in determining if they legitimately felt “more American” or “more Korean.” The five participants who immigrated “re-imagine” who they are as a reflection and enhancement of who they used to be before immigrating. This re-imagination among the participants was a result of considering experiences within the time and space in which the women resided in, and/or experienced the cultures of both Korea and the US. Additionally, being first monolingual and becoming bilingual, and further developing their identities with bi-cultural inspirations became an integral component in understanding their positionalities and their successes as professors.

The perceptions of their identities were rooted in their positionalities as women, professors, mothers/spouses, and how they defined success at work. The participants in this study acknowledged their scholarly research was accepted for publications and conferences, they felt they had supportive colleagues, they maintained generally positive relationships with their students, and they agreed that their contributions to their departments were meaningful and empowering. Furthermore, as proposed by both Moss’ (2010) and Oliver’s (2011) works, the construction of an individual’s identity is deeply

connected to many different areas of a person's life. Likewise, the participants in this study moved through their memories to connect their experiences with the development of current senses of themselves, to understand their identities in their complex cultural environments.

How people develop their identities is contextually based on how people feel they are represented in others' eyes. Moss (2010) explained that "representations are cultural processes that constitute individual and collective identities" (p. 375). For the participants, a clear representation of their cultural, familial, and professional identities revealed how they saw themselves, and how they felt others saw them. When the participants questioned their sense of belonging, whether it was through language or sense of self-worth in a new country, they were less confident in themselves, which resulted in either isolation or self-doubt. This kind of self-revelation occurred for the women in graduate school when they experienced many challenges and struggles as students. However, they made efforts to engage and participate the best they could in their programs, and their professors and mentors perceived and supported them differently because of this. According to the participants, positive experiences with their mentors proved to be life-changing. As well, their motivation to push through and complete their doctoral degrees stemmed from the boost in confidence and help they received from the professors who believed in them most. While they perceived themselves as isolated, unheard, and non-engaging, there were others, like their mentors in their doctoral programs, who saw these women as hardworking and "worth the trouble." Furthermore, the participants learned to move fluidly across their many interactions and relationships employing abilities to determine which elements from each

culture (Korean and American) suited them best in particular situations. The women utilized a sense of situational awareness and perception to integrate themselves socially and professionally exercising their cultural knowledge to guide their experiences. These cultural, familial, and professional representations—developed through both Korean and American influences function as “symbolic systems that discursively constitute and (re)produce meanings” (Moss, 2010, p. 375).

Importantly, all of the participants in this study displayed some sort of hesitation when it came to declaring their cultural identities. While some had admitted to never having thought about it prior to the study, others were reluctant to simply identify as either Korean or American. In addition, many of the women referred to not being entirely American because they were not U.S. citizens or permanent residents. This belief in a national identity (Pavaloi & Vasile, 2014) is an important way to view how the participants understand their complex lives. Pavaloi and Vasile defined national identity as one that “refers to both the particular features of a group as a nation, having the same origin, language, culture, spirituality and to the individual’s sense of belonging to this group” (p. 466). Because some of the participants were born in Korea and were currently of immigrant status, they did not feel they “were allowed to” identify as American or part-American initially. In addition, having learned English as a foreign language and speaking with an accent further contributed to a sense that they were not “really all that American.” Therefore, the women’s hesitancy to claim an identity at the start of the study emanated from a sense of “floating in space,” rather than belonging to a particular space. If where one lives and works does not “allow” that individual to identify as “belonging” to that place and those people, then it is easy to see why these women needed to find a

way to ground themselves somewhere. The issue revealed through this study is that the participants also did not feel they were “allowed” to belong to their native Korean groups either, since they made choices to study and live abroad, and to adopt some of the Western value systems and behaviors that can seem so foreign to the Korean cultural system. As such, these women found grounding and belonging in their professional work spaces, where there was space for and value of diversity and accents. Unfortunately, in their personal lives, the participants did not always find that open-minded environment with others in the culture and within themselves, which was not only conflicting but a source of why the women often felt guilt about their lives and life choices.

During the interviews, when we discussed aspects of the American and Korean cultures, these participants began to feel more comfortable adjusting how they labeled themselves. They acknowledged that over time they had come to agree often with American values rather than many patriarchal values from their Korean cultures. While at the beginning of the interviews some participants recognized having a single cultural identity, as American or Korean, some of the women felt they needed to be creative with their descriptions of self because of cross-cultural contexts. For example, Soo-Bin explained that she was more “comfortable as [an] in-between” at the start of her first interview, rather than picking one identity over the other. Jae-Young felt more comfortable with classifying herself as “Pan-Asian” because of her Vietnamese husband and their half-Vietnamese and half-Korean daughter. And, Mee-Na said she was a “globalized Korean,” while Ji-Min stated that she was an “Americanized Korean.” While some of the participants indicated that they had not considered their self-identities at such

length before, others explained that because they were born and raised in Korea, it did not occur to them to re-consider their identities after immigrating.

The participants' notions of identity and positionality help us to understand the subjective ways they made meaning and found comfort and success in their professional lives. As explained by Billett (2010), *subjectivity* is a term that can be understood in a variety of ways and across disciplines. Billett defines subjectivity as comprised of "the conscious and non-conscious conceptions, dispositions, and procedures that constitute individuals' cognitive experience" (p. 6). People engage with and make sense of lived experiences in personally subjective ways to understand and respond to "what individuals encounter in the world beyond them" (p. 6). The participants in this study described their own subjectivities using their personal spaces at home and their professional spaces at work to illustrate how their conceptions of self are represented. Billett explained that central to an individual's learning is the focus on her construction of knowledge and engagement within that knowledge. These complex and difficult understandings of self emerge through social experiences that allow individuals to learn and construct personal meanings. As such, these meanings turn into ways that the women in this study can use this knowledge in order to engage with others around them.

This process of recognizing their own elements of subjectivity allowed the participants to create a unique sense of self within the cultural systems they navigate at work and in their personal lives. Because learning through social experiences, the workplace, and everyday activities contribute to molding people's understandings of self and life, individuals' subjective dispositions will not only shape, but direct "thinking and acting, including how they construe and construct the experience" (p. 2). The

participants' working lives directed what their self-learning meant for them culturally. As such, the participants' identities and positionalities influenced many facets of their work spaces. All of the participants were positively impacted by the presence of Korean culture within their research, and they used the differences in the Korean and American cultures to their advantage. Many of their scholarly works were impacted by their Korean experiences, and these cultural connections were meaningful for these women. As well, their motivation to better integrate and engage international and foreign-language students into their learning environments was an important reason for the women to reconsider their own past experiences as students. It was evident from their self-reflections that their experiences before entering the academy played an integral role in their bi-cultural identities and positionalities as professors in the American academy. Billett (2010) clarified that "the self arises through social experience and stands as the personal basis that mediates relations about work and learning throughout working life" (p. 1). For these reasons, the women in this study verified that their experiences in the American academy influenced the development of their identities and positionalities.

By living in a dichotomous world made up of both Korean and American influences and experiences, the women developed the ability to shift back and forth flexibly between the Korean and American cultures. The women's personal lives remained closely connected to their Korean heritage and the Korean language, while their learning throughout social and academic experiences directed how they saw themselves as women, mothers, and professors. They interconnected both cultures so that their identities and scholarly work could co-exist. The ways in which success is defined for the participants show a close connection with their reconstructed(ing) identity development

because of the multilayered components that contribute. Furthermore, the act of sharing the experiences of these women portrays cross-cultural living and interaction at their institutions, and for these reasons, has allowed the women to develop and strengthen their cultural identities through their work experiences. These practices reveal that their identities “are constructed through multiple layers” (Jackson, 2010, p. 242). Their complex identities have emerged from the cultural clashes and negative experiences that have come into existence, and their identities have become flexible due to having had to integrate and survive in cross-cultural contexts.

Research Question 2 Discussion

How do these women navigate Korean and U.S. cultural systems present in their personal and professional lives?

I was interested in identifying my participants’ motivations and personal/professional desires, to identify what the contradictions within the self and culture may be, and to determine what coping strategies within their academic lives these women employed. This current research demonstrates that while women remain significantly underrepresented in academic positions in the American academy (Hoskins, 2015; Rhode, 2006), the women in my study enjoy high levels of success. The findings of this study, as well as others, suggest that some Asian American women are finding success and making their presence known in U.S. academia, yet their stories and experiences indicate that they have and must continue to confront traditional and societal barriers and complexities in their professional and personal lives on a daily basis (Green & Kim, 2005). I found that the participants in my study, like those in Pio and Essers’ (2014) work, determined that immigrant women regularly endure “triple discrimination”

because they are distinguished simultaneously by their gender, ethnicity, and minority/immigrant status (p. 252). As well, migrant women intentionally accept a need to go “beyond the demands and expectations of both the majority (White) population, [and] their own migrant community” (p. 252). This reality influences power and traditional hierarchical understandings within workplace and families.

Lucero (2014) advised that the “internal state of identity” (p. 14) was related to an individual’s “cultural connectedness” (p. 13), which stabilized the self using a “body of cultural knowledge” (p. 16) that was inherited through social experiences. Furthermore, negotiated space (Iyengar, 2014; Koshy, 2006) is a metaphor for situations in which participants are not only comfortable, but confident and settled in their surroundings. Thus, the space in which individuals find themselves navigating and claiming is made up of both their cognitive and behavioral adaptations; they learn to adapt through the experiences and relationships they have within themselves, and with families, friends, colleagues, and peers.

The women in this study navigated Korean and U.S. cultural systems present in their personal and professional lives by situating themselves decisively within their professional work, and somewhat less firmly in their personal spaces. The spaces they negotiated and claimed were the result of confirming and re-affirming their ethnic or cultural identities in the multi-cultural settings in which they participated (Koshy, 2006). For this study, the spaces negotiated were not only with others (peers, colleagues, students, family, partners, and children), but often within themselves. In this sense, *space* can also be associated with the experiences which an individual inhabits at work, at home, or beyond, and is a place where one moves between thoughts, beliefs, and

understandings to be positioned in a place of comfort. The participants negotiated decisions, beliefs, and understandings within themselves, rather than the environment around them. The decisions they made were a result of overcoming a deep sense of personal guilt, and differentiating between what they felt was necessary culturally for the sake of being successful and happy in the US.

The cultural systems of both Korea and the US differ greatly. In this study, cultural systems are understood in three different ways. First, to live successfully within the American cultural system, an individual is expected to speak English without an accent, be aware of social and community practices, and to understand the norms in which Americans behave and understand the world around them. Second, the Korean cultural system refers to the traditions that gender norms are set in place for men and women not only to interact with one another, but the cultural expectations of these gendered practices dictate how women often feel about themselves, how they dress, and where they work. Third, the cultural system of the American academy is associated with the expectation of collaborating with peers and colleagues, and participating and engaging with students and administrators well. The ways in which the women navigated across these systems and differences reflected that they used cultural elements that suited them and the situations best. Claiming space and negotiating it became more than just the navigation of physical locations or places, but instead refers to the dynamic conceptualization of how the participants use their space(s) to shape their individual perceptions and experiences in modern society.

While the women in this study led their personal lives in a variety of ways, their professional lives and experiences revealed a surprising reality that reflected strength

within the familiarity of the Korean culture. My study's findings relate to Lucero's (2014) and Flather's (2013) works in that Lucero (2014) explained that the "body of cultural knowledge" (p. 16) contributed to how the participants' space(s) shaped their individual perceptions (Flather, 2013), and thus, determined how they used these knowledges to navigate cultural systems present. Collectively, the participants took on challenges that paralleled each other's hardships and struggles with motherhood and work-life balance. While the women of Korean descent in this study felt collective pressures of professional and familial expectations to meet academic and cultural expectations, they use their identities as a platform to engage within and mediate their dual-culture settings.

Negotiating the boundaries between Korean cultural expectations and American expectations were required for all the participants because they were willingly crossing cultural boundaries and taking risks. As such, the term *risk* can be viewed in multiple ways. For these women, challenging traditional gender and professional roles in Korea, immigrating to a foreign country, attending school and working in the US, and graduating with a doctorate degree as a woman were viewed as taking risks. Additionally, while working and living in the US, being less productive in the home and with familial responsibilities were posed as risks as well. In fact, the act of forgoing these expectations was a risk all of the women willingly and intentionally used to influence the rearing of their children in the US, working as a professor in the American academy, and establishing a career that went beyond the home. They were keenly aware of their Korean culture and the limitations that others perceived to exist based on the expectations and stereotypes of their heritage culture. Their stories demonstrated that struggling with the

cultural challenges and the barriers that they had to overcome was a complex process, but these experiences were enriching learning and development opportunities. Furthermore, accepting the repercussions of the risks they took revealed that the women were well aware of traditional and personal consequences; they found consolation and pride in grounding themselves in their professional work successfully.

The women are recognized as being happy in their careers and the professional choices they have made to advance in their workplace environments, and these elements provide the women with a sense of confidence, empowerment, and fulfillment. Conversely, many of the participants were not yet fulfilled and confident in their choices to live and work in the US when it came to their personal lives. While it was reasonable to understand that the women felt inspired at work, many of them were uncertain and somewhat unsettled about the same choices at home. The sense of guilt was heavily present in the women who had children, and when it came to discussions about child rearing, the feelings of inspiration and enrichment were largely diminished. Furthermore, while there were opportunities to continue seeking career advancement, the uncertainty they felt with the choices they made for their children seemed troubling. The women expressed shame in occasionally feeling like they were not being good mothers, and others reflected on their children's childhood they missed out on during the times they were working. The constant ambiguity and insecurity they felt as mothers were important factors that affected how they saw themselves as women at home. Furthermore, the guilt of keeping their children separated from Korea and their relatives in Korea weighed heavily on these women. They felt they were deliberately keeping their children away from their roots, and therefore, they made extra efforts to retain the Korean culture. For

these women, language learning, their children's American citizenship, and the early development of their children's bi-cultural identities remained as the source of their guilt.

While the women's loyalty was apparent in their professional spaces, the findings suggest that the women had career and life goals that did not always fit with traditional Korean expectations. The purpose of immigrating to the US began with "needing a change" by pursuing their graduate degrees in the States. Therefore, they did not knowingly dismiss their Korean upbringing, and they did not abandon their Korean heritage as a result. The choices that came from difficult decisions were grounded in risks they took with the understanding that life outside of Korea presented more opportunities and rewards. While the experiences showed that this took a toll on their personal lives, their professional lives developed into a secure platform for these women. Personally and culturally, being removed from the Korean culture exposed insecurities, guilt, and doubts. In their professional atmospheres and their negotiated spaces, the analyses revealed that their individual identities were constructed through understanding themselves better in demanding situations, learning about other beliefs and traditions that impacted their understandings of self and life, and embracing personal representations that allow them to interact and pass into and between the Korean and American cultures.

Language learning, maintaining their Korean heritage, recognizing their bi-cultural identities through their children and partners, and fulfilling their professional desires successfully emerged as themes across the participants. Moreover, embracing both the Korean and American cultures together was a way for the women to gain and call upon twice the amount of cultural knowledge. Indeed, these women navigated Korean and U.S. cultural systems present in their personal and professional lives by using

an expanded “body of cultural knowledge” (Lucero, 2014, p. 16) across personal and professional relationships.

The negotiation of these challenges and benefits meant that through understanding of the present cultural systems, and with the cultural knowledges they gained, these women used their bi-cultural identities and multiple positionalities to demonstrate that living and working in a blended culture was what suited them best – at least for the moment. These experiences positively transformed the women’s identities by influencing them in ways that went beyond traditional expectations. The advantage of this kind of ‘crossing’ revealed that the participants often took an ‘in between’ stance on how they understood and recognized their multicultural experiences (Park, 2005).

As the women internally negotiated the ways in which they lived professionally, they were unapologetic for overcoming cultural, language, and academic barriers. These experiences and the stories that reflect resilience and perseverance show that the women’s strategies for success began by pushing the limits of a patriarchal society in both the U.S. and Korean cultures. While Green and Kim (2005) suggested that Korean women experience cultural difficulties because they are “under-appreciated and assumed to be less important than the men in their families” (p. 488), my study revealed that the women are professionally successful because of their willingness to take personal and professional risks that often fly in the face of traditional familial understandings and expectations. Finally, this study’s findings help to shift the understanding of immigrant women away from the existing narratives that depict them as not only uneducated, but passive and not in control of their own lives and understandings. Rather, this study supports previous literature that immigrant women are “increasingly mobile and socially

aware,” as well as “employed in a broad and inclusive sense” (Pio & Essers, 2014, p. 253).

Implications

Based on this study, there are several recommendations that can further aid women faculty members of Korean descent. This study has contributed to filling some of the gaps that exist within the literature about Asian American women faculty members, and more specifically, literature regarding Korean women in the academy. Prior to this study, participants in various studies attributed their negative experiences in the academy as ones that challenged their competence and authority at their institutions, feeling a lack of recognition and belonging for their research, and difficulty with networking and establishing professional relationships (Kim, Hogge, Mok, & Nishida, 2014). These kinds of negative experiences are prevalent in the literature that currently exists; however, the female professors in this study have revealed that their professional identities at work are secure. For the most part, they have experienced work positively, and their relationships with their colleagues and students have been fulfilling.

The results of the study were surprising, specifically since at the time the study was conducted, the literature revealed such negative and hostile experiences for women of color in the academy (Alfred, 2009; Burke et al., 2000; Chang et al., 2013; deKoven, 2011; Dong et al., 2006; Hatmaker, 2013). This study’s findings of rather positive stories and experiences in the academy suggest that diversity at institutions may be becoming more valued and supportive, and that the institutions in which the participants work are practicing inclusion at their campuses. Furthermore, these women are getting recognized for their work, they feel they are positively contributing to their disciplines and

departments, and their confidence and self-esteem are high. As well, the participants were not limited by their Korean cultures as previously suggested in the literature (Burke et al., 2000; Chang et al., 2013; Choi, 1998; Kim, 2006; Kim & Merriam, 2010; Li, 2006; Loo & Ho, 2006; Mayuzumi, 2011; Mella, 2012; Morley, 2014; Park & Liao, 2000; Park, 2007; Shrake, 2006; Wilking, 2001).

The participants made the necessary sacrifices to study abroad, learn a different language, and submerge themselves in an unfamiliar culture in order to gain momentum professionally. The positive outcomes suggest that the coping strategies for these women came from a strong desire to be successful in the Western world. Along their academic journeys into their professional lives, having a strong network of support from family and friends proved to be an important factor in the women's lives. This study reveals the importance of understanding and supporting the women's unique experiences to retain them at U.S. institutions. For faculty development, continuing a strong level of support is an important element for not only faculty retention, but for creating an atmosphere of networking and dialogue.

Additionally, the stories of the respondents have suggested that the sensitive nature of the complexities of these women's lives and the results of this study show that living and working in a different culture has many facets. Understanding these complexities means that the challenges in the female professors' professional lives often go beyond those of White women in the academy (Burke et al., 2000; Chang et al., 2013). Understanding these challenges can open opportunities and create an outlet for women to network together as a support system. Therefore, focusing on and being sensitive to the complex realities present in this study can lead to better support for female faculty that

can reflect and affect change. Promoting intercultural dialogue is an important way to create a space that is comfortable and engaging. In addition, my hope is that this study may assist those in faculty development and administrators who are less familiar with intercultural interactions and experiences in the academy as they work toward developing stronger, more culturally-sensitive systems of support. According to the participants in this study, the isolation felt in their personal lives was a byproduct of struggling with the difficulties of living a Western professional life. While trying to, in some ways, adhere to Korean cultural values of home-life, this caused feelings of stress, isolation, and guilt. As a way to address these issues, dialogue regarding these topics during professional development to create support groups for female faculty members of transnational experience to discuss this can be helpful. Support discussions should certainly take into consideration professional needs, but also cultural complexities, guilt, heritage language maintenance with children, and English language acquisition.

Moreover, the female professors in this study all came from institutions in the US that were supportive of diverse faculty members. They also recognized the benefits of working on campuses that valued a multicultural and international student body. The participants felt that these were important reasons for feeling “lucky” in terms of being accepted by those around them in the academy. Further promoting intercultural dialogue and providing internal support, such as having a faculty member who is a mentor and networking together, can help international faculty members who need additional assistance. Chai et al. (2009) explain that universities that are predominantly homogenous are ill-equipped and unprepared “to instill in their students the necessary acceptance and critical understanding they will need in the everchanging, multicultural world” (p. 45). As

well, minority and international faculty members play important roles in shifting institutions into “diverse learning communities thereby reshaping the makeup and climate of the institution” (p. 45). Likewise, creating spaces for diverse faculty members can lead to campuses that better support a diverse student body because they foster “new knowledge” and “pluralistic perspectives among students who will advance equity in a diverse and global society” (Zambrana et al., 2015, p. 41). Chai et al. (2009) noted that campuses needed the support of meaningful mentorships in order to sustain and maintain diverse learning communities. In conjunction with these kinds of learning environments, positive workplaces are associated with receiving support from peers and colleagues as well. In addition, the presence of institutional and collegial support creates a network of coworkers that can contribute to altering institutional culture and transcend barriers that many minority, international, and women of color faculty members experience (Chai et al., 2009; Zambrana et al., 2015).

The participants in this study spoke highly of the relationships they maintained professionally, and they believed that those relationships were an integral part of establishing a sense of belonging at work. The respondents referred to their graduate school mentors, dissertation chairs, and faculty members within their departments who left lasting impressions on them during their times they were struggling. The positive mentor/advisor relationships many had in graduate school certainly impacted how they became professors, and often, they wanted to emulate these kinds of relationships with their own students. Establishing a sense of belonging at work was essential as to whether the participants felt positively about their working environments. For these female participants, having a “work family” and securing a network made an important impact

on the experiences they had. Likewise, providing minority and international faculty members with faculty mentors can adhere to the “pattern maintenance” (Zambrana et al., 2015) to not only preserve, but to “pass on” knowledge associated with cultural, institutional, social, and political aspects with working in the academy (p. 42). Therefore, by creating opportunities for mentorship relationships, minority and international faculty members can familiarize themselves with the expectations of the U.S. and institutional cultural systems and expectations. Thus, they can form relationships that will allow for professional support among faculty. This collaborative approach, as suggested by Chai et al. (2009) and Zambrana et al. (2015), can be achieved through both formal and informal networks. By building trusting relationships at work, as the respondents in this study did in graduate school and in their PhD programs, they can thrive in spaces where their ideas are heard, valued, and respected.

Significance of Study

This study aimed to provide enriching “feminist scholarship on women immigrants,” to add to valuable research regarding immigrant and minority literature, and to contribute to the knowledge and the understanding of both ethnic and professorate communities (Yuen, 2008, p. 296). The significance of this study rests on its ability to connect with an ethnic population that was culturally and socially quiet. Despite the emerging literature about Asian Americans, there was still much to be learned about the experiences of Korean and Korean American women in the academy. This study helps to fill this gap. We now know more about how female faculty of Korean descent experience, create and/or develop their own legitimate spaces and their identities within the academy. Unfortunately, the relations among Asian American female groups and other

minority/ethnic groups along with Whites, has often been hidden because of the Black/White paradigm that exists within American history (Green & Kim, 2005). While it is not possible to define explicitly what it was to be “Asian” in the academy, how these women made meaning within their professional and personal lives and cultural positionalities offers ways to assist in their success as faculty in American university campuses.

Moreover, the concern was that we do not know enough about their professional experiences, and therefore, it was unknown how these women developed and integrated their identities in spaces where their marginalized selves were working to become more legitimate (Mayuzumi, 2011). In order to support and ensure success for women faculty of Korean descent in the professorate, this study adds to the understandings about how they may create and develop their own legitimate spaces and their identities within the academy. Likewise, the importance of building and maintaining relationships through mentorship is a critical way to ensure that the needs and voices of these faculty members are met and heard.

Limitations

There are some limitations in this study. While qualitative research does not claim to offer generalizable findings, the goal is that the readership may find contexts and patterns that are relevant to their own situations and settings. This research does not conclude that all female faculty members of Korean descent have the same experiences. Additionally, women who are Asian American and not of Korean descent may have different experiences. The women in this study were all heterosexual and married, and their experiences with having a husband and family obligations may differ from those

women who are single and/or have different gender or sexual orientations. Furthermore, women at other institutions, and perhaps at campuses that are not as diverse, may exhibit differing professional experiences than those in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study contributes to the body of literature that exists regarding Asian American women, specifically women faculty members of Korean descent. It makes a positive contribution to the literature that was largely negative and exposed hostile experiences of minority women in the American academy. However, further research is required to understand more about the experiences of women faculty members of Korean descent. Sampling a larger group of these women from the rest of the US could reveal additional findings regarding experiences that are both personal and professional. Furthermore, research across ethnicities, religion, and sexual orientations may reveal that women may have experiences that are specific to these factors.

Exploring ways to narrow down the participants to specific departments, geographical locations, campuses, and disciplines may yield results that can enhance our knowledge. Future research may consider comparing immigrants to those who are born in US. Because all of the women in this study had difficulties and feelings of isolation in graduate school, focusing on the experiences of doctoral programs for Korean immigrant women may be a way to better understand the complexities that exist.

In the future, conducting interviews alongside observations in the classroom may assist in data gathering, as it will provide a visual representation of experiences for women faculty members of Korean descent. The cultural understandings that can come from these future studies will allow for a more in-depth view of the complexities of

transnational females in order to recognize better ways to support these women in the American academy.

Conclusion

The participants' identities can be understood in complex and unique ways. The findings suggest that thematic elements such as self-awareness, cultural representation, belongingness, isolation, and guilt characterize the experiences of transnational female academics. As females of Korean descent living and working in a blended culture, it was evident that their lives and development were all unfinished (Freire, 1998), much like many individuals who find themselves as "in-between" identities or cultures. The overlap that exists between the Korean and the American cultures provided the individuals in this study with unique ways to take elements from each culture as they deemed necessary. Their stories reflected vulnerability as well as strength, and importantly, they were willing and interested in sharing them. As well, the process of observing these women's thinking and re-thinking about their childhood, many of them growing up in Korea, revealed that the memories were hidden beneath their courageous demeanors.

The presence of racial microaggressions, stereotyping, and the discrimination they experienced shed new light on how the negative stories in their lives still allowed them to push forward into having successful professional lives. Furthermore, the success of these female professors in the U.S. academy gives hope to other minority and international faculty members who may identify with the stories shared in this study. The narratives that spread across multiple areas of these participants' lives can be understood and recognized across cultures, as well as those who are challenged by work-life balance, motherhood, and sense of belonging at work. In addition, the ways in which these female

professors found themselves through their cultural looking glasses demonstrates that each filter and view is unique, just as the stories are unique to each individual respondent in this study.

Personal Note

As a researcher, I find that this study was an important contribution to the existing literature because it addressed not just academic experiences of women in the academy, but specifically, the personal, cultural, and professional experiences of Korean heritage for women. As a Korean American woman myself, I too am journeying through the process of entering the academy. And, as a woman and an emerging scholar, my identity has become a central point in defining and re-defining who I am while writing this dissertation. This study epitomized a sense of shared space that was shaped by both myself and the participants; as such, I feel that the identities of the researcher and the participants mutually offered the ability to influence the research and its processes (Bourke, 2014). In reading this dissertation, it is essential to take into consideration that multi-layered identities came into light through our developed sense of self and our perceptions.

As I have questioned my own position culturally, academically, and professionally during this dissertation writing process, I have found that nothing is for certain regarding my own identity. The intersection of culture and identity for the women faculty of Korean descent in this study demonstrated how their adjustment experiences were used to identify not only gender roles, but also to explore cultural belongingness and the development of cultural and national identities inside and outside the academy. Bourke (2014) situated the perceptions of others, along with the ways in which we expect

others to perceive us, as ways to develop identity based on how our own biases shape this unique research process. He asserted that through recognizing our biases, we can “presume to gain insights into how we might approach a research setting, members of particular groups, and how we might seek to engage with participants” (Bourke, 2014, p. 1).

Kezar (2002) wrote that “within positionality theory, it was acknowledged that people have multiple overlapping identities. Thus, people make meaning from various aspects of their identity...” (p. 96). My own cultural biases were shaped within my own understandings of how I grew up and went to school in the US. Outside of those experiences, my cultural ways of knowing have been largely shaped by what I have seen within my own family, what my experiences have been as a Korean-born American citizen and immigrant, and the stories I have shared with other Korean women, Korean American women, and women of Korean descent who have acknowledged cultural barriers in their own lives. However, because my identity is continuing to evolve, I do not want to impose my own identity meanings onto those of my participants. The research process through my own Korean American female positionality aimed to reveal that it was crucial to assist “in creating spaces in which voices that are often silenced were sought and heard” (Bourke, 2014, p. 5).

As noted previously, although research exists about women faculty and minority women faculty, little was known or had been studied about women faculty of Korean descent in the academy despite the emerging literature about Asian Americans. In being cognizant of my positionality, however, what I hoped to achieve in this dissertation was to gather the stories of Korean American women professors and their unique and

individual experiences—rather than, a mirroring image of my own expectations and understandings. Therefore, as Bourke (2014) wrote, “the research in which I engage is shaped by who I am, and as long as I remain reflective throughout the process, I will be shaped by it, and by those with whom I interact” (p. 7). As such “positionality is thus determined by where one stands in relation to ‘the other’” (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 411).

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Dissertation: The Cultural Looking Glass: A Narrative Analysis of Korean Female Professors in the U.S. Academy

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Texas State University IRB approval EXP2015T336860Z

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a dissertation research study that seeks to investigate how the use of personal cultural and professional narratives can enhance the study of experiences for women faculty of Korean descent. You are specifically being asked to participate in this study to share stories of personal, cultural, professional/academic practices, Korean/American traditional histories, and your scholarly journeys. The intent of this research is to understand your views and meaning-making that can contribute to knowledge about how women faculty of Korean descents' conceptions of positionality impacts their experiences in the American academy. Additionally, participants will also share how their personal cultural narratives influence the ways in which they navigate their professional experiences within the academy.

If you volunteer to participate in this research, you will participate in two interview sessions lasting for approximately 1 hour to 1.5 hours each. The first interview will elicit cultural narratives for the purpose of understanding how personal and culturally-based experiences have helped to shape who you are, and ultimately, how you understand your life as an adult woman. The second interview will aim to produce professional narratives to focus specifically on the experiences in the academy, and to further explore how being a female faculty member of Korean descent has impacted your academic life. The interviews will be audio-recorded with your permission. Your participation is voluntary and as such, you may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or jeopardy to your standing with Texas State University.

RISKS: There are no significant psychological or physiological risks associated with participating in this research study. However, some of the questions may be considered sensitive. You are not required to respond to any question that they do not feel comfortable answering. All answers will remain confidential.

BENEFITS: Research on the cultural experiences of international, minority, or immigrant students may or may not be beneficial to other professors and university administrators in understanding how best to navigate, support, and retain these students for future academic success.

COMPENSATION: There is no financial compensation available for participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name will not be used on any research reports.

Pseudonyms will be used to conceal your identity. All written materials and consent forms will be stored on a password-protected personal computer in the investigator's

office. Your name, location, and institution will never appear in any publication of these data.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study.

You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

MEMBER CHECKS: You will be provided opportunities to clarify transcripts of your interviews. Member check analysis will be performed twice for each individual interview. Once data analysis is completed, you may look over them to contribute additional explanation(s). Upon receiving the documents via e-mail, you will have one week to provide clarification; with no response, I will assume that the data provided are correct.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: Please let me or my supervising professor know if you have any specific questions or concerns regarding this dissertation research study. If you have any concerns that your rights are being violated, you may contact the Director of the Office of Research Compliance at Texas State University, Becky Northcut at (512) 245-7975.

APPENDIX B

FIRST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

(PERSONAL CULTURAL NARRATIVES)

The purpose of the first interview is to gather data about the cultural narratives that are embedded within the lives of women faculty of Korean descent. I aim to elicit details that will inform me about how the women make meaning not only in the world around them, but to also understand what their perceptions have been as they have navigated their ways within/around heritage and dominant cultural expectations.

Participants will be asked to bring a cultural artifact to each of their interviews. For the first interview, the participant's cultural artifact will reflect a connection to their personal cultural stories. Artifacts can be: a picture, a family heirloom, passport, or an item from a family/traditional gathering. Participants are not limited to these items and may bring a physical artifact that holds special meaning for them.

The first interview will inform the second interview by allowing the personal cultural narratives to function as a foundation to build off the women's experiences that occurred before their professional lives. Because the second interview (professional narratives) will be about stories related to the academy, the first interview will focus more on her upbringing, cultural values, and personal experiences outside of work.

Personal cultural narratives (interview)

- Immigrant/citizenship experiences

- Identity development throughout the immigrant/citizenship process
- Academic journey as a student until college

Interview questions for personal cultural narratives (Interview 1):

1. Where did you grow up?
 - a. What was that like for you?
 - b. What is your citizenship?
 - c. What are some family stories that you can tell me about your parent(s), sibling(s), extended family member(s)?
 - d. What Korean/American traditions did you practice and why were these important in your family/life?
2. Outside of what it may say on your passport, how do you culturally identify?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What are the circumstances around this choice of identity?
 - c. What does this identity mean to you?
 - d. What does this identity mean to you to live in America as a Korean woman?
 - e. Can you tell me a story of something that has happened in your life that would illustrate an example of what it means for you to live in America as a Korean woman?
3. What was it like for you in school during your childhood?
 - a. Were there times when you remember your cultural heritage impacted/influenced your experiences in K-12?
 - b. Can you tell me a story about this specific time and what you learned from it?

4. So now I'd like for us to talk about your experiences across your degrees.
 - a. Were there times when you remember your cultural heritage impacted/influenced your experiences when obtaining your undergraduate degree?
 - b. Can you tell me a story about this specific time and what you learned from it?
 - c. Can you tell me about an experience in graduate school when you were getting your Master's degree?
 - d. What stories can you tell me about experiences in your doctoral program?
5. Now I'd like to talk about who you are today after these experiences. How are you different/same from when you were a K-12 student/undergraduate/graduate/doctoral student?
 - a. Can you tell me a story about an experience that would illustrate a moment when you realized the importance of being a Korean woman?
 - b. When was this moment obvious to you? (your "ah-ha" moment)
6. How have your cross-cultural relationships in your life been influenced/impacted by your culture?
 - a. Can you tell me a story about a time that can illustrate your understandings about these relationships?
 - b. Why did you choose this story?

7. As a Korean woman, have there been moments that made you feel like there was a difference between your world and the rest of the world?
 - a. If so, can you tell me a story about one of those times?
 - b. What did this experience mean to you?
8. What else would you like for me to know about what your cultural identity may mean to you?

APPENDIX C
SECOND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
(PROFESSIONAL NARRATIVES)

The purpose of the second interview is to gather data about the professional narratives that are embedded within the working lives of women faculty of Korean descent. The interview for professional narratives will be conducted to gain a more focused understanding of what their work and scholarly experiences have been thus far. In this interview, questions about race/ethnicity/gender will be asked to recognize the role of culture and cultural identity within the women's experiences in the academy. I am interested in this intersection because I want to further explore the impact of the women's culture and how it affects or does not affect their work and presence at an American institution.

As with the first interview, participants will be asked to bring a cultural artifact to the second interview. For this interview, the participant's cultural artifact will reflect a connection to their professional/academic stories. Artifacts can be: a degree, a professional award, an article they wrote, or another item that relates to their professional/academic lives. Participants are not limited to these items and may bring a physical artifact that holds special meaning for them.

Professional narratives (interview)

- Cultural perception at an American institution as a student
(graduate/doctorate)
- Academic journey as a scholar in the academy

- Cultural perception at an American institution as current faculty member
- Identity development/multiple roles within the academy

Interview questions for professional narratives (Interview 2):

1. How long have you been at this present university/college?
2. How do you feel your race/ethnicity and/or gender have affected your position on campus?
 - a. Can you tell me about an experience that may illustrate this?
 - b. What does this experience mean to you and your career?
 - c. Why did you feel this way?
3. As an academic, can you tell me a moment where your race/ethnicity has been an advantage or a disadvantage?
 - a. What did this experience mean to you?
 - b. Can you explain why you feel this way?
4. As an academic, can you tell me a moment where your gender has been an advantage or a disadvantage?
 - a. What did this experience mean to you?
 - b. Can you explain why you feel this way?
5. Can you tell me about what it's been like to be a female Korean scholar in your field of study generally?
 - a. What are your scholarly interests?
 - b. What would you say are your contributions to the field?
 - c. Culturally speaking, do you think that your heritage impacts decisions you've made?

- d. If so, can you tell me about a time this has happened?
 - e. Can you give me an example about a time when your cultural identity impacted your professional identity?
 - i. Have you made different choices since that experience? If so, why?
 - f. Can you tell me a story that will illustrate what it means for you to “survive/thrive” as a Korean woman in the academy?
6. As a professor, what has your interaction with students and colleagues been like?
- a. Can you tell me a story about a time when you felt that your race/ethnicity and/or gender have affected you in student interactions?
 - b. Can you tell me a story about a time when you felt that your race/ethnicity and/or gender have affected you in administrator interactions?
 - c. How do you think your students and colleagues perceive you as a K/KA woman?
 - d. Why do you feel this way?
7. What kinds of strategies do you use to gain a sense of belonging within the American academy?
- a. What strategies would you suggest are necessary for navigating an academic/scholarly career as a K/KA woman?
 - b. What advice would you give to K/KA women aspiring to becoming a professor/faculty member?
 - c. What advice would you give to women in general in the academy?

APPENDIX D

Terms Used in This Dissertation

| Terms Used | Definition |
|--|--|
| Hyphen and space (i.e., Korean-American; Korean American) | The hyphen between <i>Korean</i> and <i>American</i> (as with <i>Asian</i> and <i>American</i>) has not been inserted to theorize the “psychological processes circulating in that space where a hyphen might appear, in historic and geographic contexts in which dual identities become dueling identities” (Fine et al., 2012, p. 120). In this study, the term <i>Korean American</i> will remain without a hyphen, but with a space. |
| Korea | South Korea is officially referred to as the Republic of Korea, and is located in the southern part of the Korean peninsula. Because South Korea is often considered to be “Korea,” this is how it will be referred to in this dissertation. |
| Asian | The term <i>Asian</i> will refer to American-born Asians and naturalized Asian citizens and residents who “trace their ancestry to the [East] Asian continent...” (Hune, 1998, p. 3). |
| Korean and Korean American females; females of Korean descent | <i>Korean</i> and/or <i>Korean American females/females of Korean descent</i> are referred to as South Korean citizens, American-born South Korean females, naturalized South Korean females, or South Korean females who temporarily reside in the U.S. for teaching at American college/university institutions, campuses (Green & Kim, 2005). |
| Asian American | <i>Asian American</i> refers to those women of Asian heritage and background, but born in the U.S. or to immigrants from other Asian countries (Green & Kim, 2005). |

| Terms Used | Definition |
|--------------------------|--|
| Academy | The academy is the context in which higher education occurs. In this study, I refer to the academy as a professional space where faculty teach, do research, and assume the scholarly role of professor/faculty member. |
| Faculty/academics | <i>Faculty</i> means university or college employees “who are assigned to carry out teaching and/or research,” who I refer to as “academics” in this dissertation (Mayuzumi, 2011). |
| Culture | Cultures, in many ways, provide diverse and assorted ways of interpreting the environment and the world around us, as well as relating to other peoples. In particular, culture refers to recognizing that other individuals and groups perceive the world differently through varied interpretations that exists among societies and communities. Culture can be defined as “the totality of [a] group’s thought, experiences, and patterns of behavior and its concepts, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and how those evolve...” (Jandt, 2012, p.7). |
| Cultural identity | <i>Cultural identity</i> refers to the identification with and acceptance into a particular cultural group that has a shared system of symbols, beliefs, and meanings as well as norms and customs for behavior (Collier & Thomas, 1988). |
| Identity | <i>Personal identity</i> refers to a “unique and distinct personality of an individual that changes through time depending on the events that happen” (Yelich Biniecki & Conceição, 2014, p. 40); and, it is linked to how the multiple contexts of adult learners impact their development (Merriam et al., 2007). |

| Terms Used | Definition |
|--|---|
| Cultural narrative | <i>Cultural narratives</i> are used to demonstrate how an individual's internalized cultural beliefs, traditions, lifestyles, gender roles have consequences or benefits regarding assimilation and acceptance (Yuen, 2008). |
| Professional narrative (Nash, 2004) | <i>Professional narratives</i> allow those who "have been traditionally underrepresented, marginalized, and disenfranchised in higher education...an opportunity to tell their personal stories in formal scholarly writing...to challenge and question the dominant white, male, Western research ethos in the university" (Yuen, 2008, p. 3). |

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