

Korean Immigrants and Their Aesthetic Perspectives on Appearance

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### **The Researcher's Perspective**

“Mommy, can I have blonde hair someday?” asked my first daughter. This unexpected inquiry made me feel awkward. I answered that it could be possible to dye her hair blonde when she grows up, but I also stressed how beautiful her slick black hair was. She seemed to be unsatisfied about my answer that she could not have blonde hair right that moment, but soon ran away from me. There were no more questions like that, and I assumed she was forgetful of the time. But recently, five years later from the day of the first question from my daughter, I observed how her faded light brown hair because of sun exposure made her happy. She did not want to have her hair cut. This made me remember her question and think about our ethnicity and identity as Asian immigrants in the United States.

“Where are you from?” I have been asked this question many times since I settled in Minnesota in 2007. In 2001, I moved to Los Angeles, California with my husband from South Korea and we lived there for 5 years. Traveling through Singapore for one year, we then moved to Minnesota. If someone asks me now if I am Korean, I say “yes,” but the question “where are you from?” always made me confused. In time, I have become more comfortable to say that I am from Korea regardless of how long I have been living in the United States. But for my children, who were born here in the United States and want to be looked at as other “American” kids, to what extent does this same inquiry “where are you from?” matter and how do they respond to the question?

While these experiences as a first generation immigrant woman in the United States matter in many aspects of my present life, my Korean characteristics that I share with my family, friends, and other Korean peers and feeling of kinship with them also

affect how I feel about the sense of belonging in both Korean and American cultures, communities, and groups. Living as an Asian immigrant and Korean Diaspora in the United States became the motivation to ask questions about immigrants' ethnic identity, relationship with co-ethnics and "Americans" in the United States, and resulting attitudes and behaviors in our daily life, especially focusing on dress related practices.

As a first generation Korean immigrant, I am still learning about American culture and I may not be helpful to answer correctly my children's question of "being Koreans in the United States." But my hope is that people having the same inquiry for themselves and others can understand better the complexity of the immigrants' states from my study.

## **Abstract**

In the United States, as the population of immigrants is constantly increasing, the adaptation of immigrants to the host society emerges as an important issue. Cultural differences between the culture of origin of immigrants and the host culture and dynamics of these two cultures shape their migratory process in the United States. The sense of belonging into the host culture as well as their culture of origin are simultaneous and often conflict with the formation of social identity. The needs for inclusion and differentiation in their dual or sometimes multiple cultural contexts make an impact on immigrants' attitudes and behaviors concerning appearance. Therefore, this study focuses on the influence of migratory experience and social identity of Korean immigrants both in their new culture and culture of origin towards their aesthetic perspectives on appearance.

Conversations with thirty first generation Korean immigrant women show that immigrants negotiate and plan their strategic practices related to their appearance. This helps them balance the needs for inclusion and differentiation in dual cultural contexts. In this way they resolve the conflicts coming from different cultural values, ideals, thoughts, and standards of the host culture and heritage culture and relationships with peers in Korean society, other immigrants in Korean immigrant community, and mainstream Americans. These practices are shown in two appearance forms in choosing to wear the same ensemble for both contexts or two ensembles for each context.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	i
The Researcher’s Perspective.....	iii
Abstract.....	v
List of Tables.....	x
List of Figures.....	xi
<b>Chapter One: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Background and Context.....	1
Purpose of the Research and Statement of the Research Questions.....	3
Significance of the Research.....	5
Terms.....	6
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Major Concepts.....	8
Assimilation and Acculturation.....	8
Ethnicity and Korean Immigrants.....	14
Ethnicity and Dress.....	16
Aesthetic Experience.....	18
Theoretical Framework: Social Identity Approach.....	20
Social Identity Theory.....	21
Self-Categorization Theory.....	21
Optimal Distinctiveness Theory.....	22
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology.....</b>	<b>26</b>

Rationale for Qualitative Research and Ethnographic Methodology.....	26
IRB Approval and Ethical Consideration.....	27
Population and Sample.....	28
Pilot Study.....	31
Data Collection Methods.....	34
Survey.....	34
Interview.....	35
Interview Questions.....	35
Data Analysis.....	39
Issue of Validity and Trustworthiness.....	40
<b>Chapter Four: Ethnic Identification of Korean Immigrants.....</b>	<b>41</b>
Data Collection.....	41
Data Analysis.....	44
Social Change.....	44
Ethnicity.....	53
Duel Identity.....	62
Identity Complex.....	67
<b>Chapter Five: Maintaining Korean Culture vs. Contact with American Culture....</b>	<b>70</b>
Sense of Belonging in a Dual Cultural Context.....	70
Ethnocentric Perspective toward the Ingroup.....	73
Conformity: Sense of Inclusion to Korean Culture and Dress.....	75
Sense of Inclusion to American Culture.....	80
Sharing the Values of Appearance in American Culture.....	84

Sense of Distinctiveness in a Dual Cultural Context.....	88
Intergroup Differentiation and Outgroup Derogation.....	88
Lost of Attachment.....	92
Outsiders in American Culture.....	97
Sense of Distinctiveness on Appearance in American Culture.....	100
Comparison with Relevant Outgroups.....	103
Intergroup Comparison with White Ethnic Groups.....	103
Distinctiveness from Other Asian Outgroups.....	105
<b>Chapter Six: Balancing between Cultures.....</b>	<b>109</b>
Balancing the Senses of Inclusion and Distinctiveness.....	110
Strategic Practices on Appearance.....	116
Same Ensemble Group.....	117
Two Ensembles Group.....	121
<b>Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusions.....</b>	<b>135</b>
Discussion of Important Findings.....	136
Migration and Encounter with Ethnicity.....	136
Sense of Belonging in a Dual Cultural Context.....	139
Ethnocentric Perspectives: Favoring Own Group.....	141
Conformity.....	142
Comparison with Relevant Groups.....	142
Uncomformity.....	144
Balancing Identity through Practices on Appearance.....	144
Limitations of the Study.....	145

Implications for Future Research.....	147
<b>References.....</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Appendix A: Lists of Respondents.....</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Appendix B: Survey and Interview Materials.....</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>Interview Consent form.....</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>Survey Questions.....</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>Interview Questions.....</b>	<b>162</b>

## **List of Tables**

Table 1. Compositions of select racial/ethnic groups in Minnesota.....	30
Table 2. Survey Data - Demographic Information.....	42
Table 3. Survey Data – Length of U.S. Residence (years).....	43
Table 4. Survey Data – Occupational Status.....	46
Table 5. Survey Data – Identification between Korean-ness and American-ness.....	47

## List of Figures

Figure 1. The Optimal Distinctiveness Model of Group Identification (Brewer, 1991)...	24
Figure 2. The Spectrum of Korean-ness vs. American-ness.....	47
Figure 3. Same Ensemble Image 1.....	117
Figure 4. Same Ensemble Image 2.....	117
Figure 5. Same Ensemble Image 3.....	118
Figure 6. Same Ensemble Image 4.....	118
Figure 7. Same Ensemble Image 5.....	118
Figure 8. Same Ensemble Image 6.....	118
Figure 9. Same Ensemble Image 7.....	119
Figure 10. Same Ensemble Image 8.....	119
Figure 11. Same Ensemble Image 9.....	119
Figure 12. Same Ensemble Image 10.....	119
Figure 13. Same Ensemble Image 11.....	120
Figure 14. Two Ensembles Image 1-1 worn in U.S. & 1-2 worn in Korea.....	124
Figure 15. Two Ensembles Image 2-1 worn in U.S. & 2-2 worn in Korea.....	125
Figure 16. Two Ensembles Image 3-1 worn in U.S. & 3-2 worn in Korea.....	125
Figure 17. Two Ensembles Image 4-1 worn in U.S. & 4-2 worn in Korea.....	126
Figure 18. Two Ensembles Image 5-1 worn in U.S. & 5-2 worn in Korea.....	126
Figure 19. Two Ensembles Image 6-1 worn in U.S. & 6-2 worn in Korea.....	127
Figure 20. Two Ensembles Image 7-1 worn in U.S. & 7-2 worn in Korea.....	127
Figure 21. Two Ensembles Image 8-1 worn in U.S. & 8-2 worn in Korea.....	128
Figure 22. Two Ensembles Image 9-1 worn in U.S. & 9-2 worn in Korea.....	128

Figure 23. Two Ensembles Image 10-1 worn in U.S. & 10-2 worn in Korea.....	129
Figure 24. Two Ensembles Image 11-1 worn in U.S. & 11-2 worn in Korea.....	129
Figure 25. Two Ensembles Image 12-1 worn in U.S. & 12-2 worn in Korea.....	130
Figure 26. Two Ensembles Image 13-1 worn in U.S. & 13-2 worn in Korea.....	130
Figure 27. Correlation between Length of U.S. Residence and Identification.....	131
Figure 28. Identification of Same Ensemble Group and Two Ensembles Group.....	132

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Background and Context**

A new wave of mass immigration beginning in the late 1960s has dramatically increased the diversity of ethnic groups in American society (Alba & Nee, 2003). The geography of U.S. immigrant population has shifted from Europe to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Institutional changes, from the civil rights movement to the immigration law, have provided a more favorable environment for non-white immigrants and their children than in the past (Alba & Nee, 2003; Waters, 1990). Migration of these ethnic groups is acknowledged to positively affect the American culture through opportunities for cultural diversity. Consequently in recent years, America has been described as the “salad bowl” instead of “melting pot,” which implies the metaphor of a heterogeneous society (Kang & Kim, 1998; Berry, 1997).

There are distinct differences between the first or second generation of Euro-American immigrants and their descendants in the United States. While former generations tended to assimilate to the host culture and blend into it, later generations tend to think that cultural differences in society are valuable and express interest in maintaining their own cultures of origin and cultural objects (Crane, Hamilton, & Wilson, 2004). Similar phenomena have been found among other ethnic groups such as Asian immigrants (Tuan, 1998; Le, 2007; Kang & Kim, 1998; Rajagopalan & Heitmeyer, 2005; Chattaraman & Lennon, 2008).

However, even though different values and views co-exist in contemporary American society, it is probable that the individual immigrants of minority ethnic groups

experience an acculturation or assimilation process which means that as they enter into a new cultural environment, they learn and adopt the cultural traits, norms, and values of majority culture that are different from the ones where they were originally reared (Kang & Kim, 1998; Berry, 1997). As a result of acculturation or assimilation, immigrants experience attitudinal and/or behavioral changes in their everyday lives.

People are individual persons and at the same time, they are members of various groups; consequently individuals have multiple selves, or multiple social identities, which interact with other people at different levels (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; DeLong, 1998, Eicher, Evenson, & Lutz, 2008). At the personal level, people's behavior is shaped by individual differences, such as traits, attitudes, age, gender, and the like. In contrast, at the group level, their beliefs and actions are aligned on their understanding of the features that define their group (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Yzerbyt & Kuppens, 2009). Various factors at the personal level and group level simultaneously influence the ways in which people acculturate (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Especially, some immigrants such as members of minority ethnic groups, experience the acculturation process in different ways because of their minority status, that is affected by their relationship to majority group and cultural differences that distinguish the groups from the host culture, such as their ethnicity, race, religion, language, and/or dress (Padilla & Perez, 2003).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William Newman (1973) defines majority groups as groups that “create or enforce the social norms or exemplify the social archetypes (trait characteristics of groups that are the most highly desired or rewarded) are superordinate with regard to the distribution of power (p. 21).” According to Newman (1973), majority and minority are determined in terms of social power. In this study, “majority” and “Americans” means white ethnic populations.

Gans (1962) suggests that as individuals immigrate into a new culture, they adopt behavioral practices of the new dominant culture. Gordon (1964) also argues that the minority group necessarily adopts the “cultural patterns” of the new society, which include language as well as dress and outward emotional expression (p. 79). Cultural contact between two groups influences the aesthetic experience in dress and appearance of members of minority groups; in consequence, immigrants’ appearances to some extent emulate that of dominant group members (DeLong, 1998; Gans, 1962). But on the other hand, the distinctive appearance also marks their status as a cultural minority (Gans, 1962). It is because both the culture of origin and the present culture they live in simultaneously influence their aesthetic response and experience, even if the culture of origin is not immediate part of their current experience (DeLong, 1998). It is also because appearance and dress, that is the consequence of one’s total aesthetic experience, help identify people’s personal attributes, social affiliations, cultural values, and place in history and at the same time, such clues help influence the behaviors of these people and of others toward them (DeLong, 1998). Therefore, the attitudes and behaviors of immigrants on appearance and dress may change according to the experience of acculturation or assimilation of each individual immigrant and also group in which individual members belong.

### **Purpose of the Research and Statement of the Research Questions**

My research indicates that immigrants in the United States experience some form of acculturation or assimilation as they enter the new cultural environment and become

part of American culture, yet they also experience differences in attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs from the members of the host culture. As mentioned, in general, both the culture of origin of immigrants and their present culture are simultaneously influential to their aesthetic experience. In particular, the sense of identity of immigrants, that is to say, their sense of belonging or sense of differentiation in two cultures which is reflected and shaped through the experience in the contact with American culture and in maintaining the culture of origin, makes their aesthetic experience on appearance and dress different from that of members of their host culture or members of their culture of origin.

One of most recent Asian ethnic groups to go through an assimilation or acculturation process in the United States is the Korean immigrant group. Korean immigrants, as part of the larger Asian ethnic community, share several social, economic, and political similarities with other Asian ethnic groups in regard to their particular relationship with the larger American society. But at the same time they have their own unique attributes in terms of the historical, cultural, and socioeconomic characteristics in American society, which are distinctive from the larger American society as well as from other Asian immigrants. As a result, Korean immigrants experience the distinctive assimilation or acculturation process and also have the different aesthetic experience that influences their attitudes and behaviors on appearance and dress comparing to other ethnic groups. There is plentiful scholarly literature that examines European immigrant groups' assimilation or acculturation processes in American society (Waters, 1990; Alba & Nee, 2003; Gordon, 1964; Gans, 1962). However, there is a paucity of research exploring Asian immigrants, especially Korean immigrants, and their attitudes and

behaviors on appearance and dress in accordance with the migratory process and social identification.

The purpose of this research is to understand the influence of acculturation and sense of identity both in a new culture and their culture of origin towards the aesthetic perspective on appearance of Korean immigrants in the United States. Korean immigrant participants represent a range of interpretation of form and meaning in dress and appearance, based on their aesthetic experiences on formal and symbolic attributes of dress associated with American culture and Korean culture.

My research aims to investigate (1) what attributes influence the acculturative experience of Korean immigrants living in American culture, (2) how Korean immigrants identify themselves and to what extent their ethnic identity influences their aesthetic perspectives and practices on appearance of themselves and others in Korean culture and American culture, and (3) what are the roles of appearance in their everyday lives to balance their identities both in Korean and American culture and between these two cultures.

### **Significance of the Research**

The goal of my research is first, to understand how the contact with different cultures and/or the maintenance of culture of origin in a new cultural context influence immigrants' everyday lives, especially their dress related behaviors. Second, it is to understand the current phenomena derived from multi-ethnic culture of the United States

through the attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and values as expressed in appearance and the similarities and dissimilarities among various ethnic groups.

To achieve my research goals, in Chapter Two, I provide a literature review on major concepts including assimilation, acculturation, ethnic identity, dress, and aesthetic experience. I also review social identity approach, focusing on the optimal distinctiveness theory as my theoretical framework for data analysis. Chapter Three outlines the methodology that applies to my research. Chapter Four and Five contain the substantive findings from my interviews exploring and comparing the respondents' experiences as members of an ethnic minority in American culture and the influence towards their appearance both in Korean culture and American culture. Chapter Six focuses on how respondents balance their sense of inclusion and differentiation through managing their appearance in both Korean culture and American culture and between these two cultures. Finally, Chapter Seven brings together the major findings from the analytical chapters and discusses the implications of the study.

## **Terms**

According to the definitions of Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992), dress is an assemblage of modifications of the body including coiffed hair, colored skin, pierced ears, and scented breath, and/or supplements to the body including garments, jewelry, accessories, and other categories of items, which are recorded by all the senses including sight, tactile, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory responses. Appearance includes features of the undressed body, such as its shape and color, as well as expression through gesture

and grimace (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). In my research, I use the terms dress and appearance as complementary because the physical characteristics of an individual are formed to compound facial expression, gesture, motion, posture as well as the various forms of dress.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Focusing on how appearance reflects the sense of identity of immigrants in accordance with the acculturative process in a new cultural context and how appearance shapes immigrants' contact with people from other cultures and maintain their culture of origin, I touch on several concepts in my discussion: assimilation, acculturation, ethnicity, dress, and aesthetic experience. In this chapter, I define and begin to elaborate how these concepts relate to my research. Then, I provide a theoretical framework for this study that is made up from a social identity approach and concerned with issues of immigrants and their aesthetic experience.

### **Major Concepts**

#### ***Assimilation and acculturation***

According to Barth (1969), culture is the only way to describe human behavior and there are certain groups of people who are characteristic of each culture. He states that in anthropology, the term "ethnic group" is understood to designate a population which (a) is largely biologically self-perpetuating, (b) shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms, (c) makes up a field of communication and interaction, and (d) has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others. An ethnic group is a cultural group that shares a common history, tradition, and sense of peoplehood, and is formed around nationality, religion, physical attributes, geographic location, or other factors (Banks, 1981; Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995).

But these characteristics of an ethnic group may change as members of the group become adjusted to a new cultural environment. According to assimilation scholars (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1950) who study white European immigrants and their descendants in the United States, immigrants take a series of steps, such as use of language of the dominant culture, change of cultural value, and intermarriage, and as a consequence, they may become indistinguishable from the members of the dominant culture and the salience of ethnicity in their lives declines with each passing generation.

According to Park and Burgess (1969), assimilation is defined as “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life (p. 735).” Park (1950, p. 138) identifies four stages of assimilation process that immigrants go through as they adjust to American culture, that is, a “race-relations cycle of contact, competition, accommodation, and assimilation.” According to this model, first, groups from different cultures contact each other. Second, groups compete with each other to gain advantages over one another. Third, different groups begin to cooperate and accommodate to each other to minimize conflict. Finally, it ends with assimilation, in which accommodation is eventually to be undermined by the personal relationships that cross group boundaries such as intermarriage and amalgamation (Park, 1950; Park & Burgess, 1969; Alba & Nee, 1997; Le, 2007; Padilla & Perez; 2003).

Gordon (1964) also identifies different types of assimilation. Among these, he provides the definition of acculturation as the minority group’s adoption of the “cultural

patterns” of the host society, such as cultural norms, beliefs, and behavior patterns. He argues that these patterns extend beyond the acquisition of the language, to dress and outward emotional expression, and to personal values (Gordon, 1964, p. 79). He distinguishes intrinsic cultural traits that are essential elements of the group’s cultural heritage, such as religion and musical tastes, from extrinsic traits that are considered less important to group identity, such as products of the historical change of the group’s adjustment to the local environment (Gordon, 1964). The extrinsic traits are likely to be given up by the group as a result of acculturation (Alba & Nee, 1997).

Gordon’s acculturation conception explains that the minority group unlearns their cultural traits, which are “evaluated by the host society as inferior,” in order to “successfully learn the new way of life necessary for full acceptance” by the middle-class “white Protestant, Anglo-Saxon origins”, which is described as the “core American culture,” and would change almost completely in order to assimilate, while the core culture would remain unchanged by this absorption (Gordon, 1964, p. 72; Alba & Nee, 1997, 2003). An example is that immigrants and their descendants from southern, central, and eastern Europe, who were seen as unassimilable races and were despised and excluded from this “core American culture,” have successfully become assimilated, namely, Americanized and become members of a white race, and afterward they do not have direct ties to their country of origin or opportunities to learn ethnic languages, customs, or values (Waters, 1990; Alba & Nee, 2003; Tuan, 1998).

While Gordon’s conception of acculturation is a mostly unilateral process which views one group as adopting that the cultural traits of another (Alba & Nee, 1997), Berry

(1997) reexamines the concept of acculturation defined as culture change resulting from contact between two autonomous cultural groups.

Meanwhile, Berry (1997) also states that acculturation is an individual-level phenomenon and there are vast individual differences in how people attempt to deal with their acculturative change. Depending on their values regarding cultural maintenance or contact, acculturation of individual members can be categorized into one among the four modes of acculturation: assimilation, separation/segregation, integration, and marginalization (Berry, 1997, 2001). Integrated individuals are those who want to maintain their identity with their culture of origin as well as want to take on some characteristics of a new culture. Assimilated individuals do not want to keep their identity from their home culture but would rather take on all of the characteristics of the new culture. Separated individuals want to maintain their home cultural heritage and segregate themselves from the new host culture. Marginalized individuals have neither the desire to maintain their culture of origin nor any desire to take on the characteristics of the new culture (Leonardelli, Picket, & Joseph, 2011).<sup>2</sup>

Various factors affecting the attitudinal and behavioral change of acculturating individuals exist at both group and individual level. Group level factors include political, economic, and demographic conditions in their society of origin as a basis for understanding the degree of voluntariness in the migration motivation of acculturating

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<sup>2</sup> Following Berry (1997, 2001), this study considers acculturation comprehensive in a broader sense than assimilation and uses the term acculturation to refer to culture change process encompassing the acquisition of new cultural traits and maintenance of the culture of origin and the term assimilation to specify the unilateral change of acquiring new cultural traits.

individuals. Also the conditions of society of settlement such as attitude and social support to immigrants, should be considered. In addition, physical, biological, socio-economic, and cultural change such as new dietary intake, loss of status, or new employment opportunities for the group should be considered as group level acculturation factors. Factors that should be considered at an individual level prior to acculturation include age, gender, education, status, migration motivation, cultural distance (e.g., language and religion), and personality. Other factors that should be considered during acculturation include phase (i.e., length of time), attitudes and behaviors, socioeconomic attainment, residential patterns, intermarriage, resources, social support, and personal attitudes about societal prejudice and discrimination (Berry, 1997). Even though in practice, more change occurs in the minority group than in the majority group, it is an important advance that Berry recognized the acculturation process as an individual's choice and as a multidimensional process of cultural change by intergroup contact (Padilla & Perez, 2003).

Alba and Nee (1997) also note that the influence of minority ethnic cultures occurs within the mainstream and the elements of minority cultures are absorbed into the mainstream American culture or fused with elements of mainstream to create "a hybrid cultural mix (p. 834)." American society has become more heterogeneous as the number of minority groups has become larger and ethnic influences on the American culture happen continuously (Alba & Nee, 1997).

Eicher *et al.* (2008) also claim that members of a cultural group who have migrated to other places express loyalty to their past culture and maintain their cultural

identity connected to their ancestry. They can have cultural behaviors, values, and beliefs that display their cultural background. Therefore, individuals of these groups feel themselves to be members of both their ethnic cultural group and the new cultural group of the society where they live. In a large society, these cultural behaviors, values, and beliefs can create conflict between or among cultural or ethnic groups.

In America, many white ethnics continue to identify themselves ethnically (Waters, 1990). Nevertheless, ethnic identity has taken on a superficial function and symbolic meaning (Gans, 1979; Waters, 1990). This symbolic identification becomes a leisure-time activity and ethnicity does not influence their lives nor limit their choices (Gans, 1979; Waters, 1990; Tuan, 1998). Today ethnicity becomes a conscious option to white ethnics (Waters, 1990).

While ethnicity is flexible, symbolic, and voluntary for white European immigrants, ethnicity is imposed on Asian immigrants in different ways (Waters, 1990; Tuan, 1998; Le, 2007). Asian immigrants have been thought to be visible racial minorities because of their physical appearance (Tuan, 1998). Even though Asian immigrants have adopted the cultural values of white Americans and acculturated to American culture, still ethnicity shapes their perspectives on life and it matters for them (Waters, 1990; Tuan, 1998). Thus, their acculturative experiences differ from those of European Americans (Tuan, 1998).

Recently, Padilla and Perez (2003) discuss the psychological acculturation, namely, the internal process of change that immigrants experience when they come into contact with members of the host culture, and present a model of acculturation related

with social cognition, cultural competence, social identity, and social stigma. According to these scholars, “the social identities the immigrants bring with them and the identities they develop in the new environment influence social cognitions that in turn guide their behavior such as the clothes they wear, the foods they eat, the people with whom they associate, the values to which they adhere, and the strategies used to accommodate to the new culture and its people (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 50).”

As Padilla and Perez (2003) propose that immigrants’ acculturation and their social identities both in their culture of origin and the host culture are interrelated and the identities influence their behaviors, an examination of the relationship between acculturation and social identity and its influence on immigrants’ appearance is instrumental in this study.

### ***Ethnicity and Korean Immigrants***

Immigrants came to the United States, gathered in ethnic neighborhoods, created ethnic organizations, and passed on their traditions and identifications of their past lives to their children (Waters, 1990). Contrary to the predictions by some assimilation theorists that with the distance in time and generations from the original immigrants, the importance of ethnic identification and allegiance and its meanings in immigrants’ lives decrease, immigrants have maintained some degree of identity with their ethnic backgrounds (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1950; Tuan, 1998; Waters, 1990).

Today Asian Americans have gained social acceptance and economic stability. Asian ethnics exceed white ethnics on number of higher education, occupation, and

family income and they reside in desirable suburban residential areas with them (Tuan, 1998; Min, 1995). However, Asian immigrants have experienced different “racialization” processes from those of European immigrants regardless of their success and social mobility, due to the visibility of their physical appearance (Tuan, 1998, p. 8). Many scholars state that the characteristics of non-white immigrant groups and their perceptions or attitudes on migration and acculturation are influential to (re)construct their ethnic identity in American society, and the ethnic identity has had very different results for individuals of these groups (Blauner, 1972; Takaki, 1987). Therefore, I decided to limit the study to only Korean immigrants among non-white ethnic groups to delve more deeply into the relationship between the migratory process of Korean immigrants and their ethnic identity and its influence towards their practices and perspectives on appearance.

Korea has been described as one of the most ethnically homogeneous nations in the world. The members of Korean society share foods, dress style, attitudes, values, tastes, history, tradition, language, and a sense of peoplehood. Korean immigrants in the United States also show these common characteristics that can be identified from other Asian ethnic groups. Moreover, in their behavioral aspects related to dress, distinctive characteristics that differ from other Asian ethnic groups, such as preference for national brands, family-orientation, reliance on word-of-mouth, and price priority were found (Kim, 1987; Kang & Kim, 1998). In addition, the history of Korean immigrants in the United States exceeds a hundred years and there are several generations who have experienced the different stages of acculturation. Thus, it is relevant to focus on one

ethnic group (i.e., Korean immigrants) living in the United States to study the relationship between acculturation, social identity, and its influence to aesthetic perspectives on appearance.

### ***Ethnicity and Dress***

In the field of clothing and textiles, researchers have investigated the characteristics of ethnic groups constituting American society focusing on their apparel-related thoughts and behaviors (Kang & Kim, 1998; Rajagopalan & Heitmeyer, 2005; Chattaraman & Lennon, 2008; Crane *et al.*, 2004). These researchers show that the relationship between ethnicity and attitudes and behaviors towards appearance is closely linked, and ethnicity has been considered as a determinant of a certain ethnic group's consumption patterns or decision-making patterns for dress. Some researches specifically demonstrate that the level of acculturation of immigrants strongly influences their consumption behaviors regarding dress (Kang & Kim, 1998; Rajagopalan & Heitmeyer, 2005).

Rajagopalan and Heitmeyer (2005) explain how the different levels of acculturation of Indian consumers residing in the U.S. influence the purchasing behavior of Indians regarding ethnic apparel and contemporary American clothing. This research describes the influence of acculturation on consumers' perceptions toward apparel. The researchers first find that certain demographic characteristics such as income, religion, and hometown, are positively associated with the level of acculturation. Second, they find that when respondents are involved in selecting and purchasing apparel items, a similar

level of involvement remains valid toward both Indian ethnic apparel and contemporary American clothing. Third, a low level of acculturation causes a higher level of involvement in Indian ethnic apparel. Lastly, Asian Indians who are new to this country are trying to identify with the new culture, leading to a decline in their involvement with Indian ethnic apparel. But, as they become comfortable in their new environment, they feel a need to reconnect with their original culture and this leads to a renewed interest in Indian ethnic apparel.

Chattaraman and Lennon (2008) also examine whether ethnic consumers' consumption of cultural apparel and the attributive responses related to their consumption would be predicted by the strength of their ethnic identification. The researchers find that consumers' strength of ethnic identification significantly influences their apparel consumption and attribution of emotions and meanings to the consumption. Further, consumption of cultural apparel mediates the influence of strength of ethnic identification on consumers' attributions of emotion, and partially mediates this influence on consumers' attributions of meanings.

Kang and Kim (1998) examine the decision-making patterns for purchasing social clothes of three major Asian American consumer groups: Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. The researchers discover that each Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrant group exhibits significant differences in terms of how much they are affected by the different sources of reference group, media, and store attributes. Three Asian American consumer groups display distinct consumption patterns, which differ relying on the level of acculturation.

Contrastingly, Crane *et al.* (2004) investigate white European Americans. They argue that dress does more than serve as a symbol of membership or affiliation in an existing group; it also serves to stimulate initial feelings of ethnic identification. In the early stages of constructing their identity, dress is adopted as a focus and dress serves as an effective boundary marker, when little else is available to maintain those boundaries (i.e. ethnic traditions). Once an individual feels complete in his or her ethnic identity, it is likely that dress symbols may become less important.

According to Nash (1989), the basic elements of ethnicity are blood, substance, and culture, but these are not visible, graspable, or available in social interaction, and there are secondary to the basic symbols of ethnicity, which are dress, language, and physical features. That is, individuals acquire identities through interaction with other people in various social, physical, and biological settings and these identities are communicated by dress within a particular interaction situation (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992; Eicher *et al.*, 2008).

### ***Aesthetic Experience***

An aesthetic experience is defined as “a bundle of emotions, images, ideas, moods, sensations, and feelings (Mitias, 1982, p. 165).” A total aesthetic experience includes the formal, expressive, and symbolic qualities of a product, appearance, or environment (Fiore & DeLong, 1994; Fiore & Kimle, 1997; De Klerk & Lubbe, 2008). According to Fiore and DeLong (1994), the aesthetic experience of dress addresses the

internal processes, the multi-sensory properties, the psychological aspects, and the socio-cultural characteristics of the wearer.

Dress elicits sensory, emotional, and cognitive reactions and these reactions result from the formal qualities of the item, such as the color, texture, lines, and proportions (Fiore & Kimle, 1997; De Klerk & Lubbe, 2008). Sensory stimulation can be used to stimulate the bodily sense, resulting in sensations of sensory enjoyment, discomfort or even pain (e.g., the satisfaction of the senses). The emotional dimension that is arousing enjoyment, a feeling of elation, and a feeling of dominance is also an important component of an aesthetic experience (e.g., a consumer experiences happy and satisfied). The cognitive dimension as the component of an aesthetic experience means cognitive experiences that occur in the mind when a product communicates a message of reality, a message of fantasy, and cognitive enjoyment to the consumer (e.g., the message that the consumer belongs to a specific cultural or social group, or dainty lingerie reflects the female consumer's inner sexuality). These three dimensions constitute the aesthetic experience (Fiore & Kimle, 1997; De Klerk & Lubbe, 2008).

Immigrants moving to a new society learn music, art, religion, language, personal adornment, manner of dress, and various behavior patterns from the host culture. "Preference, or the favoring of one thing over others, is a part of our learned appreciation (DeLong, 1998, p. 16)." As a learned attitude and behavior within a culture, apparel preferences influence the way that people think and act toward their appearance (DeLong, 1998). Apparel preference changes based on the aesthetics or aesthetic perception, that is defined as learning about what visual qualities people are attracted to

and make evaluative judgments about (DeLong, 1998). According to DeLong (1998), aesthetics relates what is valued as an ideal and how people desire to look according to the dominant images of the time. She argues that such ideals evolve slowly from one image to another based on perceived cultural cues. Our aesthetic experience is “interpreted through our ideology, a set of internal guidelines based on learned ways of doing, values, and resulting ideals (DeLong, 1998, p. 17).” Such guidelines are relatively stable. But people constantly see new forms and are introduced to new ideas. When they see these new forms and new ideas that differ from their internal guideline again and again, at some point, they “may expand or alter their guidelines to accommodate the differences (DeLong, 1998, p. 17).”

Eicher *et al.* (2008) also state that every human being develops an aesthetic sense influenced by culture, and an individual uses the aesthetic sense to dress and respond to dress of others. In a complex society such as the United States, a variety of aesthetic standards can exist relating to different cultural and ethnic groups.

### **Theoretical Framework: Social Identity Approach**

This section introduces social identity approach to be used as a theoretical framework, which is one of the most influential theories in the field of social psychology explaining intergroup relations (Hornsey, 2008). It comprises social identity theory, self-categorization theory, and optimal distinctiveness theory.

### ***Social Identity Theory***

Social identity theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) describes two basic levels of identity that define a person's self-concept: personal identity – characteristics that make her or him a unique individual distinct from others, and social identity – aspects that connect her or him to others through group memberships. According to social identity theory, people have multiple social identities derived from memberships of social groups and they think, feel, and act based on these multiple social identities in different social contexts (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Individual behavior reflects an individual's larger social units such as groups, organizations, and cultures (Tajfel, 1981). According to this theory, people favor their ingroup comparing against outgroup, which is known as *ingroup favoritism*, and the reason is that people desire to establish positive and secure self-esteem. They are motivated to think and act in ways that achieve or maintain *positive distinctiveness* between one's ingroup and relevant outgroup and this process of making salient 'us and them' distinctions changes the way people see each other (Hornsey, 2008; Padilla & Perez, 2003). These social comparison processes depend on the ranking of the ingroup in the hierarchy and the inequalities caused by the categorization into groups and comparisons between them drive intergroup conflict (Padilla & Perez, 2003).

### ***Self-Categorization Theory***

As an extension of social identity theory, self-categorization theory shares most of the assumptions and methods with social identity theory. But in social-categorization

theory, Turner *et al.* (1987) focus more on the categorization process. One of the core notions of self-categorization is the concept of depersonalization, in which people represent their social groups in terms of prototypes, and people see themselves and other ingroup members “less as individuals and more as interchangeable exemplars of the group prototype (Hornsey, 2008, p. 208).” Three-levels of self-categorization are proposed in social-categorization theory: the superordinate category of the self as human being (i.e., human identity), the intermediate level of the self as a member of a social ingroup as defined against other groups of humans (i.e., social identity), and the subordinate level of personal self-categorizations based on interpersonal comparisons (i.e., personal identity) (Turner, 1999). The social identity indicates what it is to be a group member, and also determines what kinds of attitudes, emotions, and behaviors are appropriate in a given context (Hornsey, 2008). Through the process of depersonalization, highly identified ingroup members internalize the norms of the group and assume that others have as well (Hornsey, 2008).

### ***Optimal Distinctiveness Theory***

We are aware of ourselves to the extent that we are different from other people, and at the same time, we sustain ourselves within the context of cooperative and interdependent groups (Brewer, 1997, 2003, 2009). Therefore, we are inclined to live in collectives and we have to rely on others for sharing cooperative information and collective knowledge and this characteristic of human beings is defined as obligatory interdependence (Caporael, 1997; Brewer, 2009). Among the theories that explain the

relationship between need for self-esteem and intergroup differentiation, the optimal distinctiveness theory of Brewer (1991) which is also an extension of social identity theory, explains why individuals seek identification with social groups and how social identities work to achieve and maintain a stable self-concept (Brewer, 2009). According to the optimal distinctiveness theory, individuals have two fundamental but opposing needs that control the relationship between the self-concept and membership in social groups: “the need for inclusion within the group” and the counteracting “need for differentiation and exclusion through distinctions between the ingroup and outgroups (Brewer, 1997, 2003, 2009, p. 6; Leonardelli, Picket, & Brewer, 2010).” This model proposes that “social identities are selected and activated to the extent that they help to achieve a balance between needs for inclusion and for differentiation in a given social context” and “group attachment is regulated by motives for inclusion and distinctiveness (Brewer, 2009, p. 6).” In Figure 1, Brewer (2009) depicts that “individuals will be identified with social categorizations that are either too inclusive or too differentiating but will define themselves in terms of social identities that are optimally distinctive (p. 6).”

According to Brewer (2009), there are three principles that are essential for understanding optimal distinctiveness: (1) optimal distinctiveness is context specific, which means distinctiveness is contextually defined, (2) optimal distinctiveness is a dynamic equilibrium, that is, inclusion and differentiation motives within a given context are subject to temporal influences and change over time, and (3) identity motives vary across situation, culture, and individuals.

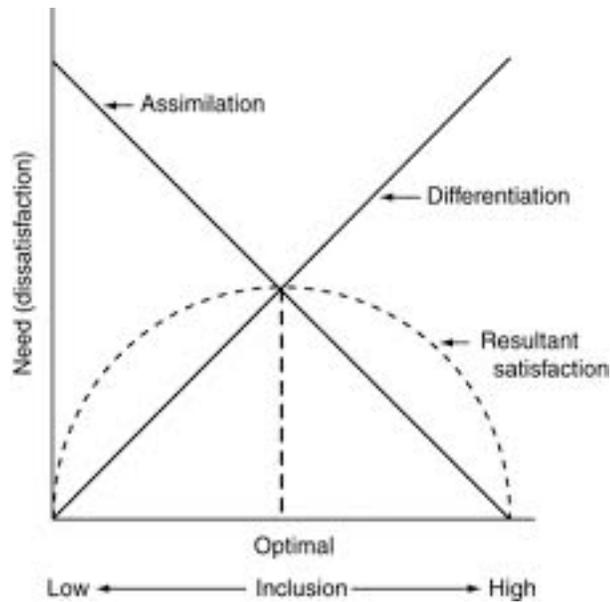


Figure 1. The Optimal Distinctiveness Model of Group Identification (Brewer, 1991)

According to the basic principles of the theory, “the salience of an individual characteristic such as ethnicity is a function of context” and it means that a characteristic like ethnicity becomes persistently salient to one’s social identification if the other people in one’s reference group are continuously different from oneself on a given characteristic (Grier & Deshpandé, 2001, p. 217). According to McGuire, McGuire, Child, and Fujioka (1978), members of the minority ethnic group would be more conscious of their ethnicity. Researches find that in ethnically diverse settings, the members of the minority ethnic group, relative to members of the majority group, exhibit a stronger tendency to identify with members of their own group and form friendships with the members. (McGuire *et al.*, 1978; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998; Leonard, Mehra, & Katerberg, 2008).

Many researchers demonstrate that self-concept is not fixed; it changes as a person moves from one social setting to another and individuals can categorize

themselves as members of various social groups (Leonard *et al.*, 2008; Leonardelli *et al.*, 2011; McGuire *et al.*, 1978; Mehra *et al.*, 1998; Brewer, 1997, 2003, 2009). The multiple ingroup memberships can result consequently to moderate attitudes toward diversity and intergroup relations (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Crisp, Hewstone, & Rubin, 2001). Since a person has not one personal self, but rather multiple social identities that correspond to the multiple group memberships, different social contexts may cause individuals to think, feel, and act differently (Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

Brewer (2009) claims that “expectations of cooperation and security promote positive attraction toward other ingroup members and motivate adherence to ingroup norms of appearance and behavior that assure that one will be recognized as a good or legitimate ingroup member (pp. 5-6).”

The factors and processes in relation to the acculturation of each individual immigrant and their social identification are critical to interpret their aesthetic experience, especially dress related attitudes and behaviors. Next, the relationship between acculturation, social identity, and aesthetic experience of immigrants on appearance is analyzed based on the theoretical framework focusing on the optimal distinctiveness theory that holds center stage to explain the outcomes of data collected, using qualitative research approach.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

This chapter discusses the methodological approach utilized for this study. The advantage in conducting qualitative methods and the appropriateness of such methods for this study are discussed. Also ethical issues, population and sample description, sampling, and data collection process taken in conducting interviews are presented.

#### **Rationale for Qualitative Research and Ethnographic Methodology**

My research pursues exploration of following key research questions; as Korean immigrants encounter and become acquainted with a new cultural context, how does their sense of identity and belonging to their culture of origin and the current culture affect their aesthetic experience on appearance and how their experiences can contribute to the understanding of various ethnic groups in the United States and their attitudes, behaviors, and values that are related to the appearance. According to Creswell (2007) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research is appropriate when there is a need to study the experiences and perspectives of a group or populations whose voices traditionally have been muted. Qualitative research is also conducted when there is a need to study a complex, detailed understanding of the issue, its contexts or settings, and participants' deeper thoughts and behaviors governing their responses (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As revealed in Chapter One, my research focus is to elucidate the Korean immigrants' experiences in regard to ethnicity in American culture where participants place and how their experiences influence their attitudes and behaviors on appearance and qualitative research approach did fulfill my research with the needs explained above.

Within the broader category of qualitative research, my approach incorporates concepts associated with an ethnographic method. Ethnography was suited since I could describe and interpret the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group with the research approach (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). One of the most valuable aspects of ethnographic research was that I, as a researcher, could gain a richer and more detailed description and a much deeper account of what people actually do in real life than can be done with other research approaches. With observation, photos, and field notes, the acculturative change of members of a specific ethnic group, its influence towards their aesthetic perspectives and experiences, and the way they appear could be understood.

In-depth interviews with open-ended questions facilitated the individualized explanations about Korean ethnic identity and complex processes of acculturation and allowed me to discover the meanings that they attach to them and their dress and appearance in the American cultural context. I also fostered interaction with participants to represent their thoughts accurately. For this research, as a member of Korean immigrant group, I attempted to control my personal views and preconceived ideas.

### **IRB Approval and Ethical Consideration**

As Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) point out, ethical issues can arise in all phases of the research process including data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and dissemination of the research findings because of the emergent and flexible design of

qualitative research; as qualitative researchers, I need to remain attentive throughout the study to the researcher-participant relationship by protecting the rights of participants.

Approval by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Minnesota for the research proposal in dealing human subjects was obtained (Approval 1204E13185). To ensure the protection and rights of participants, written consent to voluntarily proceed with the study was received from each participant (Bloomberg & Vople, 2008). The copy of the consent form is in the Appendix A.

### **Population and Sample**

Korean immigrants, as one of the Asian ethnic groups in the United States, experience a similarity with their own fellow members and at the same time, experience a certain level of difference in the relationship with members of other groups. For example, in many aspects such as language, religion, food, dress style, attitude, or socioeconomic characteristics as well as their physical appearance, Koreans can be identified from other Asian ethnic groups, as the literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two explains. Appearance including dress can be also a significant indicator to distinguish Koreans from other immigrant groups. For a variety of reasons, my research benefits from discussing the aesthetic perspectives on dress and appearance with the individual members of the Korean immigrant group. As addressed in Chapter Two, several researchers have shown the influence of acculturative experience of immigrants from various ethnic groups to consumption patterns or decision-making patterns for apparel (Chattaraman & Lennon, 2008; Kang & Kim, 1998; Rajagopalan & Heitmeyer, 2005;

Crane *et al.*, 2004). Specifically, some researches that were undertaken on Korean immigrants' purchase behavior showed the dissimilarity of Korean ethnic group from other Asian ethnic groups such as Chinese, Japanese, or Taiwanese (Kim, 1987; Kang & Kim, 1998). According to these researchers, Korean immigrants are likely to prefer national brands, be family oriented, view shopping as a part of a woman's role, consider price important, rely on word-of-mouth, and be interested in shopping centers. Thus, it is relevant to limit the study to Korean immigrants in the United States to explore my research questions about the sense of identity and belonging of Korean immigrants in both Korean culture and American culture and their aesthetic perspectives related to dress and appearance.

To recruit participants, I employed "criterion-based sampling," which is a purposeful sampling strategy where participants who possess certain characteristics are selected. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) describe that criterion sampling works well when all the individuals studied represent people who have experienced the same phenomenon. For participation, individuals had to meet three requirements. First, they were the first generation immigrants themselves who moved into the United States after the age of 18. The reason is to focus the sample to individuals who had experiences and impacts of Korean culture and had established memories in their culture of origin. Sociological research finds that there are significant differences in the historical, cultural, and socioeconomic characteristics between people who have been firstly socialized outside of the U.S. and people who have been socialized in the context of American society (Alba & Nee, 2003; Waters, 1990; Le, 2007). Second, they had to have lived in the United States

for more than one year, so participants who were recruited had been exposed to American culture to understand and assess the contextual difference from Korean culture. And third, the samples were restricted to Korean immigrant women. The choice to interview only women was made to control for the effects of gender independently and it would introduce fewer confounding factors than considering both genders at once.

Also I used snowball sampling, where participants were asked to identify and refer others who were known to have the same or similar characteristics (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Thirty women participants were recruited from Minnesota in fall, 2012 through word of mouth, acquaintances, and various ethnic organizations.

There are about 20,000 first and second generations of Korean immigrants (U.S.

Table 1. Compositions of Select Racial/Ethnic Groups in Minnesota

Ethnic group	Population	% of population
White	4,524,062	85.3%
Black or African American	274,412	5.2%
Asian	214,234	4.0%
Hispanic or Latino	250,258	4.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native	60,916	1.1%
Two and More Races	125,145	2.4%
Total	5,303,925	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010

Census 2010) and 13,000 Korean adoptees (U.S. Census 2010) in Minnesota and the population of Korean immigrants constitutes about 10 per cent of total Asian population in Minnesota (see Table 1).

Most participants lived in suburban areas and metropolitan areas of major cities in Minnesota that were not segregated by ethnic origin. This was significant because the demography enabled me to see whether and how ethnicity matters in the lives of Korean immigrants, who live amongst a multiethnic demography, and how it impacts on their aesthetic perspectives respecting dress and appearance.

### **Pilot Study**

The research stemmed from my personal experiences, dialogues, observations, and multiple projects taking place throughout my coursework in my doctoral program. Especially I have conducted two research projects under the topic of aesthetic experience in dress of Korean immigrants using a qualitative research method of in-depth interviews in 2009 Fall semester and 2010 Spring semester. I recruited interviewees who met the four criteria: a Korean, female, student or spouse of a student, and newcomer who has been in the United States more than half year and less than three years. The reason that I chose Korean students or their spouses as interview participants was that students or the family members of students who lived in the United States might have been exposed to American culture more smoothly than other immigrants. Their ways of dressing could be more easily influenced by American culture due to their younger age range than other adult immigrants and specific circumstances that are more culturally diverse and

dynamic. I recruited eight participants: seven students and one spouse of a graduate student; three for the first project and five for the second project.

During the pilot interviews, three key questions were asked to describe: (a) how you dress today, (b) whether your dress in Korea would be same or different, and (c) how you perceive the similarities or differences in dress types between your culture of origin and American culture. Several related questions were asked linked with their answers.

For the pilot project, I adopted emic and etic distinctions as a theoretical framework. The assumption using this framework was that the way people appear can reflect how the participants feel or think about the similarities that they might share with peer members in the same ethnic group and the differences that they might have from the members of other ethnic groups. Analyzing the data collected from the interviews, I categorized them into three parts applying emic and etic distinctions: (a) insider's viewpoint with emic domain seeing other Koreans in American culture, (b) outsider's viewpoint with etic domain seeing American culture, its members, and themselves, and (c) in-betweeners' viewpoint between these two cultures.

As the result of the pilot study, I found that my participants had a mixture of feelings about their new culture. They showed curiosity and interest in the novelty in environments and expectation of the opportunities found in the new culture. At the same time, conflicts arose due to the differences between their culture of origin and the new culture, such as anxiety about their status, loneliness, feeling that they do not belong to the new culture, fear of the unknown and unfamiliar, and confused values.

Also I found that their perspectives about objects, events, people, groups, and cultures were related to their senses of identity and according to their viewpoints that they took, they evaluated them in different manners. For example, when my interviewees saw themselves as outsiders in American society, they were likely to see other people as well as themselves through their outsiders' viewpoint (i.e., etic perspective). Consequently some felt freer from others' opinion on their choices of dress, because of their thoughts that they were not included in their new culture. On the other hand, because they were outsiders of American culture and could be easily distinguished from members of the majority group due to their physical appearance, they felt the necessity to dress consciously so as not to be judged by their appearance and dress. When they took an insiders' viewpoint (i.e., emic perspective), they noticed the differences between Korean immigrants and Americans in aspects of appearance such as posture, language, physical appearance, and dress style. They felt embarrassed when they met Koreans who dressed inappropriately regardless of the occasions. When the interviewees had an in-betweeners' viewpoint, they experienced a mixture of feelings such as anxiety, novelty, frustration, and curiosity. Their selection of dress style reflected this situation of immigrants, especially as in-betweeners. As an example, several interviewees revealed that they had the reverse cultural shock when they visited Korea and found their dress styles were out of mode with the current trends in Korea.

I also found that the unsure feeling about whether to stay in the United States or go back to their home country influenced the change in values, attitudes, or behaviors in dress and appearance. I believe that the results would vary depending on their age,

gender, marital status, number of children, economic situation or class, residency status or type, home ownership, length of residence in the United States as well as their interests in appearance and dress. Additionally, regardless how long people have lived in the United States, their attitudes and beliefs about cultural contact or cultural maintenance might make differences in their aesthetic perspectives regarding dress and appearance.

### **Data Collection Methods**

The use of multiple methods and triangulation is critical in utilizing qualitative research approach (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Therefore, this study employed a number of different data-collection methods, including survey and interviews.

#### ***Survey***

Demographic information such as the time they arrived in America, age, number of children, past and current occupation, and other personal information was collected through a separate survey questionnaire (see Appendix A). Such demographic information helps explain what may be underlying an individual's perceptions, as well as the similarities and differences in perception among participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). I began each interview with the survey form and asked respondents to answer the questions provided. The names and all other identifying characteristics have been changed (see Appendix B).

## ***Interview***

In order to delve more deeply into the experiences, views, and thoughts on appearance regarding Korean immigrants' sense of ethnic identification and belonging, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with thirty Korean immigrants between September and November of 2012 in Minnesota. I conducted interviews wherever convenient for my participants: in their homes, at cafes and restaurants, and at work. Each session lasted from one to three hours and audio-recorded with permission from the participants. The interview initially covered the prepared questions, but whenever participants brought up issues that were not covered in the prepared questions, I let the participants develop the issues freely. These issues were then asked of the following participants and the interview protocol was modified for future interviews. As a result, the interviews covered four general areas: (1) ethnic identity, (2) experiences with dress, (3) values on appearance, and (4) attitudes and behaviors on appearance.

## **Interview Questions**

Interview questions were developed based on the pilot study and the review of literature to correspond with each of the three research questions (see Appendix B).

The interview questions for Research Question One generated responses from participants about how they feel or think of themselves in the host culture. Participants were encouraged to discuss how these feelings or thoughts could be connected to their aesthetic perspectives on dress and appearance in the interview questions for Research Question Two. The interview questions for Research Question Three were developed to

elicit discussion about the experiences of their attitudes, behaviors, or values regarding dress and appearance that are influenced by their aesthetic perspective. The interview questions for each research question are as follows:

***Questions related to Research Question One: what attributes influence the acculturative experience of Korean immigrants living in American culture?***

**Ethnic Identity**

1. Based upon the answer to survey question 10), how much do you see yourself as a Korean or as an American?
2. What makes others distinguish you as a Korean from other Asians? (e.g., language, food, religion, attitude, physical appearance, or dress)

***Questions related to Research Question Two: How do Korean immigrants identify themselves and to what extent does their ethnic identity influence their aesthetic perspectives and practices on appearance of themselves and others in Korean culture and American culture?***

**Experiences with Dress**

1. Can you describe what you wear today and what you brought to wear for a visit in Korea?
2. Will you wear different dress items or styles for each different circumstance?

### **Values on Appearance**

1. Do you dress consciously considering your physical appearance? If yes, how and why?
2. How important is your appearance to you? Compare your value on appearance in Korea and in the United States.

*Questions related to Research Question Three: What are the roles of appearance in Korean immigrants' everyday lives to balance their identities both in Korean and American culture and between these two cultures?*

### **Attitudes and Behaviors on Appearance**

1. How much were you involved in activities or traditions of Korean culture or community in the last year? Describe some activities you have participated in.
2. How much were you involved in activities or traditions of American culture in the last year? Describe some activities you have participated in.
3. Did you choose to dress differently in each case? If yes, how and why?
4. Did you bring any Korean dress items with you to the United States? If yes, what did you bring?
5. Describe any experiences of Korean dress style or item. When did you wear it? How did you feel?

6. When you visit Korea, what do Koreans (e.g., friends) say about your appearance? Describe any experiences regarding your appearance or your dress style.
7. Where do you purchase new clothing or apparel?
8. When you purchase new clothing or apparel, which culture is more influential to you? And why? (e.g., Korean friends, celebrities, or media vs. American friends, celebrities, or media)

Before the interview, I asked each participant to wear what they usually wore in the United States and to bring their dress item(s) that they feel appropriate to wear in Korean culture assuming that they visit Korea. These dress items that they wore and brought were photographed with the consent of the participants. The purpose of using two different dress ensembles was to give participants opportunities to reflect upon the similarity and difference in managing their appearance in two different cultural contexts, not to compare the form of dress itself. Participants' perspectives related to dress and appearance relied on their dress and interviews. Considering their dress for each cultural location helped uncover participants' descriptions of their experiences related to such things as how experiences influenced the decisions they made and whether participants had a change of mind or a shift in attitude and behavior respecting dress and appearance.

I conducted the interviews in a personal, conversational manner with open-ended questions to facilitate informants' comfort and openness about sensitive topics and to

stimulate thoughtful reflection rather than a quick response. For their participation, I compensated them with a \$10 Target store gift certificate.

Interviews were conducted in Korean unless they desired to speak in English and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Completed interviews were transcribed while another interview was being conducted. By following these processes, I went through each interview several times and compared the transcriptions across the cases. It helped me to get a sense of the interview as a whole. The interviews were analyzed in Korean prior to the first translation to English. I translated the quotes first and then a bilingual speaker of Korean and English checked the accuracy of the translations.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed my collected data through three stages. First, I evaluated the survey responses by measuring meaningful demographic characteristics. One goal of the survey was to summarize the characteristics of the first generation Korean immigrants who have experienced the acculturation process. I investigated what demographic variables could affect their experiences in American culture including their attitudes and behaviors on appearance. Especially, I grouped the respondents based on the time that they stayed in America into three, seeking differences and/or similarities among groups.

Second, I examined the interview data using theme identification (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Discovering themes and subthemes is an important task in qualitative research, because thematic categories allow investigators to describe, compare, and explain their research (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Therefore, I read and reread the

transcriptions until the predominant themes emerged. By conducting a careful line-by-line analysis, I searched similarities and differences across units of data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). A coding scheme was developed after reading across cases. I started rough coding with one case and then modified the codes through other cases. When a new code came up, the code was inserted in the first interview transcript and then into the next.

Finally, I analyzed the photographs of respondents, which show the ensembles that they wear in their current cultural context and/or that they would wear assuming the visit of Korea. These images were integrated with the analysis of the interviews.

### **Issues of Validity and Trustworthiness**

Credibility and trustworthiness are also the important issues in qualitative research. To maximize credibility and trustworthiness and increase validity, I made use of two techniques. First, I adopted triangulation by using different data sources and methods to provide corroborating evidence and to shed light on the thematic structure. Second, I had peer-debriefing sessions with other colleagues. The triangulation through multiple analysts allowed me to have more confidence in the validity of the study. This process also helped me probe for personal biases and clarify meanings that had not been explicitly explained to other colleagues.

## **Chapter Four: Ethnic Identification of Korean Immigrants**

### **Data Collection**

Waters (1990) asserts that if the individuals are not white-American, where they are from does affect his or her choice of spouse, where they live, what jobs they have, who their friends are, and what their chances are for success in American society. In accordance with this assertion, several questions arose in my mind: First, what attributes influence the acculturative experience of Korean immigrants living in American culture? Second, how do Korean immigrants identify themselves and to what extent does their ethnic identity influence their aesthetic perspectives and practices on appearance of themselves and others in Korean culture and American culture? And lastly, what are the roles of appearance in their everyday lives to balance their identities both in Korean and American culture and between these two cultures? With these three research questions, I started my research to understand the experiences of Korean immigrants as being members of an ethnic minority in contact with members of other ethnic groups and in the maintenance of their own cultural heritage and its influence towards their attitudes and behaviors on appearance. In this chapter, findings are presented based on the data collected from the survey and interview.

I asked several questions regarding my respondents' demographic information and Table 2 reports the survey data including age, marital status, and residency status (see Appendix B for more Survey Questions).

Table 2. Survey Data - Demographic Information

Demographic Information		Frequency (%)
Age	20-29	2 (6.6)
	30-39	8 (26.7)
	40-49	12 (40)
	50-59	8 (26.7)
Marital Status	Married	29 (96.7)
	With Korean	28
	Intermarried	1
	Non-married	1 (3.3)
Residency Status	Non-US resident	9 (30)
	US Permanent resident	12 (40)
	US citizen	9 (30)

As noted in Table 2, the age range of my respondents is equally distributed. Their ages were between 24 and 58 with a median age of 45. The majority of my respondents (96.7%) are married. My research is most exclusively studying married Korean immigrant women, but I believe it indicates a more thorough understanding of immigrants' experience, which could display the diverse aspects of American lives through real factors that matter to their daily lives, such as education for children, residency status, and home-ownership.

Also twenty-one respondents (70%) held green cards or U.S. citizenships, which mean these people intend to continuously live in the United States.

The length of residence of the respondents in the United States at the time of interviews was between one and 32 years with the median of 11 years. According to the length of residence in America, I classified my respondents into three categories (see Table 3): short-term immigrants, in-betweeners, and long-term immigrants. Short-term Korean immigrants, who had been in the United States less than three years are referred as “new-comers” (Kim, 2008). Korean immigrants who had lived in the United States for a long time (more than 20 years) are categorized as “old-timers” (Kim, 2008). Also Korean immigrants who were between these two groups are referred as “in-betweeners.”

Table 3. Survey Data – Length of Residence (years)

Interviewees	Length of Residence	Frequency (%)
New-comers	0-9	11 (36.7)
In-betweeners	10-19	11 (36.7)
Old-timers	Over 20	8 (26.6)
Total		30 (100)

Seventeen respondents (56.7%) worked for wages and thirteen respondents (43.3%) were currently full-time homemakers. Their occupations, other than the homemakers, were nurse, student, teacher, engineer, managers, accountants, administrator, custodian, computer programmer, acupuncturist, home-care specialists,

and business owner (see Appendix A). All the respondents were first generation immigrants in the United States and most, but not all, were college-educated in Korea.

### **Data Analysis**

To answer the RQ1 (*what attributes influence the acculturative experience of Korean immigrants living in American culture?*), I focus on how social change is experienced by Korean immigrants from the migration to settlement in the United States, how ethnic identity of Korean immigrants, as an attribute accompanied by social change influences their lives, and how dual or multiple identities that immigrants attain through the interaction with other cultures play roles in the relationship between individuals or groups in their present circumstances. Responses from the interview are explained in three aspects: (1) social change, (2) ethnicity, and (3) dual identities and identity complexity.

### ***Social Change***

Social change is explained as a pervasive and fundamental characteristic of social life and larger scale changes in social, political, and economic structures are related to change (Kessler & Harth, 2009). In addition, it includes smaller issues of individual changes such as growing, developing, and aging (Kessler & Harth, 2009). Facing their cultural and social change, most immigrants may experience expectations, hope, and enthusiasm and these positive attitudes may predominate. However, at the same time, immigrants may experience insecurity, anxiety, and threat because of the uncertainty and

the risk of becoming marginalized in their new society. Environmental changes by their migration are a primary challenge to all immigrants involved. Social change influences and shapes immigrant's experience, decision, and behavior (Kessler & Harth, 2009). The nature of change implies social comparison between individuals or groups and includes the change in the relative position of individuals and groups in a society "through the emergence of new identities, and the negotiation and management of existing identities" (Festinger, 1954, Tajfel, 1978, Kessler & Harth, 2009, p. 244). Therefore, immigrants by experiencing social change develop strategies or perform certain behaviors aiming at managing their social position or constructing their social identity in relation to other people or groups (Simon, 2009).

As noted, while assimilation is considered as a linear and unidirectional culture change of immigrants by acquiring new cultural traits from host culture and losing their heritage culture, acculturation is a multidimensional change, which recognizes the possibility of the acquisition of new cultural traits and the maintenance of cultural heritage simultaneously. This conceptualization of acculturation explains how and why immigrants adopt certain traits of the dominant culture to improve their status such as learning the language, while possessing other values or patterns of their heritage culture such as child-rearing practices, family organization, native foods, and music preferences (Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

Also as noted in Chapter Two, the acculturative change of an immigrant in a new host culture can be explained in two aspects of individual level and group level (Berry, 1997). According to Berry (1997), pre-migration traits at individual level such as age,

gender, education, migration motivation, and personality and post-migration factors such as length of residence, residential patterns, intermarriage, and personal attitudes about social prejudice and discrimination influence the differences among immigrants when they confront social change.

According to the data collected from the survey, at the individual level, most of my respondents have lower chances for working in high skill occupations or for obtaining higher education and they are simultaneously more restricted in jobs in the United States compared to their spouses. These restrictions lead to little chance for social connections with other ethnic groups. However, from Table 4, I note that despite the fact that the first generation of immigrants has the initial and continuing barriers and disadvantages against them, about 56.7% of the participants were working in the U.S.

Table 4. Survey Data – Occupational Status

Interviewees	Occupation	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
	Korea	15 (50)	15 (50)	30 (100)
	U.S.	17 (56.7)	13 (43.3)	30 (100)

I started interviews with my participants asking them to respond to the statement “Who am I? Where can I place myself between Korean and American?” of survey question 10 (see Figure 3). For this question, they marked a position between 1 and 7 of the spectrum of “Korean-ness vs. American-ness” with one end for Korean-ness (1) and the other for American-ness (7).

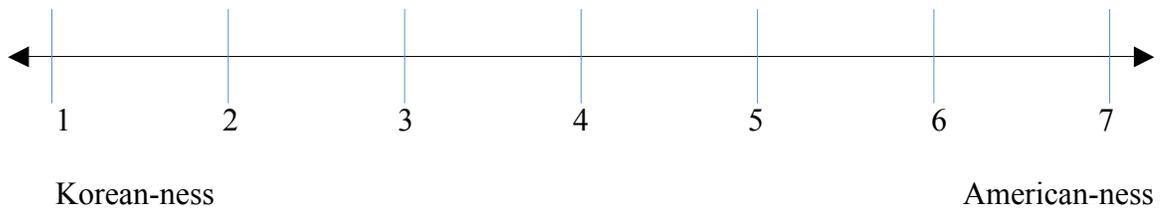


Figure 2. The Spectrum of Korean-ness vs. American-ness

Table 5 shows how respondents identified themselves between two opposites- Korean-ness and American-ness. This approach to their ethnic identification leads to their thoughts about cultural and environmental change in both individual level and group level and their understanding about being members of a minority group in the United States and its influence toward their everyday life.

Table 5. Survey Data – Identification between Korean-ness and American-ness  
(1: Korean-ness, 7: American-ness)

Interviewees	Scale	Frequency (%)
	1	6 (20)
	2	4 (13.3)
	3	4 (13.3)
	4	9 (30)
	5	6 (20)
	6	1 (3.3)
	7	0
	Total	30 (100)

Sentiments from respondents revealed several examples of individual experience regarding social change from the interview.

Interestingly, several respondents reported that they were often bothered with physical attributes caused by their Korean life styles, such as food habits. ID 3 (Kelly), a 45-year-old in-betweeners, reported that she was often nagged by a distinctive and unpleasant smell resulting from Korean food or food habits.

*Q: Do you identify yourself as a Korean?*

*A: I had an experience that made me feel very embarrassed. I broiled a fish as breakfast for my children and then I went out. Just then, I could smell the fish on my body and clothes. At that time, I thought I was Korean-ID 3.*

ID 19 (Julia), a 49-year-old new-comer, also commented upon food habits that Koreans have and that could distinguish them from majority as Koreans or at least as other ethnics.

*I use perfume. Especially when I go to work, it is essential. We have to be cautious of smell. It can be considered as ill-mannered. It is one thing that we have to avoid in this society. My husband has never had Kimchi in the morning. He becomes very sensitive to smell. I'd like to say this to other Koreans, too. It is an attitude. Sometimes we don't like particular smell from other people. That is the same to Americans. So, I always use perfume here-ID 19.*

Sentiments from ID 3 (Kelly) and ID 19 (Julia) were examples that show how cultural change influences an immigrant's behavior. If they were in Korea, they would not recognize the distinct smell from Korean foods. But the environmental change made them responsive to this kind of cultural attribute.

Some respondents reported their thoughts of parenting in their new culture. ID 9 (Ellise), a 45-year-old old-timer, reported that recent Korean immigrants had a propensity to keep the idiosyncratic traits of typical Koreans such as parenting and these traits were ever so different from her own. By inferring these traits as culturally constructed and differentiating herself from the group, she revealed the change in her attitudes and behaviors adopting the traits of the new culture and implied her desire to belong in this new cultural group.

*Q: Can you explain why you marked 5 in question No.10?*

*A: For example, when I meet someone who just came from Korea, I get the impression that there are some cultural differences between us. Our children are different too. Especially I feel that my parenting is quite different from theirs-ID 9.*

ID 24 (Abby), a 46-year-old new-comer, reported her feeling of detachment from her own home culture by explaining the difficulty of sharing feelings with other Koreans and continuing the relationships with them. She outlined the change of her attitudes, thoughts, and lifestyle.

*Q: In question No.10, you answered 6 in the scale, the level of being Americanized in the United States. Why do you think so? Is it the way of thinking or living?*

*A: In terms of the way I eat, the way I think...my overall lifestyle I think has become Americanized. When I meet Korean people, many times, relationships are hard to maintain due to misunderstandings. I just feel like that I am different-ID 24.*

ID 2 (Laura), a 46-year-old in-between, and ID 3 (Kelly) also commented upon attributes that they observed in American culture and tried to separate themselves from their culture of origin by denouncing the different attributes of Koreans. In their sentiments, my respondents deemed Koreans in their own culture of origin as an outgroup by displaying the desire to differentiate themselves from those Koreans in terms of certain traits or mannerisms that they picked up.

*Q: Are relationships different in some ways?*

*A: Americans respect privacy. They don't meddle in someone else's work. Never. But most Koreans think that meddling is a form of caring. In truth, it can be uncomfortable. I almost want to say that it's none of your business.*

*Q: Do you feel your lifestyle becomes Americanized?*

*A: I live in a single home, as opposed to the life style I used to be in Korea. I have to maintain my yard, trimming the trees and taking care of the flowers. When the seasons change, I decorate my house. These make me feel that I am Americanized-ID 2.*

*Q: Can you explain why you marked 4 in question No.10?*

*A: I feel that American lifestyle is very comfortable. I don't need to care about others' views unless I like it. I also like the family-oriented life in America. In Korea, private education is too wide spread, so it is hard for me to ignore how others raise their children. I was not free to raise my children in the way that I like. When we were in Korea, I was very anxious when other parents did something outside school (extracurricular) for their kids. I didn't want my kids to fall behind, so I had to get them as many private tutors as I could afford. Since we moved to the U.S., I raise my kids according to my beliefs. I like that people don't judge my interior by my exterior. That is the reason I feel I am Americanized-ID 3.*

ID 20 (Maria), a 38-year-old new-comer, reported that her perception about ideal body image and appearance was changed. The influential factor was the culture that she was currently located in. She differentiated herself from the common thoughts that many

Koreans conceive about body and adapted the thoughts and attitudes that she learned in American culture.

*There are various people in this country. I cannot tell whether a person is pretty or not. But after I have lived here for several years, my thought about beauty is influenced to change...Korean people think skinny as a standard for body shape. It is too exaggerated. It looks unhealthy. It could be very stressful. I have different standards about appearance. It is important for me to look healthy rather than look skinny-ID 20.*

Many respondents mentioned that they felt comfortable, relaxed, and free from other constraints that they might have in their culture of origin, regardless of their awareness of ethnicity. I repeatedly heard comments similar to those made by ID 3 (Kelly), a homemaker in her forties, who spoke about her family-oriented life: “I am really satisfied with my life. I do not need to be anxious about others like I did in Korea. It is okay as long as I fulfill myself. Especially when it is through my family. I feel easy and relaxed, so relaxed.”

Others spoke about the polite and well-bred behavior that Americans showed to them, which were different from the way they had experienced in Korea. ID 5 (Emily), a 51-year-old in-betweenener, remarked: “They respect each other. Even when they become close, they do not ask any private questions. They allow people in their ways.”

Respondents showed mostly their thoughts and opinions about the attitudes and behaviors of Koreans and Americans by the comparison between them throughout the interviews, but it is hard to determine to what extent individual factors including age, education, residency status, migration motivation, length of residence, and marital status

are influencing the attitudes and behaviors of immigrants because of the limitation of the qualitative approach. However, their demographic information gives the idea that my sample is not skewed and thus, the findings are not distorted in a way that is regarded as misleading the data.

On the other hand, throughout the interviews, most of my respondents more often refer to comparisons between their own group in relation to other groups about characteristics that they share with other members in their group than comparisons between individuals about personal characteristics. It demonstrates that social identity comparing their personal identity is more salient when they are referred to as Koreans. It also represents a more comprehensive perspective of Korean immigrants about groups and cultures.

According to Kessler and Harth (2009), the perception and evaluation of social change is dependent on whether one conceives of oneself as an individual or a group member. Thus, when an immigrant perceives himself or herself as a member of a certain group, such as Korean immigrant group or American group, their references can differ according to the characteristics of the group. Padilla and Perez (2003) claim that when the group is a minority, individuals can obtain some kinds of stigma by perceiving their group as inferior. As a result, their attitudes and behaviors are influenced. Therefore, individuals differ in how they address their two identities of their heritage culture and host culture (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Leonardelli *et al.*, 2011).

Many of my respondents expressed their thoughts about the distinctions between two cultures acquired by social change and these comments were mostly related to their

senses of belonging in those cultures. Therefore, desires of inclusion or differentiation into a culture are explained in the following relation of immigrants' social identification.

### ***Ethnicity***

According to Waters (1990, p. 52), "one of the most basic choices we have is whether to apply an ethnic label to ourselves." In consensus and surveys, we may identify our ethnic background. For most Asian immigrants, classifying ethnicity is not a complex one, even though there is little tension between being an American and being of a particular ethnicity. Based on the common view and conception of ethnicity, ethnicity is hereditary and primordial and being an Asian ethnic is not symbolic or voluntary (Waters, 1990). Most Koreans understand that their ethnicity is biologically related to common lineage and they are descendents from one ancestor. The view that membership in Korean ethnic group is taken for granted has been held among Koreans. When following the definition of ethnic group by Barth (1969), Koreans are coerced to identify themselves as Asians without hesitation.

For most of my respondents, ethnicity is a very big part of their lives and continually influences their thought. ID 6 (Shirley), a 45-year-old in-between and homemaker, reported her feeling and thoughts living as a Korean immigrant or a forever foreigner in this American society. Regardless of the time she had spent in American society, she was Korean, a temporary resident in American society.

*Wherever I go, I am Korean...I have never thought that I am an immigrant even though I am living here. I came here as a foreign exchange student and I have*

*lived here for a long time. But I have never thought that I'd live here as a resident. I constantly think that I am here just for a short while...I keep thinking that I am different from other immigrants. But I have been called as an immigrant. I was startled...Right...It has been 10 years.. It's possible that I could be seen as an immigrant...Yet my mind isn't allowing that...-ID 6.*

After labeling themselves Koreans, some respondents described how their children dealt with their ethnic identification as they grew up. ID 5 (Emily) noticed that her children have changed their attitudes toward their ethnicity.

*Our kids are different from us. While parents stick to the Korean style, our kids are easily Americanized...but they gradually become closer with Asian friends than American friends. Emotionally too...They are native-born Americans, but they are not real Americans, not whites, but minority-ID 5.*

ID 21 (Cathy), a 52-year-old old-timer, also noticed the changes in the way that her children managed their relationship with friends and participation in Korean ethnic organizations, such as Korean churches.

*Q: Are your children interested in Korean culture?*

*A: My older son is very Korean. He had lots of American friends at school. When he became a 10<sup>th</sup> grader and started to join youth group at church, he built strong friendships with his Korean friends, and now he doesn't meet his American friends any more. He doesn't have time, though. When he had to choose one of them, he met Korean friends, not American friends. After he started college, he chose an Asian church. A church in his campus....There are few Americans and the majority are Asians -ID 21.*

Since these respondents acknowledged their ethnicity, their behaviors and attitudes about their dress and appearance were affected accordingly. ID 1 (Jenny), a 35-year-old new-comer, also noticed that she acted differently when she could be recognized

as a Korean ethnic, or at least as an Asian immigrant.

*Q: Have you ever thought that there is the necessity to wear consciously because you are Asian?*

*A: There are few Asian students at my daughter's school. Just two. We are always standing out. People sometimes look at me, so I cannot go to her school like this. I change often because of the distinct smell of Korean food. That is why I also use perfume. I don't want to be judged by this. People seem to be very sensitive to smell-ID 1.*

However, some respondents including ID 2 (Laura) did not differentiate their efforts on appearance or dress because they believed that their physical appearance was somewhat clearly showing their ethnic identity.

*No...never...Even though people dress in a certain way, Americans are Americans. Koreans are Koreans. It is just their physical characteristics, nothing is related to dress-ID 2.*

Waters (1990) pointed out that a member of an ethnic group “shares a certain amount of genetic material with one’s fellow ethnics (p. 75),” and it meant that members of the same ethnic group would look alike in a certain physical characteristic. Even though “intermarriage and the ethnic mixtures it brings about make generalizations based on physical appearance less and less reliable” (Waters, 1990, p. 89), Koreans, according to their rigid cultural rules and conventions, have been endogamous and have not been in contact with other ethnic groups, particularly not with white, black, or Hispanic ethnics until recently. Therefore, their physical appearance is a reliable way of identifying ingroup and outgroup members. Population of Asian immigrants in Minnesota, the area

that is chosen for this study, has been significantly increasing for the last couple of decades. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), Asian population (Asian alone or in combination) increased 162,414 in 2000 to 247,132 in 2010 and it is 52.2% of change and higher than that (45.6%) of the entire United States. Still Asian immigrants are visible in their neighborhood; 247,132 is 4.7% of total population in Minnesota. More than two thirds of my respondents lived in predominantly white suburban communities. ID 26 (Nicole) and several other respondents recalled being one of few Asian families to live in the neighborhood and as a consequence, worrying about the discrimination or prejudice that their families could receive. ID 26 (Nicole), a 55-year-old old-timer, remembered her children's not-so-ordinary aspects of childhood that were caused by her worries of being different and reported how she tried to get through the situation:

*Q: Have you ever thought that there is the necessity to wear consciously because you are Asian?*

*A: When my children were young, like elementary students, I felt really uneasy about it. At that time, there were few Asians at their school. I was worried whether they would be treated unequally, so I paid special attention on their clothes until they grew up. In my daughter's case, I made her wear a dress everyday. I braided her hair with hair accessories and matched tops and bottoms. I think I did too much, but I was really anxious at that time-ID 26.*

According to Waters (1990), Italians were seen as a different race by Americans when they first immigrated, but after being accepted politically and socially into the American mainstream, their physical differences were not perceived as so particularly different. It might be applied to other white European immigrants, too. But there is the question if the physical characteristics of Asian immigrants also could be regarded as

indifferently. Many respondents were aware that they could use their dress to identify their ethnicity. ID 26 (Nicole) believed that she could control her physical appearance that differed from white ethnics by dressing up.

Similarly, ID 18 (Alexis), a 47-year-old engineer, has lived in the United States for more than thirty years; nonetheless, she still bore the prejudicial conception of being Asian. She stated the importance of appearance to face down the racial prejudice or discrimination.

*I like to be seen as pretty, don't you? Americans might look down on me because I am an Asian. But I heard many compliments from my coworkers of my company that Korea is number one. Korea's electronic industry is top in the world. So people in my company know Korea well. Because of this reason, I think it is good to dress smartly-ID 18.*

Though some respondents did not give much attention to their experience of being a member of a racial minority, it is natural for them that their ethnicity does matter in their lives regardless of age or the length of residence in America, and people just accept this reality. ID 13 (Elizabeth), a 42-year-old in-betweeners, articulated this attitude:

*I have lived in America for ten years. I have spent most of my time at work. So I have been able to acquaint myself with American culture. I am trying to learn something new at all times. However, despite this fact, I feel that my basic life style, central philosophy, beliefs, and the essentials of my life are still centrally Korean. Because of this, I do not think I have crossed over the threshold into becoming a true American. This, to me, presents itself as a huge barrier-ID 13.*

The sentiments from the respondents showed the thought that they could not be Americans regardless of how long they have been in the United States. Most of my

respondents reported that ever since they moved into the new culture, they were continuously aware of their own and others' ethnicities. ID 18 (Alexis) said:

*Q: Would you explain why you marked 3 in question No.10?*

*A: I have lived in America for thirty years, but I still think about Korea a lot. It is where I was born and lived my early years, so naturally it stays on my mind. Despite my US citizenship, I am a deeply rooted Korean. For instance, during the Olympics or other international sporting events, I find myself supporting more for Korean teams and players than anyone else.*

*Q: Would you say that you feel like you are an outsider?*

*A: Well, when I go to school or work, I get the feeling that I may be treated a bit differently because I am Asian. If that is the case, I speak up and express my feelings, and that usually puts an end to the situation-ID 18.*

ID 18 (Alexis) still thought that she had no choice to avoid being “defined, responded to, and treated (Tuan, 1998, p. 127)” as Asian by others even after living for thirty years in American society. Tuan (1998, p. 127) argues that there are “involuntary reasons” why ethnic people “continue to identify in ethnic” and do not use “the unhyphenated label, *American*” to describe themselves. ID 18 (Alexis) had grown up in an ethnically homogeneous environment, that is, in Korea. But after leaving her home country with her parents when she was about 21-year-old, which was not voluntary for her, she was exposed to other ethnic groups, mostly whites. This contact with different people made her realize her own ethnicity and identify herself as ethnic involuntarily. At school or at work, when she was situated in unwelcomed or undesired circumstances, she thought that her ethnic background made her different from others or placed her in an unwanted condition. It made her compare her experiences as a hyphenated *American* with her memories as an unhyphenated *Korean*.

In contrast to the experience of involuntary migration to America of ID 18 (Alexis), ID 7 (Sara), a 36-year-old in-betweener, became aware of her ethnic background when she moved into white communities in the mainland of America from her predominantly Asian neighborhood in Hawaii. She recalled her experiences about being an insider and outsider as awkward and unpleasant.

*The population of Japanese residents is high in Hawaii. Hawaiians are also people of color. I have never experienced the difference between me, as a Korean, and them. It was really comfortable. When I came to the mainland, it was a complete culture shock. I realized that there was such a thing as racism...as an Asian, I felt I was an outsider. I experienced many things on the mainland that I had not experienced in Hawaii. Culturally, it was so different. I lived in Hawaii for 10 years and thought the place as America, but after coming to the mainland I experienced another America and I can call it as cultural shock-ID 7.*

ID 25 (Joy), a 34-year-old new-comer, also explained her choice to be a Korean-American or “truly” an American and the meaning of two different cultures for her. It was a fact that she could not become an *American*, even though she thought that she was being integrated into the American culture.

*I think I've adapted to learn good things naturally. I am not exactly changed but rather used to this learning. I think it is not bad after all. But I am still a foreigner in this country. I am a Korean and I don't wish to be an American. If it makes more sense to change things to the American way, whether I like them or not, I change them. But if it isn't, I do it in the Korean way. People say that Korean immigrants are very selfish, because, if it's beneficial to them, they follow American ways, but if it isn't, they follow Korean ways. Aren't we all –Americans and Koreans - same in this regard?-ID 25.*

People have a “mental picture of what a model group member looks like (Van den

Berghe, 1985, p. 58).” According to this mental image or picture, people including both insiders and outsiders of a certain ethnic group judge a person whether he or she is a member of the group or not (Waters, 1990). As ID 7 (Sara) asserted that she put importance or value on appearance, ID 13 (Elizabeth) and many other respondents also pointed out that they should be more conscious about their appearances because of this mental image about Koreans which can be related to outward characteristics such as being stylish or fashionable.

*Q: Have you dressed up consciously at your work because you are Korean?*

*A: I do not intentionally buy clothes for work. I don't intend to dress up, but I like to express myself well. I like to hear that I take care of myself well. I like to be professional in both my attire and my work. It is not because I am Asian. I don't think I solely represent Koreans, but I don't ignore it. My colleagues might think that Koreans could look like me, as the way I look. It could be the way people communicate, their characteristics, and so on. Everything could be markers of ethnicity. I don't think my appearance is the only thing to express Korean identity—ID 13.*

On the other hand, respondents recognized that their ethnicity could be misjudged by other people (Waters, 1990). The reason can be others have little knowledge of a certain ethnic group or there is the disparity between their mental images of what this ethnic group looks like and the real. ID 6 (Shirley) and many other respondents were able to recall experiences that other people had misidentified their ethnicity.

*Right. When I go out, I worry about my appearance. What if people think that Asians are like me? My neighbors know that I am Korean. I told them. I think I represent Koreans. When I dump out the trash, I wear something clean...there is something like that. When I go grocery shopping with my husband and cashiers sometimes ask us...They know that we are not Chinese because of our language.*

*Then they ask us if we am Japanese. I say no in a very aggressive way. It is little weird, but when people ask me if I am Korean, I am happy and ask them back "how did you know that?"-ID 6.*

The attributes of physical characteristics that serve as markers of one's ethnic identity vary and it is sometimes unclear as to how much a certain attribute is reliable (Waters, 1990). The "typical" physical characteristic of each Asian ethnic group is not obvious to outsiders and it is not easy for them to recognize the differences among Asian groups. Especially, ID 7 (Sara) among the respondents, intermarried with a white European immigrant, reported that because of her intermarriage she became more aware of her own physical appearance as well as those of her children. Physical appearance of her children is less reliable to identify their ethnicity, so she felt pressure that she should make her children look nice and inevitably put enormous efforts to do it. She also mentioned her thought about feeling representative of her family's races and cultures.

*As a Korean, if I go out in a public place, I at least put some make-up. I don't wear sweatpants or sweatshirts like general Americans. Even if I meet American friends, I at least do something, like straightening my hair, or drawing on some eyeliner. I am not going there dressed like I just woke up. I don't know how people see me or judge me. But, I'd like to say proudly that I am Korean.*

*Q: Do you think you represent Koreans?*

*A: I have never thought that I represented Koreans. But it might be. I didn't know what it was. Right. That was the intention. I didn't do it just to represent myself. If it is just for me, maybe, I can do what I want to do. But I am on behalf of my husband's ethnicity, too. If my husband were American, maybe it could be more flexible. But my husband is not American and my kids are not pure Koreans. So, when I feel inadequate and poor, I don't want to meet anyone-ID 7.*

### ***Duel Identity***

According to Eicher *et al.* (2008), society is “a group of individuals who interact with each other based on the sharing of many beliefs and ways of behavior (p. 36).” People living in a large society like Korea or America do not come into face-to-face contact with all other members of their society and feel themselves belonging in several distinct groups, that have their own cultures (Eicher *et al.*, 2008)

Many researchers point out that with the passage of time immigrants become continually assimilated both culturally and socially, but it does not mean that they become entirely outsiders of their original groups and hold memberships in American culture (Waters, 1990; Berry, 1997; Tuan, 1998). In contrast to white ethnics, for Asian ethnics, being Asian is not symbolic or voluntary similar to the cases of Hispanics or blacks (Waters, 1990; Padilla & Perez, 2003). It is not a matter of choice to Asian immigrants (Waters, 1990). Therefore, in many cases, immigrants are questioning about their identities.

In the case of ID 23 (Jane), who was a 32-year-old homemaker, she reported that she was uncertain to conceive of herself as American. Her family is not settled in America because of the temporary situation in their current setting. This restricted herself to think of being a member of American society. Respondents who hold non-US residency, namely, temporary residency status, were considerably more dependent on other family members, such as their spouses or parents.

*Q: Why do you mark between 1 and 2 in question No.10?*

*A: I've been here just for 2 years. I think this is why I feel I am just staying here only for short period of time, not living here. I am getting used to it. My husband is a student and we don't know our future yet, but we are planning to go back to Korea after his program ends. So it's hard to put our heart into this place-ID 23.*

According to many social identity researchers, individuals can hold more than one membership of social categories that overlap partially in such elements like age, gender, religion, ethnicity, or occupation (Brewer, 2009). One can be a fellow ingroup member on one dimension of category differentiation but an outgroup member on another at one time and thus simultaneous activation of multiple ingroup identities is possible (Brewer, 2009). Respondents described their social identity reflecting this conception. ID 9 (Ellise) answered my inquiry about her identity: "I live in between Korean culture and American culture. So I give up some things and selectively adopt what I have to." ID 14 (Diane), a 25-year-old student, also reported that she would label herself a Korean-American, because she had Korean culture embedded in her because of her mother who was very Korean, but her social life was mostly with her American friends.

It was a common experience for most of my respondents to consider themselves with Korean ethnic identities. ID 13 (Elizabeth) reported she learned special activities or customs observed on holidays such as Thanksgiving and Easter and tried to take part in these activities on American holidays. But she pointed out that it was not approving herself as becoming an American or even a Korean-American, but a process of knowing the others' culture.

*Q: Why do you mark 3 in question No.10?*

*A: I've been here for ten years and currently work for an American company. I spend most of my time there. Nevertheless, I live according to Korean culture and the way that other Koreans do. I keep learning American culture, but my essence, like the way of thinking, my lifestyle, my attitudes towards other people, the majority of me is based on Korean culture. I am getting used to American culture, but I don't think that I became Americanized. Living within two worlds presents huge barriers. For example, when people talk about the TV shows that they had watched when they were young, I don't have any idea of what they are talking about. When they talk about books that were popular like 20 or 30 years ago, I don't know anything about that. I cannot be the part of the conversation. I have learned a lot about American culture, American lifestyle, and the things that make my life convenient here. The basics, like their manners, or holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter. I've learned. But I don't think I became similar to them. Even though I am learning their culture, I don't think I became Americanized. I don't think my identity changes-ID 13.*

ID 4 (Ellen), a 40-year-old new-comer, also stressed that her ethnic identity would not necessarily change with the passage of time and moreover, instead, it would make her life more complicating. But she acknowledged that later generations would be different from her own generation.

*I think even if I live in America, my identity, as a Korean, doesn't change. It is especially true for my generation, including me. But for younger generations it will be different. Even if I live here as an American citizen, it will be the same. There might be still changes in my lifestyle, but the longer I live here in the U.S., the more things will be complicating. Clashes in culture that I do not feel now may present themselves in the future-ID 4.*

ID 17 (Amy), a 38-year-old in-betweenener, realized the difference between true Koreans and Korean-Americans through the experience of younger generation. She found that it was hard for these two groups, which she had considered alike, to mix together. She also worried that it could not provide any benefits for the next generations to join in their ethnic group and thus it could bring confusion and desolation to them.

*Korean international students and Korean-American kids do not share the same social groups, they don't often mix. They are separate. I think that they think differently and use a different language. My friends say the same thing. At my church, there are many Korean students. They worship in Korean, but Korean American kids who are raised here cannot join. Their thoughts as well as their language is different-ID 17.*

On the other hand, ID 26 (Nicole), who had lived in a predominantly white suburban community for thirty years, expressed her regret about not having any concrete relationships with her neighbors. She revealed that she deferred the acquisition of U.S. citizenship to a later time, because she believed her Korean identity unchangeable. Her idea led her to the limited interactions with people in other groups and little attention and interest in her own life beyond the boundaries of Korean community. Simultaneously, she became an outsider even in her own culture of origin, in which she was supposed to belong.

*When I go to Korea, I am an outsider. Here, in America, I am still an outsider. I will be an outsider, forever. When I visit Korea, I can't find any similarities with other Koreans. Korea is my country, so I feel relaxed. When I meet my old friends, I am so delighted. But that is all. The commonalities in our lives have changed, and the connection between our lives has changed as well. We have been apart too long. I miss them a lot. I am an outsider here and there. I missed many opportunities in my neighborhood, as well. Even though we have lived here for a long time, I don't know my neighbors very well. I have devoted most of my time to my church. Almost every weekend, I was at my church, so I had no chance to meet my neighbors. Whenever there were some events like block parties, it was usually on a weekend and I had to go to my church. I think it's too late to meet people...I don't know why...but I was never able to make meaningful connections with the American people around me-ID 26.*

ID 27 (Jennifer), a 51-year-old old-timer, reported that she had felt deep satisfaction when she knew that one of her children was dating Korean man, who was not

white. She explained that she had not actively encouraged her children to associate with co-ethnics and her children grew up in a white suburban area in Minnesota, so she was aware of the limitations of the surroundings. She linked this with her children's ethnic identity, which she viewed as hereditary.

*Downstairs, my kids watch American TV shows. We don't have enough time to have conversation with each other. But I feel like they are Koreans. They know Korean people and are interested in Korean culture even though I have not encouraged them at all. They became proud of Korean culture. Their mainstream culture is American, but they think both ways. My older one is dating a Korean boyfriend, not American. They find their identities as Koreans by themselves-ID 27.*

The thought and attitude of ID 28 (Connie), a 44-year-old old-timer, about having dual identities was quite contrary from ID 26 (Nicole) or ID 27 (Jennifer). She understood the influence and importance of her minority status in mainstream American culture.

*I think I am a member of American culture, too. I am both. For my generation, I do not think we have any other choices but to adapt. Many people say we have to keep our identity as Koreans, but I don't agree with them. We have to live here in this American society and our kids become different from us. So we have to know what American culture is. We have to change as we need, then we can raise our voices in this society. I don't regret that I taught both Korean culture and American thoughts to my kids-ID 28.*

As Eicher *et al.* (2008) assert, respondents hold multiple memberships in American culture as well as in Korean culture. But several of them also showed they and

their children had an inclination to American culture in their day-to-day life practices. ID

3 (Kelly) said:

*My kids don't like their Korean traditional costumes. They don't wear them at all. They don't like it because it's too uncomfortable. Even though other kids wear a Korean dress to church for the holidays, they don't want to. Instead, they like American holidays and I think they feel close to American culture emotionally. We celebrate Thanksgiving, not Chuseok-ID 3.*

### ***Identity Complexity***

Eicher *et al.* (2008) claim that individuals who are members of a distinct ethnic group and at the same time members of a larger cultural group of their country of residence can have a conflicting sense of individual cultural identity because of their competing cultural values and beliefs.

Many respondents also commented that they felt themselves as Koreans because of various reasons such as eating Korean foods, language barriers, and feelings like foreigners or outsiders. But some respondents experienced identity complexity. ID 3 (Kelly) revealed her unpleasant feeling when she saw other people move back and forth acting as Koreans or Americans for their convenience.

*People say bad things about the immigrants' attitudes. For example, they change their attitudes for their convenience. Sometimes, they act like Americans, but sometimes, they do things like Koreans do. It is likely to depend on their situations. It is same when they educate their kids, so I think kids will have confusion in their identities-ID 3.*

ID 28 (Connie) revealed that she had the feeling of confusion about her identity and also worried about her children's identity uncertainty. Accordingly she had to balance the relationship with her fellow members in Korean community and American community.

*I came here in my twenties. When I go to Korea, I become a stranger. The whole thing is unfamiliar to me. Here, I am not American either. I am in between. For the sake of my kids, I formed relationships with other American parents from their school as well as with other Koreans from my church. I go to Korea with my kids often. But somebody said it could cause some problems for our kids' identities-ID 28.*

ID 27 (Jennifer) talked about her experience regarding Korean language that is also changing with the passage of time. She even felt quite foreign in terms of speaking Korean as well as English.

*I cannot understand the terms Koreans use. I don't know any Internet words. Even in Korean. I think I am so naïve. My friends in Korea say that I will be frustrating. I don't know much about America, nor about Korea-ID 27.*

ID 5 (Emily) saw many aspects that other Koreans were satisfied with in American society, but it became dull and uninteresting to her. And then she understood why her husband was preoccupied with Korean TV shows or news, keeping himself apart from American media.

*Because I am an ethnic minority, not American, nor white, I felt I needed to meet other Koreans in order to exchange my feelings. To other Koreans, it looked good to live in America. It is sure in many aspects like education. But it is also very*

*stressful to our kids. No matter what, whether people can speak English well or not, it is true. When I visited Korea, at that time, I felt at home. I could see what was happening without making any efforts. It was good. I felt alive. After I came back home, I started to feel bored. It is just home and work. I can understand now why my husband is so obsessed by Korean TV or Internet. He probably misses home and looks these channels as ways to bring Korea to us-ID 5.*

ID 6 (Shirley) felt a little melancholy when she found that her cultural heritage that she took into account was not naturally endowed to her children. She regretted that she had not made any efforts to teach them Korean history or values.

*That's the problem. I know Korean culture and it is in my mind, but not in my kids' mind. We didn't celebrate Chuseok this year. When we were students, we gathered to celebrate these Korean holidays. But we don't do that any more. Sometimes, I am confused. Because I know about Korean culture, I guess my kids may know about it. Last time, my kid asked me about Korean history. I hadn't taught them any of them. It made me sad. This is the difference between the first generation and 1.5 or second generation of immigrants-ID 6.*

In this chapter, interviewees explained the ways that they cope with their social change, their feelings, and behaviors. There are many motivational factors that lead Korean immigrants to designate themselves on a certain point of the continuum between Korean-ness and American-ness. Among these various factors that influence immigrants to fall into a certain position, immigrant's needs for inclusion and differentiation can be one important determinant. This will be investigated in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Five: Maintaining Korean Culture vs. Contact with American Culture**

In the preceding pages, I have illustrated case after case of Korean immigrants experiencing the acculturative process generated by the cultural and societal change in social psychological aspects. The material from the interviews shows that being a member of a minority ethnic group, which is visible and non-voluntary in the larger society of America, influences their social identity as well as personal identity, and consequently, this experience leads to the attitudinal and behavioral changes of immigrants on appearance. But the question is whether or not these attitudinal and behavioral changes of immigrants are comparable between Korean culture and American culture or not. These are analyzed next.

To answer the RQ2 (*how do Korean immigrants identify themselves and to what extent does their ethnic identity influence their aesthetic perspectives and practices on appearance of themselves and others in Korean culture and American culture?*), I focus on how ethnic identity of Korean immigrants is important and influences their thoughts about appearance of themselves and others including other members of Korean immigrant community and Korean society and members of other ethnic groups. Also the acculturative change in their attitudes and behaviors on appearance associated with these thoughts and views is brought into focus.

### **Sense of Belonging in a Dual Cultural Context**

Belongingness is one of the most essential human needs. In their present culture, Korean immigrants contact various ethnic groups. Some of my respondents were involved in professional services in American society, and several were self-employed or involved in enclave-associated industries. But regardless, the majority of my respondents identified themselves with their cultural origin. ID 19 (Julia), who is working as an acupuncturist, spoke about the benefits that she could have, supposedly because of her occupational characteristic associated with Oriental or Asian countries. It is ordinary for her to be a member of Korean ethnic group and receive an advantage from revealing her identity.

*Q: Why do you mark 1 in question No.10?*

*A: I've been here for eight years, but I am still living within the Korean culture. To do my business, I need to be Americanized. But when I meet American people, it looks better for me to meet them as a Korean rather than as an American. Because of my occupation, as an acupuncturist, I feel it's an advantage to appeal myself as a Korean or as an Asian, So I try to reveal my ethnic identity....I'd like to buy a Korean reformed traditional dress. I think there is some synergetic effect. It will give me more authority to work as an acupuncturist. Also my friends are all Koreans. At home, when we communicate, we do just as we did in Korea. Emotionally and culturally. It is sometimes a burden for me to meet American people-ID 19.*

ID 29 (Patty), a 52-year-old old-timer and manager in Korean nursing home, revealed the similar sentiment.

*My husband is Korean and my kids speak Korean, and even my granddaughter can speak some Korean. Also my work is to serve the Korean geriatric population and my employers are almost all Koreans. The ambience, the character and atmosphere of this place, is totally different from Korea, but I think I am completely Korean and live in a Korean community-ID 29.*

As a way to keep their ethnic identity, several respondents possessed Korean traditional dress and observed Korean holidays or events. But most respondents commented that since it was not obligatory for them to observe Korean holidays in American society, there was no motivation to celebrate them. However, some expressed guilt over their negligent attitudes. ID 15 (Carol), a 43-year-old in-betweener, kept her children's traditional dress, despite little chance to wear them. To her, this practice meant the tie to anchor her family to their ethnic group and ethnic identity. In addition, she has intentionally neglected celebrating American holidays because she was aware of the reason that her children should wear particular colors on special holidays.

*We have Korean traditional costumes. I sometimes received my kids' dress as gifts or I asked my parents to send me their dress. Even if they can't wear them often, there are always age-appropriate costumes sitting in their closet. But I am not celebrating American holidays. When my children' school tells them that they have to wear red t-shirts on a special holiday or for an event, they do. When they have to wear green, they do, too. But I am not encouraging them to do that at all-ID 15.*

ID 17 (Amy) compared holidays from two different cultures and mentioned the importance of maintaining Korean holidays and at the same time Korean language. American holidays have no meaning to her, but just a break.

*Q: Do you teach Korean culture to your children?*

*A: No, we just go to the church to celebrate Korean holidays such as Chuseok or New Year's Day. It is important to my kids. They watch Korean TV shows and speak Korean. But that is all.*

*Q: How about American holidays?*

*A: Actually, it doesn't mean a lot to me. It is just a short vacation or break-ID 17.*

When her family moved away from Korean society and into the new society, ID 24 (Abby), a 46-year-old new-comer, thought that she could represent Korean society to others and Korean traditional dress would work as a marker to indicate her ethnic identity. It was her belief that her sense of belonging to Korean culture would not change even though she was not there.

*Before I came here, I (dry)cleaned our Korean traditional dress, for myself and for my husband. I brought few t-shirts and pants. I thought I would wear my Korean traditional dress for some special occasions like parties or holidays. I wanted to wear those dresses. But there was no chance at all-ID 24.*

### ***Ethnocentric Perspective toward the Ingroup***

We usually evaluate others, particularly other groups with ethnocentrism, which is defined by Sumner (1906) as following:

*“one’s own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it...Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalt its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders (p. 13).”*

Attitudes and values of individuals are shaped by this “ingroup-outgroup distinctions” in which they view all others from the perspective of the ingroup (Brewer, 2009). In the same context of ethnocentrism, people think their own group is more favorable and prototypical than outgroups and this attraction to one’s own group is called “positive distinctiveness of an ingroup” or “group favoritism” (Turner *et al.*, 1987; Waldzus, 2009, p. 43). The reason people favor their own group relative to outgroups is derived from a desire for a positive and secure self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Striving for a positive social identity, that is, a positive distinctiveness between one's own group and relevant outgroups, group members think and act appropriate in a given context (Hornsey, 2008).

According to Brewer (2009), ingroup favoritism is not necessarily related to the outgroup hate. But people tend to evaluate outgroups with the ethnocentric view and their own standards and norms are believed to be superior to those of outgroups. From the comments of my respondents, this is uncovered.

Several respondents showed the tendency of positive distinctiveness about their own Korean immigrant group in a certain valued category. ID 5 (Emily) seemed to have positive thoughts about her fellow Koreans in the aspects of diligence and hardworking at their work places.

*There are Americans, Somalis, and Koreans at the nursing home. Residents are fond of Korean nurses because they are consistent and reliable. I think that is one way of being patriotic. If people think I, as a Korean, am working with energy and commitment and I am trustworthy, then they will hire more Koreans in the future- ID 5.*

In the following quote, ID 13 (Elizabeth) positively considered the attitudes of Koreans in fashion, which are very responsive to the changes and influenced quickly by them.

*Q: How do you think people are very sensitive to the fashion changes?*

*A: I will be the same if I lived in Korea. If people feel that keeping up with trends is too stressful for them, it might be problematic. Unless they enjoy the current trend, they might feel constraint. It is not good. But this is a huge cultural wave. I believe there is an advantage, too. The fact that Koreans are sensitive, quick, and*

*perceptive in fashion and culture gives us the energy to lead current fashion trends. So I see it positively...People assess Koreans are stylish. At my work, my colleagues sometimes appraise my fashion style as well as my hardworking. In this sense, there are more advantages than disadvantages-ID 13.*

ID 21 (Cathy), a 52-year-old old-timer, also reported the prototypical attitudes and values on appearance of Korean immigrants. Her thought revealed the concept of depersonalization, which was presented from the social identity perspective. The norms of relevant ingroups are crucial sources of information about appropriate ways to think, feel, and act. Through this process of depersonalization, ingroup members acquire knowledge of the group norms and assume that other members also have them (Hornsey, 2008). ID 21 (Cathy)'s opinion showed the process of depersonalization, which was influenced by the group norms and shifted into the direction that was favored by the Korean ethnic group.

*Always...Korean people seem to dress up to give good impressions as the manner to others or to communicate themselves through dress...it is probable that some people want to show themselves off. It is related to the personal characteristics and their personal background. For me, I don't want to be distinct in public but I believe that some people have the desire to get attention from others. That's my thought-ID 21.*

### ***Conformity: Sense of Inclusion to Korean Culture and Dress***

Brewer (2009) argues that the need for distinct boundaries between ingroup and outgroups and associated differences between intragroup and intergroup behaviors will shape the dynamics of trust and cooperation. That is, the mutual trust between members who share a salient group identity reinforces other members of the group to live by the

codes of conduct that unite them together as a group. The perception of trust and cooperation explains the attitudes and behaviors that Korean immigrants have in common with other members in their group in the aspect of appearance and dress.

ID 20 (Maria) stated her awareness of other members about her. She wanted to receive proper recognition about her decision on appearance and dress from other members in her group and thus, it became a barometer of her action of choosing her clothing as being the most suitable. In case of ID 20 (Maria), her Korean reference group is more carefully taken into account as her ingroup rather than her American reference group. Therefore, the opinions or thoughts of other Koreans on her appearance are more important than those of Americans.

*Q: What kinds of aspects affect your decision when you purchase your clothing?*

*A: First, I consider if it fits on me. My body shape is the first criterion. Second, if it is my style. And then, if it is too slobbish to other Koreans' perception. I don't buy it if it is. I think I don't care what American people think-ID 20.*

ID 22 (Lynn), a 49-year-old new-comer, reported how she modified her behavior depending on whom she was interacting with, that is, ingroup members or outgroup members. It implies that there are expectations about appropriate ingroup attitudes and behaviors on appearance among Korean members and people follow these expectations to fulfill their needs of inclusion in the group (Brewer, 2009).

*I usually go to the Bible study twice a week at the American church. But I don't care what I wear for the meeting. But when I meet Koreans, I am a little more conscious about my style. It is same when I go to my Korean church. I don't know why, but I guess I am taught to be that way-ID 22.*

Keefe and Padilla (1987) claim that ethnic loyalty to the culture of origin, such as the self-ascribed ethnicity of the individuals, the ethnic group membership of their friends, and preferences for certain things as recreational activities, remained consistently high despite passage of time or generations among immigrants. On the other hand, the implicit knowledge that immigrants have of their cultures of origin, such as proficiency of language, significant historical events, understanding and appreciation of artistic and musical forms of the culture, and standards of behaviors and values that have shaped how persons conduct themselves, declined from the first immigrant generation to the next generations (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). In identifying with her Korean ethnicity, ID 23 (Jane) showed preference and awareness of her friends from the same ethnicity than friends from other ethnic groups, and it influenced her appearance.

*I am more conscious about my appearance when I go to meet my Korean friends. It's because we are all Koreans. I cannot ignore the culture that we share. We are more aware of each other, and more conscious about each other's opinions or thoughts about ourselves. Frankly speaking, Americans don't care whether I look good or bad. But Koreans are more responsive to it-ID 23.*

ID 19 (Julia) revealed her desire to conform to her fellow members in her Korean group and followed their code of behavior regardless of her preference.

*I know some people who are very interested in brand names. They know what is hot and what the current fashion trend is. I know Coach, but not many other brands. I bought a Michael Kors Bag last week. I wanted to have one from brand names because all my friends carry them-ID 19.*

On the other hand, ID 25 (Joy) stressed the constraint on immigrants' opportunity to attend formal social events or ceremonies such as weddings, birthday parties, or funerals for their family members, relatives, or friends, and accordingly the limitations to wear their formal dress in those contexts. Restriction in these situations causes Korean immigrants to draw more attention to their ethnic group because the cooperative links between people through these events or ceremonies occur more frequently with their ingroup members than members from outgroups. When items of dress are selected by individuals, they communicate certain meanings such as power, wealth, or status (Eicher *et al.*, 2008). Especially in Korean culture, people put a high value on appearance and dress, which is quite contrasting from those of Americans. Therefore, immigrants can feel that they are endowed with a privilege to retain a certain social position or role through participation, and dress plays an important role in these occasions. ID 25 (Joy) stated:

*To me, my Korean community consists of only my church. So I dress up a little bit more when I go to church. It is the place where Korean people meet. That is why I dress up. When I go to Korea, I devote more time to look good. But it is absolutely different in the American community-ID 25.*

ID 29 (Patty) also emphasized the value on appearance and dress in Korea in a similar manner that ID 25 (Joy) talked about and she also revealed the prevailing thoughts among many Koreans, which is linking the external appearance into its internal characteristic, nature, or substance.

*Many people judge others by their appearance. My friend went to a store, looking casual, but the clerk didn't even say hello to her. So the next day she wore more*

*formal and went there again and the same clerk greeted her with a big smile saying “ Hello, ma’am.” I try to dress smart always. It is a way to respect others. It doesn’t look professional to me if someone is dressed inappropriately. I evaluate that as she doesn’t work hard enough. I think a professional works diligently in every aspect that he or she involves himself or herself in, like cooking, or fashion. If we see somebody who dresses up, we want to see her again. I believe there is a big influence of appearance to others-ID 29.*

DeLong (1998) claims that there is a difference in defining one’s appearance according to the value of individuality or conformity. If individuality is more valued, people want to stand apart from the group rather than fit into the group. On the other hand, if conformity is more valued, cultural context plays a critical role in determining people’s appearance. These values on appearance are portrayed by the sentiments of ID 21 (Cathy) and ID 24 (Abby). ID 21 (Cathy) discussed what is appropriate and what is a priority in expressing her identity.

*There are many ways to express your identity or thoughts, such as verbal language, facial expression, and dress. I don’t admire something expensive or luxurious, but I wear something clean and smart. If I am not satisfied with my dress, I feel uncomfortable. So even though it is not a brand name, I choose to dress to express myself and I choose a style of dress to respect others-ID 21.*

ID 24 (Abby) talked about the values that are embedded within Korean culture, that is, the preference of brand.

*When I buy clothes, I like to see what the brand name is, because I have confidence in the item if it has been made by popular brands (companies). I have confidence in their quality...Surely...It is because there is a sense of responsibility to their own brand and if people believe they keep their promise to the customer, then they will buy the products with the conviction. I was used to buying popular brands in Korea and it is same here. Sure it is the difference of the awareness to*

*the popular brands between Koreans and Americans. Koreans prefer brand names more than Americans do... Even if the clothing is not that stylish, Koreans would rather buy brand name clothing. I think people want to show off the brand name and their ability to have those brands-ID 24.*

### ***Sense of Inclusion to American Culture***

As Brewer (2009) explains several principles of the optimal distinctiveness theory, optimality, even within a given context, is not necessarily fixed since inclusion and differentiation motives are also likely to be temporal influences and change over time. For example, when one enters a new group, the awareness of one's marginal status as a newcomer may enhance the need for inclusion relative to the need for differentiation, but as time goes on and inclusion is more secure, differentiation needs become more salient and maintaining group distinctiveness assumes a higher priority (Brewer, 2009).

Padilla and Perez (2003) explain that individuals from the same familiar background differ on willingness and competence to acculturate because it is related to personal characteristics such as assertiveness, likeability, sociability, extraversion, and ego control. ID 22 (Lynn) reported the ways that her children coped with their marginal status as a racial minority through their different behaviors. This sentiment precisely shows how individuals interpret the cultural context and negotiate the appropriate practice to satisfy the need for inclusion to the majority culture through the different levels of involvement in their host culture and culture of origin.

*Steve sometimes asks me to pack Korean food for lunch, like Bulgogi. And he shares it with his American friends. Steve made lots of friends in that way. Once I went to his school, everybody said hi to him. But he says they are friends who just know him and their friendship is not that serious because the peer groups are*

*already established and he cannot enter through it. Instead, my younger son only asks me to pack a sandwich. He eats a sandwich everyday. He doesn't like Korean food because the smell is strong. He hates Kimbop. He says that there is a unique smell. He never has Korean style breakfast because of the smell, but he eat Korean food when he is at home. That is why we eat our Korean style dinner almost everyday-ID 22.*

ID 19 (Julia) also reported that she had made some efforts to be included in American culture, even though she thought that her behaviors or attitudes were constrained because she was not familiar with American culture or customs yet and she felt unsecure in a new group.

*I try to wear an appropriate attire because of my prejudice. I think I am expected to behave myself. If I dress up, people will not look at me with disdain. It might be considered more laborious. That's my thought. It might be an absurd thought as an Asian-ID 19.*

People can conceive of themselves as Americans and also as Koreans. Their ethnicity represents this thought. While many participants identified themselves as Koreans, there is much variation that they assign to their identification. ID 29 (Patty) answered my inquiry about how she would place herself between a Korean and an American:

*I have lived here for 28 years. But I think I am Korean(-ish) and I think I am living a Korean lifestyle. Whenever I go to Korea for a visit, my (Korean) friends call me American and think I have become very Americanized. The way that I behave and the manner in which I treat people...they said when I speak Korean, my pronunciation and accent is a little bit different. It is not because I speak English well. I do speak Korean way better than English, but it seems to be different-ID 29.*

Most of my respondents revealed that in spite of many things such as food, cultural practices, language, and attitudes and beliefs have influenced change in American culture, they considered themselves as Koreans, or at least Korean-Americans. Many factors such as their physical characteristics, different language, and past experiences make Korean immigrants distinctive from members of other groups. Being members of a minority ethnic group is not inevitable. Therefore, it is natural for Korean immigrants to think of themselves as outsiders or foreigners. However, they also share many aspects with other members of American society, whether voluntarily or non-voluntarily. And then, they learn and accept some parts from their current culture. ID 23 (Jane) reported how she became accustomed to her current circumstance in terms of appearance.

*Q: Do you consciously dress up?*

*A: No. I become less conscious of my appearance here. In Korea, the atmosphere makes people aware of others much more than here. Even when I went grocery shopping, I changed my clothes. But in America, everybody looks relaxed and comfortable, so I simply follow their lead-ID 23.*

ID 1 (Jenny) also mentioned that her attitudes about used clothing had changed by the influence of American culture. ID 3 (Kelly) reported how she created meaning with used clothing. She categorized her surrounding into two parts, Korean community and the others and then, she conducted herself based on the perception that her fellow members might think about it. The sentiments, the comparison between two cultures regarding the perception of used clothing that ID 1 (Jenny) and ID 3 (Kelly) made, revealed the feeling

of inclusion into American culture and at the same time the feeling of exclusion from Korean culture.

*I bought some clothes for Jane at Once Upon a Child. If I were in Korea, I would not even try to do that. There is no reluctance about used clothes in America. The obsession about everything becomes decreased-ID 1.*

*Korean people don't let their kids wear used clothing or hand me downs. I didn't do that when I was in Korea. I used to go to the department stores to buy something fancy for my kids. But I don't need to buy expensive clothing here. If someone gives me used ones, I happily accept...But when I go to places where I meet Korean friends, I am hesitant and think twice whether I should wear the used one or not. I'd rather not wear them. Because of the atmosphere that Korean people make...it is still bothersome to me-ID 3.*

ID 7 (Sara) and ID 13 (Elizabeth) also commented upon their celebrations of American holidays. Instead of celebrating Korean holidays, they marked Thanksgivings or Halloween. For many respondents, it was inconvenient to maintain their traditional holiday practices. Even though they showed strong ethnic identification as Koreans, it required some effort to maintain. On the other hand, some respondents reported that they wore green to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day and had roasted turkey on Thanksgiving Day. They were not expected to wear green or cook turkey and make cranberry sauce for their dinner and they had no ideas about the background of these holidays, but following some of the traditions and practices in American culture meant for them to become a part of the culture.

*I don't celebrate any Korean holidays. My husband is not Korean. So I know*

*today is a holiday in Korea, Chuseok or (Chinese) New Year's Day. I have never celebrated any Korean holidays after I left Korea when I was 13-years-old. Instead, I celebrate Halloween, Thanksgiving day, or something else...My kids have to wear Halloween costumes to school...But I feel that occasions or events in Korea are not related to me at all-ID 7.*

*I had to wear Twins or Vikings jerseys on some special days at my work. I bought some and I felt it was unique. It was fun. I liked it. But I haven't marked any Korean holidays. I don't have a Korean traditional dress. I rented one once for my wedding. It was convenient. I will not make my son wear Korean traditional dress unless somebody gives or lends one to him-ID 13.*

### ***Sharing the Values of Appearance in American Culture***

DeLong (1998) claims that “the degree to which an experience is shared is the amount of communication that will take place (p. 50).” As mentioned above, Korean immigrants share the various experiences of American culture with members of current society. It is to fulfill their need of inclusion into their current culture. In the aspect of appearance and dress, many respondents expressed similar needs and showed how Korean immigrants understand the shared beliefs and values in American culture and blend into the culture.

By comparing the value and importance of appearance and dress, ID 23 (Jane) placed herself in American culture. She felt the sense of belonging in American culture by following their meanings and values on appearance.

*Q: When you buy your clothing, what do you refer?*

*A: These days, I am trying to wear clothes that I can blend into this culture. It is because I am here. I feel I am changing unintentionally.*

*Q: Is there any differences of importance in value of clothing?*

*A: Yes, there is a difference. If I give 8 to 9 points indicating the importance of clothing in Korea, I will give 3 in America. It is affected by the cultural difference.*

*When I am in Korea, I am very conscious of my clothing and I am always aware of how people think of me (based on my appearance), but here in America, I don't care about my clothing that much-ID 23.*

ID 28 (Connie) reported her individual preference or meaning on appearance was changed by the influence of her current culture. As DeLong (1998) argues, it is because meanings that are shared are also connected to the culture. When she found that she looked inappropriate, it meant she could not communicate with another as she intended or expected and she felt the disconnection to the present culture and differentiation from the culture. Consequently, she changed her attitudes on appearance to fit into her current culture.

*I liked to buy clothes in Korea. I liked to adorn myself, so I brought some unique clothes from Korea. But I found that wearing it here made me look a bit odd. After that, I bought something usual. I think I changed-ID 28.*

ID 1 (Jenny) acknowledged the meaning of the wedding ring that it conveys in American culture. She intended to attach the meaning following what she noticed in American culture.

*I recognized that everybody wears a ring if they are married. Especially a wedding ring. I haven't been conscious of the wedding ring in Korea. When I was at a party, somebody said to me that it is important to wear a wedding ring. It is something that American people draw importance to-ID 1.*

ID 22 (Lynn) and ID 20 (Maria) knew “the subtle differences in how ... to wear clothing (DeLong, 1998, p. 46)” in American culture. By the places where they live, they recognize what would be appropriate or what would be ideal within the cultural context.

*Clothing was the most important thing for me in Korea. First it was clothing, and then accessories. Here in America, rather, I consider whether or not my earrings and necklace are matching, or what I can wear to match in color. My interest and the level of importance are changing-ID 22.*

*Q: Are you aware of your physical difference?*

*A: American people wear comfortable clothing. Yes, I do too. I wear comfortable things and try to mingle with them. But still, I cannot wear tight yoga pants that they wear. I like to wear jeans. I avoid wearing something that makes me look different from them-ID 20.*

In contrast with the comment of ID 20 (Maria), ID 9 (Ellise) reported that her child wore tight leggings. In these two instances, the subtle differences between cultures, as noted above, can be investigated. In American culture, people do not avoid wearing what they want to wear due to others' views, but it is the opposite from this perception in Korea. It might be Koreans think wearing tight leggings is not modest or not appropriate in public place except fitness center or gym. But Americans might think that wearing leggings is okay because it is related to exercise and health and it is accepted as everyday wear.

*My child was standing in front of fridge even after 10 at night. She is almost 5' 7". Sometimes she complains that her body is big and fat. If we were in Korea, she might be depressed because she is big. She would wear something that covers her body. But she always wears tight leggings and is very proud of herself. She is different because she is growing up in American culture. It looks good to me.*

*Even though she thinks herself as big and fat, she wears what she wants to, like dresses and mini-skirts. Sometimes I comment that it's too short, but she doesn't care. That is the difference between here and Korea-ID 9.*

These subtle differences were shown between Korean clothing and American styles. Some respondents including ID 9 (Ellise) and ID 3 (Kelly) reported that their children noticed these differences and were reluctant to wear Korean clothing or hand-me-down clothes from their older siblings. Their recognition of the difference in appearance and dress can indicate the commonality of experience among the next generations of the first immigrants and their peer group in American culture, which is “influential in forming people’s responses” to the appearance (DeLong, 1998, p. 286).

*When my kids were small, I made them wear Korean clothing, but not any more. It doesn't match with others. Color...Design...When I saw the clothes in Korea, they looked good. Like the attention to small details. So I bought some to bring here. The fabric is good. The quality is good. So my kids wore them when they didn't care about their clothes. But now they don't like them, so I don't buy clothes for them, not any more-ID 9.*

*My kids are very sensitive. I haven't noticed until recently, but my younger son doesn't like to wear his brother's clothes. He says it looks weird. He is not usually the type of boy to complain about things like clothing, but I recognized that those were clothes that I brought from Korea. At first I didn't realize the reason. I heard the same thing from my friends that their kids didn't like Korean clothing, either-ID 3.*

ID 21 (Cathy) reported that as she was accustomed to American culture, she tried to obtain many experiences that are important and valued by its members. Especially in the aspect of appearance and dress, she found that people communicate the meaning or message of the events or holidays through the use of color. DeLong (1998) claims that

these identifying features can be subtle and only identifiable to the social group sharing them unless it is very visible and obvious to anyone within or outside the group. While some immigrants including ID 4 (Ellen) saw these features, such as wearing red in Christmas or green in St. Patrick's Day, as "undifferentiated sameness (DeLong, 1998, p. 287)", ID 21 (Cathy) had the knowledge about the identifying features and these became valuable.

*Americans wear red on Valentine's Day or during the Christmas season. At first I didn't know that, but they do. I went to a Christmas concert at my son's school. He was on stage wearing an orange t-shirt. He looked so different. Everyone except for him wore red. I think I knew that he was supposed to dress for the holiday, but I totally forgot. I guess it just slipped my mind-ID 4.*

*Q: Do you wear something special in Christmas days? Like red?*

*A: I'd like to. I thought of it as bothersome, but no, it looks good. People wear special earrings or clothing only for that day. It looks charming. Even though I am not celebrating those holidays, like Halloween, I think that it makes people pleasant. I like it and someday I would like to try it-ID 21.*

## **Sense of Distinctiveness in a Dual Cultural Context**

### ***Intergroup Differentiation and Outgroup Derogation***

In the social identity approach, the perception that members in a group think and act in ways to achieve positive distinctiveness between their own group and relevant outgroup is related to the intergroup differentiation and outgroup derogation (Brewer, 1997).

Since Korean immigrants moved from Korean society and are established in American culture, in which they become members of the current culture, they may

consider Korean society as an outgroup. As Korean immigrants live in a different cultural context from Korean society, they experience a great disparity in such relationships, experiences, or circumstances, from the members of Korean society. As Waldzus (2009) points out that individuals evaluate their own group positively while they evaluate an outgroup negatively, Korean immigrants tend to compare their immediate immigrant group with peer Koreans in Korean society in ways that make them appear more favorable. This lack of affinity towards the Korean society influences Korean immigrants to derogate Korean society as an outgroup. The perceived differences between Korean immigrant group and Korean society lead to “a set of universal stereotypes” to characterize ingroup-outgroup differences, in which “whereas ‘we’ are trustworthy, peaceful, moral, loyal, and reliable, ‘they’ are clannish, exclusive, and potentially untrustworthy (Brewer, 2009, p. 11).” ID 16 (Angie), a 38-year-old in-betweener, denounced the cultural phenomenon of the fast changing fashion trend in Korea with this view.

*Q: How do you think about the fast changing fashion trend in Korea?*

*A: It is not that bad if it can be balanced, but following trends becomes the standard. It becomes a norm. People feel inferior when they cannot spend money as much as others do. Korean society is too small. People feel they cannot overlook others around them. It is a very unique community. It looks difficult for them to ignore those circumstances. That's why they have to follow fashion trends-ID 16.*

ID 9 (Ellise) categorized two different cultures, current culture as her ingroup and her culture of origin as her outgroup. In the process of categorization, she showed the tendency of outgroup derogation.

*Last year, my nephews were here. They were same age with my kids and I thought they would get along well. But they are the Korean kids who were used to Korean culture. They knew all the name brands. There were big differences between them and my kids. They couldn't be in harmony with each other because of different cultures. And my children are Korean-Americans who were raised here. I found how the culture could be so different even among these Korean kids. Every aspect of culture, from the way to eat to play, was different. There weren't any common interests between them. The two were completely separate cultures. They both spoke English very well, so it wasn't the matter of language...-ID 9.*

ID 25 (Joy) also reported her experience of temporary threats to her self-esteem which could be caused by the negative traits of Koreans such as a tendency to put too much value on outward characteristics and evaluate others with this yardstick.

*I am going to visit Korea next month, but I feel worried. Whenever I go to Korea, people check out my appearance if I look good or if I look old. I don't like those comments. I have never heard them here. Once I was so angry. I met my close friend and we had talked about the same topics as we did all the time, like 'you look old,' but at that time, I became sick of it. Was it that important? I promised myself I would never say that again-ID 25.*

The concept of stereotype is applied to Koreans who are living in Korea. Respondents who have established their new dwellings in America build new values and norms as their standard and evaluate Koreans with these standards. It is because they have the tendency to view Koreans of Korean society as outsiders. The interaction of stereotypes with personal experience is evident here, as ID 5 (Emily) was aware of stereotypes of Koreans who usually underscore the importance of dress.

*I stopped over in Chicago on the way to Korea. At the airport, by looking at how they present themselves, I could distinguish Korean women who reside*

*permanently in America from who are just here for a short time. You can also tell where they are from and what type of lifestyle they lead. They came dressed overexcessively. Dresses and make-up. People who live here don't put on any make-up. They dress casually, only jeans...but those Koreans dress up. I could tell the difference between Koreans and residents-ID 5.*

When I asked about the stereotypes people had of Koreans, the same ideas were mentioned by ID 6 (Shirley):

*When I see Korean people, I easily notice who just came from Korea because of their style...Korean style, not American style. Although they have been here for a long time, Koreans tend to dress well to a certain degree. But sometimes I think it is absurd to follow Korean fashion trends here-ID 6.*

Brewer (2009) argues that when the individual's sense of inclusion within the ingroup has been threatened, for example, when a member of a group is led to believe that he or she is not a typical group member or is not fully accepted as part of the group, the individual can experience extreme anxiety.

Many respondents revealed their experience of distress. Korean immigrants had relied on Korean society for “the satisfaction of belongingness” and “security” (Brewer, 2009, p. 11). But as they moved into the new cultural context, their senses of belonging within Korean society were jeopardized and they became peripheral group members. ID 28 (Connie) reported the experience as a marginal ingroup member in Korea and the hostility to all outsiders in Korean society.

*I feel uncomfortable if someone asks me to meet somewhere in Gangnam. Ah... I don't like those places. I'd like to cancel the meeting. I don't understand how people manage themselves wearing those dresses when they take subways or*

*buses. I was used to wearing sneakers. But I felt like it was not polite of me if I showed up wearing casual clothes while the person I was meeting put a lot of effort into their clothes. Now I've become too tired. It makes me sick...My husband has even been arrested at Incheon airport on the way from a mission trip from the Philippines. He might have looked strange. At the time he had a mustache, wore military pants with hat, and carried a big backpack. His pride was hurt. So he became angry and made a complaint about the situation. He is Korean, but he wondered what kinds of standards they had to arrest people like that? He still thinks it is because of his appearance. We had a bad experience-ID 28.*

### ***Lost of Attachment***

ID 1 (Jenny) reported feeling bad when she visited Korea because she had to behave in such a conspicuous manner as many Koreans did, despite that she acknowledged this as a negative trait of Korean culture.

*If I were in Korea, I might be little bit conscious about my appearance. Koreans think others' view seriously. So I will wear something better in Korea if I go there. I might prefer it if it's noble. I believe that many Koreans judge others, their economic status, according to their appearance and dress. It is not just dress, they carry expensive handbags, shoes, and accessories. Even when they run an errand, they put on make up and carry those bags and wear those shoes. So I might be more conscious about those things in Korea-ID 1.*

As like ID 1 (Jenny), many respondents claimed the inclination of Koreans to have an overly high value on appearance. ID 7 (Sara) also described a similar change of her attitudes and behaviors in Korea. In spite of her attitudes and beliefs about appearance of herself and others in America, she became more conscious of appearance in Korea. She explained this in terms of group thinking. She reluctantly discussed this tendency, but she also said it was true and inevitable.

*I think it is group psychology. I hate that perception. The group doesn't care...The entire population in Korea is a group. I usually don't care about other's judgment. When I go to Korea, my friends and my mom could hardly bear my appearance, like the blemish on my face, so I had to do laser treatment to get rid of those things. People sometimes stare at me if I wear what I wear right now. I can't go through their cold stares. I can't. I have to wear make up to hide my blemish. I have to change. That is the point... I borrow my sister's dresses in Korea. I borrow her shoes, too. I never wear my own dress. I can't. I just wear them when I am at home. I cannot wear these jeans in Korea (pointing to her jeans that she was wearing). Korean culture, that's the culture, that's the culture shock...Koreans follow the trend too much. If I don't follow, they give a cold stare. It is like a bullying. You get left behind. You get excluded. That's because you don't dress well and you don't carry something expensive or fashionable...That's why you have to follow your culture. That's my personal opinion-ID 7.*

ID 21 (Cathy) also reported the high value of conformity, consciousness of others' view, and consequently uncomfortable feeling in Korean society. It is because “people are constantly looking for affirmation of those beliefs in the people around them (Waters, 1990).” Conformity is a crucial part of Korean culture. Appearance and dress is the marker that indicates this cultural trait of Koreans.

*Q: Why do you think people follow the trend?*

*A: I think people don't like to stand out among the group...People follow trend only to not be criticized. I don't like to get unpleasant looks from people. Instead, I feel more comfortable when I blend into the group-ID 21.*

By comparing two cultures that have effects on her life, ID 9 (Ellise) reported that Korean society is pursuing materialism and people tend to consider material possessions as more important than spiritual value such as happiness. As a result, people try to distinguish themselves from others by possessing objects that are authentic and novel and by dressing themselves up sumptuously.

*There is no value of money in Korea...The imbalance between the rich and the poor...it is similar in America, but America is larger than Korea. So people can live in their own ways. I can live in my own way...I am not getting any spotlights unless I am a celebrity. This is the place where I can pursue my own happiness as I want. But in Korea, we have to compare ourselves with others restlessly. When I see someone carrying a beautiful handbag I have a feeling to have the same thing. It constantly bothers me. Korean fashion trends are too fast to keep up with. Korean culture is the same. There is no principle, but it keeps changing. That is the reason that Korean people live so hard. The whole society is suffering. I may have a hard time for a while if I have to go back to Korea. My thought has changed a lot-ID 9.*

ID 14 (Diane) compared two cultures, Korean and American, in a different aspect. The standard of beauty in Korea is also related to the cultural trait of conformity. She criticized the trend of plastic surgery into the whole society. According to her, people pursue the same standard of beauty, such as high nose, round eyes, double eyelids, and body image of thin and lightweight. ID 30 (Betty), a 58-year-old in-between, also talked about this trait as “no characteristics” among Koreans and it is because they “follow trend too seriously.” As noted above, this characteristic that many of my respondents mentioned is deeply related to the fast changing Korean fashion trend. My respondents found their thoughts incompatible in this aspect and felt ruled out from Korean society.

*Koreans all want to look like the same person: high nose, big eyes, and small face. Everyone wants to look like that. I think everyone is pretty in their own way. You just have to learn how to bring out your own inner beauty. Like if you have pretty eyes, then you should focus on that and bring it out as a main point. You shouldn't have pretty eyes, pretty nose, pretty everything because it's just like...Many Americans like curvy...I like athletic figure...I run a lot to look healthy. Koreans...they wanna look cute and young, but Americans...they wanna look sexy, mature, and chic-ID 14.*

*Most Koreans feel they should have trendy items that others have. A few years ago, one British reporter interviewed some Koreans because of how they were dressed. They wore similar headbands, black dresses, and black Prada backpacks...it was the trend in Korea at that time. But the reporter thought that those Koreans had been to a funeral because what they were wearing was so bland and had little personality. I don't like to follow the trend. Koreans follow trends too seriously, they even go as far as finding out what is trendy in the food and entertainment worlds. If people say kiwi is a healthy food, everybody eats kiwi. No personality at all. Plastic surgery is popular, too. It is too much. Everybody like children and grown-ups wear skinny jeans now. I have worn skinny jeans for a long time. People need personality and need to develop their own characters-ID 30.*

DeLong (1998) argues that “the more people share with other human beings, the more experiences they will have in common. For example, people who are similar in age, location, profession, and religion are presumed to share a common bond of interests, motivations, and preferences. Such common bonds create a basis for similarity in response (p. 253).” Many of my respondents lost the common bonds with other Koreans due to the inconsistency between two cultures culturally and geographically and immigrants could not share meanings with them when they create an ensemble in the contact with their culture of origin. ID 25 (Joy) had this experience when she visited Korea. Even though she was very conscious of her appearance and prepared not to look different from her fellow members of Korean society, she realized the difference between them.

*Q: How do you wear in Korea?*

*A: When I go to visit Korea, I am very concerned about my clothes. I usually bring my favorite items. I've never felt that I looked awkward, no...but I felt unsophisticated. I wear just the basics, like plain t-shirts and sweaters...like that. Koreans wear fancy clothes. That's why I feel unsophisticated-ID 25.*

The experience of ID 5 (Emily) was similar. She recognized the difference between two cultures when she encountered youth in Korea. Similar appearance among these children, which is too materialistic in her conception, was a surprise to her, and she discussed the common attitudes and desires for similarity and conformity towards a certain standard among peers that was passed on from their older generation.

*I was very surprised when I first saw those kids all wearing Nike or Adidas...I knew it's expensive. I first thought it might be fake. I heard that there were some fake, too. Everybody wore those shoes. They compare themselves to each other. My nephew lives in Gangnam, he said that everybody does that. There are trendy items like the i-phone, Nike shoes, expensive headphones, and puffer jackets. That is a set, or like a package deal. You can't have one, you have to have it all. Now, even children are learning this type of lifestyle and culture...There are not that many people who spend their money to buy expensive clothes in America. Doctors, I think they make lots of money, but they don't look like they spend money on their clothes. They don't even wear Polo. They just wear Khaki pants and shirts. When I went to Korea, do you know what I felt? People buy expensive items, things that need to be ironed...My cousin and his wife both work, but every morning they spend time ironing their clothes before they rush out the door. They look to be so busy. To me, they look as though they were living such rushed and haggard lives. I felt sorry for them...I also heard that even at restaurants, people judge their customers by their cars and treat them accordingly. When valets park cars, it is not first come, first serve. It is nicer cars get served first. So many Korean men want to buy good cars even if it means they will run themselves into debt-ID 5.*

ID 20 (Maria) also expressed her empathy about these traits among youth, yet she saw this as undesirable.

*I heard kids are too sensitive to trends. It is serious. Because it is trendy, everyone wears the same pants. When I went to Korea last time, everyone, from little kids to grown-ups, wore dyed skinny jeans. It was too hilarious. Even though they said it was a trend, it looked so ugly. Teens can't tolerate being different from their peers. When I worked as a high school teacher, I experienced many unpleasant situations. They made their school uniforms smaller and tighter. It didn't look*

*good, but I could understand their reason for doing it. Now I have realized that it is too hard for kids to not conform. They have to follow trends to be included into their social groups-ID 20.*

### ***Outsiders in American Culture***

Padilla and Perez (2003) argue that immigrants who experience cultural transitions because of migration “must cope with their new cultural-societal pressures and standards” and must “make sense of their new social environment and decide how and/or whether they are going to integrate themselves into the host culture (p. 42).” Immigrants want to function in a new culture “in a manner that is congruent with the values, beliefs, customs, mannerisms, and language of the majority of members of the culture” and this ability that is learned is referred to as “cultural competence (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 42).” When immigrants have obtained the cultural competence completely, members of the new culture come to view them as insiders (Padilla & Perez, 2003). But immigrants who see themselves as negatively stigmatized because of their physical appearance or language barrier may believe that they are not be accepted as insiders in the new cultural context even if they are culturally competent in that culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003). ID 12 (Erica), a 29-year-old new-comer, reported that even though she did not have any negative experience relating to her ethnicity, she felt herself as a member of a minority group. ID 16 (Angie) also shared a similar feeling as ID 12 (Erica) did. In their examples, they had the need and desire to belong to American culture, but they recognized that it was difficult to fill the need due to several reasons that were noted above such as a language barrier.

*Q: Have you thought of yourself as an outsider?*

*A: I haven't had any particular experience, but I have felt like I am a minority. I feel like it's hard to approach people from different ethnic groups. Sometimes making friends can be difficult. They may think similarly to me-ID 12.*

*The feeling as an outsider or a forever foreigner...The thought of being a minority. The language barrier is the biggest problem. But it is my fault, too. I am not proactive in solving this problem. I wanted to make friends with Americans, but now I have three kids and I'd rather meet Korean people who I can relate with. But it is the turning point. Since my kids started to go to school, I cannot use the raising of my children as an excuse to meet only people I can relate with. I think it is time for me to change little bit-ID 16.*

Sentiment of ID 23 (Jane) revealed that she endured psychological hardships such as low self-esteem as an outsider and felt excluded from the majority, and as a consequence, she questioned whether or not she wanted to integrate into American culture.

*Because of the language, I suffer from low self-esteem rather than the inconvenience or discontent of living in American society. I'd like to say something more, but I feel the constraint. Then, I cannot take pride in myself at all. I think that I am that kind of person. I cannot complain if something is wrong. So I sometimes feel I don't have any friends or close coworkers and it makes me miss my friends and family in Korea-ID 23.*

Shared meaning or experience in a culture is very influential to people's behavior or attitudes toward the culture. ID 26 (Nicole) reported that she did not include this category of shared meaning or experience because the meaning or experience from her past culture in which she was reared is much different from her current culture. Accordingly, it was inevitable that she changed her attitudes and behaviors.

*I think I am different. My coworkers often say that they had school reunions or they met their old friends. But it is not related to me and I feel that I live in another place that I don't belong to. Culturally, there are some differences, too. I didn't learn to speak out my thoughts directly or speak on behalf of myself in Korea. But I learned here that if I don't speak up, they think that I don't have any ideas or any opinions. I have to say something, then, they say okay and give some solutions or change something for me. But if I don't, they think I don't have any problems or I don't participate. This is the cultural difference that I experienced. I had a hard time changing my attitude. And this makes me think I am not in my place-ID 26.*

ID 3 (Kelly) talked about the differences in some values or code of behavior between Koreans and Americans that could not make them associate together.

*While Koreans make all efforts to adorn themselves, Americans spend a lot of time and money to decorate their houses. Every year, people go to Home Depot and buy all different kinds of annual plants and flowers that last one season or two. American people don't care about their appearance. Instead, they decorate their houses. It is impressive. They have to fill the holes, mow the lawns, and paint their houses. Every fall, they buy some mums. But most Koreans don't care about their houses. Koreans have to wear styles that are currently trending. They have to spend money to buy some make-up products. They have to remove dark spots on their face. Koreans decorate their own exteriors. People judge others by their appearance like luxury handbags, shoes, schools, and clothes-ID 3.*

In spite of their needs or desires to belong to American culture, they felt separated from the culture in some aspects. It demonstrates the claim of Padilla and Perez (2003) that acculturation is more difficult for people who are more distinct by skin color or other physical characteristics from the majority. Many respondents discussed the difficulty of acculturation to mainstream culture and it affected their attitudes and behaviors on appearance.

### *Sense of Distinctiveness on Appearance in American Culture*

According to DeLong (1998), our aesthetic experience is affected by the immediately adjacent physical space and cultural context that includes our cultural knowledge and past experiences. “When we see something new, we compare what we see with our mind’s images and ideas and find it puzzling (DeLong, 1998, p. 47).” Based on the “collection of accumulated mental images from our past experience (DeLong, 1998, p. 47),” we acknowledge the difference between what we saw in the past and what we see in the present. Before they migrated to American culture, my respondents had been aware of different conventions or codes of appearance in American culture through various social media, but they did not have any previous experience. ID 13 (Elizabeth) reported her experience of an unpredicted combination of American teachers’ appearance. Because it was not the prevailing style of teachers to wear casual dress in Korea, it was unfamiliar and at the same time surprising to her.

*It was really surprising that students typically wear hooded t-shirts. I was an ESL student for two years and I found other students ordinarily wore t-shirts and shorts. Even teachers dressed very casually. It was very impressive... Korean teachers dress formal, right? Like blouses and pants. American teachers were different. They even carried backpacks, not leather suitcases-ID 13.*

ID 27 (Jennifer) even saw the distinctions on appearance coming from her children. Since she had no knowledge or experience about American culture, she had to learn the differentiations from her own children and found there was a gap between her and her children. In some aspects of appearance, they rarely shared experiences with her and it influenced her to have a limited understanding of American culture that her

children belonged in.

*It's not important for me. But it's different for my kids. They don't wear what they wore yesterday. I say there is no difference between this and that, but they say no. They should take a bath everyday. Their friends, sometimes their teachers, seem to be very sensitive about it. Maybe it is caused by their low self-esteem. Even in the cold winter, they wash their hair every morning-ID 27.*

What is worn to a specific event such as an open house for their kids' new school, the example of ID 28 (Connie), is also a new cultural experience for Korean immigrants. Some respondents reported even though they had some learned knowledge of American culture and the conventions or codes regarding appearance, they became aware of different conventions of appearance that they had not expected. "What is considered appropriate to wear in a given situation depends on what one has experienced in the past (DeLong, 1998, p. 292)." When ID 28 (Connie) was confronted with the situation, she was not confident or comfortable. She thought that she was not part of the group.

*When my kids were small there was an open house at school. It was the first time for me to go to an open house. I had no idea about it. If I were in Korea, I would do it as the way other Koreans did...When I was young, my parents usually dressed up when they went to the school. That was my thought. I knew a little bit of American culture, that people may not consciously consider what they wear, but it was the first day for me to meet my kid's teacher, so I dressed up, but I did not think it was too formal. But I was so embarrassed. Everybody except me wore jeans and t-shirts, and even slippers. I didn't dress up that much as I said, but....no...according to the standard, I was dressed up...and I realized again that this is America-ID 28.*

In contrast to the instance of ID 28 (Connie), ID 25 (Joy) wanted to look attractive and stand out from other Americans, so she consciously wore dress that she brought from

Korea. She knew “the expected patterns of appearance” from other people in the context, she chose to resist them and be distinctive from these people (DeLong, 1998, p. 293). On the other hand, she also reported how she felt odd and strange when her appearance looked different from other members of her group in a given situation. It meant that she did not have enough experience in that situation and her decision on what to wear in the situation was based on her past cultural context, not the present.

*I'd like to look different from other Americans. But there are not many events or occasions to wear something nice. Also people don't care about what other people wear. So I wear what others wear. But still, I feel good when I get compliments from other people. And most of the cases are when I wear clothing from Korea. So whenever I go to Korea, I try to buy something unique and something special to wear in America.*

*...I wear similar styles everyday, so I wanted to dress up one day and went to the zoo with my cousins. It was a frilled t-shirt and skirt that my sister sent to me from Korea. When I arrived there, I looked around and found there was nobody who wore like me. Everyone wore simple t-shirts and shorts. In that situation, I couldn't think of myself as looking pretty or great, I was just embarrassed. After that, I always try to blend into that situation and those people. It was a really awkward experience-ID 25.*

As ID 25 (Joy) revealed that she had fewer opportunities to contact with Americans at formal events where she could look specific, ID 13 (Elizabeth) similarly reported that these opportunities made her think about her appearance more consciously. Her sentiment also can be interpreted as that being a member in a small group in this larger society is limiting her chance to adapt to American culture.

*I don't have many events or places to dress up myself. So I look forward to any chance I get to dress up. I get excited when I choose dresses and accessories to wear for a special event like a party. And when I meet Koreans, they compliment*

*me and show an interest in the outfit I put together. But there is a little chance for me to experience these kinds with Americans-ID 13.*

Sentiment of ID 28 (Connie) showed how the culture influences people's aesthetic view on appearance. In America, as the relative of ID 28 (Connie) became aware of different conventions of appearance from Korea, of importance was whether her appearance is appropriate or applicable to her given place with others. ID 28 (Connie) also realized this cultural difference by hosting the relative who was entirely inclined to her own culture and cultural group.

*A few years ago, my aunt visited me for one week. She lived in Gangnam and was very rich. She brought all her nice ensembles with her for the visit, but not any comfortable clothes. She was in her fifties. At the time, I was pregnant and so absorbed in American culture that I wore casual clothing all the time. When she came out from her room, she was perfect. Her attire was formal from head to toe. She even wore high heels. But, she seemed to be uncomfortable. After a couple of days, she admitted that she looked so strange and different. I was also uncomfortable to go out with her...-ID 28.*

## **Comparison with Relevant Outgroups**

### ***Intergroup Comparison with White Ethnic Groups***

We usually evaluate other groups with the idea of ethnocentrism. We experience such an ethnocentric response towards others or other groups. But on the other hand, we like others because they are different. We can easily accept their difference, since it is not relevant for us (Waldzus, 2009). While a difference from any one of “us” is unacceptable, our response to the difference from others or other groups is sometimes “neutral, indifferent or interested at most (Waldzus, 2009, p. 42).”

ID 20 (Maria) reported her like about the cultures and styles of others.

*People wear what they like. Really. They wear boot-cut, wide or straight pants that look old-fashioned. Some people also wear skimmers, even colored skinny pants. Even if they wear what they want, it doesn't look bother others. I like it. It makes me feel comfortable-ID 20.*

We have the desire to feel good about ourselves and value me and mine than others (Smith & Mackie, 2007; Waldzus, 2009). To obtain or maintain this positive social identity, people compare their ingroup with “relevant” outgroups and find positive distinctiveness (Waldzus, 2009, p. 42). A superordinate category that includes ingroup and outgroup is also an ingroup on a higher level of inclusiveness. White ethnic groups in American society are not relevant for Korean immigrants to consider them at the same superordinate category, which can be Asian immigrants, because of the distinct differences in the cultural background as well as physical appearance. Therefore, it is more likely for Korean immigrants to consider white ethnics as outgroups but not comparable or competitive ones.

Waldzus (2009) explains that inclusion in the superordinate category is an essential condition for a criterion to be applied when considering prototypicality as the criterion for group evaluation. This explains why a group that is different from us sometimes does not play a part in our evaluation of that group.

ID 16 (Angie) observed the Americans’ recreational activities such as gardening, decorating homes, and celebrating certain events or holidays.

*They are good at coordinating color well with inexpensive clothes and accessories. It is just meant to be worn for a year or so, so we might think it as a wasteful one, but American people do something to make a day special. They spend a little money for their accessories like necklaces, bracelets, and earrings and wear \$10 t-shirts for the events or holidays like Christmas. It is pretty. For Valentine's day, people wear pink shirts with heart prints on them. For Christmas, they wear red sweaters, decorate their houses with the theme, and serve food with Christmas plates. They change their costumes every season to match the idea or the concept. Other people may see this as trivial, but they do it to celebrate the occasion-ID 16.*

ID 22 (Lynn) also reported similar practices and activities of white American ethnic groups, but it was more or less objective for her and there was little evaluation or criticism about the fact that they were different from herself.

*I see American people are very conscious about color matching. It is not the matter of price or cost. They coordinate well regardless of price. People seem to be taught when they are young. I think this is their way to educate children. Every season, every event, and every holiday, they intentionally attempt to teach what the meaning is. They focus on each event like Christmas or Easter and try to make the kids understand why it is important and why they should wear like that-ID 22.*

### ***Distinctiveness from Other Asian Outgroups***

As mentioned earlier, while white ethnics “enjoy a great deal of freedom” in the ethnic choices, Asian immigrants are socially constrained to identify as Asians (Waters, 1990, p. 18). Asian groups such as Chinese, Japanese, Hmong, and Korean groups are sub-categories of a superordinate category. In self-categorization theory, Turner *et al.* (1987) assume that people acknowledge that social groups are representing our self-categories that we are in, or out. Asian groups are comparable with each other. But “within categories, members, as well as sub-categories, differ in terms of their

prototypicality, that is, in the degree to which they are representative examples of that category (Waldzus, 2009, p. 43).”

Asians look identical considering their physical appearance, such as skin, hair, and eye color to outsiders. Immigrants, especially, Korean immigrants think differently in terms of their prototypicality, in their appearance compared to other Asian immigrant groups. Respondents wanted to be recognized as their own ethnicity by others. The reason is that people perceive their own ethnic group as superior to the others (Waters, 1990). Respondents were aware of the perception of the relative rankings among Asian ethnic groups. ID 20 (Maria) reported how she felt when she was misidentified as other Asian ethnic.

*When someone asks me if I am Chinese, I feel unpleasant and I ask myself if I wore something to make myself appear Chinese. Koreans seem to be more stylish than other ethnics even if they are not so conscious of their dress-ID 20.*

The sentiment of ID 20 (Maria) implies the perception that Koreans are more attractive in their appearance than other Asian ethnics. It is because Korean immigrants consider themselves to be more prototypical in ways to dress up.

As Waldzus (2009, p. 44) showed in several empirical studies about substantial negative correlation between relative ingroup prototypicality and positive attitudes towards the outgroup, i.e., Germans considered themselves to be more prototypical European than Poles, Italians, or the British and had less positive attitudes towards them, psychology students considered themselves to be prototypical students compared to

business students and had less positive attitudes towards them. Some of my respondents also showed less positive attitudes towards other Asian ethnic groups.

When ID 4 (Ellen) responded to the question about distinction among Asian ethnic groups, there were negative connotations she associated with Chinese. When respondents mentioned about stereotypes or perceptions that they have about certain Asian ethnic groups, it was very related to the way they appeared.

*Q: Can you distinguish Koreans from other Asian ethnics?*

*A: I have the feeling...Um...It is intuitive. I think it is because I am also Asian. Once I discussed it with my husband and he told me that the person who wears a knee-length puffer parka is definitely a Chinese. I asked why, because that style was popular in Korea in the past. But he said that Chinese only wear those styles right now.*

*Q: Then, do you also think that Koreans wear more consciously?*

*A: Yes, Koreans are not flexible in styles comparing other groups. It is because they seem to be more aware of others' judgments on their dress style than their own-ID 4.*

When we view other groups, we often take our own group's values and norms as a standard for others who do not belong to them, and then we devalue these outgroups because of their difference. It is because people tend to value outgroup in an ethnocentric way (Eicher *et al.*, 2008; Smith & Mackie, 2007; Waldzus, 2009; Mummendey & Wenzel; 1999). ID 16 (Angie) articulated this attitude:

*I don't want to say this, but there was a popular thought that Chinese were old-fashioned... These kinds of stereotypes exist in Korean people's minds. Chinese people dress well according to the current trend, but at that time, I could point out the difference between Chinese and Korean. I know who is Japanese. Even though they are Asians who have similar skin color. It is not just us. I think Americans acknowledge the differences, too. They also know who is Korean and*

*who is Japanese because of their fashion style. Dress represents their nationality. When we check out an Asian person, if she is well dressed, then we easily think she might be Korean or Japanese, if not, she might be Chinese-ID 16.*

Several respondents showed similar responses as ID 16 (Angie) did. In the above expression, we see how people view their own culture as being superior to other cultures by “focusing on what is important in our culture” and view other cultures as being inferior by “ignoring important aspects of other cultures (Eicher *et al.*, 2008, p. 42).” Respondents believed that their practices or values on appearance and dress are better than Chinese practices or values. By ignoring their practices or values, people misunderstand or misinterpret the meaning of different practices or values. ID 23 (Jane) stated:

*Physically I am different. I have a little bit darker skin color, so I take it for granted. But I compare myself with other Asians like Chinese and I want to look better than them. It is not intentional, but I still do it-ID 23.*

## Chapter Six: Balancing between Cultures

In Chapter Four and Five, I investigated the ways that ethnicity of Korean immigrants influence their acculturation process, sense of belonging, and attitudinal and behavioral change on appearance in contact with a new culture and maintaining their culture of origin.

In this chapter, to answer the RQ3 (*what are the roles of appearance in Korean immigrants' everyday lives to balance their identities both in Korean and American culture and between these two cultures?*), I focus on how Korean immigrants balance their identities between two cultures through their appearance by using the images that show the ensembles of interviewees at the time of interviews and ensembles that they could wear assuming the visit of Korea.

Immigrants' perceptions about the self are influenced by the social change through their international migration, and by getting through the acculturation process in a new cultural context, where immigrants experience "significant redefinition and reconstruction of both personal and social identities" (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 50; Park, 2009). During the time that immigrants are acculturated into their new cultural environment and experience the process of redefining their identity, they decide on what extent they identify their membership between the host culture and their heritage culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003). This process is related to their needs for inclusion and differentiation between two cultures (Brewer, 1997; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Le, 2007). It

also varies by many aspects, both at the personal and group level. Particularly, as a group, Asian immigrants have distinct attributes that are different from other ethnic groups including white ethnics, such as motivations of migration, language, religions, customs and practices, physical characteristics, and so forth. Among these attributes, appearance, including physical characteristics and dress, plays an important role when they balance their needs for inclusion and differentiation in their dual cultural context, as Eicher *et al.* (2008) argue that “individuals who live in a large-scale culture may withdraw from one group and shift membership to another and dress is often the evidence of this shift (p. 330).”

### **Balancing the Senses of Inclusion and Distinctiveness**

Sentiments from my respondents show that Korean immigrants take different attitudes and behaviors toward appearance in each cultural context according to the perceptions and expectations that members of each group have of them. The attitudes and behaviors of immigrants look distinct and are subject to the perceptions attained from each culture. But social identity construction of immigrants are taking place across borders (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Park, 2009). Immigrants maintain the relationships with members of their culture of origin and the ties to their heritage culture as well as their host cultures. It is a consequence of simultaneous and inseparable needs to balance the sense of belonging in the new culture and their heritage culture and the sense of differentiation by detaching themselves from these two.

In the following section, I investigate how my respondents think and act to fill

and balance these two needs through their appearance.

ID 28 (Connie) was always aware of her ethnic identity as an Asian in her new cultural context. Her memberships in the Korean immigrant group and in American culture continuously have an influence on her everyday life. Regarding her appearance practice, she explained the reason that she chose to wear semi-formal items as appropriate to fit into multiple places and occasions of her dual cultural context.

*When I go to my kids' school, I dress up a little bit. I don't wear Jeans. When I go to music concerts, I like to look clean and tidy. It doesn't matter what Americans wear. Even though they wear casual clothes, I am Asian and I wear smart. When I dress casually, I feel small. So I always try to wear semi-formal items-ID 28.*

By experiencing and recognizing particular characteristics of appearance relative to places of different cultures, ID 16 (Angie) began to change her appearance to be appropriate in a given context. But still she considered what other Korean immigrants wore and how they thought about their appearance. It was because she wanted to live in the continuity between two cultures of America and of Korea. According to Park (2009), these behaviors using different identity strategies through boundary crossing practices are “strategic and effective” and these “survival strategies” help immigrants “keep their options open” in the multiple communities (p. 171). The way that immigrants coped with their circumstances, especially through their attitudes and strategic practices on appearance, indicates the desire of immigrants to belong to two cultural contexts and at the same time their social identity as in-betweeners in both cultures.

*My style has changed. I have lived in California, New Jersey, and now Minnesota. Those people look different from Minnesotans. Every state has a particular style. Especially, New Jersey people. I think it is because of the distance from New York. Whenever I went out, I felt that people were very interested in their appearance. But in Minnesota, most Minnesotans dress very simple and plain, so I feel I am changing accordingly. I've noticed many Koreans also change a little to match their circumstance.*

*...People don't care about the outside, but I am not totally accustomed to it. I still don't wear what other Koreans don't like, but I also don't wear what Americans think is babyish like ribbons or laces-ID 16.*

Like ID 16 (Angie), ID 20 (Maria) also recognized the different expectations about appearance between Koreans and Americans and this caused the changes in her attitudes and behaviors on appearance.

*In Korea, I had to follow the trend, but now I can make a choice for my behavior and my appearance by myself. I can wear what I like, casual or trendy. Sometimes I wear something unique, but people don't stare at me. They express their interest in my clothes, but it is not like Koreans do-ID 20.*

As the meaning of the old saying "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," different people have different ideas about what is beautiful. But the aesthetic response about an object or event is not only based on personal tastes and preferences, but is formed and shared by groups to which people belong (DeLong, 1998). Koreans seem to be more sensitive and discriminating on appearance than others in some aspects. Particularly Korean immigrants become more aware of their appearance because it is different from that of the people from other groups in American society. Park (2009) explains that the immigrant women "developed an ability to pull together resources and cultural repertoires from multiple societies" and they use the knowledge to "reconstruct and

renegotiate their multi-layered identities after migration (p. 161).” My respondents also understand, compare, and evaluate the differences of their appearance with other outgroup members and then, choose to dress and appear reflecting their multiple identities. The sentiments from ID 22 (Lynn) and ID 25 (Joy) revealed that they found their ways to look appropriate and fit into both cultural contexts of Korea and America.

*People seem to change. They have to live here, they have to buy and wear something from here. We cannot wear different, but there are certainly Korean-American styles. It looks like Korean style, but is still American. Korean immigrants like certain brands or stores, like Talbot. People like its styles and colors...-ID 22.*

*I try to find my own style... I see if it is acceptable in both contexts of Korea and America. I like to wear similar styles with my co-workers, but I'd like to be a little bit different. For example, when I buy a jacket, if the style is popular among other people, I like to buy something bright like red...I have the tendency. I like to be different, so I try to find clothing that can express my taste, something that looks cute and young. It doesn't make sense, but at the same time, I also try to buy something attractive, something ladylike. I think if it is too childish, there is no attractiveness, or no appeal-ID 25.*

ID 5 (Emily) showed her critical stance toward her culture of origin and explained the course that immigrants changed to follow the norms and standards of the current culture. However, after interview, she also revealed how she could be different by showing another ensemble, as the saying goes, to do as the Koreans wear, when in Korea (see Figures 15-27 of Two Ensembles Group).

*People in America are very reasonable and realistic. That is also my style. I don't want somebody to interrupt my life. Some Koreans still decorate themselves as they did in Korea, but it becomes faded out as time passes. To be realistic, I*

*always think what is more important... For example, Korean people spend too much money for the wedding itself. I didn't like the impracticalness. But for me, it is more important to manage my marriage well. So we (me and my husband) went to the court to do our wedding and said I do, and I do...and we planned to do something else with the money for the wedding. People say that 'when in Rome, do as the Romans do.'*-ID 5.

In case of ID 17 (Amy), she distinguished the different attitudes on appearance between Koreans and Americans and praised the balanced attitudes and behaviors of Americans relating their appearance practices. However, she also revealed that her dress style and the items that she picked up for herself and her children were more connected with Korean trends or styles.

*American people seem to think health is important...I mean the value, compared to Koreans. I like running. It affects my appearance and my lifestyle...Koreans seem to see just one direction. Just one thing that appeals to their outward appearance. I think Americans are more balanced and more sensible...Healthy body as well as beautiful appearance. It is well-balanced, but in Korea, it is unwholesome. ...Americans don't care about brand names as much as Koreans do. They also know Polo is a quality brand. But they seem to think it is expensive. They know it is good, but too expensive to buy some for their kids. But Koreans think it is not that expensive compared to the price in Korea. I think Americans are very pragmatic. I saw many people who can afford to buy those brands, but they don't. They buy their kids' clothes at Target. I have learned from them and changed myself in many aspects-*ID 17.

Korean immigrants experience the change of aesthetic perception about beauty by looking at various forms of dress and appearance in their new culture. On the other hand, Korean immigrants realize that they cannot communicate what they intended to with others because the meaning or message is not fully understood by other people. Therefore, the circumstance that immigrants are located in influences them to change

their attitudes and behaviors on appearance. ID 13 (Elizabeth) reported that items or practices that have certain meaning or value, for example, luxury goods, in Korean culture do not refer to the same thing in American culture, so she takes different attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors according to her given culture.

*It is surely different from Korean immigrants in America and Koreans in Korea. Many Koreans like luxuries. In Korea, many people possess luxuries and they compare with each other. I heard people sometimes buy them in debt. But in America, there are not many occasions to carry these bags and even more, people don't know if it is a good brand or not. There is no fun. But some people, some Korean immigrants including me still like luxuries, too...When I meet my Korean friends, I watch attentively what other people carry. But I seldom have the occasion, because I spend most of my time at work or at home. I know just a few Korean friends. So I don't have any motivation to buy luxuries. Nobody around me considers it important and it has no influence on my social life...It becomes less attractive for me to have those luxuries-ID 13.*

ID 2 (Laura), who worked as a nurse in Korea, reported her newly emerging identity by facing cultural changes and occupational change related to her appearance. Before she migrated to the United States, her pre-migration identity was closely related to her social class, which she thought was also linked to her occupation. She considered herself as middle-class in Korea because of her former high-profile career, and she thought that it was usual to spend their disposable money to purchase expensive clothes and handbags among middle-class Korean women. But her present cultural context differed from her past, even though her husband is a prosperous professional doctor. It caused changes in her everyday practices on appearance.

*Q: Do you think you are influenced by American culture?*

*A: I sometimes feel awkward when I carry an expensive handbag. Nobody carries those bags. I was influenced and now I prefer something comfortable and casual. My entire appearance has changed-ID 2.*

ID 23 (Jane) also changed the behavior toward her appearance influenced by the context. She distinguished her previous experiences on appearance in Korea from those of her current culture. She felt her appearance and dress was too unique and inappropriate to blend into her current context; thus it became necessary for her to change her dress style.

*I brought lots of clothes from Korea, but I felt that many of them didn't blend in here. I used to wear formal attire a lot more in Korea than in America. I don't have any places to wear these dresses. I also wore only high heels in Korea, but now I am wearing only flat shoes, so my outfit seems to change according to that, too. Right now, I am buying most of my outfits here-ID 23.*

### **Strategic Practices on Appearance**

When I asked my respondents to bring an extra ensemble, assuming that they were visiting Korea and thinking what they could wear, fourteen respondents (46.7%) brought their clothes which they thought were different from what they were wearing in their current culture and eleven (36.7%) responded that they would wear the same clothes in Korea as what they were wearing in America. The last of the respondents (16.6%) did not respond for the request. Several respondents from the latter group mentioned that they usually brought their clothes to Korea or buy new ones in America to wear on their visit to Korea. It meant that they kept their styles and did not change their behaviors on appearance. The following images show the group who would wear the same ensemble in

their Korean and American communities.

### *Same Ensemble Group*

In cases of Same Ensemble Group who did not want to change their dress style for the visit of Korea, they try to balance their appearance in an adequate and acceptable way in both cultural contexts. The appropriateness in any circumstances was of importance for these respondents. Therefore, they continuously made certain levels of effort to feel proper in their peer groups or free from stress or critiques by others. Below are the images of my respondents in Same Ensemble Group who tried to take proper practices on appearance in order to belong to their multiple communities simultaneously.



Figure 3. Same Ensemble Image 1



Figure 4. Same Ensemble Image 2



Figure 5. Same Ensemble Image 3



Figure 6. Same Ensemble Image 4



Figure 7. Same Ensemble Image 5



Figure 8. Same Ensemble Image 6



Figure 9. Same Ensemble Image 7



Figure 10. Same Ensemble Image 8



Figure 11. Same Ensemble Image 9



Figure 12. Same Ensemble Image 10



Figure 13. Same Ensemble Image 11

Some respondents of the Same Ensemble Group demonstrated their sensitivity, delicacy, and care in choosing suitable dress and appearance.

*I've been here for 10 years, but I don't think American people dress up often as like Koreans do. But I'd like to be little more conscious of my appearance than they are. I don't like to wear sweatpants to my kid's school like other people do, intentionally. When I give my kids a ride to school or pick them up at school, I don't wear something fancy, either. But if there are some special events, I'd like to dress up and carry my favorite bag. I don't want to overdo things, though. I just want to look clean and simple-ID 16.*

In her sentiment, ID 16 (Angie) showed her strategy for coping with her uncertain situation. She revealed the interest on her appearance that made her pay more attention to

her style than people who were around her. There were the beliefs in her mind that appearance and dress had meaning, which people in the same group can communicate and understand each other through their appearance and dress. It is because of their cultural influences that people commonly share, despite the geographical distance from her Korean fellow members.

### ***Two Ensembles Group***

During the interviews, some respondents revealed that their dress styles were quite distinguishable from other Koreans when they visited Korea, and because of this reason, they experienced the feeling of embarrassment, stress, and/or constraint. ID 8 (Sandi), a 57-year-old old-timer, and ID 17 (Amy) stated:

*Q: Is there any difference in the value on appearance and dress between Korean culture and American culture?*

*A: In Korea, people treat others differently based on what they have like luxurious cars or clothing. When I go to a beauty salon, I wear something nice and then they treat me differently. When I go shopping, I also see people evaluate others according to their external appearance. But in America, I do what I want to do. If it's cold, I wear something warm...that is all...there is no need for me to be overly conscious of my appearance-ID 8.*

*I try to dress up when I go to the places where Koreans get together. But almost unconsciously, I don't think I have to dress up when I meet Americans. Americans do not seem to care about getting dressed up-ID 17.*

As a result of experiencing ambivalence between two cultures, my respondents changed their dress style and had a secure feeling of inclusion. The feeling or experience of embarrassment, stress, and/or constraint caused by the differences of their appearance

from their peers, either in the Korean community or the American community, was a huge emotional strain or tension resulting from living in multiple cultural circumstances. The pressure to conform to each culture resulted in the respondents paying particular attention to their appearance. Also some respondents had experienced some kinds of discrimination or prejudice in American society because of their statuses as minority, thus, they wanted to get rewards by being recognized as successful immigrants in their home culture or at least as having comfortable lifestyles in America from their families or friends. Consequently, they tried to look good to these people in their home country.

According to Park (2009), Korean immigrant women used multiple identity markers to define their class statuses, such as college education and/or economic achievement in American society. When my respondents visited Korea, the easiest way to describe their statuses in American society was through displaying their economic achievement and in Korean society, the best way to demonstrate this was through their appearance, for example, through the possession of expensive handbags or dresses. Some of my respondents explained that they also bought several items from the popular brands among Koreans to give good impressions to their families or friends. These practices were quite different from those they took in American culture. The reason that they are moving in and out between the contexts is that they want to preserve their identities and statuses in both cultural contexts by following the expectations and values on appearance of each context.

Park (2009) argues that Korean immigrant women in the United States “routinely practiced fluid strategies to imagine themselves as belonging to multiple communities”

including their Korean immigrants, peers in Korea, and ‘Americans’ in general (p. 135). Korean immigrant women did not think about one group as their relevant ingroup; rather they indicated fluid shifts when they referred to their “significant others” in comparison with their identities (Park, 2009, p. 146). My study also identifies that the respondents simultaneously consider themselves as members of Korean immigrant community, the larger U.S. society, and Korean society even though their senses of belonging to these contexts are not exactly the same. And they shift their relevant ingroup to make the best use of the sense of belonging to a certain group. My respondents constantly compared the behaviors, attitudes, and thoughts on appearance and dress between different cultures and among different reference groups. The awareness of these differences and their shifting attitudes and behaviors on appearance made them balance their needs of inclusion and differentiation in multiple cultural contexts. Their selective and strategic practices on appearance in their circumstances showed their efforts to adopt to the U.S. society and at the same time to maintain their cultural heritage. However, these practices may indicate that Korean immigrants are situated as being marginal or peripheral immigrants in American society and being Korean Diaspora from Korean society and consider themselves as outsiders from both cultural contexts.

Also first generation immigrants who are not fully engaged in either Korean or American culture tend to struggle with their inconsistent identities (Park, 2009; Han, 2011). While some of my respondents found their dress related practices that could be appropriate in both cultural contexts as demonstrated in examples of Same Ensemble Group, some respondents revealed the ways that they cope with their ambivalent

situations by negotiating their attitudes, behaviors, or values on appearance to fit into each cultural context. In making decisions about practices on appearance, they tend to prioritize their reference ingroup and choose proper dress styles in the context. Below images from Two Ensembles Group show how immigrants are differently involved in their unsettled situations and navigate the two cultures in their efforts to create balance.



Figure 14. Two Ensembles Image 1-1 worn in U.S. & 1-2 worn in Korea



Figure 15. Two Ensembles Image 2-1 worn in U.S. & 2-2 worn in Korea



Figure 16. Two Ensembles Image 3-1 worn in U.S. & 3-2 worn in Korea



Figure 17. Two Ensembles Image 4-1 worn in U.S. & 4-2 worn in Korea



Figure 18. Two Ensembles Image 5-1 worn in U.S. & 5-2 worn in Korea



Figure 19. Two Ensembles Image 6-1 worn in U.S. & 6-2 worn in Korea



Figure 20. Two Ensembles Image 7-1 worn in U.S. & 7-2 worn in Korea



Figure 21. Two Ensembles Image 8-1 worn in U.S. & 8-2 worn in Korea



Figure 22. Two Ensembles Image 9-1 worn in U.S. & 9-2 worn in Korea



Figure 23. Two Ensembles Image 10-1 worn in U.S. & 10-2 worn in Korea



Figure 24. Two Ensembles Image 11-1 worn in U.S. & 11-2 worn in Korea



Figure 25. Two Ensembles Image 12-1 worn in U.S. & 12-2 worn in Korea



Figure 26. Two Ensembles Image 13-1 worn in U.S. & 13-2 worn in Korea

Respondents' images shown above demonstrate how immigrants strategized appearance practices in their given cultural contexts. As aforementioned, respondents recognized the perceptions and/or expectations about appearance of their multiple contexts or their prioritized reference group and decided whether they would shift or modify their appearance in the direction that was favored by the group or culture, or find the appropriate attitudes and behaviors that could fit into any cultural contexts or groups. Figure 27 and 28 illustrate that these two distinctive strategies from my respondents are related to their length of residence in the United States and identification between Korean-ness and American-ness. First, Figure 27, which is graphed from survey data

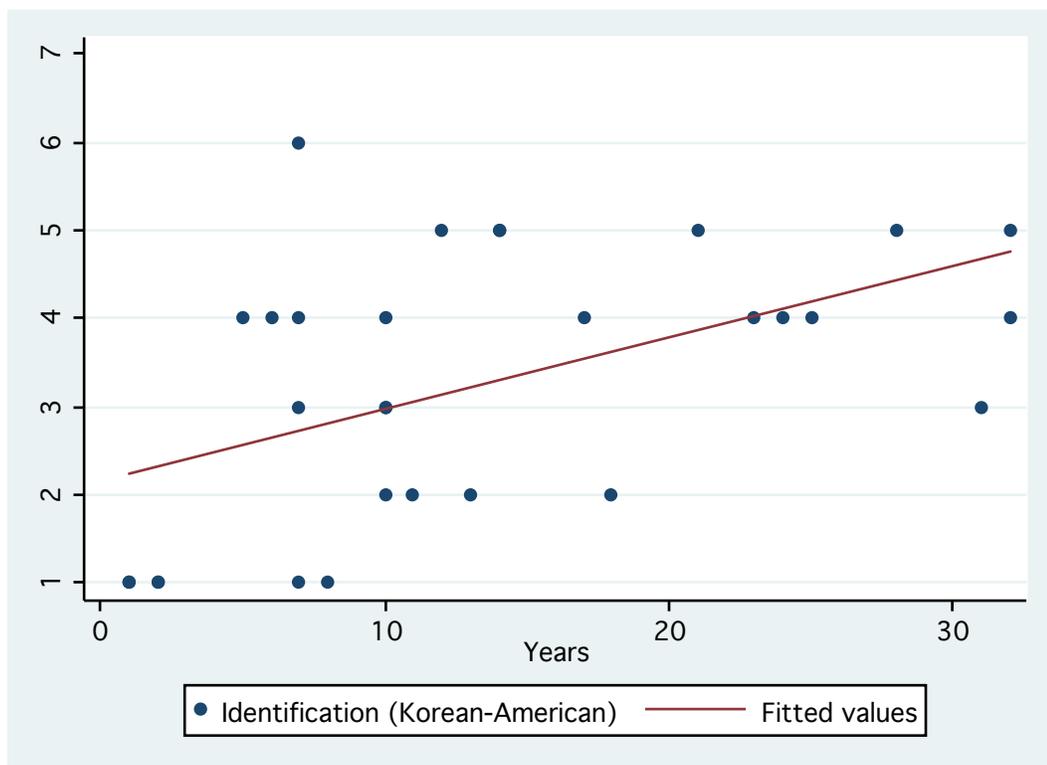


Figure 27. Correlation between Length of U.S. Residence and Identification (1: Korean-ness, 7: American-ness)

(see Table 3 and Table 5), displays the visible correlation between the length of U.S. residence and their identification between their Korean-ness and American-ness. Whereas several outliers are noticeable, it still reflects that as immigrants live longer in their host culture, they tend to identify themselves as more Americanized.

More specifically, Figure 28 shows the variation in participants' identification between Same Ensemble Group and Two Ensembles Group. It is likely that the respondents of Same Ensemble Group are distinguished as being more Americanized than those of Two Ensembles Group both, for new-comers and in-betweeners.

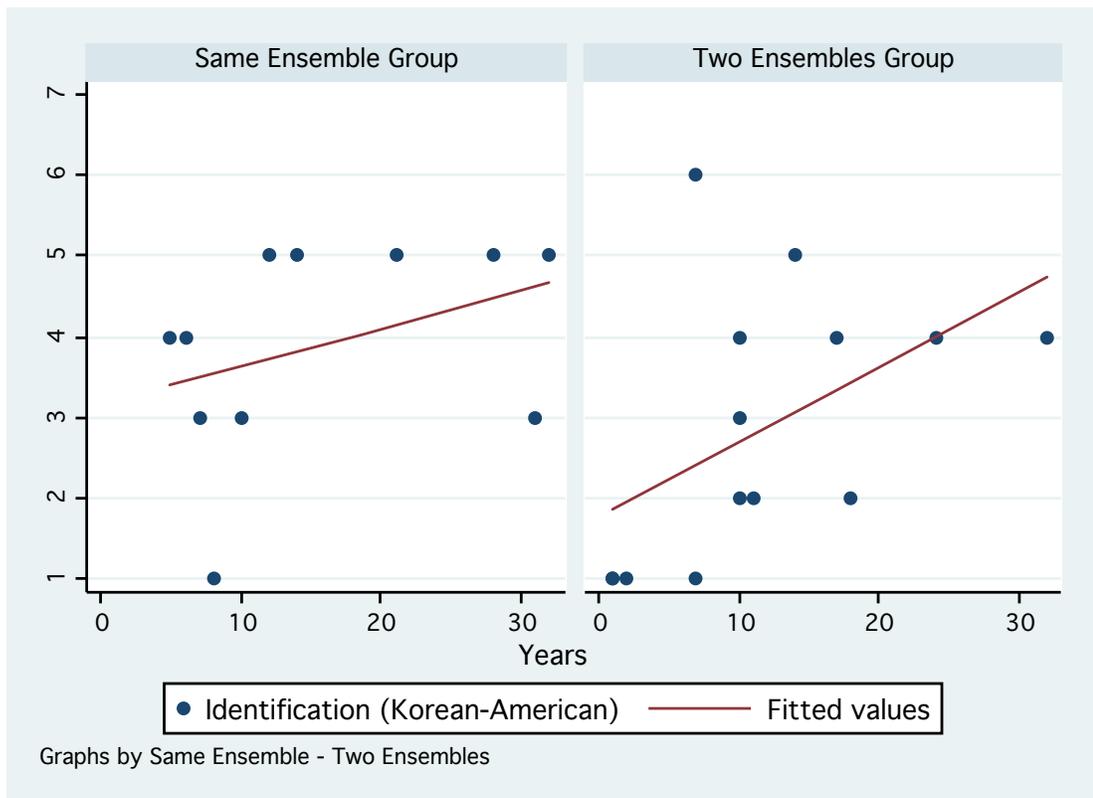


Figure 28. Identification of Same Ensemble Group and Two Ensembles Group (1: Korean-ness, 7: American-ness)

The result from Figure 28 and accounts from the respondents in Same Ensemble

Group showed their continuous effort to feel proper in their ingroups by choosing suitable dress and appearance. For example, while ID 30 (Betty) showed her opposition to the trend focused fashion in Korea and expressed her particular regard for wearing casual, she also revealed her sensitivity and caring about her appearance during the interview.

*Frankly speaking, I didn't like to wear formal in Korea, something fixed like Korean styles...I like to wear...comfortable, something like American style-ID 30.*

On the other hand, ID 9 (Ellise) revealed her low level of fashion interest by choosing one ensemble to blend into her dual cultural contexts.

*I always wear like this. I only changed my pants and shoes that I wore in my work today because those are not comfortable. When I go to Korea, I wear the same style like this. Last time when I visited Korea, my brother complained what I was wearing. It was a long coat...Red..It was kind of my uniform. I always wore that coat during that winter in Minnesota, but my brother hated me to wear it...I would wear whatever suited me, even if I lived in Korea-ID 9.*

The result from Figure 28 also explains that the respondents from Two Ensembles Group are more conscious of the cultural differences and constantly compare the attitudes, behaviors, and thoughts on appearance between cultures or among groups. Then, they prioritize their reference group or context and choose proper dress styles for the context. By negotiating their attitudes and behaviors in accordance with the ideal, meaning, and values of each context, they secure their sense of belonging within their ingroups. ID 26 (Nicole) perceived the ideals that were distinguishable between her

present culture and culture of origin and decided her actions to follow the ideal or value in each cultural context. It resolved the conflict.

*I used to buy clothes in Korea in the past, but I don't buy that much these days. I don't feel any necessities to buy clothes that will not fit in this place. I feel like those are not appropriate in this culture...I like jeans and I wear them often. But in Korea, people in my age don't wear jeans. So I try not to wear jeans in Korea-ID 26.*

According to Park (2009), immigrant women experience the differences in their identities including class, race, and gender through migration and settlement processes and their structural inequality and locations are reflected by various identity practices. But Park (2009) also emphasizes that they “accommodated, took advantage of, appropriated, succumbed to, and resisted various macro forces of identity category formations by engaging in micro exchanges of identity expressions and interpretations (p. 183).” Whether Korean immigrant women choose the same ensemble or two different ensembles in their multiple cultural contexts, they keep their options open. It means that they are not just passively accepting what happens in their situations, but they actively negotiate, resist, and make changes to fulfill their sense of belonging in both cultures.

## **Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusions**

In the past, there have been several analyses describing trajectories of immigrants' memberships concerning their behaviors on appearance and these dress studies related to immigrants mainly examined the impact of acculturation or ethnic identification in the host culture toward the decision making and/or consumption patterns of their ethnic dress and/or contemporary dress (Chattaraman & Lennon, 2008; Kang & Kim, 1998; Rajagopalan & Heitmeyer, 2005; Crane *et al.*; 2004). Few studies have addressed how immigrants convey their identities relating their sense of belonging in multiple societies including the host culture as well as their culture of origin through their strategic practices on appearance. Recent perspectives of ethnic identity have shown that the dynamics in the culture of origin of immigrants may shape their adaptation or influence their migratory processes in the host culture, even though the United States is the immediate context of their everyday living. Individual immigrants change their social identification to multiple levels depending on the cultural contexts and social settings (Park, 2009; Kim, 2008; Collet, 2007; Noh, 2008). Social identity of Korean immigrants in the United States is also in a constant state of change and the degree of sense of belonging or sense of differentiation varies in certain situations (Park, 2009; Noh, 2008). The constant change of social identity according to their different situations or settings affects much in their everyday lives.

My study focused on the first generation Korean immigrant women's experiences on their identity and attitudes and behaviors related with their appearance considering the multiple cultural contexts. The purpose of the study was to further the understanding of

Korean immigrants' acculturative experience in American society and in their culture of origin in terms of the construction of social identity and its influence to their attitudes and behaviors related with appearance. This study has addressed these questions by analyzing narratives from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with thirty first generation Korean immigrant women in Fall of 2012, who differ in the length of time living in Minnesota. This chapter presents the important findings and the limitations of the study. In addition, the contributions of the study and implications for future research are discussed.

## **Discussion of Important Findings**

### ***Migration and Encounter with Ethnicity***

According to social identity theorists (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), even if the social identity of immigrants is not recognized positively in the host culture or by the majority group of their new circumstance, they can respond to the host culture in the following ways: (1) immigrants can leave the heritage group physically and/or subjectively through a reduction in their identification with their heritage group, (2) immigrants can reinterpret their group attributes to justify the negative stigma or to make it acceptable, and (3) immigrants can engage in social action to promote desirable changes both inside and outside the heritage group. An individual immigrant's sense of belonging to a culture changes in importance and to what extent it varies depending on the cultural contexts in which the individual is situated.

In this study, Korean immigrant women experienced the migratory process including assimilation or acculturation in contact with the members of American culture

and became integrated to their new conditions by learning the values, meanings, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors shared within the culture. By adapting to these attributes or by resisting them, immigrants simultaneously experienced the sense of belonging and the sense of differentiation in both Korean culture and American culture. The degree of belonging in each culture varied depending on individual immigrants' social identification that they hold in their situations. In particular, Korean immigrants have distinct characteristics including physical appearance, language, and values and these characteristics influence their experience of social change in American culture. For instance, the physical visibility of Korean immigrants affects their thoughts of being members of a minority group, that is sometimes interpreted as outsiders or foreigners, in the larger U.S. society. As a consequence, their social identities guide their behaviors such as clothes, foods, and friendships. From the interview, I discovered that immigrants' aesthetic views on appearance and dress were influenced by the contact with "Americans" as well as by maintaining the relationships with their peers in Korean society and other Korean immigrants in the United States. Immigrants used their appearance and dress to define themselves and to manifest their social identity they tried to emphasize at any given time or places. That is, they changed their attitudes or behaviors on appearance depending on the place or group they wish to belong in or to differentiate from.

During this process, the differences were always the issues remembered by many of my respondents. Their attitudes, behaviors, and values that they had been reared with and constructed in their culture of origin were recognized as incompatible in American

culture. The credentials that they had achieved in Korea, such as education, career, or social status as middle-class were not evaluated. Social change resulting from migration mattered in many aspects of immigrants' lives. The life styles that they enjoyed as the mainstream middle class women in Korea were disrupted. Language difficulty became an issue for Korean immigrant women to associate with the majority group. Their food habits were lambasted. Parenting and passion for their children's education were criticized. Their knowledge or ability in their education and/or career was devalued. These experiences of social demotion in statuses challenged their sense of self-esteem (Park, 2009).

Regardless of their competency such as in language, education, or economic achievement, their physical characteristics, different from other white ethnics, first and foremost made them distinguishable from others. Ethnic identities attributed to the first generation Korean immigrant women in the United States were not familiar to them. The encounter with their new labels related with their race and ethnicity was not pleasant, and sometimes it was somewhat difficult or hostile to understand or accept it as a natural consequence in a new cultural context.

As ethnic identity of Korean immigrants matters in many ways to their lives and determines many aspects such as friends, marriage, residence, and occupation (Waters, 1990; Le, 2007; Tuan, 1998; Park, 2009), their constantly changing social identity affects their statuses in Korean society.

Many of my respondents revealed that even though they could be integrated into the American culture and learn the others' culture, it did not mean that they could

approve of themselves as “true” Americans or choose to be Americans. On the other hand, their identities and statuses in Korean society were not stable. Their connections with other family members or friends in Korea were disrupted. Their absence restricted them from sharing special moments such as weddings and funerals with their families or intimate friends. They were constrained to continue their cultural practices such as the celebration of Korean holidays. They felt quite foreign when speaking Korean language because of fast changing trends in the use of Korean among young people. These kinds of experiences within their culture of origin contributed to the feeling of confusion about their identities and statuses as in-betweeners or outsiders in both cultural contexts.

Since their ethnicities are not voluntary or symbolic like other white ethnics (Waters, 1990), but inherent and imperative in a new cultural context, my respondents sometimes viewed these experiences on account of their ethnicity as more complicating and desolating with the passage of time. However, the complexity of identity was not the only factor that lead Korea immigrants to fall into a certain point between Korean and American. Immigrants’ needs for inclusion and differentiation in multiple contexts and their strategic behaviors in their lives influenced Korean immigrants to designate themselves as in-betweeners.

### ***Sense of Belonging in a Dual Cultural Context***

Waters (1990) claims that “[h]aving an ethnic identity is something that makes you both special and simultaneously part of a community. It is something that comes to you involuntarily through heredity... And it allows you to express your individuality in a

way that does not make you stand out as in any way different from all kinds of other people (p. 150).”

The need for inclusion within the group and the need for differentiation through distinctions between the groups are the fundamental needs of the human being. People have the desire to identify themselves with groups and receive the conformity from others and at the same time, they want to maintain their individuality by differentiating themselves from others (Brewer, 2009). Individuals can balance these two opposing needs by defining themselves with social identities that are optimally distinctive (Brewer, 2009). The United States consists of a culturally diverse population and immigrants in this society have contact with diverse ethnic groups. However, the relevance of other groups seems to vary depending on the characteristics of immigrant groups. In accord with the degree to assess the relationships with other people or group, Korean immigrant women selected and activated their social identities. As Park (2009) demonstrates in her study that Korean immigrant women compare themselves with three different reference groups as salient groups including “other Korean immigrants, ‘Americans’ in general, and/or their peers in South Korea (p. 142),” my respondents also evaluated their attitudes and behaviors on appearance mostly in comparison with these three groups, even though the importance of these reference groups varied by individual and/or by an individual’s situations. To achieve the sense of belonging in their relevant groups and the sense of differentiation from other groups, their strategic practices on appearance changed. These attitudes and behaviors on appearance to fulfill the needs of inclusion and differentiation

were explained in several concepts: ethnocentric perspectives, conformity, intergroup derogation, and comparison with relevant groups.

***Ethnocentric Perspectives: Favoring Own Group***

People tend to think their own group is more favorable and attractive than other groups. Group favoritism, that is the inclination toward their own group, is derived from the desire for a secure and positive self-concept. Group identity guides and prescribes to the members of the group what are the appropriate attitudes, emotions, and behaviors in a given context (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Hornsey, 2008; Walczus, 2009).

My data indicated that the majority of my respondents were aware of their ethnic background and that ethnicity was continually influencing their thoughts and behaviors regardless of the time or place. They had shown the tendency of positive distinctiveness about their own Korean peers of Korean society and of Korean immigrant communities in some valued categories, such as diligence and hardworking.

On the other hand, for the first generation Korean immigrant women, the need for inclusion in American culture was important and they made some efforts to belong to the majority culture. They learned some beliefs and values in American culture, and by following their traditions and practices, they could feel the sense of inclusion into American culture. In addition, they showed the positive distinctiveness or group favoritism towards their current American culture.

### ***Conformity***

Korean immigrant women often experienced their peripheral statuses in both American culture and their heritage culture. Even though they adopted cultural values of American society and made efforts to belong to American culture, their physical characteristics made them visible racial minorities. Meanwhile, discontinuity from their culture of origin caused by the geographical distance, disconnection in networking with families and friends, changing values and beliefs, and inconsistency between two cultures influenced immigrant women to feel disrupted in their heritage culture. Because of these conditions, Korean immigrant women felt their statuses as in-betweeners, outsiders, or forever foreigners in each cultural context and consequently tried to receive the conformity within their groups. The desire to conform to their ingroup members made my respondents follow the values or behaviors of the contexts regardless of their preferences. Especially, in terms of their appearance practices, many of my respondents believed that they could communicate and understand each other with their appearance and dress, and accordingly they wanted to get proper recognition about their efforts and decisions on appearance and dress from their peer members. According to the data, Korean society or Korean immigrant communities were taken into account as their reference group more than American groups. It can be explained as the result of specific characteristics such as overly high value on appearance and the consciousness of others' views among Koreans.

### ***Comparison with Relevant Groups***

For Korean immigrant women, three different groups appeared as salient in their primary contexts when they evaluated the attitudes and behaviors of themselves and/or others: Korean peers in their culture of origin, Korean immigrants, and “Americans” in general. My respondents compared themselves with these groups in many aspects, such as the values, attitudes, and behaviors, and when they felt that they could share the values and communicate their thoughts, behaviors, or manners well with other members in the group, they considered this as their ingroup. However, when they were led to believe that they were not accepted as part of group or as typical members of the group, they experienced the sense of distinction with the group members and the differences between them were considered negatively. For example, as Korean immigrant women who became outsiders and experienced their marginal or peripheral statuses in their Korean society, their senses of belonging and security were jeopardized. Their recognition of the differences from their relevant group led to feelings of dissatisfaction, anxiety, distress, and exclusion from their own society. At the same time, as Korean immigrants became competent to understand American culture and accustomed to their given culture, they viewed and denounced some characteristics of their other peers in Korean society or Korean immigrant communities such as high value on appearance, lack of individuality, or obsession with popular brands, as undesirable.

Meanwhile, to my respondents, the experience of differences with Americans sometimes was considered as a pleasure. The reason was that Americans had distinct differences in cultural background as well as physical characteristics and thus white ethnics, who were assumed as general Americans to Korean immigrants, were not

considered as comparable or competitive with Korean immigrants, while some other Asian outgroups were regarded as comparative. Therefore, their attitudes and behaviors on appearance were evaluated with more objective perspectives by Korean immigrants.

Depending on the priority in their relationships with the relevant groups, the ways that immigrants think, feel, and act were influenced by the norms and standards of the group and especially, the values and beliefs about appropriate attitudes and behaviors on appearance were shifted to the direction that was favored by the group.

### ***Unconformity***

On the other hand, my respondents also experienced psychological hardships as outsiders in their given context. They had the limited understanding of the shared meaning or experience among Americans, and especially they encountered the different aesthetic experience of appearance and dress than those in their culture of origin in which they were reared. They observed different ideas, values, and behaviors on appearance. What is appropriate to wear in a certain context oftentimes became the primary concern to the immigrants and these experiences brought them into a state of discomfort or confusion.

### ***Balancing Identity through Practices on Appearance***

As a result in the experiences on appearance in multiple cultural contexts, Korean immigrant women's preferences or meanings of dress and appearance were changed according to their prioritized ingroup in their circumstances. However, the relationships

with other members in their relevant groups are not temporary but continuous, even though these relationships sometimes do not exist in their present time or context. Therefore, the connections with other ingroup members and the sense of belonging within the groups are important. At the same time, the need for differentiation and exclusion between their ingroup and outgroups also should be fulfilled because this need still influences Korean immigrants to obtain and maintain their distinctive characteristics. Particularly, through their strategic practices on appearance, which shifted their attitudes and behaviors in accordance with the ideal, values, and beliefs of each context or found the appropriate outfits that could blend into both cultural contexts, immigrants balanced their identities and achieved the optimal distinctiveness in their multiple contexts. Korean immigrants kept “their options open” to fulfill the needs for inclusion and differentiation.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While I carefully chose my research method, there are several limits of conducting qualitative research. This study was inductive and the greater part of the findings relied on the narratives of my respondents. These narratives were their subjective and interpreted stories about their experiences with identities and appearance (Park, 2009). Therefore, it was hard to evaluate how much their stories were consistent with the realities and how thoroughly they viewed these experiences and situations. Whether their specific individual conditions were interrupted in their narratives or not could not be determined through the methods that were applied in this study, but some of the problems could be resolved by achieving the objectives of this research through

several projects and pilot studies and by employing multiple data collection methods and sources.

The more obvious limitations in my research are shared with limitations of other qualitative research dealing particular subjects, relationships, and contexts. The result of this study cannot be generalized to any larger population due to the small sample size and the non-random sampling methods that were used. Relative to the sample size, the findings from this study cannot provide predictive power for other Korean immigrants in the United States regarding their sense of identity and its influence on their attitudes and behaviors on appearance. Also Korean ethnic identities as non-whites had quite different consequences for individuals in this society, so it could be expected that the experiences described here would be different from other populations such as European, African, or Hispanic immigrants. In addition, the findings are limited to the first generation Korean immigrants and thus, there might be the generational gap between the first generation and the later generations of immigrants as regards their identity and/or culture that is dominant in their personal and social lives. Whether the study for U.S. raised Asians or other ethnics would be also different from the study for their foreign-raised counterparts could be an issue relating to this topic. Findings of this study are restrictive to the context, i.e., Minnesota. Each Korean community in the U.S. has its own immigration and development history. In my study, Korean immigrants living in Minnesota had the opportunities to mingle with their peer immigrants since the population of Korean immigrants is relatively large and Korean immigrant communities, such as churches and associations, encourage immigrants to unite together and involve actively in immigrants'

everyday lives. Also the motivations of migration to Minnesota of Korean immigrants and the reasons that they settled in Minnesota might be different from those of other local Korean immigrants. Therefore, many factors such as the size of Korean immigrant population, motivations, the intensity of feeling to their ethnicity and cultural heritage, degree of involvement to their local immigrant communities and the host culture, and individual occupations and economic situations will make the immigrants' experience vary.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The present study explores first generation Korean immigrant women and their aesthetic experiences related to appearance through survey, interview, observations, and photographs of the respondents. This study provides evidence of how Korean immigrant women's aesthetic attitudes and behaviors on appearances have been affected by their social identity and sense of belonging both in their host culture and culture of origin. The study demonstrates the challenges that resulted from their ethnic identity through the societal/cultural changes that immigrants face in their two fundamentally different circumstances. My respondents adapted some of their appearance practices in order to balance their position within the two cultures. Cultural dissimilarities made the Korean immigrants find ways to fit into their dual cultural context.

From this study, there are several implications. Several questions discussed as this study's limitations will have to be answered through future research. This includes the ethnic identification of other ethnic groups in the United States, their perspectives on

appearance, interest in maintaining their heritage culture, and degree of integrating into their new culture and its resulting practices on appearance.

From this study, it appears that not only the host culture, but also the culture of origin of immigrants influences the immigrants' day-to-day lives and their everyday practices, especially their attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs on appearance. The interactions and relationships with their peers in Korean society, Korean immigrants, and mainstream Americans are prioritized and navigated by the immigrants and accordingly, their practices concerning their appearance shifted and were modified. Therefore, the migration motivations of individual immigrants, their pre-migration life patterns and social classes, interactions with their peers, and involvement in their culture of origin can be explored to further the understanding of immigrants and their experiences in the United States. The study about acculturation strategies and resulting behaviors on appearance that immigrants develop according to their pre-migration experience, migratory processes, and outcomes in the United States can contribute to an expanding of knowledge.

Many studies of immigrants in the United States focus on their acculturation experience including the socio-cultural adaptation, economic settlement, and psychological adjustment and ensuing conflicts. Therefore, studies about the ethnic immigrants in the United States and their practices can widen the scope of the field of apparel studies and generate long- term benefits.

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### APPENDIX A. List of Respondents

<b>ID/Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Category (Length of Residence-Year)</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Same vs. Two Ensembles</b>
ID 1 Jenny	35	New-comer (1)	Yes	N/A	Two
ID 2 Laura	48	In-betweener (12)	Yes	N/A	Same
ID 3 Kelly	45	In-betweener (10)	Yes	Small Business	Two
ID 4 Ellen	40	New-comer (7)	Yes	N/A	Two
ID 5 Emily	50	In-betweener (14)	Yes	Home-care specialist	Two
ID 6 Shirley	46	In-betweener (10)	Yes	N/A	Two
ID 7 Sara	37	In-betweener (18)	Yes	Computer programmer	Two
ID 8 Sandi	57	Old-timer (32)	Yes	Accountant	Same
ID 9 Ellise	45	Old-timer (21)	Yes	Sales accountant	Same
ID 10 Karen	52	In-betweener (17)	Yes	N/A	Two
ID 11 Susan	35	New-comer (2)	Yes	N/A	Two
ID 12 Erica	30	New-comer (1)	Yes	N/A	Two
ID 13 Elizabeth	41	In-betweener (10)	Yes	Nurse	Same
ID 14 Diane	25	New-comer (7)	No	Student	No response
ID 15 Carol	43	In-betweener (11)	Yes	Customer relation	Two
ID 16 Angie	38	In-betweener (10)	Yes	N/A	Two
ID 17 Amy	38	In-betweener (13)	Yes	Teacher	No response
ID 18 Alexis	52	Old-timer (31)	Yes	Engineer	Same

ID 19 Julia	49	New-comer (8)	Yes	Acupuncturist	Same
ID 20 Maria	38	New-comer (7)	Yes	N/A	Same
ID 21 Cathy	52	Old-timer (24)	Yes	Home-care specialist	Two
ID 22 Lynn	49	New-comer (5)	Yes	N/A	Same
ID 23 Jane	31	New-comer (2)	Yes	N/A	No response
ID 24 Abby	47	New-comer (7)	Yes	N/A	Two
ID 25 Joy	34	New-comer (6)	Yes	Marketing manager	Same
ID 26 Nicole	55	Old-timer (32)	Yes	Administrator	Two
ID 27 Jennifer	51	Old-timer (25)	Yes	or Custodian	No response
ID 28 Connie	44	Old-timer (23)	Yes	Home-care specialist	No response
ID 29 Patty	52	Old-timer (28)	Yes	Manager	Same
ID 30 Betty	58	In-betweener (14)	Yes	N/A	Same

\*All names have been changed to ensure anonymity

\*\*If their occupation is homemaker, it is marked as N/A.

## APPENDIX B. Survey and Interview Materials

### Interview Consent Form

University of Minnesota  
College of Design

#### Part 1: Research Description

Principal Investigator: Park, Saet Byul

Research Title: Korean Immigrants and Their Aesthetic Perspectives on Appearance

#### **Dear Participant:**

As a graduate student in College of Design Doctoral program of the University of Minnesota, I am conducting a research about the influence of cultural change to the aesthetic perspective of Korean immigrants who live in the United States and their resulting attitudes and behaviors on appearance. The findings of this study will increase our understanding about immigrants as well as multi-ethnic culture of America.

Your participation in this study requires an interview during which you will be asked questions about your experience in dress. The duration of the interview will be approximately 60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped and transcribed. The results of this study may be published, but your name will not be used at all. On all transcripts and data collected you will be referred to only by way of a pseudonym.

No commercial use will be made of any research materials. All the research materials stemming from your participation will be maintained and used solely for educational purposes.

This study will be conducted by the researcher Saet Byul Park, a doctoral candidate at the University of Minnesota. The interview will be undertaken at a time and location that is mutually suitable.

#### **Risks and Benefits:**

This research will hopefully contribute to understanding the aesthetic experience on appearance of Korean immigrants in the U.S, and so the potential benefit of this study is improvement of understanding of the lives of immigrants. Participation in this study carries the same amount of risk that individuals will encounter during a usual conversation. For compensation for your participation in this study, \$10 gift certificate will be given.

#### **Data Storage to Protect Confidentiality:**

Under no circumstances whatsoever will you be identified by name in the course of this research study, or in any publication thereof. Every effort will be made that all information provided by you will be treated as strictly confidential. All data will be coded and securely stored, and will be used for professional purposes only.

**How the Results Will Be Used:**

This research study is to be submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Apparel Studies at Design of College, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Minnesota. The results of this study will be published as a dissertation. In addition, information may be used for educational purposes in professional presentation(s) and/or educational publication(s).

**PART 2: Participant’s Rights**

- I have read and discussed the research description with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
  - My participation in this study is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without jeopardy to future medical care, employment, student status, or other entitlement.
  - The researcher may withdraw me from the research at her professional direction.
  - If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available that may relate to my willingness to continue to participate, the investigator will provide this information to me.
  - Any information derived from the research that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
  - If at any time I have any questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the researcher, Saet Byul Park who will answer my question. The researcher’s phone number is 612-598-4438. I may also contact the researcher’s faculty adviser, Marilyn DeLong, at 612-625-1219.
  - If at any time I have comments or concerns regarding the conduct of the research, or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board. The phone number for the IRB is 612-626-5654. Alternatively, I can write to the IRB at University of Minnesota, D528 Mayo Memorial Building, 420 Delaware Street SE, Minneapolis MN 55455.
  - I should receive a copy of the Research Description and this Participant’s Rights document.
  - Audio taping is part of this research. Only the principal researcher and the members of the research team will have access to written and taped materials.
- Please check one:

- ( ) I consent to be audio-taped.
- ( ) I do NOT consent to being audio-taped.

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

Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Survey Questions**

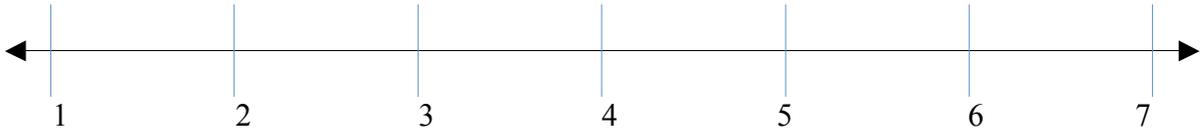
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! I am interested in interviewing Korean females who have lived in the US for 1 to 40 years. Please complete the survey below and return it to me prior to the interview.

Please note that information collected in this questionnaire will be handled completely confidentially and will only be used for the purpose of the research.

### ***Demographic Information***

1. In what year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
2. In what year did you come to the United States? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What age were you when you came to the United States? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Why did you come to the United States? (Motivation of migration)  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Did you have an occupation in Korea? If so, describe what it was.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you have an occupation in the United States? If so, describe what it is.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your residency status? Ex) Non-US resident, US permanent resident,  
or US citizen
8. Are you married? If so, how many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How many visits to Korea have you made while living in the United States?  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. How much do you identify yourself between Korean and American. Please mark the line below with a (V).



Korean-ness

American-ness

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your time and participation are very much appreciated, and will contribute to a growing knowledge base on experiences of Korean immigrants in the U.S.

## **Interview Questions**

### Questions Part A. Experience with Dress

1. Can you describe what you wear today and what you bring to wear for a visit in Korea?
2. Will you wear different dress items or styles for each different circumstance? If so, why or why not?

### Questions Part B. Ethnic Identity Issues

1. Based upon the answer on survey question 10), how much do you see yourself as a Korean or as an American?
2. What makes others distinguish you as a Korean from other Asians? (e.g., language, food, religion, attitude, physical appearance, dress)

### Questions Part C. Values on Appearance

1. Do you dress consciously considering your physical appearance? If yes, how and why?
2. How important is your appearance to you? Compare your value on appearance in Korea and in the United States.

### Questions Part D. Attitudes and Behaviors on Appearance

9. How much were you involved in activities or traditions of Korean culture or community in the last year? Describe some activities you have participated in.
10. How much were you involved in activities or traditions of American culture in the last year? Describe some activities you have participated in.
11. Did you choose to dress differently in each case? If yes, how and why?
12. Did you bring any Korean dress items with you to the United States? If yes, what did you bring?
13. Describe any experience of Korean dress style or item. When did you wear it? How did you feel?
14. When you visit Korea, what do Koreans (e.g., friends) say about your appearance? Describe any experience regarding your appearance or your dress style.
15. Where do you purchase new clothing or apparel?
16. When you purchase new clothing or apparel, which culture is more influential to you? And why? (e.g., Korean friends, celebrities, or media vs. American friends, celebrities, or media)