The Experiential Journey of Korean Mothers of International Students Living in Delta, Canada

by

Deirdre Annett

M.Ed., University of Victoria, 2007
B.Ed., University of British Columbia, 1987

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Name: Deirdre Annett
Degree: Doctor of Education
Title of Thesis: The Experiential Journey of Korean Mothers of International Students Living in Delta, Canada

Examinining Committee:

Chair: Dr. Allan MacKinnon, Associate Professor

Milton McClaren, Professor Emeritus
Senior Supervisor

Cindy Xin, Adjunct Professor
Co-Supervisor

Geoff Madoc-Jones, Limited Term Senior Lecturer
Committee Member

David Zandvliet, Associate Professor
Internal/External Examiner

Dr. Zhenyi Li, Associate/Professor
School of Communication and Culture
Royal Roads University
External Examiner

Date Defended/Approved: January 12, 2012
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Abstract

This study explored the experiences of Korean mothers of international students living in Delta, British Columbia, Canada. These women made the journey with their children to live as temporary transnational residents in Canada in order to support their children while they studied in elementary and secondary schools in the Delta School District.

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of the Korean mothers, to discover their personal challenges and successes, and to explore their level of connection with the school and local Canadian and Korean communities. The ultimate objective is to better understand how School Districts can provide effective support for these families that they have recruited into their International Programs. International Student Programs in the Canadian elementary and secondary school system is a relatively new phenomenon. While Canadian International Student Programs is a multi-billion dollar industry, bringing a large revenue stream into local School Districts and communities, there are relatively few research studies on the experience of the students and their families.

**Keywords:** International student education; multiculturalism; social capital; transnationalism; globalization; ethic of care
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Finally, thank you to the international families from all over the globe who trust us with the honour of educating their children. We are cognizant of this huge responsibility and aspire to provide the best educational experience along with the loving care expected of us.
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Finding 3. Korean mothers of international students in Delta were not very connected to their children’s school and had a general incomprehension of the Canadian school system, yet felt satisfied with their children’s academic experience.

Finding 4. Korean mothers of international students in Delta felt comfortable navigating their small local community, but there were indications that they didn’t feel confident about the Western health care system and they didn’t have any real ties to the local non-Korean residents.

Finding 5. Korean mothers of international students in Delta had extremely strong ties within the Korean community. They formed exclusively Korean bonding network ties and tended to interact mainly with other Koreans for both social and professional support.

Finding 6. Korean mothers of international students in Delta reported that the most important support factor for them was having a Korean staff member from the school district.

Finding 7. Korean mothers of international students in Delta seek more information about the Canadian education system and also help by having more English classes provided for the newcomers.

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

In this new era of globalization, human migration patterns are shifting with a growing emphasis on education and the acquisition of English as key factors in the creation of new human and cultural capital. Many families in South Korea, and other parts of the world, view providing an opportunity for their children to learn English overseas as a key investment that will benefit the child’s future educational and professional opportunities, raise the family’s overall social standing, and increase the upward mobility of the family unit. A growing number of Korean mothers come to Canada with their children to set up temporary homes in order to provide support for their children while they study in elementary and secondary schools. These women must face many challenges such as acculturative stress, loss of an established network of support, language barriers, loneliness, fears and insecurities about how to navigate through a foreign system of banking, shopping, and interpersonal interactions. Their social capital in the local Canadian community and their ability to cope and forge new bridging ties in the local networks may affect their experience to different degrees. The term social capital emphasizes the role of social networks, trust, norms, and relationships among people which facilitate an individual or group action. It stems from the concept that social ties and reciprocity are potentially productive (Healy, 2003; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004).

The sole focus of the Korean mothers is to provide support for their children’s schooling. However they may have a general incomprehension of how the Canadian educational system works, and may therefore be insecure about how to best interact with the school community. Their lack of individual knowledge about the Canadian educational system may also impact their feelings of effectiveness in this arena and thus frame their perceptions of their experience.
International mothers living in a foreign country also have unique stress factors due to the fragmentation of their family units, with one parent and possibly some children residing in the home country, while the other parent and children are temporarily in the new country. These families are termed “visitors” by the Canadian government due to their Visa status, however they may be living in their Canadian communities for 3 years or more. Since they are visitors, these women don’t have the usual settlement support of government agencies or non-governmental organizations that are provided to immigrants and refugees. School Districts in British Columbia require that a parent accompany their elementary aged child to live with them during their study term (although each district has a different specific age requirement for an accompanying parent). In most cases the accompanying parent is the mother. After requiring the parent to live in the school community, there seem to be minimal support structures in place to assist them. While school districts may provide various types of general information, the families are basically on their own to face various challenges with their own resources (or by supporting each other). They may look to the local and overseas Korean communities for support and their ability to navigate in these networks may also have an effect on their overall feelings of satisfaction or stress in their daily lives.

The research described in this study will document the experiences of these Korean mothers and attempt to describe and explore their perceptions of their sojourns in Canada. What challenges do these women face and what outcomes have resulted from their experience in Canada? What new strengths do these women now possess and how do their personal narratives express or encapsulate their individual journeys and growth?

**Historical Overview**

Starting in the 1990’s in Canada, the number of international students arriving from countries all over the world has steadily risen and continues to grow. Delta School District’s international program began in 1997 with 19 students from Japan. Delta District currently has approximately 300 students from 23 countries studying in programs ranging in length from 1 semester to full year and graduation programs. In addition there are 200 students in short-term winter and summer camps, and a variety of foreign
teacher training programs. Delta also hosts sister school programs from three countries and works with Ministries of Education from a variety of countries on different educational projects. Sister school programs occur when schools from two countries decide to formally collaborate on projects ranging from joint classroom lessons to student and teacher exchanges.

The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT, 2009) conservatively estimates that each international student brings in $25,000 a year to the local community and $6.5 billion to Canada in tuition, expenses, and discretionary spending. The British Columbia Council for International Education (BCCIE) reported in April 2011 that the economic impact of international students on BC was $1.8 billion a year, making it one of the top five trade and investment sectors in the province. The report (BCCIE, 2011) stated that international educational services provided roughly 13% of all jobs in the educational services sector. Korea was reported as the top source country for elementary and secondary international students. Both reports stated that the economic findings should be seen as conservative. Not included and unknown were economic impacts of students in short-term ESL programs, as these students don’t need study visas to enter Canada and come under tourist visas.

Further to this, Premier Christy Clark recently announced on September 20, 2011 that the British Columbia Government will take steps to increase the number of international students by 50% over the next 4 years. The Vancouver Sun article on September 20, 2011 stated “She (Premier Clark) added that each 10 per cent increase in the number of international students translates into an estimated 1,800 new jobs and a $100-million boost to the Provincial GDP.” Currently both Provincial and Federal levels of government are focusing more attention on promoting increases in the numbers of international students studying in Canada at the K-12 and post-secondary levels.

There are 38 School Districts in British Columbia that belong to the International Public School Education Association (IPSEA) and have International Student Programs. In an informal poll of IPSEA members on October 4, 2011, only 10 reported having an International Program Department staff member who spoke Korean. Of these 10 School Districts, 6 of the Korean staff members had other job descriptions and mainly helped Korean families with documentation and student/school related issues if needed. Their
main jobs were teaching, office staff support, and homestay coordination. Four School Districts had a designated Korean support staff, but only three of them provided more substantial support for the Korean mothers personally. One of them only supported students (the parents were directed to their Korean agent for assistance). Three School Districts offered a landing service to the Korean mothers for a $1,000 fee.

International Education Programs in the K-12 Public School Sector in British Columbia are locally developed in each district, rather than being prescribed by Provincial guidelines or expectations. The programs grew out of necessity as increasing numbers of international students started arriving and each district gradually developed a unique set of procedures and district protocols as a result. Some districts contracted outside business managers, while others tasked internal staff such as principals and other educators to oversee the international student program. There continues to be a wide variety of practice among the school districts in terms of how they run and manage their International Programs. There is also limited research targeting the field of K-12 International Programs.

Researcher

I started teaching in 1987 and have taught in both elementary and secondary schools. I been a Department Head, Counselor, Summer School Principal, District ESL/Multicultural Coordinator, District Coordinator for International Programs, District Principal of International Programs, and am currently a Director of International Programs. I worked in Coquitlam School District, British Columbia, Canada, for 22 years and transferred to Delta School District, British Columbia, as District Principal of International Programs in 2008. As ESL/Multicultural District Coordinator, I gained some background with immigrant Korean mothers and families. When I started working in International Programs in 2002, I began to interact with the Korean mothers of international students more closely and became fascinated with their unique experiences and stories. At that time, I noticed that some of the mothers experienced a variety of stressors such as marital break-ups, financial difficulties, and some incidents of poor physical and mental/emotional health. Some of these mothers seemed to be isolated and showed a lack of support. Some mothers would leave Canada abruptly mid year
and I wondered about the circumstances of their sudden departure. At that time there was no Korean support staff member working in the school district. A Korean staff member was hired in approximately 2005, but mainly for school meeting interpretation, translations, parent meetings, and for assistance with documentation and district office support.

When I arrived in Delta School District in 2008, I noticed a few similar experiences from the Korean mothers of international students in Delta. I began to wonder about the experiences of these Korean women and about the kind of support that they required in order to facilitate a smooth transition into our local schools and community.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of the Korean mothers, and to gain a better understanding of how school districts can provide better support for these women and families we have attracted and brought into our communities.

**Objectives and Research Questions**

This study was guided by three objectives:

1. To explore the experiences of Korean mothers living in Delta, British Columbia, Canada while their children were attending local schools as international students.

2. To examine the level of participants’ connectedness with the local and overseas Korean community, local Canadian community, and the school community.

3. To gain a better understanding of how school districts can provide effective support for visiting mothers and families.

See Table 1.1 which translates research objectives into study questions and methods.
Table 1.1. Research Objectives, Questions, and Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Research Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To explore the experiences of Korean mothers of international students living in Delta, Canada.</td>
<td>1.1 What kind of challenges and successes have the Korean mothers experienced while living in Canada? 1.2 What are the reflections and insights from these participants and are there any common experiences?</td>
<td>Group and individual interviews (May/June 2011) - Questionnaire (June 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To examine the level of participant connectedness and support within the local and overseas Korean community, local Canadian community, and school community.</td>
<td>2.1 To what degree do the Korean mothers interact with the school community? 2.2 What is the Korean mothers’ level of connection with the local community? 2.3 What is the level of interaction with the local Korean community and church network? 2.4 How much support do the mothers have from overseas Korean networks?</td>
<td>Group and individual interviews (May/June 2011) - Questionnaire (June 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To gain a better understanding of how school districts can provide more effective support for visiting mothers and families</td>
<td>3.1 What support structures are the most beneficial for assisting international parents in the school district and community?</td>
<td>Recommendations will come from results of the study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance of the Study

Growing numbers of transnational mothers are bringing their children to live in local communities in Canada in order to provide educational opportunities for their children. This trend appears to result from the popularity of learning English, the solid reputation of the Canadian education system, and the positive global impression of Canada as a safe and democratic living environment. These international parents are in a unique position because of their lack of Canadian citizenship or immigrant status, and from the transient and temporary nature of their situation. These visiting families do not have access to government agencies or to the settlement support that is provided to immigrant and refugee families. Although they are visitors to the country, they may live here for more than 3 years. They must be self-sufficient because they do not fall under any category that would make them eligible for funded service from the Canadian government.
By gaining a better understanding of the experiences of the visiting transnational Korean mothers, more effective levels of support may be generated for these families. It is important to understand how school districts can help them to navigate the various networks of school and community, effectively and positively, and to enable these women to have a healthy and settled experience in Canada. It is important to explore any possible vulnerabilities and examine areas of potential risk to the physical, social, and emotional well-being of these visiting families, as well as to examine how school districts can accentuate the potential for personal growth and positive outcomes. Since so many school districts across Canada are now involved in programs to attract international students and are generating additional revenue directly from these students, there should be a responsibility to understand the experiences of these transnational families and to provide effective support for their well-being. Many school districts have policies that require a parent of an international elementary school-aged student to live in the area with their child, and yet no real consideration is made for these parents. After attracting them to come, most school districts provide extremely limited support, even though a substantial revenue stream is generated from their presence. What are the “rights” of these visitor-residents in Canada? Although the international student education industry is a relatively new phenomenon, it is time for school districts to develop considerations and policies to ensure that sufficient support structures are in place for the families of international students under an ethic of care and responsibility.

Research Sample

The sample participants in this study consisted of 13 Korean mothers of international students living in the municipality of Delta, in British Columbia, Canada. The participants were all parents of children studying in elementary and secondary schools in the Delta School District. Most of the participants were new to Canada (living in Delta for under a year), had limited previous overseas experiences, and had low levels of English proficiency. The study also involved interviews with the Korean Multicultural worker for Delta School District. This staff member’s job is to provide support for these visiting families.
Methodology

The case study described here was exploratory and utilized a combination of surveys and interviews in order to determine the unique perspectives of the visiting Korean mothers. The mixed method study took place from May to June 2011. The interviews were conducted as a combination of individual and small group sessions. The interviews with the Korean school district support staff member occurred in May prior to the interviews with the students’ mothers.

This study also examined the interactions between the Korean mothers and the various social networks and communities in order to observe the effect of bridging and bonding social capital on their overall experience in Delta and to examine what coping strategies and network support structures the individual Korean mothers were utilizing to navigate through their new environment. The study explored the mothers’ individual journeys and their overall experiences while living in Delta.

Limitations and Challenges

The study described had a number of limitations and challenges.

1. The accuracy of respondent reports cannot easily be independently confirmed and so it can only be assumed that they answered the survey and interview questions honestly and accurately. Some responses may have been skewed due to human error, fatigue, nervousness, miscomprehension of the questions, and cultural factors.

2. The responses generated during group sessions may have been affected by peer pressure or social constraints. Participants may have edited their comments based on factors such as trust, potential shame, embarrassment, pride, or other social, emotional, or cultural factors.

3. As the Director of International Programs for Delta School District, I was known to the participants. Thus the participants may have given responses that they felt I wanted or expected to receive or my relationship with them may in some other ways have affected the responses.

4. The Korean interpreter was also known to the participants, as she is the school district’s Korean multicultural worker and is also the wife of
a local church pastor in the Korean community. While this factor may have helped to establish trust, there is also the chance that this association may have affected the participants’ responses.

5. The English/Korean translations of the surveys and interpretations of the interviews are subject to the efficacy of the translation. The translation process, while being literally accurate, may neglect or affect the subtle meanings or comprehension of the questions/answers.

6. Researcher bias might play an unconscious role in interpreting the data, although every attempt was made to analyse the results objectively or with an attempt to recognize any biasing influences.

In order to address some of the inherent limitations to this study, a combination of research methods was used, including individual questionnaires, group interviews, and individual interviews. By gathering data in different formats, it is hoped that some of the above limitations were mitigated.

**Delimitations**

The project described here was defined with two delimitations.

1. Participants were selected from a pool of volunteers who are currently Korean mothers of international students in the Delta School District as of May 2011.

2. Participants must have been living in Delta with their children for the current school year (participants did not include visiting mothers who fly in and out on a transient basis or who came with their child for a short-term study period of less than 1 year).

**Definition of Terms**

**Astronaut Child**

Also called satellite or parachute child, astronaut child is a term used to describe an individual child who lives in a host country without his/her family for a short-term educational study period. These children usually live with a homestay family who are paid a predetermined fee to act as a temporary custodian.
**Astronaut Family**

Also referred to as satellite/parachute family, astronaut family is a generic term to represent a family or split-household transnational family who reside temporarily in a host country (generally for the purposes of the children’s education), but who intend to return to the home country.

**Diaspora**

The application of the Greek word for dispersion, diaspora describes the process where a large number of individuals from a country migrate from their homeland on a temporary basis with the intent to return in the future. Diasporas can be voluntary or involuntary, but the individuals regard their ancestral homeland as their true base and are not fully assimilated into their host society. A diaspora is a multidirectional dispersal, not mere transfer from one country to another (Akenson, 1995).

**Human Capital**

A term which implies the economic mobility and potential future workforce gains made through education, training, skillset, and other conditions which could affect future growth opportunities for an individual or group.

**International Student**

A student who is not a Canadian citizen, Landed Immigrant, or refugee. This student is a visitor to Canada and possesses a study permit for a predetermined length of time. This student pays a tuition fee and is self-funded, without a Ministry funded designation of any sort.

**Social Capital**

A term which emphasizes the role of social networks, trust, norms, and relationships among people which facilitate an individual or group action. It stems from the concept that social ties and reciprocity are potentially productive.
**Transnational**

The designation attributed to an individual who is not a citizen of the residing country. This individual is also not a tourist, but has a temporary settlement situation due to a specific short-term goal. A transnational individual may spend periods of time in multiple countries due to transient work or study terms. International students would all be classified as transnational, however not all transnational individuals are students, with some residing in a country for specific short term work terms.

**Wild Goose Family**

A Korean term used to represent a split-household transnational family in which the mother and children are overseas for the children’s education while the father stays in Korea working and financially supporting the family.

**Organization of the Thesis**

Chapter 1 has outlined the purpose and significance of the study. The research questions have guided the creation of the questionnaire, which was used to collect the data in this study. Important definitions, limitations, and delimitations have been presented. Chapter 2 will review the literature related to the study. The methodology will be discussed in the third chapter, where information related to the setting, data collection, and data analysis will be explained. The fourth chapter describes the research findings. Chapter 5 explains the conclusions and the researcher’s recommendations.
Chapter 2.

Literature Review

Korea is the country that sends the most elementary international students to Delta School District. These children may have their mothers accompany them for the duration of their time in Canada. There are very few research studies about the experiences of these Korean transnational mothers in Canada. As a result, the literature reviewed here includes information about mothers from other nationalities in foreign countries, the landed immigrant mother experience in British Columbia and Canada, Korean mother experience in New Zealand and Australia, and general medical and psychological studies about stress and disease factors on individuals who have been relocated. Most of these studies have highlighted social capital as an important lens through which to view the experience of these transnational mothers, as in many cases their connection to a community network of some kind has had an impact on their perceptions of their new environment. This review will also describe research which has described the historical and cultural background of the Korean mothers who come to Canada, as well as analyzing their motivations, and discussing the various positive and negative experiential factors which have been documented in the literature.

More research needs to be done in the area of transnational families and their experiences in Canada. More specifically, there have been very few studies on the experiences of the mothers of international students studying in Canada. There are some researchers who have studied similar experiences such as Waters (2000, 2003), who focused on Chinese “astronaut” families and transnationalism in Vancouver and Noh and Avison (1996) who researched Korean immigrant stress factors in Canada. Dyck and McLaren (2004) focused on the experiences of immigrant and refugee women in Canada, while Song (1997) studied the Korean community in Vancouver from a historic and sociological perspective. Kwak (2008) provided a case study on the transnational Korean community in Vancouver through the lens of globalization and
entrepreneurialism. There have been other studies on the Korean transnational mother experience in Australia and New Zealand as well as how Korean immigrant women navigate the education system in the USA. Some studies have focused on Chinese immigrant women in Canada and the Asian immigrant experience in general, but there is very limited research exploring the experiences of Korean mothers of international students in Canada (or of other ethnic transnational mothers who are living for a relatively short-term in Canada for the education of their children). Since the numbers of these women and families are growing in Canada (and are increasing all over the globe), there are still great gaps in the research knowledge about the effects and experiences of these families that need to be explored.

Who Are They and Why Do They Come?

Globalization, increased technology, and the facilitation of hyper-mobility have combined with the need for the acquisition of English as a common language for business, science, and education to create new categories and trends in human migration patterns. Transnational individuals, who live temporarily in a number of countries to meet short-term goals, may even be starting to outnumber traditional immigrants (Chew, 2009). Waters (2000) describes the increasing mobility of people who "cross national borders in multiple ways (culturally, socially, economically, and politically)" (p.10). Global flexibility and mobility are key strategies currently being used both professionally and personally by Korean families in search for the most efficacious methods to reach their goals. Families with school-aged children may frequently travel to a variety of countries for short-term educational camps or opportunities. Canada has no real way to track the actual numbers of Korean mothers who come to Canada to support their children’s education because they come on generic visitor visas. Students in Canada for short-term ESL courses do not need study visas and are also here on visitor visas, so the government has no accurate figures to determine their numbers.

There are new descriptions for these transnational families and research is just starting to focus on this new phenomenon. Some call the Korean transnational practice of temporary residence in a host country for a specific goal a voluntary diaspora, with a circular migration pattern or sojourn characteristic (K. Kim, 2002). The family may travel
around the globe to a variety of countries while returning to their home base periodically. New technology has enabled these families to maintain close social support connections with the home country, and may have minimized the effects of geographical distancing (Waters, 1998). Waters (2000) describes a “transnational consciousness” where the families develop multiple identifications and basically create a personal and unique “self-fashioning” of culture and way of being, especially after multiple country sojourns (p.24). Waters (2000) also describes the “deterritorialization” of culture and the importance of imagination in the construction of cultural identities. The Korean mothers who come to Canada from a highly patriarchal society with a historically Confucian-based ideology, in which female roles are more rigidly structured, may experience a crossroads in personal development as a result of the relocation, not only because of experiencing Canadian culture, but also through navigating their unique transnational perspective and imaginary. They may begin to amalgamate a variety of cultural perspectives as a result of their trips to various countries and form an identity that reflects their unique experiences. They may no longer see themselves as a traditional Korean, or even a Canadian Korean, but may identify with a new sense of what it means to be a global Korean woman in an evolving representation of their new cultural identity.

For Korean transnational mothers who come to Canada, the acquisition of English for their children is the primary motivation, as this linguistic ability is believed to propel their children to better secondary schools, universities, and ultimately more profitable employment. Chew (2009) refers to this as the “pursuit of linguistic gold”, which will help to enhance the economic potential and social status of the entire family unit. Many Korean families believe that the overseas experience is an investment to further the potential human capital of their children.

English language ability and an overseas experience is also a symbol of rising social rank in modern Korean society. “English has long been a class marker in South Korea…” (Park & Abelmann, 2004, p. 646). Park and Abelmann (2004) suggest that English is an “ideological vehicle” as its value exceeds its practical use. They discuss how English acquisition reflects Koreans’ “cosmopolitan striving” and the “South Korean imaginaries of opportunities abroad”, in addition to the practical benefits of education. Social standing and the opinions of others are vital in the South Korean culture. In addition, Dyck and McLaren (2004) reported that transnational mothers’ goals were for
their children to “…become ‘flexible citizens’ of transnationalism, who forge social relations that are anchored in but transcend one or more nation-states” (p.49). They claim that “The parents were less interested in preparing their children to be members of a national community than to be successful global citizens” (p.50).

In many Asian countries, children are seen as the wealth of the family unit, and as such, parents will make sacrifices in order to pursue any goal which will enhance their child’s potential. Chew (2009) states that “in Confucian-based societies such as China, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea, children have often been regarded as part of the ‘wealth’ of the family; and the quality of such wealth is maintained and ‘enhanced’ through education” (p.35). Education is a key focus of Korean families and it is the mother’s role in particular to provide the most efficacious educational opportunities for her children. Cho (2007) maintains that throughout Korean history, education has been the highest priority for both families and governments. “As human capital, this commitment to education is often given credit for Korea’s transformation from a ’Third World U.S. military satellite into an industrial giant’ (p. 63). “Indeed, standing as the 11th largest economy in the world, Korea’s dedication to education explains much of the astonishing economic growth in the short period of three decades” (p. 64). Cho also describes Korea’s “obsessive passion for education” as the overwhelming focus of Korean mothers. Breen (2004) and Cumings (1997) also highlight the historical importance placed on education in the Korean culture and on how this single minded focus has propelled South Korea towards its current place among the most prosperous countries in the world.

In Korea, a transnational split-household family (where the mother and children travel to a new country and leave the husband in the home country) is called Kirogi Kajok or “wild goose family.” The term, which originated in the 1990’s, symbolizes family sacrifice and devotion; “…the scene of flying wild geese often evokes in many Korean people the quality of ‘han’, which is described as deeply buried feelings of longing, loneliness, sorrow, and regret…” (Cho, 2007, p. 53). “Wild goose is the gift given to a couple, wishing for eternal love at Korean traditional weddings and the bird has been recognized as a very devoted bird sacrificing oneself for children” (Kim, n.d., p. 168). Who is the Korean mother? What shapes her identity?
The typical and ideal images of Korean women are quiet, gentle, subordinate, and sacrificing, and those images are often voiced in the immigrant community…You have been the epitome of Korean mother with diligence, patience, and love. You have been a big tree which gives the comforting shade for your loved ones. You always put yourself behind your children and husband. (Kwak, 2002, p. 25)

Korean women’s gender roles seem to continue to be influenced by strong cultural and social practices. Park (2009) explores the identity of modern Korean women from the Confucius and patriarchal perspective, which imposes the concept of “good” mothers sacrificing their own needs for the betterment of their husbands and children. This sacrificial quality is commonly mentioned in many studies (Chew, 2009; Cho, 2007; Dyck & McLaren, 2004; Jeon, 2008; Kwak, 2002; Park, 2009; Park & Abelmann, 2004; Tokita, 2006). “I sacrifice myself for my boy…I regard my time here as a blackout in my life” (Jeon, 2008, p. 8). “We should follow the Korean way. Same story to my own daughter. I always tell her that she is the one who endures and sacrifices for the family” (Kwak, 2002, p. 23). Cho (2007) iterates that in both traditional and modern Korean societies, women do not identify themselves with an independent professional role and an outside career is not a means to self-fulfillment. Their sense of accomplishment comes from the harmony in their home, their husband’s success, and the educational/professional advancement of their children.

Tokita (2006) describes the Korean wild goose mothers as belonging to the wealthy middle class. “These mothers are mostly tertiary educated, often with professional occupations, and they have high aspirations for their children’s education” (p.2). Tokita claims that the motivations of the Korean mothers are sometimes driven by peer pressure and also the highly competitive educational environment in Korea. Her study indicated that the Korean education system is highly stressful for some students and the pressure to excel is too intense. Some mothers thought that an overseas education would be more relaxed and creative. Cho (2007) outlines how many Korean parents have lost confidence in the Korean education system and are now relying on other educational strategies to assist their children to gain the coveted university acceptance. She stresses how “the crisis in Korea stems from the excessive attention placed on college entrance exams” and how “the stakes in Korea are arguably the highest” (Cho, 2007, p. 10). The study goes on to stress how many Korean mothers
begin preparing for these exams in elementary and even pre-school with after school academies, tutors, and overseas experiences.

Regardless of individual factors, the research would seem to indicate that visiting transnational Korean mothers are extremely goal-oriented, with relatively short-term objectives. However, their situation is vastly different from the profile of Korean immigrants, who, although still highly focused on the educational success of their children, may embrace more long-term acculturation outlooks in the host country without the intense need for fast results. The emphasis of the transnationals remains fixated on the home country’s culture and values, with a strong awareness of the necessity upon their return to “fit back into” their regular school and cultural routines and demands.

**English Ability**

Limited English skills may be the most significant obstacle for the Korean transnational mothers in all areas of their daily lives in Canada. “When participants were asked to name the biggest challenge that they faced after migration to Vancouver, the most common response involved speaking and understanding in English” (Waters, 2000, p. 92). The language barrier for Korean mothers is especially true for school based interactions and communication (E. Kim, 2002; Lee, 2005; Tokita, 2006). “Parents who don’t speak fluent English often feel inadequate in school contexts” (Finders & Lewis, 1994, p. 52). Newsletters, report cards, and even homework may often be sent home with little explanation for these parents. Lee (2005) described how Korean mothers in English immersion programs expressed frustration that they can’t communicate with the teachers, don’t understand the system, and perhaps don’t fully comprehend the style and methodology of what the schools are trying to accomplish and the strategies that are used. Lasky (2000) describes how “A combination of fear and a cultural tendency to defer to the authority of teachers often prevented parents from asking clarifying questions.” (p. 844). Carreon, Drake, and Barton (2005) describe how immigrant parents may lose some of their authority because they lack the nuances of language needed to communicate their concerns or enter into the typical school-parent relationship. “Language is also an instrument of identity and power” (p. 470). When mothers have their children translate for them this can also upset the cultural norm by placing children
in a position of equal or higher status than the mother, creating hierarchical difficulties in 
the social structure at home (Carreon et al., 2005).

Communicative competence (the implicit social interactional rules that surround 
verbal conversation, like turn-taking and interruption) are difficult to interpret for second 
language learners, and make immigrant parents insecure and uncomfortable when 
interacting in formal meetings or even social settings (Lee, 2005). There is a loss of 
dignity and self-concept when trying to communicate with a limited vocabulary, making 
the individual feel foolish and less intelligent. “When I talk to (New Zealand) parents at 
school, I can use only easy and always the same words to express myself. But I am 
more intelligent than that. While I talk in English I feel smaller and stupider” (Jeon, 2008, 
p. 166).

Waters (2000) reports that even when taking community centre courses in order 
to meet other women and extend their connections into Canadian society, immigrant 
women reported extremely slow progress due to language limitations.

Even after the course I find that we cannot mix well...though we can 
speak English, we are not as good as the Caucasians. We cannot speak 
the slang...and it’s rather slow...so they won’t be patient to communicate. 
Just like classmates, it’s good, but not go any further to become very 
good friends. (p. 95)

School Experiences

Lareau and Horvat (1999) describe how insecurities and fear are constant and 
recurring themes reported by immigrant parents when interacting with school staff: 
“...fear of appearing foolish or being misunderstood, fear about their child’s academic 
standing” (Finders & Lewis, 1994, p. 53). Many Korean parents feel uncomfortable with 
being physically present at school (Lee, 2005). Ethnocultural identity can dictate how 
families should interact with schools and there are generally miscomprehensions and 
stereotypical responses on both sides (Ogbu, 1993). In Korea, the concept of 
institutional professionalism centers on the “teacher-as-expert” framework (Lee, 2005). 
This implied hierarchy of power and authority may inhibit the Korean mother from 
seemingly questioning the school or teacher, so there may be a hesitation to ask even
simple questions to get a basic understanding of the system in fear of overstepping the social boundary. Even volunteering or playing any kind of active role at the school may be a foreign concept for the new Korean mothers. “The notion of school as a place where parents come in and spend time providing help was rather new to the Korean parents” (Lee, 2005, p. 306).

**Isolation in the Home: Boredom, Loneliness, and Fear**

Some lone immigrant mothers report spending too much time isolated in their homes (Jeon, 2008; Waters, 2000). They may be nervous to venture out on their own, leading to eventual boredom and loneliness. Some studies report on the extreme change in lifestyle experienced by the mothers, where in their home country they previously had full lives with busy jobs, time spent looking after husbands, larger family obligations to in-laws, and busy social lives (Waters, 2000). Some immigrants to Vancouver expressed how “slow” Vancouver is, with fewer shopping malls and less “energy” compared with many fast-paced cities in Asia. The lack of hustle and bustle in many Canadian cities, with fewer people on the streets many also seem lonely to women who are used to a more lively urban centres. The pain of separation from loved ones, friends, and even work colleagues is a reality for these transnational mothers (Jeon, 2008). Jeon describes how these mothers expressed feeling disjointed or disconnected from the daily facets of life; missing the casual conversations about world events, unable to understand news programs on the radio or television, and unable to read the newspaper.

Some studies have shown that the visiting mothers may begin to feel lethargy and even depression, and others express fear about burglaries and being alone with their children at night. The amount of space between living areas in Canadian cities and the less dense populations also seemed to increase the feelings of nervousness. Some lone mothers expressed fear of answering the door or phone due to their limited English ability as well (Waters, 2000).
Short-term Differences (Unique Stress Factors)

Short-term transnational mothers have unique stress factors due to their limited time to get many goals accomplished, so they have different experiences than immigrant Korean women (Jeon, 2008). Jeon describes how these mothers also have to worry about their re-integration back into mainstream Korean society, so they must keep their children’s education in line with the system back in Korea via after school academies, tutors, and regular correspondence with teachers back home. They have to maintain dual lives simultaneously, without immersing in either system. Jeon (2008) goes on to describe how there are financial and other pressures due to the time limitation and the mothers must accomplish their goal effectively, quickly, and successfully. Their children’s school results are completely on their shoulders, all blame will fall on the mothers if the study abroad experience is not successful or if the return re-integration isn’t accomplished smoothly.

The short time frame also affects the transnational Korean mother’s lifestyle and self-esteem. These mothers typically buy cheap household items because they will be “thrown away” shortly, yet there is an embarrassment and discomfort with their “downgraded and disposable” situation. It can cause shame when visitors come to the home. “What’s the point to buying nice things? So I buy cheap ones, just good enough for a couple of years… the thing is…it is not a good feeling to buy and live with things to throw away” (Jeon, 2008, p. 165).

Depression and Mental Health

Tokita (2006) questions whether these transnational mothers are at a greater risk for mental health episodes and diseases. Noh and Avison (1996) report on a few studies that show a prevalence of depression among Korean immigrants; a higher rate than many other immigrant groups. Kuo and Tsai (1986) described how Korean immigrants generally score higher on scales measuring adjustment stress and depression. Song (1997) describes the Korean immigrant community as having possible health risks due to underutilization of the system. “A low reliance on public health services and rare reporting of stress may speak of a community which hides or internalizes its health
problems” (p. 8). Noh and Avison (1996) also stress the Asian cultural tendency to underutilize mental health services for fear of stigma.

Noh and Avison (1996) discuss how chronic stressors are associated with the immigration experience and how ethnic social support is an important factor. “Several reviews of the literature on social support and social resources have provided incontrovertible evidence on the important role played by social support in the stress process” (p. 195). Further to this Noh and Avison report that those immigrants who have connections with both ethnic and host society support networks tend to exhibit better health compared to those immigrants who limit their connections solely to their own cultural community (p.195). However, they describe how the degree of support from the Korean ethnic community seems to be the most beneficial for Korean members in alleviating stress and psychological distress (p.196). Thus it would seem that bonding social network connections (exclusively within the Korean ethnic community) are important to the health of the transnational Korean mothers who may experience higher than average degrees of stressors as a result of their temporary overseas experience.

Transnational mothers may not get the medical care that they need due to avoidance because of limited English and unfamiliarity with the medical system.

Suna avoids the situation where she is treated as a medical subject, where she has to use English with a Western professional. In such an interaction, a Korean astronaut mother has to manage herself in multiple power relations, created between the authority of the medical professional and her ownership of her own private body, between a male doctor and a woman client, and between the Western knowledge of a woman’s body and the ethnic knowledge of her body. (Jeon, 2008, p. 167)

There may also be suspicion and perhaps mistrust of a new system of medicine and medications and treatments may be mismanaged due to poor English communication and unfamiliarity of the process. Some visiting mothers may not bother to get adequate health insurance, due to their short-term stay and the different cultural custom regarding health support. Some countries don’t have strong health care systems, and there may be a general unwillingness to pay for protection.
Loss of Social Networks

Jeon (2008) describes how another consequence of translocation is the loss of friendships, spousal contact, direct support from in-laws, who usually fulfill babysitting and other roles, loss of peers and colleagues at work. Waters (2000) outlines how additional domestic responsibilities have been reported by new immigrant women. Minor household repairs are also stressful, because in Asia, such service is cheap, fast, and easy to negotiate. Lacking the knowledge on how to repair items, and a husband or friend to assist, these types of difficulties can become quite stressful.

In Korea, if you buy furniture, people will deliver it and assemble it for you. However, here, they come with pieces and just leave the rest to you. Anyway, you can’t sit idle when your kids are watching you. You have to do everything. (Jeon, 2008, p. 166)

Financial planning, paying bills, and navigating the various banking, medical, and daily chore necessities become challenges for these visiting mothers who have no social networks to provide support or assistance.

I don’t have any friends. I remember one time I fall…I fall down the stairs and I strained my ankle. Yes, and I sit on the ground and I cried. My husband had a friend here. But we never met! And I don’t know him! Nobody can help me, but I need help! I called him…and my husband’s friend buy some food and gave me. (Waters, 2000, p. 86)

Transnational Marital Relationships

The husband-wife relationship will certainly undergo changes as a result of the prolonged separation. Waters (2000) reports some relationships are weakened as a result of more limited connections, conversations, and no “building of the life-world together” through daily interactions. On the other hand, some relationships have been strengthened because of an enforced break in negative patterns, resulting in a more relaxed interaction from afar. In some cases, the lone astronaut mothers begin to build new competencies and lifestyle patterns that differ from the husband’s expectations. “Mrs. Nam later added that her husband often thought of and treated her as an incapable person when they were in Korea. It was not an abusive relationship, but it was
certainly patriarchal” (Kwak, 2002, p. 18). The attitudes of the husbands and wives may begin to diverge.

I don’t want them (her children) to copy me. I want them to be more independent, to have their own ideas...he find that the children are not working as hard as himself...We have different points of view in studying, in learning. I would prefer a more general or broad area for the children and let them go out and have more experience. Not only academic things...so I just argue with him on this topic. (Waters, 2000, p. 143)

One helpful factor was the degree to which both parties maintained a clear and shared objective and were able to continually communicate and uphold this commitment. They relied on virtual connections via various technologies to keep connected (Chew, 2009).

Some extra marital affairs have been noted by both husbands and wives in astronaut family situations (Chew, 2009; Waters, 2000). The studies noted that there is extra stress on lone Korean immigrant woman in Canada not to interact with men in case the appearance causes gossip and speculation of inappropriate contact while the husband is away. Thus even casual friendships with men are very limited for the overseas mothers, for fear of public scorn and speculation. There seems to be a vulnerability for the mothers living alone, and a perception that they are somehow defective or incomplete here without their husbands, as well as suspicion that they will act inappropriately. This perception can also cause self-isolation or self-consciousness when in the community. “Because my husband is not here...well, even if people wouldn’t tell me off, I don’t feel comfortable to put on make-up when I go out. Even going out for eating with friends...well, it can make rumours” (Jeon, 2008, p. 166). Some mothers worry that their husbands will have affairs in Korea and perhaps even ask for a divorce while they are away and there can be insecurities due to the fact that their financial support is completely dependent on their husbands.

**New Freedoms**

Some transnational mothers have reported new levels of independence and unexpected freedom (Jeon, 2008; Waters, 2007). The women seemed to have “re-made’
their lives, re-conceptualized their role in the family, gained new competencies, skills, and confidences, and started to gain an individual sense of personal growth and action. The old roles, structures, and confinements had been removed. There was a sense of relaxation when compared to their previous stressful lives which involved many obligations.

When participants mention their relief of being free from the burden of being a daughter-in-law, it is an expression of freedom, not only from the extra physical work during those days, but also from being in a position where they are so very constrained by expected roles. (Jeon, 2008, p. 167)

The astronaut mothers reported some informality in their lifestyle in Canada, without having certain strict expectations from the husband, in-laws, and society in general. “Many eyes watch you”, said one mother referring to her previous life in Taiwan (Waters, 2000, p. 139). Some mothers reported the ability to plan their own time as a real benefit. Others reported the increase in leisure time, time for church activities and other social connections that weren’t possible in the home country due to time constraints of work and domestic duties. While driving a car was at first a source of anxiety, it became a new freedom over time. Many of the mothers had not driven in their home countries, due to traffic and a solid transit system (Waters, 2000).

Spending time interacting with their children was also seen as a positive change and new sense of freedom for the mothers in Canada. Previously, the women noted that busy daily schedules for the whole family necessitated limited leisure or quality time spent in simple interactions with their children. The different Canadian lifestyle enabled the mothers a greater opportunity to become more involved in their children’s lives to a different degree. With no nannies, in-laws, or other care-givers, and with no professional work schedule, the transnational mothers reported a new degree of interaction with their children (Waters, 2000).

The mothers in one Vancouver study reported an “intense desire by participants to broaden their personal horizons and accumulate knowledge and skills for themselves” (Waters, 2000, p. 121). “Now I have become so used to the life here…my husband said I have been changed. Of course, I have. Before I thought that I could not have a good
life without a husband” (Jeon, 2008, p. 168). Some mothers reported feeling more “cosmopolitan” and that they were personally gaining some global panache (Chew, 2009).

The contrast between their Korean roles, expectations, and lifestyle and the Canadian experience may present a huge upheaval in the self-identity and imaginaries for these lone women. Park (2009) states that, “In normative, patriarchal societies, women’s work and their identities become socially and culturally essentialized into a limited set of generalizable and stereotypical behaviors without consideration of the possibility of women’s identities being fluid, ever-changing, multiple, and contradictory in nature” (p. 184). Thus, for Korean mothers, the transition to Canadian life may provide an incredible challenge as well as an opportunity for a re-evaluation of their identities as a woman in a global context, and for personal reflection. The challenge, then, would be how to conceptualize a re-integration back home into the old social and familial patterns after such an experience. How would her new world-view and life-world be situated upon her return? “Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that Jinu’s Mother’s experience living abroad was life-transforming” (Park & Abelmann, 2004, p. 664). Fears about their own personal changes may also be a source of stress as well as wonder.

Some transnational mothers felt that their lives in the new country were “purposeful”, since they were making sacrifices for their child’s education. They felt a sense of accomplishment and that their children were benefitting from the decision to make the journey. Some of these mothers had children who were failing and struggling in the home country, for them, just seeing their children having a chance to leave behind the depression, shame, stress, and oppression was in itself uplifting (Chew, 2009).

**Time Factor**

There seems to be a critical time factor that shapes the experiences for transnational mothers living in a foreign country away from their husbands and extended family. The first year seems to present the most challenges and negative experiences. At the 1-year juncture, there seems to be a metamorphosis in terms of how the experiences in the new country are expressed, and a marked increase in positive
reactions and new outlooks (Chew, 2009). Initial problems turn into achievements. “During interviews, one year emerged as the critical juncture, after which an unsettling and emotionally difficult experience of migration transforms into an unexpected sense of freedom” (Waters, 2000, p. 110).

Creating New Social Networks

Attending English as a Second Language class was a major way for new immigrant mothers to develop new social connections with like-minded peers. Some women volunteered at their children’s schools in order to learn about the school system and connect with the school staff. Some women took up hobbies, crafts, sports, or joined church groups.

The most important source of support for lone transnational women was reported as having friends or relatives present in the community (Kwak, 2002). For those with no previously established contacts, generating a support network was crucial. “She helped me with many things such as apply medical card, and go to the school board…about driving—which one you can do and which one you can’t do. She tells me everything” (Waters, 2000, p. 128). Expanding the social network for women meant functional survival beyond friendship. Some astronaut women also found other mothers like themselves in the host country, with similar experiences who could relate to them on a personal basis. They could share ideas and new perceptions (Chew, 2009).

Overseas visits from friends and relatives were also beneficial. Technology has enabled constant contact via phone, internet, etcetera, so that overseas support continues to play an expanding role for lone immigrant women. There is now a “virtual community” outside of the local and physical network. Studies are now needed to determine the impact of other forms of “community” on the social/emotional experiences of transnational families. Beyond connections with loved ones, the internet provides support sites, advice, and social networks for individuals in similar experiences, and for those with access, provides a rich new source of social capital; what Levitt and Schiller (2004) call the non-physical “domains of interaction.”
Importance of Church Connections

Some lone transnational women stressed the importance of the church for providing spiritual comfort and also for providing a network of friendship. “Families without any pre-migration networks reported that they often actively participated in establishing new social networks by regular church attendance…” (Kwak, 2002, p. 12). The roles of Korean churches in Vancouver are central for basic settlement support for these transnational Korean mothers who don’t have access to Canadian government programs. In addition to proving the spiritual and emotional comfort, they provide assistance with the functional aspects of everyday life and by admitting the lone mothers into the community network (Kwak, 2008).

Tokita (2006) reports that the Korean churches in Australia are also taking a central role in support for the Korean transnational families. Nearly all the Korean mothers in her study attended the Korean church, even if they weren’t Christian beforehand. These churches also provide sources of information, free ESL classes, and Korean educational classes for children who need to maintain their grade level Korean content knowledge for their return. Song (1997) reports that the Korean churches not only provide spiritual comfort, but that they also embody the formal and informal aspects of traditional Korean society, and provide a social network within which the members can achieve the prestige, power, and social status in the community. “During the formative years of Vancouver Korean history, community activities, whether religious or social, took place at the Korean United Church. The church was the centre of the infant community…” (Song, 1997, p. 27). The Korean churches continue to play a central role in Canada, as a cultural and community hub, in some cases regardless of religious affiliation.

Some astronaut mothers reported that they now had the time to explore religion, whereas in their home country, their lives were simply too busy (Waters, 2000). The Korean immigrant community in particular is quick to form many organizations, church groups, and associations. It is a tight knit community, which finds social networking to be extremely effective for navigating in a new country (Kwak, 2002).
Some studies have criticized the Korean churches for their strong reinforcement of patriarchal structures and oppressive traditional values in the host country, as they often play a strong role in preserving the hierarchical ideologies in the new country (Kwak, 2002). Song (1997) describes the Vancouver Korean churches as going through transitions with a degree of strife, conflict, and competition.

### Korean Community

Some studies showed that Korean immigrants stay within their own Korean community while in Canada, and have more limited integration into other social networks.

...all my interviewees’ social activities and networks were exclusively within the Korean immigrant community. For example, at the time of the interview, none of my interviewees had personal friends from other ethnic groups nor were they affiliated with associations other than Korean associations. (Kwak, 2002, p. 24)

The Korean community has very strong bonding social ties and networks that extend globally. “In most of these overseas communities with a sizable Korean population, Koreans live surrounded by their own social, economic, religious, and cultural institutions such as Korean churches...” (K. Kim, 2002, p. 265). Massey (1994) describes how people have a “desire for fixity and for security of identity in the middle of all the movement and change” (p. 4).

The gender roles and cultural expectations are very strongly maintained in the various Korean associations, churches, and networks in the host country. “For Korean Canadians, the maintenance of a distinct Korean identity and heritage has been and continues to be an extremely vital cultural enterprise” (Song, 1997, p. 30). There is also an economic and functional power structure to be gained from ethnic solidarity and cooperation that, not only provides social support for its members, but is also helpful for survival and economic stability (Kwak, 2008).

Song (1997) documents how for Koreans, “the attainment of status and success is an extremely important aim” (p. 3). His research describes the historical growth of the
Korean community in Vancouver and how they have struggled to find their status as an integral aspect of their unique social identity.

**Tensions between Immigrant and Temporary Transnational Families**

While the Korean community is very close-knit and generally supportive, there is a boundary between the immigrant and short-term families. “I heard that immigrant mothers say “Do not hang out with the astronaut mothers” because …they (immigrants) have a life here that goes on, paying tax, and so on. But we, astronaut mothers, stay for a certain time only and leave…” (Jeon, 2008, p. 164). The “visiting” mothers may never quite lose their “non-status” label within the Korean community. Jeon (2008) reports that there may be a feeling that these mothers are not socially reliable, since they will shortly be leaving. In a hierarchical society, having a rank or designation (even socially) situates you in the community. These short-term mothers may have an isolation even within their own community. There is a sense of “belonging nowhere” (Jeon, 2008). Kwak (2008) reports that some tensions exist in Vancouver Korean communities between transnational members and immigrants. The transnational families are seen as “opportunistic”, may be from higher socio-economic backgrounds, and might be treated with suspicion or even jealousies from the established immigrant community.

Since these transnational mothers do not receive the usual immigrant support from governmental agencies, and for those who do not wish to utilize the Korean church or association support, some new entrepreneurial Korean business owners are creating new companies which specialize in providing settlement support for a fee. These privatized profit-making enterprises may prey on new Korean mothers who don’t have a clear comprehension about how to navigate the Canadian systems, paying large sums for relatively minor products and support services. According to Kwak (2008) this is another growing area of concern within the Korean community, causing tensions involving profit-making vs. ethnic trust between new visitors and established immigrants.
Social Capital

The theory of social capital referred to in this study is taken from Robert Putnam’s concept (2007) which emphasizes the role of social networks, trust, norms, and relationships among people which facilitate an individual or group action. It stems from the concept that social ties and reciprocity are potentially productive. Pierre Bourdieu (1983) popularized discussion of social capital, however, Putnam’s extension of the concept to include trust and voluntary social associations may be a better fit in this study examining the networks for Korean international mothers.

The importance of social capital on the lived experiences of the visiting transnational mothers seems to be relevant. The benefits of social capital for both individuals and families have been documented in previous studies. “Nevertheless, much evidence suggests that where levels of social capital are higher, children grow up happier, safer, and better educated, people live longer, happier lives, and democracy and the economy work better” (Putnam, 2007, p. 138). Noh and Avison (1996) discuss how chronic stressors are associated with the immigration experience and how ethnic social support is an important factor in mitigating stress and increasing health benefits. Soroka, Helliwell, and Johnston (2004) describe how “Those who are well-supported by family, friends, and community networks live longer and in better health than others – certain groups are more vulnerable to ill health due to their isolation or lack of social ties” (p. 7).

Helliwell and Putnam (2004) describe that bonding social capital refers to ties to people who are similar to you, and bridging social capital indicates connections to people from different spheres. Putnam (2007) suggests that bonding social capital is the general first step for new immigrants, which in many cases eventually leads to bridging networks. Both of these social networks can lead to more positive functioning in society as a whole. Helliwell and Putnam (2004) found that a high degree of social capital is associated with good physical health and emotional well-being (as represented by self-ratings of happiness and life satisfaction). They demonstrated that social networks have value, due to many components such as increased knowledge, trust and reciprocity. By leveraging the bonding and bridging connections, transnational individuals may make gains in personal efficacies and coping strategies, which can lead to more positive
experiences in their host country. Coleman (1998) makes a connection between social capital and the rise of human capital in the next generation, which is also one of the main goals and drivers behind the decision for Korean mothers to bring their children to be educated in Canada.

One caution about social capital is that while it may be a glue or bond to connect individuals, it may, at times, also be used to exclude others not like the group or to guide group behaviour through peer pressure. Healy (2003) calls this “social network closure” (p. 5). He cautions that some social networks may cause possible oppression. As previously noted, local Korean immigrant networks may have shown some aspects of this network closure effect. “Too much bonding and too little bridging can stifle and restrict personal initiative and innovation. Too much bridging and too little bonding can leave individuals personally vulnerable” (Healy, 2003, p. 8).

**Successful Adaptation**

Berry (2006) describes how cultural adaptation is multifaceted and that various factors affect a positive acculturation. “Good psychological adaptation is predicted by personality variables, life change events, and social support while good sociocultural adaptation is predicted by cultural knowledge, degree of contact, and positive intergroup attitudes.” (Berry, 2006, p. 295). He notes that various groups and individuals have different acculturation strategies and engage in the process in a variety of ways.

**Concept of Society**

Levitt and Schiller (2004) claim we must reformulate the concept of society, as national boundaries are no longer what define many individuals living in a nation. “Our analytical lens must necessarily broaden and deepen because migrants are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind” (p. 2). Levitt and Schiller argue that the complexities of our interconnected modern reality that make older views of the nation-state obsolete. Within this new reality, social life, made up of a multiplicity of networks,
citizenships, and temporal residencies, is demanding new definitions of citizen, rights, freedoms, and democracy. The fabric of this new reality is centered on the social networks and experiences of the people who are weaving it.

**Summary**

My study may help to provide information about those individuals living in a simultaneity of culture and social networks, experiencing the daily juxtaposition of handling multiple, and at times conflicting, needs and requirements.

The interesting underpinning of transnationalism is its inherent fluidity, not just of location and place, culture and tradition, but of the fluidity of mind and the pursuit of a future imaginary. Hara (2009) describes this as the process of becoming instead of being. The goals for most transnational families are centered on increasing the, as yet unknown, potential in the next generation. It involves the drive and determination of some mothers, whether of a reluctant and sacrificial mindset or of a brave and adventurous nature to embrace all odds to pursue a dream and help to propel their family forward on the cutting edge of a new modernity. It is interesting to investigate the effect on Korean mothers, from a very traditional, patriarchal, and hierarchical culture, who are in the forefront of such a new migrational trend. It is intriguing to query how these Korean mothers, given their background, can navigate this difficult transformation between two quite diverse cultures; opposite in so many aspects. Their experiences, in particular, would be quite profound and through exploring these new subjectivities, powerful insights may be shared via this unique lens.

The next chapter will discuss the methodology of the research study. It will review the purpose, clarify the setting, sample population, and explain the design and analysis of the data collection instrument. There will be information on the ethical considerations, and a discussion on control for bias.
Chapter 3.

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Korean mothers living temporarily in Delta, British Columbia, for the duration of their children’s education in the Delta School District. The intent was to identify the various challenges and successes, and gather insights and reflections in order to gain a better understanding of how school districts can support these women and families who are living in our communities. The study was designed to examine the level of participant connectedness and interaction within the school, local community, and Korean networks, both local and overseas, in order to develop a picture of the daily lives of these visiting mothers and to chronicle their narrative.

Study Method

This case study was an exploratory, mixed method study utilizing a combination of participant surveys and interviews. A narrative approach was essential to this study because it is through discourse and re-telling that these participants can begin to define their unique experience. “…narratives of belonging function to ask us to find, discover or rediscover belonging and a shared place where we can ‘feel at home, not just in the literal sense of place, but also in the imagining of a collectivity” (Anthias, 2002, p. 277). The transnational experience is fundamentally about redefining a sense of identity, place, and culture in the context of multiple sojourns and temporary geographic environments. Chew (2009) describes today’s “feminization of migration”, because it is primarily women who are making these journeys, charting new territory, and ultimately developing new multiplicities in terms of cultural identity. The social processes and
cultural crossroads that these women are developing and navigating can only be sincerely reflected by hearing their voices as they deconstruct their journeys.

The questionnaires were translated into Korean and the group interview included a Korean interpreter. The interviews were a combination of individual and group sessions. The surveys were handed out and returned in the months of May and June, 2011, and the interviews with the Korean mothers took place from June 2 to June 15, 2011. The Korean support worker was also interviewed on two occasions (May 11 and 16, 2011) in order to get her personal observations and insight from her years of providing support to these visiting transnational Korean mothers.

Setting Background

This study took place in the Delta School District, Delta, British Columbia, which is located in the lower mainland of Greater Vancouver (see maps in Appendix A). The Delta School District includes the suburban three communities of Tsawwassen, Ladner, and North Delta. These communities are home to approximately 100,000 residents. The total student population of the School District is approximately 16,000 in 30 schools (23 elementary and 7 secondary). The Delta School District is experiencing a decline in regular student enrolment; however the international student population continues to increase each year. In the 2010/2011 school year there were approximately 300 international students studying in regular programs in Delta, plus an additional 200 studying in short-term winter and summer camps. The students come from a wide variety of countries including Austria, Brazil, China, Colombia, Chile, Germany, India, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Mexico, Philippines, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, South Africa, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, USA, and Vietnam.

International students are not Canadian Citizens, Landed Immigrants, or refugees. They have permission to study in Canada for a predetermined length of time, as stated on their study visas issued by the Canadian Embassy in their country of origin. International students must pay for their own education, currently charged at a tuition fee of $12,000 a year in Delta School District (plus medical and homestay costs). International students come to Canada for a variety of reasons. Most full-year students
study at the secondary school level and intend to graduate from high school in BC. Some students study for 1 semester up to 1 year for a global and cultural experience. Elementary students are mainly from Korea and study for the purposes of improving their English skills from 1 to 2 years. If they are quite young, the Korean mothers accompany their children to Canada while their children study in Delta schools. Most school districts require a parent to accompany elementary school aged students for the duration of their study term.

Delta School District International Programs department has seven staff members including administrators, clerical, homestay coordinators, and multicultural support. Each secondary school has an international coordinator or school contact who manages the case load and provides a variety of site based support activities. There is a part time Korean support worker to assist with the student and parent support and communications.

My role as Director of International Programs is to oversee the overall operations of the department. This includes handling the marketing and recruitment of students and agents, forming partnerships with foreign schools and governments, presenting workshops overseas for parents, students, and agencies about the Canadian education system, and monitoring the local homestay and school experiences for the students. In addition, I oversee the support for the visiting Korean mothers and try to maintain a quality control over the entire program.

This study was conducted in May and June, 2011. Participants were international Korean mothers of regular full time students registered in Delta School District.

Interview and Questionnaire Details

The Korean mothers were invited to participate in this study in a variety of ways. They were phoned by the Delta School District Korean support worker, who was known to the women, and an information letter (Appendix B) was also distributed at the Korean international mother ESL class that the School District helped to organize. The participants were also approached by the researcher directly in the last 2 weeks of May when they came by the International Programs office on other business. In all cases the
mothers were given the information letter and it was explained that the voluntary interview and subsequent survey were part of a research study and were unrelated to the Delta School District.

The group interview took place on June 2, 2011 at the Delta School District Office. Nine Korean mothers participated at this interview and the Korean support staff member was present as the interpreter. The interview took approximately 2.5 hours. All of the participants signed a consent letter (see Appendix B) and the details of the research study were explained. Some of the participants were friends and lived in the same apartment building, while two mothers lived in another community and were not as familiar with the rest of the participants. Most of the participants had met previously at various School District functions such as the international Korean mother luncheon and other cultural events hosted by the Korean support staff member throughout the year.

The interview questions were semi-structured, but were also fairly open-ended in order to give the participants the chance to present their own experiences and to direct the topics into areas of personal relevance. The initial question asked participants to describe their experiences in Canada. Next, they were asked about the main challenges as well as any positive outcomes from living in Delta with their child(ren). They were asked to describe their level of interaction in the school and local community (with both Koreans and local residents) and about the types of experiences they had in these settings. The participants were asked to give their advice about what kind of support would be beneficial for international mothers in Canada and also about how Korean mothers could be better prepared for their experience. These were the basic foundation questions; however the group interview topics often flowed to a variety of discussions and personal anecdotes that went beyond the confines of the basic questions and into areas of personal significance.

There were two individual interviews which occurred on June 7 and 15, 2011 at the researcher’s office in the International Student Programs department and lasted between 1 and 2 hours. Both Korean mothers were able to communicate in English and talked to me without the use of a Korean interpreter. Both signed the participant consent letter and the study was outlined. The basic questions were the same as those of the group interview. One of the participants was leaving the country shortly and was at the
end of her journey in Canada and the other had been here for almost a year at the time of the interview.

The responses in all of the interviews were written down by the researcher. Since the group interview was interpreted back and forth it provided the time for a written record of the discussion. The individual interviews were discussed simply due to the ESL level of the participants, so again the answers were not very complex and easy enough for a written format. In all interviews, I read back what I had written before moving to a new topic to make sure that I understood the responses correctly. This was also in order to confirm that the Korean interpretation was accurate. In the group interview, two of the mothers had a fair degree of English and they would nod and follow the Korean interpreter quite closely as the communication went back and forth. At times one of them would add information to the interpretation so that the meaning was clearer. They also seemed to enjoy being able to assist in the interpretation at times.

The information from all interviews were analyzed together and organized in basic themes (challenges, positive outcomes, school connections, community connections, support issues, and advice for the future).

The Korean support staff was interviewed on May 11 and 16, 2011 in the International Student Programs Office. She also signed the interview consent letter and read the study information. The interviews lasted for 1.5 and 2 hours. The questions were semi-structured, but again allowed for new topics to be introduced and to arise from the discussion. The questions ranged from a discussion of both the challenges and positive outcomes for the visiting Korean mothers to the general experiences that the mothers had while in Delta. The topics were focussed on the level of interaction at school and in the local communities, plus the level of overseas support for these mothers from Korea. The Korean church was discussed and the role that the local Korean community plays in these women’s lives. A major focus was on the level of need and support for the Korean mothers from the school district and on discussing how the support could improve. There was quite a large amount of time spent discussing specific cases and incidents in the past where certain Korean mothers had high level risk factors and how these situations were handled. I wrote her responses down and confirmed them with her before going on to a different topic. In some cases, the discussion became more
involved back and forth between the two of us, so we had to go back and define a clear answer to a certain topic. For example, a discussion might have veered into an interesting area involving more in depth conversation between the two of us, so then I would have to go back and write down a concise resulting response on the topic before we talked about a new area.

The questionnaire was distributed in a variety of ways. It was handed out by the Korean support staff member at the international Korean mother ESL class, and also by the researcher at the counter of the International Student Office. The questionnaire was also handed out at the group interview on June 2, 2011. Participants returned the questionnaires in a variety of ways. Some handed them, in envelopes, to the Korean support staff member; others were handed to the researcher directly in the International Student Office. One mother completed hers in the individual interview and some mothers stayed after the group interview and completed them at that time. The consent letter was attached to the questionnaires. Not all participants of the group interview completed a questionnaire. All participants used the Korean questionnaire and wrote their responses in Korean. The responses were then translated into English.

The accuracy of the translation of the questionnaire and subsequent responses was listed as a limitation factor in this study. To address this, the questions were written simply and literally in the first 5 sections (to lessen the chance of translation/interpretation error). The final section was more open ended and asked for participants to provide their own suggestions, opinions, and advice on three topics. The final section, while more problematic in terms of translation accuracy, was not a major focus of this study. It provides additional information from the Korean mothers themselves and adds their individual voices to the study. The information in this section should be analysed for the general meaning and overall gist of what the participants are trying to express, rather than for an absolute literal translation.

At the time of the study there were 16 Korean mothers of international students living in Delta. Nine mothers participated in the group interview and two mothers had individual interviews. Thirteen participants completed the questionnaire.
Survey Design

The survey questions were designed after the review of the literature. I decided to include a survey in addition to interviews because it would provide some statistical data that could help to balance the anecdotal narratives that come from interviews and discussions. What a participant may say in a group could differ from what is provided in an individual survey format. In one sense a survey could offer another reliable representation of a participant’s opinion (without group peer pressure and cultural bias playing a role). It’s also easier to analyse the data from a survey instrument and get some numerical evidence of opinions to certain statements.

- Section A of the survey was designed to generate some background information on each participant including length of time in Canada, age of children, previous overseas experience, and personal English proficiency level.
- Section B explored the participant’s overall experience in Canada; their health and emotional state, an indication of any challenges and/or personal growth, lifestyle, and level of support.
- Section C focussed on the school community and questioned the level of interaction and comfort with school staff, levels of participation at school, understanding of the education system, and feelings of belonging in the environment and with Canadian parents.
- Section D centered on the local Delta community and examined the level of adaptation to the living environment, level of connectedness to the area, ability to navigate the facilities and local health/recreation areas, and level of interaction with local residents.
- Section E questioned the level of connectedness to the local Korean community and explored the amount of support and connection generated by other Korean individuals and organizations (such as churches and paid agencies as well as other Korean immigrant or international mothers). It also questioned the amount of support and connection to overseas Korean networks.
- Section F requested suggestions on what kind of support a school district or other agencies could offer new Korean mothers and on any advice directed to new mothers on how to have a successful experience in Canada.

The questionnaire was available in English (Appendix C) and Korean (Appendix D). It was generated in paper format for portability and to allow participants to complete it in a variety of venues. The participants completed the survey in a variety of ways such as in an ESL class, after the group interview, after the individual interview, and at home.
in their own time. While many participants returned the survey in an envelope, some simply handed them to the researcher or Korean support staff member at the end of an interview or at the counter of the International Student Programs Office.

**Sequence of Events**

The following sequence describes the research study process.

1. The survey and interview questions were designed after the review of the literature in order to gather relevant information.
2. The Korean support staff member was interviewed on May 11 and May 16, 2011. Some of her comments influenced the group interview questions and added some areas which I decided to explore further, such as health concerns for the Korean mothers.
3. The surveys were distributed between May 16 and June 2, 2011. The surveys were returned during this time frame, both individually (in sealed envelopes) and at the group interview.
4. The group interview was held on June 2, 2011 in the Delta School Board Office.
5. Two individual interviews were held on June 7 and June 15, 2011 at the Delta School Board Office.

**Population and Sample**

The total number of Korean mothers of international students living in Delta with their children in June 2011 was 16. Nine mothers participated in the group interview and two mothers had individual interviews. Thirteen participants completed the questionnaire. Of the 13 participants who returned the survey, 10 mothers listed their own English proficiency at a beginning level and three participants rated their English level as intermediate. No participant assessed their English level as advanced. Most participants were relatively new to Canada, yet all had lived in Delta for over 6 months. Eleven of the Korean mothers reported living in Delta between 6 months and 1 year and two women had resided in Delta between 2 and 3 years. Eleven mothers had young children at elementary school and two had teenagers studying at secondary school. For
11 participants, this was their first long-term overseas trip (not including vacations) and two women had lived abroad previously.

The study also involved two interviews with the female Korean Multicultural worker for Delta School District, whose job it is to provide support for these visiting families. This staff member has worked for the district for 7 years and has also had a similar position for 16 years at a BC university.

A breakdown of the questionnaire participants follows (see Table 3.1).

### Background on Questionnaire Participants

**Table 3.1. Questionnaire Participants’ Background**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother’s English Level</th>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
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<tr>
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<th>Age of Children</th>
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### Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was granted by Simon Fraser University’s Office of Research Ethics on May 10, 2011 (Appendix E). Approval was also granted by Delta School District on March 8, 2011 (Appendix F). Several ethical considerations were taken into account when conducting this research. These considerations were explained in a letter given to the participants that outlined the research details and their role in study (see Appendix B). There were no known or anticipated risks associated with being
part of the research, and the participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study, or simply decline to submit the questionnaire, without explanation or consequences. The questionnaires were anonymously completed and voluntarily submitted.

The Korean mothers were assured of security in terms of the confidentiality of their participation. All surveys and interview data were stored in a locked filing cabinet and under password protected computer files during the course of the study. No names were released within the time frame of this study nor will they be released for future use. All identifying data will be destroyed once the study has been completed. Participants signed a participation agreement and the terms therein will be adhered to. As researcher, I took all care to remain cognisant of my dual role as researcher and also school district Director, and did not record information when interview discussions went into sensitive and emotional areas not related to the study. Participants were assured that their involvement in this study would have no effect on the treatment that their child(ren) received at school and that the schools would not be informed of their individual participation in this study.

**Control for Bias**

As researcher, my bias comes from the belief that creating a more supportive environment for visiting Korean mothers and families will result in a more successful adaptation to life in Canada and will ultimately provide a better chance that the children will have a more stable home and school experience and increased success at school. I believe that there is an ethical responsibility to provide some level of support to the Korean mothers who have been recruited to live in our community by the school district and are required to live in the area as a result of their child’s enrolment into the elementary school program and who are contributing revenue to the school district, local community, and province. This research was an attempt to explore what kind of support would be beneficial to such transnational families.

I have been an elementary and secondary teacher, counsellor, ESL/Multicultural Coordinator, International Coordinator, District Principal, and Director of International
Programs for almost 25 years in two British Columbian school districts. I have worked closely with immigrants, refugees, and international families during the past 17 years. To control for any bias on my part, all data were tabulated concisely, all questionnaires were anonymous, and the responses from interviews were recorded objectively. However, as with any ethnographic study, part of the richness of the narrative involves the voices and passions being presented in an authentic fashion. I made every attempt to interpret the information with consideration and care, and tried to remain cognizant of ethnocentrism when analysing the responses and their meanings.

The next chapter will discuss the findings of the study. Information from the interviews and questionnaires are summarized to form the results. These results are also summarized on charts and graphs to provide a visual and numerical representation for better clarity.
Chapter 4.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of the Korean mothers of international students living in Delta, British Columbia, to examine their various challenges and successes, and to ultimately gain a better understanding of how School Districts can provide better support for these women and families who we have brought into our communities. The study also explored the level of participant connectedness within the school community, local and overseas Korean communities, and the local Canadian community, in an attempt to understand how the Korean mothers interacted, adapted, and lived in their new environment. The findings of the research, as presented in this chapter, will be organized by the objectives of the study.

Respondents

As shown in Chapter 3, nine mothers participated in the group interview and two mothers had individual interviews. Thirteen participants completed the questionnaire. The 13 Korean mothers who responded to the questionnaire mainly had a beginning level of English, were relatively new to Canada (under 1 year), had children in elementary school, and had never previously travelled outside Korea. The total number of Korean mothers of international students living in Delta at the time of this study was 16, so this sample is highly representative of the total potential subject group (see Table 4.1).

Note that although the breakdown of responses was commonly groupings of 11 and two mothers on a given question, it actually represents different women for most questions. In other words, the group of two did not always consist of the same two respondents.
Table 4.1. Questionnaire Participants’ Background

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Interview Results from Korean Mothers

Main Challenges

Language Barrier

The mothers who participated in this study described a number of challenges in their lives in Canada, but all agreed that the language barrier was a major factor that affected all areas of their lives. The mothers’ lack of English caused even simple everyday tasks from setting up a bank account to talking to their child’s teacher at school, to become stressful and at times insurmountable. One mother described how she couldn’t understand field trip notices and even book order forms sent from the school. She didn’t know how to fill out the forms and her child witnessed this inadequacy, which made her feel “lowered” and embarrassed. She didn't like the feeling of being shown to be unable to perform a simple task in front of her child. It was also hard on her self-esteem and pride. Another mother described not being able to help with elementary school homework when her child came to her for assistance. She became frustrated and realized that she couldn’t even help with the math projects. She said how she “looked foolish” to her son and how upsetting that was. In a hierarchical Korean society, where adults are above a child and due proper respect, this reversal must have caused anxiety and perhaps even shame. Other mothers added how their young child
had to translate for them at some school meetings with the teacher, adding more feelings of inadequacy and causing the child to be seen as above the mother.

One mother described a situation where her child was sick and she was attempting to take him to a clinic, however she got lost along the way. She drove around and around and started crying as she kept trying to ask people where the clinic was, but all directions and conversations were confusing to her. Her child had a high temperature and she felt scared and helpless. She expressed how the whole situation was a nightmare that she will never forget. When she finally found the clinic, she was so upset that it was difficult to interact with the doctor and office staff. As she described the scenario, the other mothers were nodding and agreeing that they had had similar types of experiences of inadequacy and stress.

**Stressors**

Stress was a topic that was quite emotional for the mothers. The list of stressors from their experiences in Canada was extensive and emotional. Some mothers expressed the stress around ensuring that their child succeeded in school and could therefore show a good report card to relatives back in Korea. There was a long discussion about how the child simply “must” do well in Canada. There was some worry about what would happen if the child failed here and how badly the Korean relatives would talk about their family, especially the mother-in-law.

One mother expressed her anxiety that Canadians must “look down” on her and her child because they lived in a small 1-bedroom apartment. She didn’t let her child invite friends over to the apartment in case this happened and in case it hurt the child’s self-esteem or affected the ability for her to make friends. She pondered about how Canadians must think about all the Korean families here—living in small, cheaper places instead of having a typical Canadian house with a yard. She asked if Canadians were secretly judging her and her child.

One mother didn’t join with any of the other Korean mothers in activities or in a social network. She was more isolated, lived in a basement suite away from the group, and was rarely seen at functions. Yet, her son received excellent high school results, got a few scholarships to top universities and she was quite positive about her family’s
decision to come to Canada as it gave them the realization of their goal for her son. It may have been more of a sacrifice for her own personal life, but she was satisfied with the trade-off.

Many mothers discussed how Canada had such a slow pace in everyday life and how difficult the medical system was. They talked about long waiting times for everything from the emergency room to getting furniture delivered. There were quite a few frustrations about daily living that kept arising.

Quite a few of the mothers discussed how difficult it was to live here alone with no husband. They said that the hardest part was the decision-making. It was stressful to have all decisions large and small as their sole responsibility. It made some days quite exhausting and they would second guess their decisions. Almost all of the mothers said that they received little or no help from overseas when it came to decisions or daily support. They expressed how “every little thing” was their lone chore and how this caused depression at times. There were so many new tasks that they had not contemplated before they arrived. The tone and facial expressions showed traces of bitterness and negativity when they described how everything was on their shoulders. Yet, quickly following was a sense of pride and accomplishment. Most mothers admitted that they felt stronger and more capable now. Still, there seemed to be a sense that they desired some recognition of their plight or some acknowledgement of what they went through, especially in the beginning.

**School**

Since their children’s education was the sole and overwhelming reason for the families to relocate to Delta, the interviews contained many topics around school about which the mothers felt stress and anxiety. Some mothers expressed opinions that they didn’t understand the school system at all. Things like split classes were foreign concepts to them and they didn’t understand how it could be possible for a teacher to teach the grade level curriculum to two grades at the same time. They were suspicious that the school was simply teaching only one grade level and their child was being short-changed and taught inadequately.
Some mothers didn’t understand the report card information and wanted to see more actual letter grades or percentages instead of anecdotal remarks that they felt gave no real information (or that they couldn’t comprehend). Many mothers described the high level of expectation in Korean schools and they worried that Canadian schools didn’t seem to have this type of expectation or intensity. They wondered about how their child was learning and just “prayed” that the result would be good enough for their return to Korea. Other moms expressed how their child had to attend after school academies, have tutors, and do extra work in order to maintain the Korean level of educational knowledge for when they returned. They expressed stress in having to carry on with both styles of education at the same time, and about how it was all the mother’s responsibility.

One mother described how she really wanted to go to some school events to show her support. There was a school auction and fund-raising dinner for parents at the school. She worried about it for days and really wanted to participate, but in the end she didn’t go because she had no husband and she worried that the Canadian mothers would go with a husband at this evening event. Then she worried that the school teachers, parents, and principal were now judging her and thinking poorly of her because she wasn’t supporting a school fund-raising project. She asked if the school staff thought badly of the Korean mothers because they didn’t participate in these types of activities—she expressed how Canadians might feel like the Korean mothers were not contributing to the school. She kept worrying about this type of thing and it made her even more watchful and anxious when she went to the school.

**Positive Outcomes**

All of the mothers participated in this study responded that their experience in Canada was positive. This was an unexpected result. The mothers in the group interview described how almost all of them travelled around the USA, BC and the rest of Canada and how they made the most of their time here.

Pride was a common expression; they expressed that after all the stress and hardships, they felt a real sense of accomplishment in themselves and in their own capabilities. One mother described how she just took her children to the Ladner
community May Day celebration and how she knew some people in the crowd and felt
connected. As she related the story, her face glowed and showed that for her, this was a
landmark of sorts.

The mothers claimed that they learned a lot about a different education system
and while some of them still didn’t understand why certain concepts were taught in such
a way, they learned to appreciate that their children were enthusiastic and that their
English had improved along with their confidence and maturity. The participants seemed
to express a wonder about this, in the way that occurs when you witness something that
doesn’t fit with your understanding or normal world view. They described feeling that
there were pieces of the Canadian education system that they were missing, so it was
hard to trust in the process as they viewed it. Yet, they did see good results, which made
them feel positive about their decision to come to Canada. At the same time it was hard
for some of them to let go and trust each time there was a new project or topic at school.
They felt unsure and yet didn’t feel comfortable going to the school to ask questions.

The mothers were quite positive about their children’s overall school experience.
Schooling was the aspect that satisfied them the most as it is their overriding purpose for
being in Canada. They were most impressed with the vast choice of elective courses in
high school and in the opportunities in elementary school for other forms of learning.

Some mothers tried to get involved at school and three of them volunteered. This
was a source of pride for them when they described the experience in front of the other
mothers. They helped in the school library and on some projects and field trips. Those
mothers stated that they felt more comfortable talking to the teachers and that they
understood the education system better because they were in the school building to see
things first hand. They were less judgemental since they saw what went on each day
and how the teachers handled things like discipline and all facets of the educational
process.

One school’s Parent Advisory Council (PAC) actively invited the Korean mothers
to attend events and meetings. Two of the mothers joined at the same time. The Korean
multicultural staff worker attended some of the luncheons and parent meetings at the
school with the mothers to provide support and interpret for them. Since this school’s
PAC was proactive in reaching out to the Korean mothers, it tended to be the school where the mothers felt the most confident and positive. They thought this school was "the best" when compared to the others.

**Personal Growth**

There were some stories of personal growth from the Korean mothers. One mother was just accepted into an Arts Degree Program at a local university and she was excited to share her good news. She initially was here for a short time, but will now stay for a further 2 years and pursue higher education for herself. She brought her acceptance document to the interview and was very proud. A large number of the mothers started golf and English lessons and they are starting to look at new options for themselves here in Canada. They discussed how "important" it was to learn new things and participate in new activities, even if it was just travelling and sightseeing.

**Social Networks: Korean and Canadian**

The mothers definitely stayed together for the majority of their daily activities. Almost all of them lived in the small community of Tsawwassen and many of them lived in the same apartment complex. They golfed together, took English classes together, they carpooled for shopping trips, travelled on vacations together, and their children played together. Almost all of them responded that they relied on help mainly from other Koreans. Not many of them had actual friendships with non-Koreans, and in the Korean community, most of their connections were with the other international Korean mothers. This cohort of mothers seemed very close. While they described how important it was to generate other connections, very few of them seemed to venture outside their group. However, this group of mothers had been in Canada for just under a year and perhaps with time they will start to show more comfort in stepping outside their circle. The researcher did witness one of the mothers at a non-Korean child’s birthday party in June, and although she seemed a little nervous, she stayed for the celebration and seemed to be proud of herself (she came right over and introduced herself and on future interactions she kept referring to the fact that she was at that event). The Korean staff worker did reflect that the mothers tended to boast of times when they interacted with Canadian residents.
Survey Results from the Korean Mothers

Section A of the questionnaire (Appendices B and C) gathered brief background information about the participants. The results have already discussed at the beginning of this chapter (Table 4.1). Section B of the questionnaire focussed on the Korean mothers’ overall experience in Canada; their health and emotional state, an indication of any challenges and/or personal growth, lifestyle, and level of support. Specific results from section B are outlined below.

*Indications of a Positive Experience*

The experiences of the participants in this study, as reported on the survey questions, were generally positive. Question B.4 “I feel my experience in Canada has been positive” resulted in 100% of the mothers agreeing with the statement. When asked in B.5 to rate their health and emotional state, 85% affirmed that these were “good”. Question B.11 asked “This experience has changed me in positive ways” and 77% agreed with this statement. Eighty-five percent of the respondents reported travelling around Canada (B.21) and 69% agreed that they had “learned new things” in Canada and felt that they had “grown in new ways” (Questions B.9 and B.10). When asked in Question B.8 if they “Longed to return to Korea and can’t wait until I can go home”, 85% disagreed. Sixty-two percent reported that they had “Tried new activities in Canada” (Question B.12). Table 4.2 summarizes these findings.

**Table 4.2. Indications of Positive Personal Outcomes Experienced by Korean Mothers of Students Attending Public Schools in Delta School District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.4. I feel my experience in Canada has been positive</td>
<td>13 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.5. My health and emotional state have been good</td>
<td>11 (85%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.11. This experience has changed me in positive ways</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.21. I traveled around Canada</td>
<td>11 (85%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.9. I learned many things while I have lived in Canada</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.10. I feel I have grown in new ways since being here</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.12. I tried new activities in Canada</td>
<td>8 (62%)</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.8. I long to return to Korea and can’t wait until I can go home</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>11 (85%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Difficulties in Canada**

Generally, the participants also showed indications of stress and lack of support. In Question B.3 “I have had lots of help in Canada and feel supported”, 77% disagreed. Eighty-five percent of respondents have been depressed and 62% have been lonely (Questions B.6 and B.7). Sixty-two percent agreed that there was a lot of stress in Question B.13. Seventy-seven percent indicated that they “…had to learn everything by myself with minimal support from anyone” in Question B.16. When asked if it was more relaxing in Canada than in Korea (B.18), 77% disagreed. 62% of the mothers agreed that “It was very difficult for me to be away from my husband and family” in Question B.17. When asked if they had a fairly busy lifestyle with many friends in Canada, 77% disagreed (B.23). See Table 4.3.

Section B results seem to indicate that the mothers have felt the burden of this experience with minimal support from others. It has generally been stressful and difficult with times of depression and loneliness. However, the respondents indicated that ultimately it has been a positive experience, with personal growth, new experiences, and travel opportunities. Generally it was difficult and stressful, but perhaps worth the pain.

**Table 4.3. Indications of Difficulties Experienced by Korean Mothers of Students Attending Public Schools in Delta School District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.6. I have felt depressed at times</td>
<td>11 (85%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.7. I have been lonely</td>
<td>8 (62%)</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.13. There was a lot of stress for me</td>
<td>8 (62%)</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.17. It was very difficult for me to be away from my husband and family</td>
<td>8 (62%)</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.16. I had to learn everything by myself with minimal support from anyone</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.3. I have had lots of help in Canada and feel supported</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.18. My life in Canada is more relaxing than in Korea</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.23. I have many friends here and have a fairly busy lifestyle</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section C: School Community

Section C focused on the school community and questioned the level of interaction and comfort with school staff, levels of participation at school, understanding of the education system, and feelings of belonging in the environment and with Canadian parents.

Indications of Disconnection with the School

There were indications that the Korean mothers were not very connected with the Canadian schools. Ninety-two percent revealed that they didn’t attend school meetings (Question C.7). Seventy-seven percent don’t frequently visit their child’s class (C.12). Seventy-seven percent of the participants are not comfortable talking to the school principal in Question C.5. Sixty-two percent have not joined a field trip with their child’s class (C.10). Sixty-two percent of mothers did agree that they “…would like to participate in my child’s school, but didn’t know how to get involved” (Question C.8). Only 54% of respondents felt comfortable going to their child’s school (C.1) with 54% saying they felt welcome at the school (C.2). 62% said that they didn’t talk to or interact with Canadian parents (C.4). See Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Indications of Disconnection with the School by Korean Mothers of Students Attending Public Schools in Delta School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.7. I attend school meetings</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>12 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.12. I frequently visit my child’s classroom</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.5. I am comfortable talking to the principal</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.10. I have joined some fieldtrips with my child’s class</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
<td>8 (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.8. I would like to participate in my child’s school, but I don’t know how to get involved</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
<td>8 (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.1. I feel comfortable going to my child’s school</td>
<td>7 (54%)</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.2. I feel welcome at the school</td>
<td>7 (54%)</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.4. I talk and interact with other Canadian parents</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
<td>8 (62%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Feelings about the School Connections

The survey revealed that the participants had some positive feelings about their connection with the school. Ninety-two percent agreed that they “…felt like a valued part of the school community” in Question C.13. Sixty-nine percent agreed to feeling positive about their connection with the school (C.16). When asked if they felt isolated and unconnected to the school, 69% disagreed (C.15). Sixty-two percent reported that they “understood” about the Canadian education system (C.11). Seventy-seven percent reported joining some events at the school (C.6). See Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Indications of Positive Connections with the School by Korean Mothers of Students Attending Public Schools in Delta School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.13. I feel like a valued part of the school community</td>
<td>12 (92%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.16. Overall I feel positive about my connection with the school</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.15. I feel isolated and unconnected with the school</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.11. I understand how the Canadian school system is organized</td>
<td>8 (62%)</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.6. I join events at the school</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section C was interesting because it indicated that while the mothers generally didn’t feel comfortable going to the school, talking to the principal, or visiting the classroom, they did feel valued and thought that their level of connectedness was fairly good. Perhaps cultural issues are highlighted in this section whereby the Korean mothers are not used to participating in school to the degree that Canadian parents are, thus their lower levels of connection to the school seem to be adequate in their opinion. It was interesting that in the interviews, the three mothers who volunteered at the school were generally more positive on the whole and had fewer “complaints” about misunderstandings with how the Canadian system operated. So, while the Korean mothers may have viewed their school connections as adequate, perhaps a greater connection would result in a better understanding and a more positive overall experience.
Section D: Local Delta Community

Section D of the survey centered on the local Delta community and examined the level of adaptation to the living environment, level of connectedness to the area, ability to navigate the facilities and local health/recreation areas, and level of interaction with local residents.

Connections in Local Community

Section D showed that the Korean mothers felt generally comfortable in their local community environment. Ninety-two percent know where the health clinics were located (D.7). Eighty-five percent use the local facilities such as library and recreation centres (D.3). Eighty-five percent felt comfortable getting around in the community (D.6). Eighty-five percent agreed that “At first it was hard, but now I feel comfortable in the community” (D.13). Seventy-seven percent didn’t feel isolated in the community (D.11). See Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. Indications of Positive Connections in the Local Community by Korean Mothers of Students Attending Public Schools in Delta School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D.7. I know where the clinics and health centres are</td>
<td>12 (92%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.3. I use facilities in the community such as the library and recreation centres</td>
<td>11 (85%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.6. I feel comfortable getting around in the community</td>
<td>11 (85%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.13. At first it was hard, but now I feel comfortable in the community</td>
<td>11 (85%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.11. I feel isolated in the community</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disconnections with the Local Community

There were also some indications that the Korean mothers were still isolated from the local community. Eighty-five percent didn’t feel comfortable using Canadian health care and would drive to Korean or Asian medical services outside the area (D.9). Forty-six percent of the mothers haven’t used any medical service for themselves, preferring to wait until they return to Korea in Question D.10. Only 46% became involved in local activities (D.1). Fifty-four percent of respondents attend English classes in the
local community (D.2). Thirty-eight percent have made Canadian friendships in the community (D.4). See Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. *Indications of Disconnections in the Local Community by Korean Mothers of Students Attending Public Schools in Delta School District*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D.9. I feel more comfortable driving to Korean or Asian medical services</td>
<td>11 (85%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instead of using Canadian clinics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.10. I haven’t been to any medical clinic for myself while I’ve been in</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
<td>7 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada—I prefer to wait until I go back to Korea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.1. I am involved in a variety of activities in the community</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
<td>7 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(sports, recreation, cultural)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.2. I attend English classes in the community</td>
<td>7 (54%)</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.4. I have made Canadian friends in the community</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
<td>8 (62%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section D is interesting because although it shows that the Korean mothers (who are mostly approaching the 1 year mark for living in the small community of Tsawwassen) are comfortable getting around in their community, they seem to have made only bonding social connections within their own small cohort of Korean international mothers and limited bridging connections into the general community at large. They know where the facilities are and make use of libraries and community centres yet, while they know the area, there is limited involvement at a deeper level with friendships and activities within the local community. Since most of these mothers live in the same apartment complex in the very small community of Tsawwassen, it is natural that the families interact and help each other to a great extent.

**Section E: Korean Community**

Section E questioned the level of connectedness to the Korean community and explored the amount of support and connection generated by other Korean individuals and organizations (such as churches and paid agencies as well as other Korean immigrant or international mothers). It also questioned the amount of support and connection to overseas Korean networks.
Bonding Connections in the Korean Community

Section E showed quite definitely that the Korean mothers have strong connections with other Korean families and agencies/community services. Ninety-two percent agreed that they get most of their help from other Koreans in Question E.1. Ninety-two percent disagreed with the statement “My family doesn’t interact a lot with other Korean groups” and 92% also disagreed with “I am a little isolated from other Korean families” in Questions E.10 and E.9. Seventy-seven percent went further to agree that “I associate mostly with other international Korean mothers” in E.5. Seventy-seven percent take golf and other sports from Korean instructors (E.8) and 69% used a Korean agency landing service (E.7). Sixty-two percent pay a Korean agent to assist them (E.6). Eighty-five percent have had visits from overseas relatives (E.11). Forty-six percent attend a Korean church (E.2). See Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. 
Indications of Bonding Connections in the Korean Community by Korean Mothers of Students Attending Public Schools in Delta School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.1. I get most of my help from other Koreans in Canada</td>
<td>12 (92%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.10. My family doesn’t interact a lot with other Korean groups</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>12 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.9. I am a little isolated from other Korean families</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>12 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.5. I associate mostly with other international Korean mothers</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.8. I take golf lessons or other sports/recreation activities with Korean instructors</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.7. I used a Korean agency landing service</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.6. I paid a Korean agency to help me when I came to Canada</td>
<td>8 (62%)</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.11. My husband, family, and friends have visited me here in Canada</td>
<td>11 (85%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.2. I attend a Korean church</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
<td>7 (54%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section E also provided an interesting result from Question E.12, which had 92% of the mothers (all but 1) disagreeing with the statement “I have a lot of support from overseas, even though I am here alone.” This sentiment came out strongly in interviews as well, with the mothers being quite vehement that they have to do “everything themselves.” There seemed to be a touch of resentment in the conversations around this
issue, and perhaps a need for some recognition of their plight from family members and husbands.

Section E also provided interesting information about Korean friendships. Only 46% said that they had many Korean friends here, and yet almost 100% said that they weren’t isolated from other Koreans and that their families mostly interacted with Koreans. It seems to indicate that while the Korean mothers are banding together for most activities and to help each other, it may be more out of necessity or comfort than actual friendship.

This section showed the extent to which the Korean mothers are using social connections with the other Korean mothers and the Korean community here at large. They seem to be solely relying on the Korean connections and social network and haven’t made much foray into the Canadian communities at this point in their experience.

**Section F: Korean Mothers Voice Opinions**

Section F solicits the opinions of the participants about how school districts could provide better support for the new mothers and they also offer advice to new mothers based on their experience in Canada to this point. Eleven Korean mothers wrote their own suggestions in this section.

Question F.1 asked the participants to describe “What kind of support is most helpful for new Korean mothers coming to live in Canada.” The overwhelming response indicated the need for a Korean staff member from the school district to provide ongoing assistance for everyday life situations (not just for school district administrative issues).

> When I first came to Delta, I got help from (the school district Korean staff, hereafter called KS) and was able to get temporary lodging. Also, I've got so much help and advice from KS whenever there is a problem or obstacle for my child. (Participant 1)

> KS, the Korean counsellor working for Delta School District. She cares so much for her student and considers every aspect of the student's life. (Participant 2)
KS, she always smiles and cares and helps the family with everything. (Participant 3)

As I had never been in Canada, I didn’t really know what to do when I first came here, but the Korean counsellor in the school district helped me a lot, especially with the choice of school and accommodation. I was so relieved, I was able to adjust and start our lives off so well. (Participant 4)

Whereas agents from the most school agency charge a lot for landing service, KS in the school district takes care of numerous difficulties my child and I experience. (Participant 5)

“Honest Korean” is the most important help. (Participant 6)

KS in the school district. (Participant 7)

The important support areas: “A Korean counsellor, good and close relationship with neighbours and communication with other parents. (Participant 8)

Another type of comment surrounded the need for help in improving the mothers’ English skills (whether that was from the school district providing classes or from the staff assisting the mothers in getting tutors or other forms of help).

One of the hardest things for mothers of the international student is the language barrier. Accordingly, attending any facility, school, or academy to learn English is the greatest help you can get. (Participant 9)

Greater and broaden opportunity to study English. (Participant 10)

Question 2 asked “What advice would you give new Korean mothers coming to Canada?” Many of the mothers suggested keeping an open mind and trying not to judge Canada and the school system based on the Korean mind set. They wrote about new ways to raise children as less overprotected and more independent and being open to new ways of parenting. They also suggested that mothers should take up new activities for themselves and certainly increase their abilities in English. Other advice stressed the importance of joining school events and activities. Some mothers outlined how important it is for the women to enjoy leisure activities for themselves as well. One mother talked about the importance of personal motivation for studying English and other activities to overcome boredom and feelings of helplessness.

You should try to accept and assimilate into Canadian culture, this can only happen when you try not to think and judge the world in the viewpoints
you've learned and held in Korea. It is also very important for you to educate and equip your child with Canadian manners and customs so that they can adjust well to the life in Canada. (Participant 1)

I think it is important for you, as mother, to have a hobby or to actively participate in activities. And I advise you to take part for school events if you have certain knowledge and capability in English communication. (Participant 2)

Of course, coming here is a huge sacrifice for mothers, you should still invest some of the daytime for yourself and enjoy leisure activities. (Participant 3)

The school system of Korea and Canada is totally different, but I constantly see Korean mothers who are overly obsessed with their children and raise them in such an overprotected and dependent way. As long as you are here, I hope this kind of incident does not happen, and it is always better if you can retrospect the original reason that you and your children come to Vancouver and to reset the educational directions for your children. (Participant 4)

The typical Korean educational style is not similar to that of Canada, so I advise you to expose your children to the Canadian education system that promotes lots of various hands-on experiences. Also, overprotection or obsession towards your children might be a bad idea for nurturing a child under Canadian culture. (Participant 5)

Of course, the prime reason for coming here is to educate our children, mothers still need a motivation and purpose. Along with the care for your lovely children, we, as mothers, have to exercise and take English classes. Without these, you might be caught up with all those boredom and helplessness. Do not hesitate to go on a trip and study for yourself! (Participant 6)

Proficient driving skill, study English for the minimal ability necessary for communication, have an organized plan and budgets. (Participant 7)

Do not merely plan for your children but spend or invest some time for yourself. If you are fluent in English I suggest you to participate in volunteering. (Participant 8)

Study English. (Participant 9)

Stay positive throughout all sorts of difficulties you might face. (Participant 10)

Go around and deal with each incident by yourself (first-hand experience). Make prudent use of the internet and have much background information through web-search then go on trips as much as possible. Things you should do: studying English, travelling, exercise. Things you should not do: meeting with Koreans only. (Participant 11)
It is interesting to note that much of the advice didn’t seem to be reflected or reflect in the participants’ own actions (as described on the survey and interview results). For example, the advice of volunteering at school and joining in school activities, not “meeting with Koreans only”, etc. Perhaps this advice is more of a wish list of things that the participants wished that they themselves followed more closely. Also, since they have now been in Canada for almost a year, the advice may reflect the actions that they are now ready to start to undertake themselves and wish they had started earlier.

Question 3 asked “What are some suggestions for how school districts can better support the mothers of international students”? Some mothers requested more information about the Canadian school system via orientation sessions or translated hand-outs. Others requested that school information be communicated in a simple or clear way to help those who didn’t speak English.

I think it could have been better if there is any orientation program that can help mothers to learn about the Canadian school system which is fairly different and new from Korea. (Participant 1)

It is often a case that mother of an international student cannot participate in a meeting or school conference simply because it is hard to know of the specific date or ways to be part of these kinds of events. So I really wish that there is a way for schools to deliver clear information that is designed specifically for mothers of international students. (Participant 2)

I have been in a situation where my child and I feel like we do not get sufficient attention or chance to have a deep conversation with the principal of the school. Because most of the parents coming in have a tendency of aggressiveness and are eager to take part in the school event, it would be much better if we get proper assistance and guidance toward these events. (Participant 3)

Honestly, it is really difficult for Korean mothers to approach and have a sincere relationship with Canadian mothers. Of course, this tendency is rooted in our language barrier, but it is also due to the cultural differences. To reduce this problem, I hope that the school provides a program specifically for mothers of international students. With the program like this, Korean mothers can be friendlier with the Canadians and have better understanding of the Canadian culture/life. I know that there is a volunteering program, but most mothers are just sitting around separately and go home right after the work assigned; it might be a little futile. (Participant 4)
ESL classes offered by the school and taught by the school teacher for communication or conversation skills. Making clearer explanation and provide detailed information of the overall system or curriculum of the school. (Participant 5)

Meetings specifically for parents of the international students. More consideration and understanding for international students who might have less proficiency in English. (Participant 6)

I hope that someone can inform or provide mothers of international students with more detailed and clearer information on the Canadian education system. (Participant 7)

Let us know how to participate in school events and to handle the assignments given. (Participant 8)

I hope that someone can provide me (or mothers) the list of the students in the class with the students’ contact information so that I can invite each of my child’s friends. Also I like to know how I can participate in the school activities and events. (Participant 9)

See Appendix G for the survey results and Appendix H for the participant questionnaire comments.

**Interview with the Korean Multicultural Worker**

The school district Korean multicultural worker was also interviewed on two occasions in order to gather her unique insights after 7 years of working in Delta and 16 years at a British Columbia university in the role of providing Korean support and counselling. When interviewing the Korean support staff member, the focus was on her cumulative experience over the years of supporting visiting Korean mothers in Delta and on the issues and situations that she witnessed in order to add some background information to the results of this study.

**Main Challenges**

In the opinion of the Korean multicultural support worker, the main challenges for the Korean mothers was primarily adapting to a new culture and naturally the language barrier. She described witnessing extreme cases of loneliness and depression, and stated that the mothers routinely called her late at night to simply talk about their lives
and situation. She expressed a view that the evening and nightly calls were actually the most important part of her support, since the daytime hours tend to be full of children and chores, but the night times are the “darkest hours.” She felt that without someone to call and talk to who was non-judgemental, it would be quite difficult for some of the mothers to navigate their experiences successfully.

The support worker claimed that most of the mothers experienced loneliness and missed their husbands’ support. She noted that sometimes there are marital disputes and a withholding of money from Korea. There have been cases over the years of divorces happening while the mother is here alone, causing more stress and depression. Sometimes there are financial difficulties, growing in recent years, where a husband’s business fails while the family is here. The fragmentation of the family unit and distance causes subtle alienation and lack of communication. There have been some obvious marriage difficulties and strains on the relationship while the mother and children are in Canada.

The Korean support worker also discussed the pressures placed on the mothers by Korean mother-in-laws, and how judgemental the communications from overseas could be without a true understanding of the mothers’ Canadian situation. Special holidays and Korean celebration times are the worst for the Korean mothers in Canada, since they are away from their family and friend networks. The staff member hosts Korean gatherings in her home at such times, and provides extra support during these days.

**Depression and Health**

The support worker claimed that depression was a very common state for almost all the mothers, however the strain at times became too much for certain individuals who had some serious breakdowns and health emergencies. She described in particular some individual cases of severe depression leading to suicidal thoughts and attempts. In these cases the mothers had to return to Korea ahead of schedule. In some cases they left their children in Canada to complete their education and live in a Canadian homestay or with another Korean mother. At times the whole family left together part way through the year.
In the last few years two Korean mothers in Delta were diagnosed with cancer and one went through the stressful process of navigating the medical system while trying to support high school children who were nearing graduation. The support worker felt that the decision to stay and support her children may have exacerbated the medical condition in terms of adding additional stress of being extremely ill in a foreign country. The second mother eventually returned to Korea to get treatment and left her children in Canada. The Korean support worker drove these women to doctors’ appointments, spent countless hours counselling and providing tangible support, and even brought dinners to the families.

The Korean support worker claimed many Korean mothers are hesitant to get medical treatment for themselves while in Canada. Many of them don’t even have medical insurance. Along with the obvious language barrier that inhibits the mothers from using the Canadian health system, they feel that the process is too much work in Canada, with long delays in appointments and that it is too complicated. They also don’t necessarily feel comfortable with the treatment style. In some cases the mothers even called the Korean support staff member for medical advice. Some of them eventually returned to Korea for medical treatments and then quickly came back to Canada. The support staff worker claimed that some of them will simply delay getting their own treatment until the whole family returns to Korea, which can cause some serious health issues to worsen with the delay in treatment.

**Mental Health**

The Korean multicultural worker described witnessing a variety of breakdowns in mental health over the years and noted cases where a Korean mother may make poor decisions perhaps caused by stress and mental/emotional instability. It was claimed that there have been cases of criminal activity such as stealing, where the Korean mother was caught and prosecuted. The support worker noted that some mothers isolate themselves in their homes and become recluse while some feel shame and try to hide these emotional conditions due to cultural attitudes about mental health issues and out of fear of failing their child and husband.
**Positive Outcomes**

The Korean support staff member indicated that over the years the mothers have described various positive outcomes from their experiences in Canada. The benefits included improvement in their English which leads to better opportunities back in Korea as well as a feeling of pride and accomplishment. The mothers also detailed how they are much more independent and strong, and were proud of how they have managed alone. They have described how positive it is to have a break from in-laws and other family obligations while they are in Canada. The mothers have also expressed surprise at the level of equality there is in Canada and about the lack of hierarchical structures. They have welcomed learning about this aspect of Canadian society. The mothers also expressed how they have learned new ideas and have more open minds. The Korean staff member voiced the opinion that the mothers who are more rigid and not open to new ideas are generally not as successful in Canada. The staff member claimed that those mothers insist on complaining about small issues, and want everything to be like it was in Korea and are upset when things don't conform.

The Korean support staff member claimed that generally the mothers have expressed how the Canadian education system is positive and is beneficial for their children. They felt safe living here and appreciate the clean and healthy environment. The Korean moms were able to explore their own choices from recreation to travel. In particular they enjoyed lots of golfing, which is cheap and available in Canada compared to the situation in Korea. Golf is a status symbol in Korea, so having the ability to take lessons here and improve their skills was commonly mentioned.

**Final Notes from the Korean Support Worker Interview**

Reflecting on the comments made by the Korean support staff member, it seemed that for such a small total population of Korean mothers temporarily residing in Delta over the years, the number exhibiting suicidal depression, criminal activity, end stage cancer, and other serious health conditions seemed to represent a larger than average percentage, however this study was not focussed on measuring these
conditions statistically. It is, however, a caution that other school districts may want to be aware of.

The participants of this particular study seemed very well adapted and positive about their experience with good social/emotional/medical health, but this may be in part because of the personal support of the Korean staff member, who provides increasing night time and weekend availability, and also because the school district has noted the past issues and is providing increasing levels of support in a variety of ways. Almost all of the mothers in this study referenced the importance of the individual Korean staff member to their settlement and described how much they relied on her support and care. Also, the mothers who exhibited more extreme difficulties had already left Canada previous to this study.

The next chapter will discuss the findings, draw conclusions, and offer recommendations arising from the study.
Chapter 5.

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter discussed the findings presented in Chapter 4 and presents the conclusions and recommendations resulting from this exploratory study. An overview of the project and a review of the methodology are provided to establish the framework from which the conclusions were generated. The major findings are then outlined, followed by discussions and recommendations. Finally, suggestions for future research are presented.

Overview of the Study

Starting in the 1990’s in Canada, the number of K-12 international students has risen steadily and continues to grow from countries all over the world. As a result, human migration patterns are also shifting due to this growing emphasis on education and on the acquisition of English as key factors in the creation of new human and cultural capital. With decreasing numbers of children in an average middle/upper class family unit in many countries, there seems to be an increased intensity around providing greater educational opportunities for individual children. Many families in China and South Korea, in particular, seem to view providing an overseas English educational experience for their children as a key investment that will benefit the child’s future educational and professional potential, raise the family’s overall social standing, and increase the upward mobility of the family unit as competition for jobs and university space becomes more aggressive.

To this end, a growing number of Korean mothers come to Canada with their children each year to set up temporary homes while their children are studying in elementary and secondary schools. These women face many challenges but also
discover new strengths as they navigate through a variety of unique situations alone. In order to determine how to provide the most efficacious support for these transnational families, it is important to gather insights from the mothers and hear their stories and perspectives on their experience.

Since School Districts generate increasing revenues from these families and require that a parent accompany the elementary aged students, there may be an ethical question around the type and amount of support a District should be providing these families. Since there are no guidelines or Provincial protocols, School Districts are not under an obligation to provide support of any kind for these new families, who also don’t qualify for governmental settlement support. Many School Districts in BC that have international programs do not have a Korean support staff member to assist the new Korean families in settlement or with ongoing issues.

It is important to understand how school districts can help the parents to more effectively and positively navigate the various networks of school and community, and to enable these women to have a healthy and settled experience in Canada. It is crucial to explore any possible vulnerabilities and examine areas of potential risk to the physical, social, and emotional well-being of these visiting families, as well as examine how school districts can accentuate the potential for personal growth and positive outcomes.

The study reported here took place in Delta, British Columbia, in May and June 2011. It examined the experiences and support networks of the Korean mothers of international students currently living in Delta, with the aim of generating information on how school districts could provide better support for these transnational families living in our communities.

**Review of the Methodology**

This case study was an exploratory, mixed method study utilizing a combination of participant surveys and interviews. Since it focussed on a group of women from the same ethnic and cultural background who were all parents of students in the same school district and who lived in close proximity to each other, the study has many characteristics of an ethnography. Nine Korean mothers were interviewed in a group,
two had individual interviews, and 13 completed a survey (Appendices B and C). The school district’s Korean support staff member was also interviewed to generate more insight into the experience of these visiting mothers in Delta. The mothers had a beginning level of English, were relatively new to Canada (under 1 year), had children in elementary school, and had never previously travelled outside Korea.

Findings and Discussion

This study was designed to accomplish the following three purposes.

1. To explore the experiences of Korean mothers of international students living in Delta, British Columbia, Canada.
2. To examine the level of participant connectedness within the local and overseas Korean community, local Canadian community, and school community.
3. To gain a better understanding of how school districts can provide more effective support for visiting mothers and families.

The study also focussed on examining the challenges and successes that the Korean mothers experienced while living in Canada, and to gather their reflections and insights from their unique perspective.

**Finding 1. Korean mothers of international students in Delta had a positive personal experience in Canada, and their children had beneficial educational outcomes.**

One hundred percent of the participants reported that their experience in Canada were positive. They felt a sense of pride in their accomplishments, expressed how they travelled, grew and changed in a variety of ways. Some mothers got college/university acceptances while they lived in Delta, others took English classes and tried new activities. They were positive about how their children benefited in the Canadian school system and they felt a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in their children’s results.

The studies by Chew (2009) and Waters (2000) indicated that there seems to be a turning point at the 1-year mark, where trans-national mothers begin to become more
adapted and acclimatized to their new environment. Their expressed level of stress seems to decrease and there is a marked increase in positive reactions and experiences. This study seems to have caught many of the Korean mothers in Delta at just this metamorphosis or turning point, since 11 of the 13 mothers had been in Delta for just under a year and their experiences at the time of the interviews/survey seemed to be generally positive. The negative experiences were related in the past tense in anecdotal stories, such as the mother who was lost driving with her sick child.

Finding 2. Korean mothers of international students in Delta felt a lack of real support and reported a variety of stress factors. Lack of functional English skills was also a key cause of situational difficulties.

The participants reported that they “had to learn everything by (themselves) with minimal support from anyone.” They reported feeling depressed, lonely, and overwhelmed at times, and also related stressful incidents and experiences as they learned how to navigate living in a new cultural environment without husband or relatives. There were strong indications that they received almost no emotional or decision-making support from their husbands overseas (in terms of their daily life) and that they felt overwhelmed when having to set up residency and a household in Canada. The research from the literature review also supported these findings. Waters, 2000, and Jeon, 2008, describe how transnational mothers have feelings of loneliness and situational depression as they attempt to navigate their new environment as the sole adult in the family.

Lack of functional English was reported as the premier stress factor in their daily lives for the Korean mothers in this study. The results of this study were supported by the research in Chapter 2 regarding English ability being a main source of stress (Finders & Lewis, 1994; E. Kim, 2002; Lee, 2005; Tokita, 2006; Waters, 2000). The research by Carreon et al. (2005) described that when children are used as interpreters for their mothers, it can also upset the cultural norm by placing children in a position of equal or higher status. The mothers in this study also reiterated their feelings of embarrassment and shame when placed in this type of situation in front of their children.
As indicated by the Korean support staff member, in the past some mothers have displayed more serious mental and physical health conditions while they lived in Delta, including suicidal forms of depression, end stage cancer, and other diseases. While there is no evidence that these conditions were a result of their overseas experience, increased stress may aggravate pre-existing tendencies.

**Finding 3.** *Korean mothers of international students in Delta were not very connected to their children’s school and had a general incomprehension of the Canadian school system, yet felt satisfied with their children’s academic experience.*

The mothers did not generally feel comfortable going to their children’s school or interacting with the teachers or principal. They did not participate in school activities or visit the classroom to any great degree. They felt an incomprehension of the educational system, didn’t understand about split grades, report cards, or specific homework expectations. There was a great deal of stress associated with school-related issues. The findings from previous research in Chapter 2 also highlighted the Korean mother behaviour of having limited contact with the school. The research by Lee (2005) described how Korean parents may be “uncomfortable with being physically present at school” (p.306).

Despite these factors, the mothers reported feeling very satisfied with their children’s Experience. Ninety-two percent felt valued at the school and felt that the outcomes for their children were positive.

**Finding 4.** *Korean mothers of international students in Delta felt comfortable navigating their small local community, but there were indications that they didn’t feel confident about the Western health care system and they didn’t have any real ties to the local non-Korean residents.*

The participants showed confidence in getting around in the community and in using the local facilities. They did not indicate feeling isolated or helpless in their daily living situation. However, 85% reported not feeling comfortable using Western health services (preferring to drive out of the area to use Asian health centres). Almost 50% of the mothers indicated that they would wait until their return to Korea before seeking health care for themselves. As it could be years before the return to Korea, this practice
could negatively affect the women’s health. The Korean support staff member also
described how some of the mothers flew back and forth between Delta and Korea for
needed treatments. This behavioural trend was also highlighted in the literature as Song
(1997) and Jeon (2008) described how transnational Korean mothers tended to
underutilize Western medical services.

Very few mothers indicated that after almost a year they had formed any
Canadian friendship or connections. Putnam (2007) suggests that bonding social capital
is the general first step for new immigrants, which in many cases eventually leads to
bridging networks. Since the Korean mothers in this study were fairly new to Canada
(mostly under 1 year), Putnam’s research could explain their lack of bridging networks.

**Finding 5. Korean mothers of international students in Delta had
extremely strong ties within the Korean community. They formed exclusively Korean bonding network ties and tended to
interact mainly with other Koreans for both social and professional support.**

Putnam (2004) describes that bonding social capital refers to ties to people who
are similar to you, and bridging social capital indicates connections to people from
different spheres. Ninety-two percent of the mothers got most of their help and support
from other Korean families or paid agencies. Almost all of the participants lived in the
same apartment building, socialized together, took vacations and golf/English lessons
together, and relied on each other for daily support. The Korean staff worker from the
Delta School District also played an ongoing and extremely supportive role for these
women. Some belonged to Korean churches and others paid Korean agencies for a
variety of daily living services. There was minimal venturing into bridging connections
with Canadian residents or services.

This behaviour was also described in the literature:

…all my interviewees’ social activities and networks were exclusively
within the Korean immigrant community. For example, at the time of the
interview, none of my interviewees had personal friends from other ethnic
groups nor were they affiliated with associations other than Korean
associations. (Kwak, 2002, p. 24)
Finding 6. **Korean mothers of international students in Delta reported that the most important support factor for them was having a Korean staff member from the school district.**

Almost all of the participants expressed the importance of having a Korean staff member that they could rely on for a variety of issues. They talked about practical and also social/emotional support for advice and also information and assistance in the evenings as well as for emergencies. They discussed how they used the staff member for daily living issues, school meetings, educational advice and information, and for personal assistance. The staff member acted as a counsellor and “friend” when the mothers felt scared and depressed. The staff member drove them to medical appointments at times and assisted in a variety of personal and settlement issues. It could be that this level of support was instrumental in many of the participants’ positive reactions that were reflected in this study. This could be a good template or practice to be followed in other school districts (having a Korean staff member available in an outreach style in the evenings or weekends and on call for emergencies).

Finding 7. **Korean mothers of international students in Delta seek more information about the Canadian education system and also help by having more English classes provided for the newcomers.**

The participants asked for more prepared materials and further orientations whereby they could get more translated information about the school system and also have schools communicate information more clearly on a daily basis. They also wanted free English classes for mothers of international students; while there are adult ESL programs in the city and school district, they felt the fees were too high.

**Additional Information**

Objectively speaking, the participants in this study had a fairly strong support network in the sense that the Korean mothers mostly lived together in the same apartment building in Tsawwassen, which is a fairly small community that is easy to navigate. Delta also has an experienced Korean staff member who is well connected in the Korean community and is available in the evenings and on weekends to provide flexible emotional and practical support for the mothers. The results of this study should
be viewed with this level of Korean support in place, as opposed to a school district with no Korean staff member and with Korean mothers living separately across a larger city area. In addition, the fact that the two mothers in Delta with more serious depression had returned to Korea just prior to this study may have affected the data results.

Many school districts who host Korean international students do not have a Korean staff member and among those that do, the employee may only be hired to assist with documentation or school related issues such as teacher-parent meetings and interpreting for school related functions. Given that situation, the findings of a similar study in another location could have vastly different results in terms of stress factors and experience. Perhaps the provision of a district staff member with background in the same ethnic and language group of the mothers of international students (providing this level and type of assistance) may prove to be a template for best practice when it comes to the most efficacious settlement and ongoing support for international mothers.

Due to the growth of international students, it may be prudent to assume that mothers from other ethnic backgrounds may also begin to accompany their children to Canada and this study may address their needs in addition to those of Korean families.

The variety of previous mental and physical health issues that were detailed by the District’s Korean support worker in this study should not be overlooked, especially in light of the research findings by Noh and Avison (1996) which stress the Asian cultural tendency to underutilize mental health services for fear of stigma and describe the chronic stressors that are associated with the immigration experience. They also describe the “incontrovertible evidence” showing how ethnic social support is an important factor in alleviating or mitigating some of these stressors (p.195).

Conclusion

Each year, growing numbers of school districts across Canada and the United States start international student programs. While this phenomenon originated with large urban centres such as Toronto and Vancouver, now even very small rural areas are beginning to accept fee paying foreign students and their mothers. South Korea is the country that tends to send young elementary students to study in North America and
every school district has some age restriction that requires a Korean mother accompanying her child to reside in the School District area for the duration of the study term. School districts need to consider what forms of support they will provide these visiting families since there is no governmental and non-profit settlement support available for to them. This study highlights the need for consideration of the type of support required and for the various positive and negative effects on the mothers, and ultimately the families, who will be living in the local community for a number of years.

The participants in this study indicated that the level of support required goes beyond simple administrative and school meeting interpretative functions. The families need emotional and settlement care and assistance as they begin to integrate into the community. This study indicates that Korean mothers tend to feel more comfortable with a bonding network of Korean community support, and if they receive such, their adaptation to their environment seems to be positive. In small rural areas with a limited Korean immigrant community, it seems even more crucial for the presence of a School District Korean staff member to build a network of international Korean mothers so that they can bond together and form a base to provide more support for each other. This staff member should have a flexible work schedule that can include evening and weekend contact for the most efficacious and caring support. The staff member should organize ongoing Korean mother luncheons, meetings, and special holiday celebrations help to build these support networks, and to integrate the new mothers who arrive throughout the year.

The Delta area, while very close to Vancouver, does not have a large Korean immigrant community. In this regard it may resemble the demographics of a smaller town farther away from a large metropolitan area. Results from this study may offer suggestions as to how other School Districts can develop better forms of support for the visiting international families, regardless of their ethnic background. Even large urban school districts may benefit from improving their support base by analysing the role of any multicultural support staff members to go beyond the usual administrative roles towards more of an outreach style. All school districts would benefit from a more in depth analysis of their visiting Korean families to ascertain if they are at risk or are experiencing a variety of mental, emotional, or physical health related conditions. In
becoming more aware of the family situations and potential risk factors, school districts can develop better strategies and support structures.

School Districts are accepting international students for revenue generating options, but also from a belief in the importance of developing a sense of global citizenship in our own children and ourselves as we prepare for the future. As educators, we hope that by welcoming students from around the world our Canadian students can also make a variety of multicultural connections and learn how to interact on a global stage as they prepare for a future where mobility will be a key aspect in their professional and personal paths. Ethical compassion and understanding, empathy, respect, and a duty of care are also inherent components in what it means to be a true global citizen. School Districts should model these qualities in their treatment of these families, to do otherwise would indicate that we view these students and mothers as simply revenue generating commodities. This might lead to cynicism from the public and reflect a more commercial intent that goes against the basic heart and tenant of our educational philosophy.

Strategies and Suggestions for School Districts

A variety of strategies and suggestions for school districts with international programs have come out of this study, both from the participants themselves and also from an analysis of the results. These suggestions will be outlined in the following categories:

- Strategies for school districts.
- Strategies for individual schools.
- Suggestions for international mothers.

Strategies for School Districts

School districts that recruit international parents with their children should consider making sure that someone checks in with each family to ensure that they are not experiencing an overwhelming level of stress and distress, especially at the beginning of their settlement. There should be a multicultural support staff person in place that the parents can access in the evenings or on weekends in times of
emergency or in an on-call arrangement. Perhaps a District could develop ways to connect the newcomers with any immigrant group or ethnic church/community centre in their area. There should be orientations for new mothers and translated information explaining the Canadian education system.

School Districts should consider providing:

1. Welcome orientations for all new families
2. A translated Welcome Package with health centres and important community facilities, local maps, school district emergency contact numbers, and information about the school and educational system. Also important would be an explanation of the health system and how to navigate the various levels of health and dental care. Existing mothers could assist in the creation of this package as they would have insight into what kind of information would be most helpful.
3. A Korean support staff member with flexible hours or an on-call system for emergency contact.
4. Ongoing information and support meetings for mothers of international students to discuss issues as they arise and to prepare for the various seasonal items such as report card times (so there could be a greater comprehension of the education system).
5. English language classes for adults where English is a second language.
6. Parent workshops on topics like bullying or positive discipline, which can give families from other cultures new insights and a greater understanding about Canadian values and expectations.
7. Possible outings or social gatherings during the key ethnic holiday times (which are lonely and isolating times when away from family or friends).
8. Arrangements for connections between the international mothers, by distributing optional phone lists or by hosting international mother teas, luncheons, or events.
9. Information to the schools of which international children are living with a parent, for greater awareness at the school level.
10. Protocols for contacting the families from time to time in an out-reach style to determine the level of adaptation and acclimatization.

**Strategies for Individual Schools**

Individual schools can also provide better support for the international mothers of children in their site. Encouraging better parent participation at the school was shown to
be beneficial in this study. For example, the school where the PAC actively welcomed the Korean mothers had international mothers involved who complained less and who felt a better understanding of the overall system. Some further recommendations are included below.

Individual schools should:

1. Ensure that the principal makes a personal contact or meeting with the international mother in the first month (the study showed that 77% of the mothers were not comfortable talking to the principal).
2. Encourage the Parent Advisory Committees to openly welcome international mothers
3. Inform the teachers and encourage them to reach out to the international mothers and invite them into the classroom for a visit
4. Encourage the international mothers to volunteer at the school and to join field trips
5. Use jargon-free language at meetings and speak slowly and carefully
6. Have interpreters for key parent meetings
7. Enable the Korean mothers to use the school library
8. Host multicultural festivals that would give the parents and students a chance to participate and contribute their own unique skills and cultural perspective to the school community

Larger urban school districts with larger immigrant populations may consider having translated materials that provide information about the school, calendar, reporting system, etc. Parent informational bulletin boards could include some translated material.

**Suggestions for International Mothers**

The Korean mothers in this study offered suggestions for other mothers new to Canada. These included taking English classes, learning new hobbies, and educating themselves about the Canadian education system. They also recommended volunteering at the school and about keeping an open mind to accept new ideas about education and customs. They encouraged the newly arrived mothers to learn how to drive in Canada and to have organized plans and budgets. Other suggestions are listed below.
Mothers of international students should:

1. Visit the school, meet the teacher and principal, go to the classroom, and join field trips, assemblies, or other volunteering activities.
2. Join community centre classes, take a variety of lessons, join exercise or sports activities.
3. Learn about the community, travel, visit tourist venues, and take local trips.
4. Meet the neighbours, make some connections in the community through school, community centres, fitness centres, English classes, etc.
5. Ask questions if needed, get help when required, get medical check-ups and use medical services, learn about the Canadian education system.
6. Obtain proper health insurance.
7. Meet other international mothers and make social connections.

Future Research

There is not extensive research about the experiences of transnational mothers living in Canada as the parents of international student studying in elementary or secondary schools. While there are studies focussing on the immigrant experience, short-term transnational families have quite a different set of expectations and situations. They also have no settlement support from governments or non-profit organizations. The mothers of international students may be here under duress, and may view this as a sacrificial experience for themselves as they have been forced by School Districts to accompany their children due to regulations or conditions of student acceptance. They may have extremely limited English and not be completely prepared for this experience.

This study focussed on the Korean mothers with students studying in Delta School District. It was based on a relatively small sample compared to the total number of Korean mothers in school districts around BC. The study showed that the mothers in Delta have a fairly good support network because they live near each other (mainly in a small area of Delta–Tsawwassen), the area is not a large urban centre so the community is more easily mastered in terms of driving and other challenges, and the school district
has a strong Korean support staff member who is available in evenings and on weekends.

A more comprehensive study would be beneficial; one that analyzed the situations of Korean mothers of international students living in districts with no Korean support staff and no Korean community support. It would be of benefit for all school districts to take note of these families and to be watchful of their living situations. Women and children living alone without support may experience difficulties that go unreported. It is difficult to measure the number of women who become overwhelmingly depressed or who experience serious health concerns, or even marital break-ups and financial duress while living in our communities without support. They may suddenly leave the area and return to their home country with no explanation. Delta has experienced some serious situations where visiting mothers have been under extreme duress.

If gone unnoticed or without further research, School Districts may be unaware of the need for further support structures. The impact on human life and on the emotional, physical, and mental health of international children and mothers may be greatly affected depending on the circumstances in a community. The numbers of these transnational families is on the increase and currently Chinese mothers are just starting to accompany their elementary aged international students as well (as Canadian study visas for elementary children and mothers from Mainland China have started being approved). As the landscape of education becomes increasingly trans-global, educators and researchers need to expand their focus to explore the conditions surrounding new and fledgling communities. We need to consider what kind of “duty of care” is owed to these new residents who settle in our community, especially if their residency is due to our specific School District requirements.
References


The Vancouver Sun (September 20, 2011). *B.C. to take steps to attract more international students: Christy Clark*. Retrieved from http://www.vancouversun.com/business/take+steps+attract+more+international+students+christy+clark/5431434/story.html


Appendices
Appendix A.

Maps of Delta

Note. From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richmond,_British_Columbia
Appendix B.

Participant Information and Consent

Dear Parent,

April 18, 2011

You are invited to join a study on the experience of Korean mothers with children attending Delta School District. The study title is The Experiential Journey of Korean Mothers of International Students Living in Delta, Canada. This study will explore the experiences of the mothers while their children are studying in Canada. This research is important because it may give information about how school districts can provide better support for visiting international families and it can provide some insight into the general daily conditions that the visiting mothers are facing.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are the parent of an international student and are living here as a visitor to Canada on a short term basis. Your experience in Canada will provide useful information about the conditions faced by international parents living in a new country.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this study, you will be interviewed in a small group and/or individual session, and given a questionnaire to complete. The study will take place from May to the end of June 2011. The school(s) that your child(ren) attend will not be informed about your participation in this study and there will be no effect on your child’s education as a result of your participation. This study is not a Delta School District project and is not connected with the international program in Delta. You may withdraw at any time. No names will be used in this study and all participation will remain anonymous. All questionnaires and interview data will be locked in a secure filing cabinet and digital information will be stored in a password protected computer file. Two years after the study is completed, all data will be destroyed. This study provides no foreseeable risks to you or your family.

I am a doctoral candidate, in the Department of Education at Simon Fraser University. This study is supervised by Dr. Milton McClaren. If you have any concerns or complaints, please contact Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director, Office of Research Ethics at [redacted] or at 778-782-6593. You may also contact Dr. Milton McClaren at [redacted] or at Simon Fraser University at 778-782-5897 if you have questions about this study. This study is listed as ethics application #2011s0197 for your reference.

The results of this study will be used in a doctoral thesis submitted to Simon Fraser University and will be publically available. The results of this study can also be sent to you by contacting me at [redacted]. The results of this study may also be shared with school districts in Canada in order to provide information on how districts can provide better support to visiting international families.

By consenting to participate in this study you confirm that any information you encounter will be kept confidential and not revealed to parties outside the focus group.

Both the Office of Research Ethics at Simon Fraser University and the Delta School District have given written permission to conduct this study.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request to participate in the study.

Sincerely,

Deirdre Annett
By signing this participation consent form, you are agreeing to be interviewed for the research study “The Experiential Journey of Korean Mothers of International Students Living in Delta, Canada”. You will also be asked to complete a survey questionnaire at the end of the study. You may withdraw at any time during this study. By signing this agreement, you affirm that you understand the conditions of the study outlined on page 1 of this document and that you give your consent to participate.

Participant Name: ________________________________

Signature:_____________________________________

Date: ____________________
Appendix C.

Questionnaire (English)

Questionnaire

A Research Survey for Korean Mothers of International Students Living in Delta, British Columbia

A. Background

Please answer the following questions in the space provided.

A.1 What date did you arrive in Canada?

A.2 How long do you intend to stay in Delta?

A.3 What grade is your child(ren) enrolled in?

A.4 Is this your first long term trip overseas?

A.5 What other countries have you visited previously?

A.6 What is your English level? (Circle) Beginning Intermediate Advanced

B. Experience in Canada

Please respond to the following statements by putting an “X” in the column that indicates your opinion. The answers should be based on your personal feelings about your situation, not about your child’s experience.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1. Living in Canada has been easy for me</td>
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<td>B2. I adapted quickly to life in Canada</td>
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<td>B3. I have had lots of help in Canada and feel supported</td>
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<td>B4. I feel my experience in Canada has been positive</td>
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<td>B5. My health and emotional state have been good</td>
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<td>B6. I have felt depressed at times</td>
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<td>B7. I have been lonely</td>
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<td>B8. I long to return to Korea and can’t wait until I can go home</td>
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<td>B9. I have learned many things while I have lived in Canada</td>
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<td>B10. I feel that I have grown in new ways since being here</td>
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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>B11. This experience has changed me in positive ways</td>
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<td>B12. I have tried new activities in Canada</td>
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<td>B13. There was a lot of stress for me</td>
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<td>B14. I feel that this was a sacrifice for my child’s benefit</td>
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<td>B15. When I need help, I have someone to support me</td>
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<td>B16. I have had to learn everything by myself with minimal support from anyone</td>
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<td>B17. It was very difficult for me to be away from my husband and family</td>
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<td>B18. My life in Canada is more relaxing than in Korea</td>
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<td>B19. Living here has been a break from my obligations in Korea</td>
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<td>B20. I got involved in a variety of activities in Canada</td>
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<td>B21. I traveled around Canada</td>
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<td>B22. My personality is a little quiet, I don’t join many activities and am not very outgoing</td>
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<td>B23. I have many friends here and have a fairly busy lifestyle</td>
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<td>B24. It is boring here compared to my life in Korea</td>
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<td>B25. I am too busy doing things for my child and don’t have time to focus on my own activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>B26. I have more free time for my own activities here compared to Korea</td>
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### C. School Environment

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<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1. I feel comfortable going to my child’s school</td>
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<td>C2. I feel welcome at the school</td>
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<td>C3. I know some Canadian parents at the school</td>
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<td>C4. I talk and interact with other Canadian parents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>C5. I am comfortable talking to the principal</td>
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<td>C6. I join events at the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>C7. I attend school meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>C8. I would like to participate in my child’s school, but I don’t know how to get involved</td>
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<td>C9. I volunteer at the school</td>
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<td>C10. I have joined some fieldtrips with my child’s class</td>
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<td>C11. I understand how the Canadian school system is organized</td>
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<td>C12. I frequently visit my child’s classroom</td>
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<td>C13. I feel like a valued part of the school community</td>
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<td>C14. I would like to be more involved at the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>C15. I feel isolated and unconnected with the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>C16. Overall I feel positive about my connection with the school</td>
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**D. Local Delta Community**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1. I am involved in a variety of activities in the community (sports, recreation, cultural)</td>
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<td>D2. I attend English classes in the community</td>
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<td>D3. I use facilities in the community such as the library and recreation centres</td>
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<td>D4. I have made Canadian friends in the community</td>
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<td>D5. I have Canadian acquaintances, but not real friends</td>
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<td>D6. I feel comfortable getting around in the community</td>
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<td>D7. I know where the clinics and health centres are</td>
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<tr>
<td>D8. I have used medical services in the community for myself when needed</td>
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### D. Medical Services

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<th>Question</th>
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<th>Agree</th>
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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D9. I feel more comfortable driving to Korean or Asian medical services instead of using Canadian clinics</td>
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<tr>
<td>D10. I haven’t been to any medical clinic for myself while I’ve been in Canada – I prefer to wait until I go back to Korea</td>
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<td>D11. I feel isolated in the community</td>
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<td>D12. I don’t know where to go for help at times</td>
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<td>D13. At first it was hard, but now I feel comfortable in the community</td>
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### E. Korean Community

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<th>Question</th>
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<th>Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E1. I get most of my help from other Koreans in Canada</td>
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<td>E2. I attend a Korean church</td>
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<td>E3. I take English lessons from a Korean agency</td>
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<td>E4. I have many Korean friends here</td>
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<td>E5. I associate mostly with other international Korean mothers</td>
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<td>E6. I paid a Korean agency to help me when I came to Canada</td>
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<td>E7. I used a Korean agency landing service</td>
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<td>E8. I take golf lessons or other sports/recreation activities with Korean instructors</td>
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<td>E9. I am a little isolated from other Korean families</td>
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<tr>
<td>E10. My family doesn’t interact a lot with other Korean groups</td>
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<td>E11. My husband, family, and friends have visited me here in Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>E12. I have a lot of support from overseas, even though I am here alone</td>
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</table>
F. Your Advice

1. What kind of support is most helpful for new Korean mothers coming to live in Canada (Korean community, school district staff, local community)?

2. What advice would you give new Korean mothers coming to Canada? How can they have the most positive experience? What should they do and not do?

3. What are some suggestions for how school districts can better support the mothers of international students?
Appendix D.

Questionnaire (Korean)

질문 사항

달타 생활 유학생들의 한국 엄마에 대한 연구 조사, 브리티시 컬럼비아

A. 배경

번 공간에 다음과 같은 질문에 제공된 답변 주시기 바랍니다.

A.1 캐나다에 도착한 날짜? __________________________

A.2 얼마나 며칠에 머무를 예정인가? __________________________

A.3 여러분의 자녀가 몇학년으로 입학 했는지? __________________________

A.4 해외 장기 여행이 이번에 처음인가요? __________________________

A.5 이전에 방문한 나라라는 어느 나라입니까? __________________________

A.6 당신의 영어 레벨은? (동그라미) 초급 중급 고급

B. 캐나다 경험

여러분의 의견을 나타내는 열에 "x"로 회신해주시기 바랍니다. 그 대답은 아이의 경험에 관한 것이 아니고, 당신의 개인적인 느낌에 기초되어 작성해야 합니다.

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<td>B6</td>
<td>가끔 스트레스를 받았다.</td>
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<td>외롭다.</td>
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<td>B8</td>
<td>한국으로 돌아가길 바라고 집에 갈 수 있을 때까지 기다릴 수가 없다.</td>
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<td>캐나다에 살면서 많은 걸 배우다.</td>
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<td>B10</td>
<td>여기에 있는 이웃과 새로운 방식으로 성장했다고 느낀다.</td>
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<td>이 경험은 긍정적인 방식으로 나를 바꿨다.</td>
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<td>B12</td>
<td>캐나다에서 새로운 활동을 시도했다.</td>
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<td>나에게 많은 스트레스가 있었다.</td>
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<td>자녀의 이점을 위해서 나는 희생되었다고 느낀다.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B15</td>
<td>도움이 필요할 때 날 도와줄 사람이 있다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B16</td>
<td>어떤 사람의 최소한의 도움으로 내가 스스로 많은 걸을 배울 수 있었다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B17</td>
<td>남편과 가족으로부터 멀어져 있는게 너무 힘들었다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B18</td>
<td>캐나다에서 생활이 한국에서보다 더 안락했다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B19</td>
<td>여기의 생활이 한국에서의 의무로부터 벗어났다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B20</td>
<td>캐나다에서 다양한 활동에 참여했다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B21</td>
<td>캐나다를 여행했다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B22</td>
<td>성격이 조금 조용해서 많은 활동에 참여하지 않았고 많이 외향적이지 않다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B23</td>
<td>여기에 친구들이 많아서 생활이 훨씬다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B24</td>
<td>한국에서의 생활과 비교하여 여기서</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

매우 그러함 | 그러함 | 그렇지 않음 | 매우 그렇지 않음
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>지류하다</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B25. 자녀를 위해 하는 일이 바쁘고 내 개인 활동을 할 시간이 없다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B26. 한국과 비교하여 내 활동을 위한 자유시간이 더 많다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. 학교 경험이

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>매우 그러함</th>
<th>그러함</th>
<th>그렇지 않음</th>
<th>매우 그렇지 않음</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1. 자녀의 학교에 가는게 편하다</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2. 학교에서 환영받는다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3. 학교에서 캐네디언 부모님을 만다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4. 다른 캐네디언 부모와 대화하고 소통한다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5. 나는 교장선생님과 대화하는 것이 편안하다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6. 나는 학교에서 열리는 행사에 참여한다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7. 나는 학교에서 열리는 회의에 참여한다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8. 나는 자녀의 학교 행사에 참여하고 싶지만 방법을 모른다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9. 나는 학교에서 자원봉사를 한다</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10. 나는 자녀가 가는 겐락을 함께 참여해왔다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C11. 나는 캐네디언 학교의 시스템이 어떠한지 이해하고 있다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C12. 나는 자녀의 교실에 자주 방문한다</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C13. 나는 어느 정도는 학교 행사가 가치 있다고 느낀다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C14. 나는 학교 행사에 좀 더 참여하길 원한다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C15. 나는 학교와 의사소통이 안되고 고립되어 있다고 느낀다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C16. 나는 전체적으로 학교와 의사소통이 긍정적이라고 느낀다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### D. 지역 델타 사회

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>매우 그렇함</th>
<th>그러함</th>
<th>그렇지 않음</th>
<th>매우 그렇지 않음</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D1. 나는 내 지역의 다양한 행사에 참여한다(스포츠, 오락, 문화)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2. 나는 내 지역의 영어 수업에 참여한다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3. 나는 도서관이나 오락시설 등 내 지역의 시설들을 이용한다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4. 나는 내 지역에 캐내디언 친구들을 만들어왔다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D5. 나는 캐내디언과 안면은 있지만 친구는 아니다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D6. 나는 주변지역이 점점 편안하다고 느낀다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D7. 나는 병원과 운동센터 등이 어디에 있는지 알고 있다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D8. 나는 필요할 때 내 지역의 의료서비스를 이용하고 있다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D9. 나는 캐내디언 병원보다 한국 또는 아시아계 의료서비스를 받는 것이 더</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

98
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>매우 그렇함</th>
<th>그러함</th>
<th>그렇지 않음</th>
<th>매우 그렇지 않음</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E1.</td>
<td>내가 받은 도움의 대부분은 캐나다에 있는 한국인들에게 받았다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2.</td>
<td>나는 한국교회에 다닌다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E3.</td>
<td>나는 한국의 유학원으로부터 영어 강의를 수강한다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4.</td>
<td>나는 캐나다에 많은 한국인 친구들이 있다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E5.</td>
<td>나는 다른 한국인 엄마들과 대부분 잘 어울린다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E6.</td>
<td>내가 캐나다에 왔을 때 한국 유학원에게 도움을 요청했다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E7.</td>
<td>나는 한국유학원의 캔딩서비스를 이용한 적이 있다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E8.</td>
<td>나는 한국인 강사와 함께하는 골프레슨 또는 다른 스포츠나 요락활동을 수강한다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E9.</td>
<td>나는 다른 한국인 가족들과 조금은 고립되어 있다고 느낀다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E10.</td>
<td>나의 가족은 다른 한국가족들과 잘 어울리지 않는다.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E11.</td>
<td>나의 남편과 가족 그리고 친구들은 나를</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F. 한국 지역사회
보았다 캐나다에 방문한적이 있다.  
E12. 나는 혼자 있음에도 불구하고  
해외로부터 많은 지원을 받는다.

F. 당신의 조언

1. 살기 위해 캐나다로 오는 새로운 한국 어머니들에게 지원해주는 최고의 도움은 무엇인가? (한국 지역사회, 학교 교육청 직원, 지역사회)

2. 캐나다에 오는 새로운 한국 어머니들에게 해줄 조언이 있다면? 어떻게 최고의 긍정적인 경험을 할 수 있을까? 해야 할 것과 하지 말아야 할 것은 무엇인가?
3. 학교에서 국제 학생의 어머니들에게 좋은 도움을 줄 수 있는 약간의 제안이 있다면?
Appendix E.

Simon Fraser University Ethics Approval

May 18, 2011

Deirdre Annett
Graduate Student
Faculty of Education
Simon Fraser University

Dear Deirdre:

Re: The Experiential Journey of Korean Mothers of International Students Living in Delta, Canada: A Narrative of Their Experience
- Appl. #: 2011s0197

I am pleased to inform you that the above referenced Request for Ethical Approval of Research has been approved on behalf of the Research Ethics Board. This approval is in effect until the end date May 10, 2014, or only during the period in which you are a registered SFU student.

The Office of Research Ethics must be notified of any changes in the approved protocol. Request for amendments to the protocol may be requested by email to dore@sfu.ca. In all correspondence relating to this application, please reference the application number shown on this letter and all email.

Your application has been categorized as “minimal risk” and approved by the Director, Office of Research Ethics, on behalf of the Research Ethics Board in accordance with University policy R.20.01, http://www.sfu.ca/policies/research/r20-01.htm. The Board reviews and may amend decisions or subsequent amendments made independently by the Director, Chair or Deputy Chair at its regular monthly meetings.
"Minimal risk" occurs when potential participants can reasonably be expected to regard the probability and magnitude of possible harms incurred by participating in the research to be no greater than those encountered by the participant in those aspects of his or her everyday life that relate to the research.

The REB assumes that investigators continuously review new information for findings that indicate a change should be made to the study protocol or consent documents and that such changes will be brought to the attention of the REB in a timely manner.

Please note that it is the responsibility of the researcher, or the responsibility of the Student Supervisor if the researcher is a graduate student or undergraduate student, to maintain written or other forms of documented consent for a period of 1 year after the research has been completed.

If there is an adverse event, the principal investigator must notify the Office of Research Ethics within five (5) days. An Adverse Events form is available electronically by contacting dore@sfu.ca.

All correspondence with regards to this application will be sent to your SFU email address.

Please notify the Office of Research Ethics at dore@sfu.ca once you have completed the data collection portion of your project so that we can close this file.

Best wishes for success in this research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director
Office of Research Ethics

cc: Dr. Milton McLaren, Supervisor

/jmy
Appendix F.

Delta School District Letter of Approval

March 8, 2011

Ms. Deirdre Annett
34 Alder Drive
Port Moody, BC V3H 5M3

Dear Ms. Annett,

I am pleased to advise you that your research proposal “The Experiential Journey of Korean Mothers of International Students in BC; A Narrative of Their Experience” has been given District approval subject to the following:

- Simon Fraser University Ethics Board of Approval

Please accept my best wishes for success with your research project.

Yours truly,

Nancy Gordon
Director of Learning Services
### Appendix G.

## Survey Results

A Research Survey for Korean Mothers of International Students Living in Delta, British Columbia

### B. Experience in Canada

Please respond to the following statements by putting an “X” in the column that indicates your opinion. The answers should be based on your personal feelings about your situation, not about your child’s experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1. Living in Canada has been easy for me</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2. I adapted quickly to life in Canada</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3. I have had lots of help in Canada and feel supported</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4. I feel my experience in Canada has been positive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5. My health and emotional state have been good</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6. I have felt depressed at times</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B7. I have been lonely</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B8. I long to return to Korea and can’t wait until I can go home</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B9. I have learned many things while I have lived in Canada</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B10. I feel that I have grown in new ways since being here</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B11. This experience has changed me in positive ways</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B12. I have tried new activities in Canada</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B13. There was a lot of stress for me</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B14. I feel that this was a sacrifice for my child’s benefit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B15. When I need help, I have someone to support me</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B16. I have had to learn everything by myself with minimal support from anyone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B17. It was very difficult for me to be away from my husband and family</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B18. My life in Canada is more relaxing than in Korea</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B19. Living here has been a break from my obligations in Korea</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B20. I got involved in a variety of activities in Canada</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B21. I traveled around Canada</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B22. My personality is a little quiet, I don’t join many activities and am not very outgoing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B23. I have many friends here and have a fairly busy lifestyle</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B24. It is boring here compared to my life in Korea</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B25. I am too busy doing things for my child and don’t have time to focus on my own activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B26. I have more free time for my own activities here compared to Korea</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### C. School Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C1. I feel comfortable going to my child’s school</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2. I feel welcome at the school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3. I know some Canadian parents at the school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4. I talk and interact with other Canadian parents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5. I am comfortable talking to the principal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6. I join events at the school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7. I attend school meetings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8. I would like to participate in my child’s school, but I don’t know how to get involved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9. I volunteer at the school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10. I have joined some fieldtrips with my child’s class</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>C11. I understand how the Canadian school system is organized</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C12. I frequently visit my child’s classroom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C13. I feel like a valued part of the school community</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C14. I would like to be more involved at the school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C15. I feel isolated and unconnected with the school</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C16. Overall I feel positive about my connection with the school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

**D. Local Delta Community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D1. I am involved in a variety of activities in the community (sports, recreation, cultural)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2. I attend English classes in the community</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3. I use facilities in the community such as the library and recreation centres</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4. I have made Canadian friends in the community</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D5. I have Canadian acquaintances, but not real friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D6. I feel comfortable getting around in the community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D7. I know where the clinics and health centres are</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D8. I have used medical services in the community for myself when needed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>D9. I feel more comfortable driving to Korean or Asian medical services instead of using Canadian clinics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D10. I haven’t been to any medical clinic for myself while I’ve been in Canada – I prefer to wait until I go back to Korea</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D11. I feel isolated in the community</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D12. I don’t know where to go for help at times</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>D13. At first it was hard, but now I feel comfortable in the community</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**E. Korean Community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E1. I get most of my help from other Koreans in Canada</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2. I attend a Korean church</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E3. I take English lessons from a Korean agency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4. I have many Korean friends here</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E5. I associate mostly with other international Korean mothers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E6. I paid a Korean agency to help me when I came to Canada</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E7. I used a Korean agency landing service</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E8. I take golf lessons or other sports/recreation activities with Korean instructors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E9. I am a little isolated from other Korean families</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E10. My family doesn’t interact a lot with other Korean groups</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E11. My husband, family, and friends have visited me here in Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E12. I have a lot of support from overseas, even though I am here alone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H.

Participant Questionnaire Comments

F. Participant Advice

1. What kind of support is most helpful for new Korean mothers coming to live in Canada (Korean community, school district staff, local community)?

Participant 1: “When I first came to Delta, I got help from (the school district Korean staff, hereafter called KS) and was able to get temporary lodging. Also, I’ve got so much help and advice from KS whenever there is a problem or obstacle for my child.”

Participant 2: “KS, the Korean counsellor working for Delta School District. She cares so much for her student and considers every aspect of the student’s life.”

Participant 3: “KS, she always smiles and cares and helps the family with everything.”

Participant 4: “As I had never been in Canada, I didn't really know what to do when I first came here, but the Korean counsellor in the school district helped me a lot, especially with the choice of school and accommodation. I was so relieved, I was able to adjust and start our lives off so well.”

Participant 5: “Whereas agents from the most school agency charge a lot for landing service, KS in the school district takes care of numerous difficulties my child and I experience.”

Participant 6: “Honest Korean” is the most important help.

Participant 7: “KS in the school district.”

Participant 8: The important support areas: “A Korean counsellor, good and close relationship with neighbours and communication with other parents.”

Participant 9: “One of the hardest things for mothers of the international student is the language barrier. Accordingly, attending any facility, school, or academy to learn English is the greatest help you can get.”

Participant 10: “Greater and broaden opportunity to study English”

Participant 11 – no response.

Two additional participants left all questions in this section blank.

2. What advice would you give new Korean mothers coming to Canada? How can they have the most positive experience? What should they do and not do?

Participant 1: “You should try to accept and assimilate into Canadian culture, this can only happen when you try not to think and judge the world in the viewpoints you’ve learned and held in Korea. It is also very important for you to educate and equip your child with Canadian manners and customs so that they can adjust well to the life in Canada.”
Participant 2: “I think it is important for you, as mother, to have a hobby or to actively participate in activities. And I advise you to take part for school events if you have certain knowledge and capability in English communication.”

Participant 3: “Of course, coming here is a huge sacrifice for mothers, you should still invest some of the daytime for yourself and enjoy leisure activities.”

Participant 4: “The school system of Korea and Canada is totally different, but I constantly see Korean mothers who are overly obsessed with their children and raise them in such an overprotected and dependent way. As long as you are here, I hope this kind of incident does not happen, and it is always better if you can retrospect the original reason that you and your children come to Vancouver and to reset the educational directions for your children.”

Participant 5: “The typical Korean educational style is not similar to that of Canada, so I advise you to expose your children to the Canadian education system that promotes lots of various hands-on experiences. Also, overprotection or obsession towards your children might be a bad idea for nurturing a child under Canadian culture.”

Participant 6: “Of course, the prime reason for coming here is to educate our children, mothers still need a motivation and purpose. Along with the care for your lovely children, we, as mothers, have to exercise and take English classes. Without these, you might be caught up with all those boredom and helplessness. Do not hesitate to go on a trip and study for yourself!”

Participant 7: “Proficient driving skill, study English for the minimal ability necessary for communication, have an organized plan and budgets.”

Participant 8: “Do not merely plan for your children but spend or invest some time for yourself. If you are fluent in English I suggest you to participate in volunteering.”

Participant 9: “Study English”

Participant 10: “Stay positive throughout all sorts of difficulties you might face.”

Participant 11: “Go around and deal with each incident by yourself (first hand experience). Make prudent use of the internet and have much background information through web-search then go on trips as much as possible. Things you should do: studying English, travelling, exercise. Things you should not do: meeting with Koreans only.

Two participants left this section blank
3. What are some suggestions for how school districts can better support the mothers of international students?

Participant 1: “I think it could have been better if there is any orientation program that can help mothers to learn about the Canadian school system which is fairly different and new from Korea.”

Participant 2: “It is often a case that mother of an international student cannot participate in a meeting or school conference simply because it is hard to know of the specific date or ways to be part of these kinds of events. So I really wish that there is a way for schools to deliver clear information that is designed specifically for mothers of international students.”

Participant 3: “I have been in a situation where my child and I feel like we do not get sufficient attention or chance to have a deep conversation with the principal of the school. Because most of the parents coming in have a tendency of aggressiveness and are eager to take part in the school event, it would be much better if we get proper assistance and guidance toward these events.”

Participant 4: “Honestly, it is really difficult for Korean mothers to approach and have a sincere relationship with Canadian mothers. Of course, this tendency is rooted in our language barrier, but it is also due to the cultural differences. To reduce this problem, I hope that the school provides a program specifically for mothers of international students. With the program like this, Korean mothers can be friendlier with the Canadians and have better understanding of the Canadian culture/life. I know that there is a volunteering program, but most mothers are just sitting around separately and go home right after the work assigned; it might be a little futile.”

Participant 5: “ESL classes offered by the school and taught by the school teacher for communication or conversation skills. Making clearer explanation and provide detailed information of the overall system or curriculum of the school.”

Participant 6: “Meetings specifically for parents of the international students. More consideration and understanding for international students who might have less proficiency in English.”

Participant 7: “I hope that someone can inform or provide mothers of international students with more detailed and clearer information on the Canadian education system.”

Participant 8: “Let us know how to participate in school events and to handle the assignments given.”

Participant 9: “I hope that someone can provide me (or mothers) the list of the students in the class with the students’ contact information so that I can invite each of my child’s friends. Also I like to know how I can participate in the school activities and events.”

Participants 10 and 11 – no response

Two additional participants left this section blank