BETWEEN TWO CULTURES WITHIN ONE RACE: KOREAN-AMERICAN YOUTH IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY THROUGH LITERACY IN KOREAN CHURCH COMMUNITIES

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Despite the rich body of literature on dealing with the question of boundaries between Koreans and the “outside world” such as other races and ethnicities, and even studies that dissect issues between the first generation Korean immigrants and second generation Korean-Americans, there has been relatively little attention paid to the invisible boundaries existing within one race, one ethnicity: the Korean-Americans. Through an ethnographical and socio-psychological approach, the research provides a snippet of various tensions that are created within the Korean church communities. However, not only does this research focus on mere culture and religious issues, but it also touches upon cultural identity and assimilation within one society, namely the Korean church community, by observing various modes of literacy. The paper shows how literacy is not merely used for communication purposes, but also as a social practice, which forms different identities within one cultural group. This study examines 1.5 and 2nd generation Korean-American young adults within two Korean churches in Pennsylvania, USA within a two year span of observation. In reflecting how boundaries can exist within one culture and religion, this study illuminates the need to blur the distinction or separation of Koreans through the terminologies, “1.5 generation” and “2nd generation,” especially more so within a religious place where we must not merely say that we are brothers and sisters of Christ, but act and feel like one body under one church.
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INTRODUCTION

One Sunday morning, I find myself in a new church. Stepping into the stone-built architecture, many warm smiles greet me. Until suddenly, one sweet looking Korean girl asks me in flawless English, “So, are you looking for EM or KM?" In other words, are you a Korean-American or Korean-Korean? Taken aback, I respond, “Um... I guess, I’m looking for KM service” in the same fluent, accent-less English as the girl. Most likely a second generation Korean-American like myself, the girl gives me a slightly confused and disappointed look and points in the direction where the Korean service is taking place.

Each time I come across another church, I always wonder if I am in the right place. What does it mean to be EM or KM? Was there even that much of a difference between them for a bilingual, second generation Korean-American like myself? We often find ourselves asking these questions of identity. What does it mean to be of a certain ethnicity? More particularly, what does it mean to be a Korean-American? How does one be more Korean than American? Many factors affect the way one looks at oneself. Each individual places himself or herself within certain groups. One of the factors that differentiate individuals is language. Using ethnographical methods, this

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1 EM: English Ministry, KM: Korean Ministry. Korean-Americans generally attend the EM service while Korean-Koreans or 1.5 Koreans go to KM. Further details will be explained throughout the paper.
paper will examine written and oral discourse practices within two Korean church communities to unpack latent tensions present within Korean culture in America today.

Generally, studies focus on tensions between first and second generation Koreans. Here, however, I examine between 1.5 Korean-Americans and 2nd generation Korean-Americans, or in other words, Korean-Americans who are forced to choose between Korean-Korean or Korean-American identity. While tensions between “in-betweens” among other ethnicities (Chinese, Japanese, and other South Asian groups) have been studied, more research is needed on similar tensions among Koreans.

Specifically, this paper explores identity among Korean-Americans with a focus on literacy practices (oral, written, digital) in Korean church communities. I conclude that spiritual literacy becomes a social practice through which Korean-Americans struggle to find an identity. To tackle these issues, we must first investigate how identities are formed and understand some of the concepts and theories of the creation of identity.

In part one of the study, the paper will analyze different ways in which an individual’s cultural or social identity is formed, and addresses whether the formation of an identity is a direct, fixed, one-way option for the individual stuck between two different cultures or is an ever-changing, multidirectional, situation-dependent process. Part two examines different types of literacy used in Korean churches and how they

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2 Mary Yu Danico acknowledges other in-between generational groups (Danico 1).
help create identities for Korean-Americans. Last, but not least, part three sums up the investigation results with a section of further research.

I. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON IDENTITY FORMATION

Cultural identity typically involves race, ethnicity, or national origin. For instance, someone who was born and raised in one country, yet who resides in another, may juggle with two identities. Today, many studies discover inter-generational tensions within ethnicities. Some scholars have said that Koreans of different generations are forming unlike identities, identities which are more identifiable within religious settings. According to some scholars, values and cultural ethics are what really shapes an individual’s social identity (Chong, 1998). Others say that identity is purely defined by language and social discourse (Jung and Lee, 2004; Kim, 2010). Still, some believe it is the social environment that mainly constructs an individual’s identity (Kebede, 2010; Lee, Chang, and Miller, 2006; Warner, 2007). But can identity really be constructed in only one way, or defined simply?

A. Theories behind the Acculturation of One’s Identity: Linear vs. Multifaceted

Identity research offers several different views about the creation of an individual’s identity. In the past, theories stated that when individuals from the second generation began acculturation within their ethnic cultures, they followed the linear
adaptation process (Jung and Lee, 2004). According to traditional views about minorities in the United States, “persons who function in more than one culture are expected to be in transition, linearly and preferably moving toward the dominant culture,” which in this case is Anglo-Saxon-European America (Lee, 2006). Lee identifies this idea as the “zero-sum model” because identification towards one culture presumably decreases the individual’s identification with another culture. Therefore, the individual is forced to become more American or more ethnic. This leaves no room for the individual to even consider their bicultural identity.

This “zero-sum model” describes Korean-American identity in Figure 1. In this linear model developed by Oetting and Beauvais (191-92), “the transitional model,” the region of stress as shown in Figure 1 is divided into three parts: Korean, 1.5 generation, and American. The “region of stress,” a continuum that shows the minority person’s level of tension builds as he or she moves along the spectrum, illustrates two cultures, American and Korean, which stand at opposite ends. Interestingly, according to this traditional model, the Korean culture is labeled as the “old, bad, traditional first generation,” whereas, the American is the “new, good, progressive second generation” (Lee, 2006). The continuum arrow points to American culture, leading to the implicit conclusion that it is better to move in that direction.

Between these two extremes, the 1.5 generation is “confused” or “caught,” between Korean and American cultures. As the number of (South) Koreans immigrating to the United States rises, the Koreans who were either born or have been living in

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3 Refer to the Appendix at the back.
America for more than three fourths of their lives (1.5 or second generation Koreans-Americans) realize that these immigrants merely look similar to them. The immigrants’ culture—their morals, values, attitudes, and language—are quite different from these Korean-Americans. Both Korean-Americans and Korean immigrants are forced to choose between two cultures and struggle through with the development of their identities. As Oetting and Beauvais characterize this situation:

The linear understanding of one’s cultural identification is reflected in the ‘1.5 generation’ terminology...The ‘1.5 generation’ Koreans who stand between two generations are regarded as caught in-between two cultures, marginalized from both cultures, thus often confused in their identity. The ‘1.5 generation’ Korean Americans are neither American nor Korean and are regarded as suffering from the anomie (absence or lack) of identity because of the canceling effect of two cultures on the continuum. The 1.5 generation Korean Americans are described as living in ‘islands of islands’ and belong fully neither to Korean nor American culture. (Lee, 2006)

The model above symbolizes how bicultural and bilingual Koreans are expected to identify with either the American or Korean culture without having the open options of choosing both (Figure 1).

However, as time goes by and more 1.5 generation Koreans flourish, the original, traditional model no longer applies. Instead of looking at the Koreans’ acculturation
process as a linear one, other scholars believe that the “zero-sum” model is biased because it is indicates that “the Korean…culture is not desirable and one would do better to move away from it.” Instead of having Koreans reject their ethnic culture and walk towards the American one, a more advanced model shows authentic Korean Americans distancing themselves from both Korean and American cultures. In this case, “Korean Americans…must confront not only biases toward their own traditional culture but also the pressure to conform and assimilate into the majority culture” (Lee, 2006).

Figure 2\(^4\) shows what happens to an individual who fails to assimilate into both cultures, resulting in the “marginal man,” rather than “an ideal Korean American hybrid” (Lee, 2006). According to the traditional linear concept of the acculturation process, the 1.5 generational Korean-Americans are assumed to suffer from “acculturation stress” because they cannot fit into the American nor Korean culture (Berry & Annis, 1974).

However, since this paper deals with Korean-Americans with mixed identities, assume that the extremes on each ends of the pole are not Korean and American cultures, but are the more Koreanized Korean-Americans (leaning towards the 1\(^{st}\) generation) and Americanized Korean-Americans (leaning towards the 2\(^{nd}\) generation). This includes 1.5 Korean-Americans and 2\(^{nd}\) generation Korean-Americans on both ends. As a result, in the center are not only 1.5ers, but the Korean-Americans in between 1.5 and 2\(^{nd}\) generation\(^5\). In this case, the \textit{in-between},\(^6\) are those who are neither fully 1.5 Koreans or 2\(^{nd}\) generation Korean-Americans:

\(^4\) Refer to the Appendix.
\(^5\) Look at Figure 3 in the Appendix.
Living in two cultures for most Korean Americans is not a choice but a given. Living in two cultures is like living in water that contains a mixture of elements. Many attempt to parse out certain elements as if they can be neatly isolated from lived experience. They treat the matter as a choice of either-or rather than both-and. How we construe ourselves makes a world of difference in how we carry our attitudes, biases and beliefs. (Lee, 2006)

Here, Lee maintains that it is impossible for a Korean American to completely avoid the influences of both cultures at the same time. Even though the more advanced model of cultural identification is that of an on-going, ever-changing process, the real issue is not whether the process is linear or multidimensional but whether identity can be seen as something that shifts and changes. One way to note those shifts is through the bicultural person’s attitude towards a culture’s values.

i) Sense of Security: Values and Cultural Ethics

In fieldwork conducted in two Korean-American ethnic churches in the Chicago area of 1995, Chong explores the formation of identity for second generation Korean-Americans. One of the topics he investigates is the placement of second-generation Korean-Americans in the larger American society. He argues that one of the markers

*Italicized are my words.*
that stand out of second-generation ethnicity is “basic value orientation” (Chong, 1998). Chong says that second-generation Korean-American church goers tend to distinguish themselves as a group from the outside world through cultural ethics. Barth (1969) notes that there are two orders within the cultural contents of ethnic dichotomies. First, there are the “overt signals or signs,” which are the “diacritical features that people look for and exhibit to show identity, which often include features such as dress, language, house-form, or general style of life” (Chong, 1998). Then there are the “basic value orientations,” which consists of the “standard morality and excellence by which performance is judged” (Chong, 1998).

To formulate his hypothesis on second-generation Korean-American identities, Chong makes certain claims about the second-generation Korean-Americans in the two churches—Chicago Church, which is located in the northern suburb of Chicago, and the “South Park Church,” which is a smaller Korean Methodist church in the Southside of Chicago. Through in-depth interviews and participant observation, Chong investigates the role of Korean ethnic churches for second-generation members and considers why they would choose to attend the ethnic church instead of an American one. The majority of these members are American-born, “well acculturated, highly educated, and upwardly mobile,” have attended or have graduated from four-year colleges, are employed in professional occupations like business, law, medicine, and social services or education in American society, and speak little to no Korean. However, they still choose to attend an ethnic over a more mainstream, American church. The more striking aspect is that they attend a type of ministry that is held in all English. Then why would they still
choose to go to an ethnic church? Chong states that the members’ replies were nearly
the same: “being able to maintain social networks with other Korean Americans or to
‘keep up’ the Korean culture and language” (Chong, 1998). He quotes one member’s explanation:

Why do I come to a Korean church? Well, it’s not strictly for religious
reasons, but cultural. Part of the reason is to keep some contact with the
Korean community because it’s our only source of cultural identity. It’s
also important to our parents – this is not the most important factor, but
one of the important factors. Another thing is that we think about the
next generation. Our kids will have the same exposure if we have contact
with the Korean community. (Chong, 1998)

Another stated a desire for ethnic community and fellowship:

The first thing that attracts people is fellowship, a sense of closeness. It’s
trying to find a group that’s comfortable. Lots of kids from white areas
come to church to relate to Korean friends. There is a sense of comfort in
being with other Koreans or Asians because there’s an understanding in
terms of background. For example, all Asian parents are strict. Korean
Americans have an unspoken understanding that we’ve all been there,
like experience of prejudice. (Chong, 1998)
Much like these two second-generation Korean-Americans, many other second-generation individuals feel the need to stay within their own group for cultural and ethical reasons. These individuals find their cultural identity through values and cultural ethics. Unconsciously, these individuals group themselves once more within their ethnic churches. In the second interview above, she does mention the overall Korean community such as “Korean friends,” and the comfort she finds with “other Koreans or Asians,” but observe her very last statement. She finds “an unspoken understanding” with other “Korean-Americans.” For some reason, it does not feel like she is talking about the first generational Korean-Americans. Most likely, she is speaking about other second-generation Korean-Americans who can understand what she feels in the American society such as “experience of prejudice.” Here, both interviewees seem to emphasize the sense of closeness within their own group: the second-generation.

Today, many Korean American Church leaders are aware of the issue of second-generation Korean-Americans leaving the church. They point out that though language may be the problem between first and second generation Koreans, values are also what widen the “cultural gap.” “Most second generation Koreans feel that the first generation Korean American Christians are not flexible enough to embrace their second generations” (Ro, 2004). Unlike how some scholars have characterized second generation Korean-Americans and their identity issues linked with cultural values, Ro states that “[m]ost second generation of Korean Americans...has lost their interest in either learning Korean culture or appreciating Korean values.” For instance, many first
generation Koreans feel that the second generation Korean-Americans are “too Americanized” (Ro, 2004).

But what exactly is being “too Americanized?” For this reason, today, many Korean-American churches are facing a new challenge—establishing Korean-American identity. However, despite what Ro and other scholars have said about the role of values in influencing a bicultural person’s identity, this question can be explored through the way language gives an individual a sense of cultural identity.

ii) Language: Cultural Literacy vs. Spiritual Literacy

Although cultural ethics and values may be of concern, the bigger issue is the language differences. Warner briefly explores why many second-generation Korean-American students seem to be “disappearing out the back door of their parents’ churches” and may possibly be abandoning their faith: “[m]embers of the second generation were not fluent in the parents’ native tongue, but at their parents’ churches the pastors typically spoke English with a thick accent and without awareness of American idioms (if they spoke English...at all)” (Warner 2007). For this reason, many Korean-Americans seem to leave their parents’ ministries, which are more than likely to be performed mostly in Korean, and attend American churches. However, nowadays, due to many Korean-Americans’ desire to “keep up” with their cultural identities, they try to find ways in which they can stay close to their Korean culture, but at the same time, maintain their American-ness (the English language and American values).
One factor that distinguishes Korean culture from first generation Korean-American culture is language: “When I think of Korean culture, the only thing that comes to mind is the Korean language. For Korean people, when they think of culture, they think primarily about language. That’s all there is really in our minds” (Kim, 2010). Though the statement may not quite be true for all Koreans, in reality, language does have a heavy impact in a community of Koreans. For the immigrant generation, language has always been seen as the most essential component of Korean culture. Even for other immigrants such as the European immigrants during the early 1990s, research has shown how language had been the major determinant of culture. “Herberg found that among the first generation of immigrants, because Americans did not recognize groups based on their regional source of origin but on their linguistic difference, ‘an emphasis on language gradually outlined the new character of the immigrant groups and answered the aching question of identity’” (Kim, 2010).

The influence of language in setting up a bicultural person’s cultural identity is most distinct during fellowship, where Korean church members gather and interact using casual conversations. Jung and Lee stress how “in-group” and “out-group” interactions play a significant role in the formation of cultural identity: “The individual constructs one’s multiple cultural identities as in-group, in comparison to out-group members” (Jung and Lee, 2004). The “in-group,” in a general sense, would refer to the group the individual feels more attached to. The “out-group,” then, refers to the “other ethnic group members” (Jung and Lee, 2004). Therefore, cultural identity is not defined on linear terms, but is negotiated and produced through social networking and
interactions within ethnic communities. In most cases, researches focus on the issues of “in-group” and “out-group” between two different ethnicities, but could this issue not be possible within one ethnic group?

Many Korean-Americans are caught in a quagmire. Take for instance, a 1.5 Korean-American who came to the United States at around the age of 15. In most cases, if that person grew up in a Korean environment and spent the rest of his or her years in America experiencing all sides to the American culture, he or she would most likely be bi-cultured and bilingual. Then does that make that individual more Korean or more American? Where can this person go within the Korean ethnic church: where there are more Koreanized Koreans (KM) praising in all Korean or more Americanized Koreans (EM) carrying out their service in complete English? One Korean-American, who came to the United States at age 5, states her cultural identity through language as well:

As I grew up, I discovered my identity as Korean through my daily interaction with both American and Korean peers. When I became a college student, I realized who I was and what made me different from American and other ethnic students. I spoke only English with peers before entering the university, but now speak Korean more often than before with Korean peers. (Jung and Lee, 2004)

In this young woman’s case, she is most likely referring to the “in-group” and “out-group” of Korean versus American peers. Through her everyday interactions in school between both Korean and American friends, she realizes that she can identify herself more with
the prior than the latter. This is because she liked using more Korean than English. But, what if her situation changed from toggling between the Americanized Koreans to the more Koreanized Koreans? Both sides are technically Koreans. Both sides do know about and acknowledge the Korean and English language. Then, which would become the “in-group” and “out-group?”

The same goes the second generation Korean-Americans. A second generation Korean-American does not necessarily have to be born in America, speak little to no Korean, and have a lack of interest in the Korean culture; he or she can be American-born, fluent in both English and Korean, and have a personal desire to know more about his or her heritage. Song notes how even within two Korean-American individuals, there is a possible chance of having different identities:

According to linguist Song there is an inverse relationship between the amount of Korean language knowledge and English language knowledge. The more Korean I know, chances are, the less English and vice versa among the 1.5ers. The younger one comes to America the more English and less Korea one will know and vice versa (Chong, 1977). So my experiences as a 1.5er, who came here at age 6, knows English more proficiently than many native speakers, only passively fluent in Korean, are different than the 1.5er who came here at 16. (Chung, 1997)

Koreans subconsciously label each other through the type of language one uses during the everyday interactions is what differentiates one from the other. Even though the
process of labeling may be necessary in other parts of our daily lives, labels will most likely have a negative effect on “the way people perceive themselves;” “Nagel (1996), on a similar note, states that there is a ‘dialectic’ between the internal identification of people and the way in which identities are externally ascribed to them” (Kebede, 2010).

iii) The “Powerful Others:” Society’s Influences

If identity is influenced by values and language, an even greater factor can be social environment. Even in elementary school, if one student is the only child wearing glasses, he or she will be ostracized, if not made fun of; a similar situation goes for a bi-cultured person. Kebede makes note of an important argument:

Since identity is a sociocultural marker, when a person identifies him/herself as belonging to a particular group, he/she is also pointing out that he/she does not belong to the other group. Identification with a group can thus function both as an inclusionary and exclusionary tool. In this respect, identity is political and a power dynamic is constantly present (Howard 2000; Said 2000; Zetter 1991). Accordingly, although individuals as well as groups want to define themselves, they also become defined by the powerful and dominant in society. There is a power struggle that occurs in defining the identity of the disenfranchised group. This struggle occurs between the powerful, who aim to define the other group’s identity, while this group, i.e. the disenfranchised group,
tries to exercise its own power and ability to define its identity for itself.

(Kebede, 2010)

Now, imagine a bicultured and bilingual Korean-American. He is comfortable with both American and Korean cultures. However, he must choose between KM and EM, where the prior is too Koreanized and the latter is too Americanized. Still, he must choose one group. “What follows from this is that even the most subjective definition of ethnicity...is not formulated in isolation, but in interaction with perceptions of others (Kumsa, 2006). When he steps into KM service, the majority of Koreans there are known to be “FOB”s—“fresh off the boat,” or the Koreans who recently came to America. They all use Cyworld. They all know Korean idioms and speak in Korean slang. Often times, he is not used to them and has trouble understanding them. Soon or later, other KM members will know that he is not exactly alike as them. So, in order to hide his American-ness, he eats like them, learns to talk like them, and perhaps, even dress like a “FOB.”

Alternatively, he attends an EM service. Thinking he will be able to get along with them more than KM members, at first, he thinks he feels at home. However, again, because he has a lot of the Korean cultured mentality and attitude, he has a hard time adjusting to being all Americanized. For instance, EM students would never use Korean words. They even dress differently. They may eat more often at Americanized places such as “Five Guys” or “Rita’s” rather than at “Han Chon.” Once, he spots an elder walking by so he greets him using appropriate honorifics and respectfully performs a short “jul,” or bow, in order to show respect since it is the right thing to do in the
traditional Korean culture. However, all of the other second generation Korean-Americans see his actions as awkward or out of place. In his home, he is accustomed to calling people who are older than him in appropriate honorific titles. However, he is seen as the *weird guy* if he calls older guys in his ministry as “hyung”s or older Sisters of Christ as “nuna”s. How then is he supposed to fit in? He must avoid using honorifics, use more of the American slangs when conversing with other EM members, and try to avoid doing Korean things such as eating too much Korean food, watching Korean movies or dramas, or having more Korean songs in his IPod.

When “[i]t is the everyday expectations of regular people in a person’s everyday life that can affect his/her idea about traditions, morals and values,” the creation of one’s cultural identity is not a straightforward, fixed process;” rather, it is “ascribed, achieved and/or managed” (Kebede, 2010). One must meet the others’ approval and criteria by creating the right impressions in order to be perfectly accepted into a group or community of people. Therefore, the linear conceptualization of cultural identification does not accurately depict the process of a bicultural person finding his or her identity. Instead, it is an on-going, situational concept because we live in a multifaceted society, where there can be “no such thing as a ‘pure’ monoculture that can be preserved” (Lee, 2006). Identity is something that is situational, fluid, and even, temporary.

**II. THE STUDY**

The investigation presented in this study consists of relevant literature reviews, interviews, paper surveys, and data obtained through participant observation of young
adults (also called “chung nyun boo” for KM, and “college group” for EM) affiliated with two different Korean churches in Pennsylvania. I analyzed an English Ministry from Korean Church A (KCA) and a Korean Ministry from Korean Church B (KCB) in Pennsylvania. Though the actual study was conducted from 2010 to 2011, the period of analyzing and attending those churches began around the year of 2008. One concern may be that the study of both EM and KM was not conducted in the same churches, but rather, one service per church. Although in-depth reasoning for not being able to study both services in one church will be further explained later on in the paper, the overall reason is that there is a subtle presence of discrimination among Koreans within one Korean church.

In Korean Church A (KCA) and Korean Church B (KCB), there exist two types of sermons: EM and KM. “EM,” an abbreviation for the English Ministry, is a service that is completely done in English. Often times the pastors may not even be of a Korean descent. However, what is clear is that everything would be in English. On the other end of the spectrum, “KM,” or also known as the Korean Ministry, is service entirely done in Korean. As it would be rare that any verbal or written use of Korean would be used throughout EM service, likewise, it would be strange for English to be seen or heard during KM.

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7 In order to respect the privacy of the churches and individuals involved, I have represented both churches in examination with pseudonyms, KCA (Korean Church A) and KCB (Korean Church B). The complete citations are listed under the References.

8 To protect participants’ privacies, the names of churches are named as pseudonyms. Research on EM was performed in Korean Church A (KCA); study of KM was from Korean Church B (KCB).
This chapter examines how different types of literacy are used within the church walls, which help create identities for Korean-Americans. Then, it explores how such identities are questioned and categorized within the Korean society. The chapter is separated into two larger sections: EM: English Ministry and KM: Korean Ministry. First, the paper will expose some of the participant observations of rhetoric used within each group, such as the difference between cultural and spiritual literacy, as well as the data analyzed from questionnaire and interviews. Also, due to the limitations of space, I restrict my discussion by exploring two out of many other Korean ethnic churches as well as denominations.

A. Methodology and Theoretical Approaches

In my study, I categorize the different generations of Koreans within an ethnic Korean church and subcategorize various identities that result from clashing of generations. Some of the variables I use to study their thought processes were the interplay of literacy within everyday interactions within each fellowship and the rhetoric found within websites, and even prayer. I developed a questionnaire that I distributed to both KM and EM members\(^9\). After I have retrieved the necessary data, I organized them into the different categories labeled from the beginning, and then, connected them to the overall phenomenon to which they related to.

As for the different types of data analysis, the participant observation, interviews, and the distribution of questionnaires from both churches were performed through a

\(^9\) See Figure 4 in the Appendix: Questionnaire that was distributed to participants.
purposive sampling, or more specifically, the “snowball” method, in which data is collected with a “purpose in mind” (Trochim, online). This method was used to reach a targeted sample in a short amount of time and where “sampling for proportionality is not the primary concern” (Trochim, online). I specifically decided to sample using this technique in order to “reach populations that are inaccessible or hard to find” (Trochim, online). The reason in this case is because, as mentioned before, there is an invisible force field of discrimination within the Korean church. For instance, since I was not able to perform observation or interviews from both the KM and EM from one church, I needed to find an individual who met the criteria to include him or her in my study, and then ask them to find others who they know that may also meet the criteria (Trochim, online).

Other observations were obtained through my being within each group for about a year during my stay at each church. They include investigating the structure or use of rhetoric in websites, listening to informal conversations exchanged during fellowship time, observing the language used during prayer, and random oral interviews with some of the members from each group. In order to protect the interviewees’ privacy, no names are specified.

B. General Observations from EM vs. KM

Perhaps I cannot say for all Koreans, but usually, when one Korean individual meets another fellow Korean for the first time, he or she may immediately wonder

\[\text{See Figure 5 in the Appendix: Snowball Sampling Chart}\]
whether that person is an immigrant, an exchange student, or an American-made Korean. Unfortunately, despite the fact that labeling human beings may not exactly be the most generous thing to do, Koreans labels Koreans. “You were a Korean-American? You look so much like a FOB!” “Did you know that he was a FOB? I thought he was a Twinkie all this time!” Whether or not we like to be labeled in such ways, the categorization of Koreans is inevitable. However, what about those 1.5 generation Koreans who seem more American? What about some of the second generation Korean-Americans who seem more like a “FOB?” In other words, what about the in-betweens, or those who are neither completely Korean-American nor Korean-Korean? Because of such labeling like “Twinkie,” “FOB,” “1.5,” or “second generation,” the individuals who do not feel like the label they are labeled with, are confused about their identities and places within the Korean (and possibly, American) society.

Established sometime in 1990, KoreAm Journal, the first most popular monthly magazine highlighting the news and issues of Korean-Americans, was born. “KoreAm,” published in Gardena, California, is “short for ‘Korean-American” (Lemann, 1996). However, what really matters is the appearance of Banana Man. Also known as “Dear Banana Man,” the anonymous advice column became the most popular feature in the journal. Throughout the columns, Banana Man plays against the stereotypical labeled role of a Korean-American: the “submissive straight-A students who care only about

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11 “FOB” means “Fresh Off the Boat,” a label used for either the first or 1.5 generation Koreans who seem more Korean than American.
12 “Twinkie” is a label used for second generation Korean-Americans or those who seem more Americanized than Korean.
obtaining graduate degrees and making propitious within-group marriages” (Lemann, 1996). However, how exactly true are these stereotypes? How are these labels forcing themselves on the individual, forcefully creating an identity for the each person? If we then further dissect the ways in which language and modes of communication affect how one identifies oneself within a society, we must analyze how certain terms are used to stereotype different groups. For instance, in the name, “Banana Man,” why would the columnist specifically choose the term, banana? According to Lemann, “banana” is a stereotypical racial slang for Korean-Americans:

“Banana” is a derisive Korean-American slang word equivalent to ‘Oreo’ among blacks. It means ‘yellow on the outside, white on the inside’ (an alternate term is ‘Twinkie’). Many children of immigrants from Korea are vulnerable to accusations of bananadom, because they speak little or no Korean and don’t live in Koreatown... (They would call their accusers ‘FOBS,’ for ‘fresh off the boat.’) (Lemann, 1996)

In this passage, both Korean-Americans and Korean-Koreans (Korean immigrants) are labeled with stereotypical cultural terms, banana or Twinkie and FOBS respectively. How then can an individual fit within either role? Does that signify that a Korean has no other possibility of identifying him or herself with other than being a Twinkie or a FOB?

According to Jung and Lee, the distinct categories of “FOB” and “Twinkie” constitute in-group boundaries at Eastern University, which generated much tension:
The group members identifying themselves as FOB closely engaged in Korean cultural activities in school with other Korean peers. Its members spoke Korean with each other, although most of them spoke English better than Korean. FOB members signified that although they had immigrated to the United States, they associate with other Koreans and do not make an effort to assimilate into mainstream U.S. culture. On the other hand ... Korean American students, nicknamed Twinkie, were not actively involved in Korean-related social and cultural activities and primarily spoke English in everyday conversation. (Jung and Lee, 2004)

Clearly stated, even those more Koreanized, or also known as “FOBS,” are not complete non-English speaking individuals. They are familiar with English and some even “[speak] better English than Korean.” However, the matter of fact is that they prefer to use Korean over English. Vice versa, the more Americanized group chooses to use more English than Korean. The difference does not end there. The labeling of “FOB” and “Twinkie” also determine “each group’s communication behaviors and language patterns:

The FOB students strongly resembled Korean college students in Korea in terms of their cultural behavior and communication patterns: they liked Korean culture (i.e., Korean dance, music and movies) and engaged in collective cultural activities with other Korean peers in school. Also the focused group...had a strong sense of respect for Korea customs...For
instance, FOBS usually addressed older peers as “Hyung,” “Nuna,” or “Unni,” –all honorific titles meaning older brother or sister. (Jung and Lee, 2004)

However, are all FOBS Korean immigrants or 1.5 generation Koreans? Likewise, are all Twinkies limited to only second-generation Korean-Americans? What if 1.5 generation Koreans carry more of the stereotyped second generation qualities, and some second generation Korean-Americans resemble FOBS? Perhaps it is the language that truly hinders bicultural, bilingual individuals from determining their true selves. When others unconsciously label one another, these labels become determinants of another’s identity whether or not that individual identifies him or herself in that manner.

“Between two seemingly contradictory cultural forces, Korean Americans [or rather, Koreans] are expected either to become more American (thus less Korean) or more Korean (thus less American), thereby leaving no alternative way of considering their bicultural identity” (brackets are in my words) (Lee, 2006). Then we must ask, “When and how do speakers select among languages, and in connection with which identifiable co-occurring features of the situation?” (Heath, 2008). In order to grasp the psychology above, one must turn to patterns of language, particularly applied lexically and syntactically.

i) EM: “English Ministry”
The primary concern within this study is not how each individual is labeled, but how each individual feels because, I argue, what makes one an “in-between” does not rely on labeling. The most important question I asked each participant in the questionnaire is how he or she identifies him or herself. For instance, I first asked whether they were born in the United States or not to find out how they identify themselves. Most of EM members circled, “United States.” Then, technically speaking, he or she would normally identify him or herself as a “2nd generation Korean-American.” However, my data says otherwise. Nearly eighty percent of the participants who were surveyed were all born in the States and have labeled themselves as a “1.5 Korean-American,” rather than a “2nd generation Korean-American.” How could this be? Some of the aspects we need to consider are the factors that affect one’s cultural identity. Perhaps by observing the interplay of literacy within the English Ministry we will be able to see how the rhetoric in one’s social surroundings can build upon one’s sense of identity.

One of the first things a person will hear when they step inside a KM or EM service is the language spoken. Some of the more popular expressions used among Korean-Americans in EM college groups are “support,” “thank,” “yikes,” “my bad,” “weak sauce,” “sadness,” “potluck,” “food,” “Operation Christmas Child,” “Coffeehouse,” “small group,” “flag football” and other creative uses of the English language. Secondly, the frequency of the language used is quite important as well. As observed before, in

13 (Schmo, head count for SUPER BOWL PARTY, February 4, 2010), (Schmo, happy new year’s!, January 1, 2010), (Venus Hill Christian Ministry, coffeehouse, March 18, 2009), (Doe, operation Christmas child + warm up America!!!!, November, 8, 2008).
most EM services, it is rare to hear any Korean language spoken. The majority of EM participants replied that they generally speak in only English. As one participant explains:

When I’m in EM, I try to always speak English, because often the atmosphere becomes awkward if I speak Korean in EM. There might be some EM people who are uncomfortable or sensitive about being Korean but unable to speak the Korean language. In fact, sometimes my friends would joke that I appear to be a “FOB” when I speak Korean and laugh about how non-American I seemed.

Being fairly bilingual, she had also once joined a KM group. There too, she feels discrimination when speaking in a language that is not majority within that group.

In the KM, I try to always speak Korean unless I somehow couldn’t express what I wanted to say in Korean fast enough. Similar to the awkward atmosphere in the EM, most of the KM people became aloof from me if I spoke English. Although I got along well with the KM people, there was an age hierarchy which demanded that I speak Korean in the KM. If I spoke in English, my older KM friends would repeat what I said and praise but partially laugh at my pronunciation. Speaking in English to my older KM friends created an uneasy atmosphere of disrespect or disconnection.

This second generation Korean-American woman cannot feel comfortable in either KM or EM without hiding her true self. She calls herself neither completely American nor
completely Korean because she feels like she is “in an awkward position between the ‘FOB’ and ‘Twinkie’ characteristics.”

Scholars, Yuet-Sim D. Chiang and Mary Schmida, introduce an acronym, “NELB,” that stands for U.S.-born Americans who have a non-English language background. Simply put, these U.S.-born Americans without perfect English language background describe themselves as “bilingual,” or having the ability to speak two different languages with equal or nearly equal fluency. However, they are not completely fluent in both languages. Cases like these can be seen as second generation Korean-Americans who are not quite fully Americanized as their other second generational peers. In other words, they have a balance of both the Korean and English language, unlike the stereotyped quality of a typical second generation Korean-American who would generally be more fluent in English than in Korean. Chiang and Schmida examine how U.S. citizens who are born from immigrant parents “define and negotiate the boundaries of language and identity” (Harklau, 1999).

Nonetheless, the words, “define” and “negotiate,” intrigue me. When defining something, one usually attaches A to B. However, in this case, NELB users are confused in whether to connect A to B because they use more than two languages but are not fluent in either. In this sense, they then must try and “negotiate” to which language or culture they belong to. “How can I give myself an American identity if I cannot even feel connected to the American language itself? By saying connected, I mean the feeling of owning the language and, therefore having full authority over it. It does not matter how
frequently I use English, somehow I can never feel that I own it,” says Hai Nguyen (Harklau, 1999). We can imply that Nguyen has knowledge of at least two languages, where English is one of them. The concern though is that he is an American; yet, he does not feel native to the country due to his incompetence in English compared to other American born citizens. With this in mind, we must question what it really means to be bilingual and how language can associate itself with one’s social and cultural identity. Individuals who call themselves, “bilingual,” likely mean that they are associated to two cultural affiliations with the heritage languages, rather than indicating they are fluent in speaking, reading, and writing in two different languages.

Another core difference is the use of honorifics between EM and KM. According to traditional Korean culture, it is respectable that younger generations should call their elders with appropriate honorifics. However, for the second generation, there seems to be a mix of responses when it comes to honorifics. Among EM participants, only one individual claims that he usually does not use honorifics: “We don’t really use honorifics in the English language, although we do call each other ‘man or bro’ as directive common verbal gestures.” This individual seems to be slightly more Americanized than the rest of the participants. He openly states that he joins EM mainly due to language barriers: “I always join EM because I can’t understand the crazy talk that a lot of Korean pastors use when preaching. I mean, I understand most Korean, but traditional Korean pastors talk like Shakespeare, but in Korean.” Clearly, for him, understanding the Korean language is what separates him from the rest of the Koreans. However, unlike some of the other second generation Korean-Americans, he does not feel comfortable speaking
even the littlest bit of Korean because he feels like he is “probably more of a Twinkie or a banana smoothie because [his] Korean isn’t that great and [he] mix[es] well with either whites or Asians.”

On the other hand, there are also second generation Korean-Americans who are either comfortable using honorifics at appropriate times and not at others. For instance, one participant feels the pressures from the group in using honorifics: “I used honorifics in KM, because everyone else assumed the use of them. I think the age hierarchy in KM pressured me into using honorifics. Being one of the youngest suggested that I used honorifics.” Still, another second generation Korean-American says that she is “familiar and comfortable in giving respect by using the honorifics or title in calling someone for what they are titled to be.” Through these examples, clearly we can see different types of second generation Korean-Americans even within one group, EM. Therefore, not all second generation Korean-Americans are alike. If this is the case, must all second generation Korean-Americans feel at home in their assumed comfort zones in EM? And vice versa, could a slightly more Koreanized second generation Korean-American fully feel comfortable in KM?

Another way literacy differentiates various generations of Koreans from each other is through the rhetoric found within each group’s websites. In most cases, EM promotes the use of Facebook and Twitter, if not their own highly technologized personal homepages. Often times, Korean-Americans have a distinct creativeness with

\[14\] Although well-established, they may not appear exactly as they did when this paper was first researched and presented.
the use of language. For instance, the KCA’s EM college group’s website is quite striking for the Korean-Americans in EM represent themselves\textsuperscript{15}. Many of the terms that are used throughout EM websites or blogs are “community,” “missionaries,” “blog,” “small groups,” “ministry,” “membership,” “newsletter,” and “hangouts” (KCA website). However, what really catch the eye are terms such as “Plug-In” and “The Pub” (KCA website). According to the general definitions of each term, “plug-in” is defined as something “designed to be connected to an electric circuit by plugging in” (“plug-in,” online); likewise, “pub,” is generally used to describe a place where “alcoholic beverages are sold and consumed” or in other words, a “public house” (“pub,” online). If these terms are used in the general sense, people would wonder why such language would be used in a Christian website. However, most likely, the designer of the site does not write those terms in the literal way. He or she is being creative—encouraging others to join in the fellowship. Once the visitor clicks on the highlighted links of “Plug-In” and “The Pub,” he or she will be led to another page that says, “PLUG-IN: Join the Family,” and “THE PUB: A place for community resources and mingling” (KCA website).

Now, if we examine some of EM participants’ responses with regards to the frequent use of different types of websites, we can see that the majority of EM students are attracted to Facebook or Twitter. Some of the reasons for using them were basically because everyone else in their group used them and could be used in “creating events for fellowship:”

\textsuperscript{15} See Figure 6 in the Appendix.
Some of my ministry friends update every single event, whether trivial or significant, in their day on the status updates on Facebook and Twitter. These updates fill in other friends about those daily events which they can talk about the next day. I believe the sites give the fellowship members close contact and conversations topics for the next day. On the other hand, they may be used for gossip and can greatly rob someone of her privacy.

As shown, clearly there is a lot of activity and communication through the web among group members. However, what is more striking is not the frequent use of these websites, but in what language they communicate in. In a general sense, it is assumed that the majority of second generation Korean-Americans lack in proficiency in reading and writing Korean. Like one participant had said, “I always type in English since my Korean isn’t that great and typing in Korean makes it that much harder, although I do know how to type in Korean.” Still, as he noted, he does have the basic knowledge in the language; he just prefers not to use it when he is around his EM peers. On the other hand, there are a few second generation Korean-Americans who feel rather comfortable in both languages. However, due to the pressures of other EM members who are not as comfortable in the Korean language, they submit to using pure English within EM service: “I type both English and Korean, but I use more of English since most of my friends are EM-goers.”

Each EM service from two different Korean churches represents their identities using similar modes of written and oral forms of literacy. Their websites show that “[w]eekly meetings of Bible study, worship and fellowship, as well as special youth
rallies and seasonal spiritual retreats throughout the year...have long characterized the Korean American youth ministry, provided not only the nurturing of Christian faith but also a sense of community for Korean American youth” (Park, 2005).

**ii) KM: “Korean Ministry”**

If in EM, several different types of second generation Korean-Americans were introduced, in KM, there are various types of Koreans as well. Generally speaking, the majority of Koreans are 1.5 generation. However, often times, there are a few second generations as well. Here the complications begin. Just as there were some second generation Korean-American students were not entirely able to be themselves around their peers, such as being able to freely speak using a mix of Korean and English, many Korean-Americans in KM feel the same as well.

Just as with EM, I thought to ask KM students the same questions, e.g., what they are technically labeled as but also, how they really felt. Out of KM members that were surveyed, three-fifths of the members were born in South Korea (technically being 1.5), and also felt like they were 1.5 generation Korean-Americans. However, two-fifths were born in the United States, technically being second generation Korean-Americans; however, they felt more like they were 1.5ers. Here, a second generation Korean-American woman responds as to why she feels more like a 1.5 Korean-American, rather than a second generation individual:
More Korean but living a life of a 2\textsuperscript{nd} gen. Korean American. I live in an American society preferring to choose the Korean Society. Although I face cultural clashes due to different mindset each society withholds, I choose or rather force myself into the Korean Society and retain myself in it. I grew up in a mixture of strictly old-fashioned Korean family, an individualistic American Society and a group-oriented Korean Society requiring us to give respect for certain things that ask us for.

She announces that she is clearly living the lifestyle of an American. However, she chooses the Korean society over the more Americanized one because of the “different mindset.” Also, she makes note that she “can join the EM without any trouble conversing, but as far as relating [herself] to it or being an interpersonally connected congregational, [she] would have to think on that.” Here we can see a second generation Korean-American not really being able to fit into either society: KM or EM. Even though she says that she prefers the prior over the latter, is she really able to completely connect herself with the more Koreanized Koreans? For instance, she was asked in which dialect she speaks within her ministry. She responds by saying that it would “depend” on the situation: “If I am in a congregation that strictly speaks only English, yes I would speak English only. If I’m in an EM congregation that can easily switch back and forth from English to Korean, I would speak both.” By this, we can assume that she is implying how it is rare to find a congregation that would have its members comfortably speaking in both languages, interchangeably.
What about other KM members in the ministry? If a second generation Korean-American may not completely feel like a second-generation or ideally Korean, then perhaps, a 1.5 generation Korean-American would feel a similar type of tension a bit more. Take for instance, a 1.5 Korean-American male who was born in South Korea and immigrated to the United States at the age of fifteen. When asked what generation he feels like, he answers that “it is complicated.” His sense of identity is further convoluted as he struggles to find a space where he is completely welcomed. For instance, his bilinguality takes a large role in determining his true identity. He is a bicultural and bilingual Korean-American, in other words, quite fluent in both languages; however, he too, like the second generation Korean-American participant mentioned before, feels the pressures of using one language over the other according to the type of ministry:

When I was in EM, I spoke both languages because most of the 2nd gens understood Koreans as well. But I spoke in English mostly because that’s what most of the people did in that group … When I switched to KM, I spoke only Korean because nobody spoke in English and also because I was more comfortable with Korean.

By observing his responses, this young man had experienced both services. Perhaps he wanted to explore his comfort zone and where he could fit in the most. However, during his stay at both the EM and KM, the pressures of the majority led him to use one language over the other. Clearly there is a sense of discrimination against one culture or language over the other between these two services, one more Americanized and the other more Koreanized.
A further contrast that can be found between EM and KM is the literacy used in internet websites and cellular phones. Today, not only do many Korean Christians use the Internet as a rich source of information on Korea, but also as a place to “build a portable church where fellow believers can connect to each other via the thread of frequent, running commentaries of their everyday lives” (Cheong, 2010). In this sense, not only do Korean Christians promote their religious practices, exchange quick prayer requests, and outreach through the web, but also create a space to grow a personal self and communal group membership awareness. However, again, within the Korean community, we find a divide between the types of language used to communicate within each website. As noted before, most of the Americanized ministries employ their own personal websites or engage in fellowship through the more popular form of American web-based communication sources, Facebook and Twitter. KMs’ use of literacy and modes of communication slightly differ from that of EM. One of the most obvious differences is the use of Cyworld, or in other words, the Korean version of Facebook and Twitter (“ReadWriteWeb”)

16. According to Alexa: The Web Information Company, Facebook is acclaimed to be a global popular form of web-based communication; whereas, Cyworld is South Korea’s choice of method.

Among many other forms of cyber-communication, some of the popular types of blogging or websites used by Korean Christians are personal homepages, Facebook, Twitter, and Cyworld. For many Koreans, church websites or blogs “has begun to play an
important role in reinforcing the cultural identity of ethnic diasporic groups” (Jung and Lee, 2004):

Korean church websites offer themselves as ‘texts’ from which to ‘read’ the spirituality of contemporary Korean churches. The graphics and audios of the site present conceptions of holiness, the divine, and spiritual life; the organizational aspects of the site show the interests and priorities of Korean Christians; and particular pages disclose current issues and spiritual understanding. The ‘reading’ of the Korean Internet is not only of interest for what it reveals about Korea itself but, because Korea is so far ahead technologically, it can also help predict the future of cyber-development in other societies. (Kim, 2006)

For instance, Twitter describes itself “as a new media service that helps users communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to the question, ‘What are you doing’ (Cheong, 2010)?” Cyber media is becoming a popular mode of communication where people can interact among their peers and keep in touch with them. However, for Korean Christians, it does not stop there. Sites and blogs such as Facebook, Twitter and personal homepages can offer a source of spirituality and place of worship as well: “Some evangelical Christian groups harness these coincident messaging flows to create meaningful pathways for personal, intercessory and synchronized prayer” (Cheong, 2010). This also invites deeper technology to come into play. Since Twitter and Facebook are quite popular in today’s society, many cellular
devices also easy access to such sites: “Just as mobile telephony assists distal family members to build ‘connected presence’...I suggest that faith tweets stimulating mobile mediated prayers help build a sense of closeness and ‘religious connected presence’ amongst the distributed family of faith believers, to recreate and reaffirm Divine and corporeal bonds” (Cheong, 2010). As stated, these different types of cyber technologies are becoming forms of spiritual literacy where church members can interact and form closer spiritual bonds by posting prayers, sending prayer requests and casually keeping in touch with each other.

However, just as different Korean-American students undergo a certain level of language barrier in their everyday conversations between the more Americanized and more Koreanized groups of Koreans, a similar type of tension exists within the Korean churches’ cyber-communities: the “cultural identity formation of second or third generations is not a linear adaptation process to host culture but a multifaceted negotiation process contested thorough wide-ranging interpersonal and mediated communicative interactions” (Jung and Lee, 2004). It can be assumed that there is a cultural difference that divides these two groups into Cyworld or Facebook users because the prior is one of the most popular forms of blogging used in South Korea, whereas, the latter is more likely to be known and used by Americans.

However, the important matter is that even the use of certain websites like these shows which group the Korean individual is in. For instance, if a student is known to use mostly Cyworld, another would assume that that individual is more Korean and
attends KM service. On the contrary, if someone is seen to be on Facebook or Twitter and does not use or know of Cyworld, he or she is assumed to be a “Twinkie” rather than a “FOB.” In this sense, again we can see how cultural identity is not a linear process, but a situational one. What I mean by this is that one’s identity depends on different situations and environment. KCA’s (EM) website offers the perfect example. Here, they announce on their main page to “Stay Connected” with Twitter and Facebook (KCA website)\(^1\). Likewise, take a look at Korean Church B’s (KCB), a Korean Ministry that was researched, website. In KM services, they mainly use the social networking system of Cyworld to communicate (KCB website)\(^2\).

Also, when examining the “patterns of talk sessions” in KM as we have done with EM, “the tight relationship between oral language—particularly in terms of lexical, syntactic and generic productive skills—and written language” will show how each group “rework stereotypes” and “position themselves interactionally” in order to “reveal their ideas about how to create groups and manage boundaries” (Heath, 2008). For example, I have recorded several of the brief conversations the Koreans had with each other, and noted their use of language. Often times, there would be repetitions in the uses of “hul” (the type of response when someone is amazed or taken aback), “huk” (the type of response when someone is annoyed or slightly insulted), “mung mi” (the type of response when someone is highly confused or surprised), “ki ki ki” (synonymous as the English form of ha ha ha), etc. However, occasionally, KMs would drop a couple of

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\(^1\) See Figure 9 in the Appendix.  
\(^2\) See Figure 10 in the Appendix.
English words as well. Still, they are usually associated with popular Christian terms such as “Quiet Time” and “Christian Café” (KCB website). So if someone asks a Korean, “What’s Christian Café?” the person would assume that the person who asked is most likely a second generation Korean-American. Whereas, if someone asks a Korean, “What’s Coffeehouse?” they would assume the person to be someone not as Americanized.

A further area to investigate is literacy in the spiritual context. Literacy exists not only in everyday conversations or websites and blogs, but; in prayer as well. For those who are mono-cultural or monolingual, there are not that many choices when it comes to trying to pray in a different tongue. For bicultural and bilingual Korean-Americans, whether they be 1.5 or 2nd generation, even praying in a certain language can differentiate between two Koreans. Of course, I am not implying that the other who prays in another language will be ostracized or thought to have lesser of faith than the majority language; however, one will see the other as more Americanized or more Korean through the choice of language he or she uses to pray in.

“I usually pray in Korean, because I strangely feel more in touch with God in this way,” says an EM second generation Korean-American female member. However, another EM second generation Korean-American male retorts, “I pray in English, my main language. Or I hum praise music, which isn’t a language but who says you have to pray in a language for the Lord to hear you?” In this sense, even though both individuals are second generation Korean-Americans attending EM services, they vary in the style of
prayer. The only difference is that, the female member feels more 1.5, or in other words, more Korean, than 2nd generation; whereas, the male member is and feels like a 2nd generation Korean-American. In retrospect, perhaps we can assume that someone who feels more Korean than American would resort to praying in Korean, and possibly in “Konglish,” which is basically a mix of Korean and English. Then, on the other side of the spectrum, the more Americanized Korean-American would stick with English straight through because he or she feels like that is his or her native language, rather than Korean. Therefore, if one second generation Korean-American student in an EM service is heard praying in Korean when everyone else is praying in English, perhaps the others would unconsciously assume him or her to be a bit different than themselves.

Where then do the boundaries take place? How do labels such as “1.5 generation” and “2nd generation” affect a bicultural and bilingual Korean-American’s sense of cultural identity? What about the second generation Korean-Americans who are neither quite Korean nor American? Where do these “in-betweens” fit in?
III. FINDINGS & FURTHER RESEARCH

The complexity of the “in-betweens” might not be as convoluted as it seems if there were no sense of discrimination between the two groups, KM and EM. The last set of questions I asked the participants were how they thought about the other Korean. If an individual was a 1.5 Korean, how does he place the 2nd generation Korean-American in society? Vice versa, how does a 2nd generation Korean-American who attends EM service think about another Korean in KM? Most participants felt some sort of tension or awkwardness around the other.

For many EM and KM members, the idea of being too Korean or too American revolved around similar ideals: the use of language and attitude. One Korean-American male says that being too Korean meant being “able to speak and write Korean fluently and able to communicate with native born Koreans.” On the other hand, being too American meant that individual “rarely uses Korean and avoids it because Americans label it as ‘foreign-talk’.” Whether or not these stereotypes are true, it is inevitable that there is an invisible wall that separates the Korean-Koreans from the Korean-Americans, whether they are 1.5 or 2nd generations. Both KM and EM students were asked a final question: “If there was a get-together picnic with both KM and EM, how would you feel? Would you be able to have a comfortable fellowship with them as you would with your ministry (just KM or just EM)? Why or why not?” Although a few individuals did like the idea and believe he or she would be comfortable, even that individual did mention how there is a bit of an awkward silence in between the groups: “I always like for my friends who are ‘too Korean’ or ‘too American’ to break out of their shell and befriend those
that I believe are good for them linguistically.” However, the majority of members from both KM and EM note how there may be a shred of awkwardness around their others.

Here were some of the responses from some of the members. A KM 1.5 Korean-American male states his point of view:

I went to EM during my middle-high school years then because of the grade gap between church and school, (I was 11th grade in school but 12th in church so I had extra one year in church), and out of curiosity, I switched to KM after high school graduation. I get along with either group but at the same time, I felt I do not fit perfectly into either group. My case is rare. In high school, there was no Korean at all. I consider my situation to be extreme 1.5 generation. And there aren’t many like me anywhere. I thought about this many times as I grew up. I also thought about such a picnic several times. I thought it would be great if there was Korean and English combined ministry. I would feel most comfortable in such a ministry, praising in both languages interchangeably and sharing both cultures without any offense. But I am a case and get-together picnic would feel uncomfortable for most of people.

This time, a second generation Korean-American female who goes to EM shares a similar perspective:

I have been in get-togethers with both the KM and the EM. I feel the pastors and the fellowship leaders did a great job in making them
enjoyable. I personally liked spending time with the united group, but inevitably a wall arose between the EM and the KM people. The KM and EM members rarely, according to my experience, spent much time together. Although all of the members from both fellowships were in one location, they would separate according to their comfort levels. Not only is the language barrier an issue between the KM and the EM people but also a cultural barrier. Many KM members are recent visitors to the U.S. who cannot easily cope with some of the EM members who only speak English and vice versa. From my experience, many EM members, on the other hand, are afraid of being judged as being only American and detached from their Korean heritage.

Both EM and KM perspectives felt that a get-together may be an uncomfortable setting for many. The reasons are due to language and culture barriers. If there is that big of a gap between Korean-Koreans and Korean-Americans, where can the in-betweens go? Whether they are labeled as second generation or 1.5, what if they do not feel fully comfortable in either group? What if they must always try to fit in because they are forced to choose between the pair labels—1.5 and 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation, “Twinkie” or “FOB?” One member says that she feels awkward always trying to “[conform] to the group instead of expressing [her] ideas.” Another says quite bluntly, “No, I have been a part of EM until I was 19 and most of EM population gives negative stereotypes to KM population,” as a response to EM and KM get-together.
To sum up the research, there are three key findings. First, society needs to revise traditional understanding of Korean-American identities. It cannot be assumed that all second generation Korean-Americans to be exactly alike. This also applies to 1.5 generations or other Koreanized-Koreans in general. Some 1.5 generation Korean-Americans may be more Americanized and have similar viewpoints or act like 2nd generation Korean-Americans rather than other 1.5 Korean-Americans. This implies that the construction of a cultural identity does not rely on a linear process, but rather, a multifaceted, changing one. Second, the findings show the barrier between EM and KM is strong. If the groups were originally created to overcome language barriers and a “silent exodus,” it can be inferred that these groups are further separating them from the entire church. Even though EM students attend their ethnic churches, they are nonetheless treated and seen out of place within the Korean church as a whole. Last but not least, the findings expose a problem with Korean Christianity today. If Christianity teaches people not to hate but love all and to become one body and soul, how come there is an invisible wall within one church? Clearly, EM and KM members are not completely on comfortable terms with each other.

The challenges posed by the relationship between Korean-Americans and their ethnic church raise questions about the future of Korean Christianity and the Korean ethnic church. Can a Korean who is comfortable with both the cultural ways of Korean-Americans and Korean-Koreans fit into Korean church communities? If Koreans are unconsciously expected to fit into either the uniforms of Korean-Americans or Korean-Koreans, where can those with “bicultural identit[ies] go (Lee 292)? According to Lee,
“[i]ndividuals experiencing multiple cultures especially with minority status, feeling caught between the dynamics of these cultures, report conflicting self-identity, values, attitudes, beliefs, or loyalty to a particular cultural group” (Lee 290). Due to line drawn between Korean-Americans and Korean-Koreans, the tensions that form within one ethnic community latently challenge the individuals’ sense of cultural identity. Through differences of language and modes of communication between the two Korean groups, Korean church communities often form an imperceptible barrier and discriminate against each other.

In this paper, I suggest that in order to create a more unified Korean entity in church communities, we must look into how we can break down such cultural and rhetorical barriers between Korean-Americans and Korean-Koreans. “The future of the ethnic church will largely depend on the future assimilation experiences of Korean Americans” (Chong, 1998). This will help the 1.5 generation feel less confused and torn about their cultural identities, perhaps by more activities where both KM and EM can participate. It is imperative that Korean ministries find ways to diminish walls that exist through terminology so that Korean-Americans can fully achieve a sense of full assimilation in walking through the doors of their ethnic church.

This research is limited in that it only observes two Korean churches in a limited geographical area for a short period of time. It does not investigate a broad range of religious denominations, different generations of Koreans in more specificity, or consider results according to gender, age, class, and background. Therefore, further
research may be needed in the areas of a larger pool of participants, varied
denominations, and a longer period of time, in which the study is conducted.
APPENDIX

Figure 1

“Transitional model of Korean American cultural identification” (Lee, 2006)
Figure 2

“Alienation model of Korean American cultural identification” (Lee, 2006)
Figure 3

Those In Between 1.5 and 2\textsuperscript{nd} Generations
Figure 4

Participant Interview Questions 2011

DIRECTIONS: Please respond to the following questions in the most honest and straightforward manner as possible. None of the participants will be openly named and identified, but anonymous. Please write on a separate sheet or in a different color ink. Thank you 😊!

Please circle one: (Korean-born in Korea; KA-born in Korea, but immigrated at youth or was born in the States)

1. My father is: 1) Korean 2) Korean-American 3) Other
2. My mother is: 1) Korean 2) Korean-American 3) Other
3. I was born in: 1) Korea 2) United States 3) Other
4. I identify myself as: 1) 1.5 generation Korean-American 2) 2nd generation Korean-American

Free Response:

1. If you were born in Korea or a different country, at what age did you immigrate to the United States (if born in the US, please disregard answer)?


3. If you have heard of the words, “FOB” and “Twinkie/banana,” what do you consider yourself to be? Why?

4. If you knew about EM (English Ministry-ministry done in all English) and KM (Korean ministry-ministry done in all Korean) in a Korean ethnic church, where would you usually join? Why?
Your Church Ministry and You:

1. Do you speak in Korean or English during fellowship in your ministry?

2. If you are in EM and do not have barriers with the Korean language, do you always (try to) speak English only? And if so, why?

3. If you are in the KM and do not have barriers with the English language, do you always (try to) speak Korean only? And if so, why?

4. In the traditional Korean culture, there is the use of *honorifics* (ie. oppa, nuna, dongseng), do you prefer to use them within your fellowship? Why or why not?

Your Ministry Website and You:

1. In your ministry personal homepage/website, what is most popular? (ie. Cyworld, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

2. Are you usually active on those sites? If so, why?

3. How do these websites help you gain a sense of fellowship?

4. On the website forums, do you usually type in Korean? English? Or a mix of both?

Prayer and You:

1. When you pray, in what language do you usually pray? Why?

2. There are different ways to pray (ie. openly praying loudly with others; openly praying softly with others; quietly praying individually, etc.) What is most comfortable for you?

3. Pretend that you are praying now. Please write a couple lines of prayer as you would normally pray:
You:

1. What do you think defines a Korean person from being too Korean (literacy-wise)?

2. What do you think defines a Korean person from being too American (literacy-wise)?

3. If there was a get-together picnic with both the KM and EM, how would you feel? Would be able to have a comfortable fellowship with them as you would with your ministry (just KM or just EM)? Why or why not?
Figure 5

Snowball Sampling

Researcher contacts three individual participants

Participant One

1.1  1.2  1.3
Participants recruited to sample by participant one

Participant Two

2.1  2.2  2.3
Participants recruited to sample by participant two

Participant Three

3.1  3.2  3.3
Participants recruited to sample by participant three
Reflecting Our Creator.

We’re a community of people following after Christ, and we invite you to join us. “Reflecting our Creator,” is a tag-line we strive to live up to. It means reflecting His love, mercy, and care to the world around us.

Take a few moments to look around our website and find out more of what we’re about as a community and as local & international missionaries. Don’t be too shy to come to an upcoming event or sit in on a weekly community group, to which all information can be found in our “Plug-In” section.

Members and seekers are encouraged to also check out The Pub, which will serve as an extension for our weekly discussions at Sunday Service and in our smaller groups. Pastor [Redacted] will be keeping a blog on The Pub with ideas and challenges to aid the community and don’t be surprised if there are polls held from time to time regarding decisions and changes we may want to implement as a ministry with the input of the church body. Membership is strongly encouraged and also necessary if a member would like to subscribe to the [Redacted] monthly newsletter and find out the latest happenings. You can also check our calendar for any upcoming group hangouts.
**Figure 7**

Another EM website

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<thead>
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<th>Global</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>South Korea</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Yahoo Japan</td>
<td>Naver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Google</td>
<td>QQ</td>
<td>FC2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>YouTube</td>
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<td>Google Japan</td>
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<td>MSN</td>
<td>Google</td>
<td>Cyworld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Windows Live</td>
<td>Netease</td>
<td>Mixi</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Auction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 8

KCA Website

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We're a community of people following after Christ, and we invite you to join us. "Reflecting our Creator," is a tag-line we strive to live up to. It means reflecting His love, mercy, and care to the world around us.

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Figure 9

KCB Website

 Works Cited


