A qualitative study on the bicultural experience of second-generation Korean immigrants in Germany

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Abstract

This research focuses on second-generation Korean immigrants and the strategies they used to combine two different cultures — parents’ and resident cultures — in their everyday lives. Using a case to reconstruct the meaning behind the strategies employed, this study aims to identify factors that influence immigrants' development when exposed to two different cultures. To investigate this development, an autobiographical interview was conducted on a second-generation Korean immigrant in Germany. The interview was analyzed through objective hermeneutics. The findings of the case study reveal how Ji-Hye Song (interviewee) was able to blend into both Korean and Germany societies, similar to a chameleon. The interviewee developed the ability to combine and control the influences of two cultures in a ‘Korean island’ located in Germany.

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Introduction

Multicultural societies are formed when people from different cultures migrate and become members of a different culture. As these migrants carry their own culture and way of life into another setting, they not only experience differences but also absorb, through social remittance, the ideals, norms, practices and identities associated with the new culture [16]. The first generation of Korean immigrants influenced the breakdown of national and cultural boundaries within the local culture and played a role in integrating and combining the two cultures. By taking their own culture into an unknown region, they were confronted by different cultures. This resulted in culture clashes between the two that affected the people on a personal and social level. The focus of discussion on the subject of multicultural society is how another culture is understood and integrated into their personal and social lives. If a multicultural society was born through the influx and mixing of local and ethnic cultures, the second generation of immigrants can reshape the way

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we perceive and define a multicultural society. Unlike the first generation, second-generation immigrants experience their ethnic culture through their parents and the local culture where they reside. The first generation of immigrants moved from one culture to an unfamiliar culture and they experience conflicting cultural norms and rules. Second-generation immigrants are born and raised in two cultures simultaneously. In other words, these second-generation children form their identities and reconcile the norms and values of both cultural groups, those of their parents and of the country of birth [33]. This study shows how second-generation immigrants cross the group boundaries of two cultures and combine different cultural rules and values.

An individual’s membership in a group influences his/her sense of belonging. The member knows their position within that group and has a clear understanding of the rules he/she is expected to follow. However, once the boundaries that define a group are blurred, their clear sense of belonging within a group and associated cultural rules become ambiguous [2]. These second-generation immigrants, who live in a world where they must cross two cultural boundaries, form an unstable sense of belonging, which is a fundamental human desire [19]. The blurring boundaries affect their grasp of cultural norms1 that determine social acts. In the process, they are faced with an identity crisis.

According to Ref. [17]; most children of immigrants ultimately compromise with the norms and institutions of the place where they are raised. Some children, more deeply and intensely embedded in transnational social fields, do not simply choose between the home and the host society. Instead, they strike a balance, albeit tenuous, between the comparable resources and constraints circulating within these fields and deploy them effectively in response to opportunities and challenges that present themselves. Immigrants’ children’s experiences are not just a continuation of the first generation’s involvement in their ancestral homes but rather are an integral part of growing up in a new destination [17].

Berry, who researched this topic, defined acculturation as the cultural and psychological change that occurs when a member has contact with two or more cultural groups [3]. According to the acculturation process, strategies employed by second-generation immigrants can be categorized into four types: Assimilation, Integration, Separation, and Marginalization.2 However, this research does not aim to classify second-generation immigrant assimilation strategies but instead seeks to understand their coping strategies by looking at overall life experiences. The rationale behind this approach is not because their multicultural experience is found in independent events throughout their lives. Rather, these events occur in a continuous series and are affected by each decision made. Therefore, it is important to understand the events in a sequential manner [20], Namely, if we are to understand fully the control strategies used by the focus group, we need to approach their life events sequentially.

By looking at life stories and events, this paper will explore how second-generation immigrants develop in an environment where two different cultures coexist; find what strategies are used to help define their position in the two cultures; and rediscover the significant effects their strategies have on their lives. Furthermore, by studying case studies of second-generation immigrants, this research seeks to propose topics of discussion regarding the different coping strategies used to address their borderline status. For this purpose, the Autobiographical Narrative Interview of a second-generation Korean immigrant (collected by Fritz Schütze) was chosen and analyzed through Oevermann’s objective hermeneutics.

Method of data collection and analysis of data

Method of data collection

Autobiographical narrative interview (F. Schütze)

F. Schütze’s Autobiographical narrative interview is done by interviewees telling their life stories without having prepared in advance. The open, unstructured interview gives the interviewee more control and flexibility over what life experiences they want to relate, allowing the interviewer to study their lives more accurately and completely. The life stories, which the interviewees choose to tell or remember in an impromptu setting, have a special significance in their

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1 In sociology, a norm is a shared expectation of behavior that connotes what is considered culturally desirable and appropriate [11].

2 Assimilation is what happens when immigrant youth have little interest in cultural maintenance combined with a preference for interacting with the host society. Separation is what happens when cultural maintenance is sought while avoiding involvement with others from the host society. Marginalization is defined as when there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance and little interest in having relations with others. Finally, integration is defined as when both cultural maintenance and involvement with the larger society are sought [4].
lives. In addition, the interviewer finds out what happened in a social context when a socially active participant shares their perspectives through the interviewee's life stories. By observing an individual's life, it is possible to understand the general social environments s/he is living in. This research method gives the interviewer a precise and realistic narrative, narrowing the gap between research and reality by allowing the interviewee more control. The interviewer starts with an open question, e.g., 'I am interested in your life. Will you tell me about it up until now?' Supplementary data were collected through additional (implicit and explicit) questions after the main narrative has ended — usually marked by a coda [13,28–31].

Method of data analysis

Objective hermeneutics (U. Oevermann)

Objective hermeneutics is a method of text analysis created by Ulrich Oevermann, a Professor of sociology at the University of Frankfurt, Germany, which combines research with a practical, orientated foundation to study theories and practical principles in social science [6]. Hermeneutics originated from an effort to enter the individual's subjective and objective world and to reorganize it to understand human history [13,27]. Hermeneutics, developed by Wilhelm Dilthey, was based on philosophy and operates much like a hypothetical debate between a 'genius' philosopher and the 'text' [13]. This type of philosophical hermeneutics was succeeded by Gadamer, and later U. Oevermann, who works in the tradition of Habermas. To apply philosophical principles to social science, Oevermann created an objective verification procedure, as part of his objective hermeneutics approach, to apply the concept of reciprocal subjectivity. Therefore, in objective hermeneutics, subjective perspectives must be verified through group discussions [21].

The main purpose of objective hermeneutics is to discover the hidden meaning and structure from expressed gestalts (Ausdrucksgetalt) [22]. These expression gestalts portray two dimensions: one comprises mental, social and cultural expressions constructed by meaning and revealed by empirical science; the other, much like how we embody our own subjective reality (Lebenspraxis), shows the objective response to our subjective experience of the world [22]. Thus, objective hermeneutics focuses on people's intersubjectivity and emphasizes the need to understand human rules and hidden meanings behind subjective experiences. The procedure itself consists of conceiving and fixing the social action in question as a form of text, then interpreting it hermeneutically with regard to action and generating latent meaning structures. That is why it is one of the most appropriate methods to analyze the data from the narrative interview, which can be used to find out the meaning of personal experiences. In other words, we can deduce objective structures from subjective thoughts and analyze possible meanings of the data methodically and by stages.

There are five steps in this process.

Step 1. Raising questions about the subject.

In this step, the researcher begins to think about the purpose of the study and why s/he is interested in the subject. There is a need to prevent the study from asking too many irrelevant questions, which could distract the researcher.

Step 2. Confirmation of text type.

The researcher must confirm the text type that s/he wants to analyze. Raising questions about the text type helps to categorize the data and to form the overall structure of the study.

Step 3. Sequential analysis.

The researcher categorizes the interactions and analyzes them sequentially [13]. The sequential analysis of each individual contribution to an interaction is carried out systematically, without first incorporating the internal or external context of the utterance [21]. In principle, every paragraph, line, and word of the text should be sequentially interpreted, and the researcher should analyze every level of the interview with a genuine mindset. Group discussions are required to draw as many hypotheses as possible. All compatible meanings of the documents — ‘Lesarten’ (the ways of reading) — are generated through the process of arguments presented by different interpretations as a thinking experiment. A ‘Lesarten’ which generates an inappropriate meaning for the text is excluded during the interpretation process [7].

Step 4. The extensive meaning interpretation.

The ‘Lesarten’ are checked against the text to verify its meaning during the extensive meaning interpretation stage. If the procedures preceding this
focused on gathering the facts and their meaning from the text, the extensive meaning interpretation stage confirms the facts and meanings derived from the text and offers a general interpretation on which to base a research hypothesis. Furthermore, when interpretation of the text is required, other relevant resources and theories are used.

Step 5. Structural hypothesis.

In the final step, the researcher sets up the hypothesis by generalizing the structure. Extensive meaning interpretation is done by an interpretation group until a winning hypothesis remains and it is possible to form a research question [7]. The surviving idea becomes the hypothesis, and the researcher conducts repetitive falsification of it. If the researcher decides that the hypothesis has been proved, the process of objective hermeneutics ends.

Case study

Case summary

Ji-Hye Song was born in 1979 in H, which is located in the northwest part of Germany. She was the eldest of three and had two younger brothers. Her father came to R in Germany as a miner in 1974 and her mother came to H in Germany as a nurse in 1975. They married in 1978 in Germany. After her father's mining contract ended after 3 years, he worked for a car factory in H. In 1979, he died due to cancer; Ji-Hye Song was 18 years old. Ji-Hye Song's mother had worked as a nurse in a hospital before she retired; she now lives with her sons in H.

Ji-Hye Song has been participating within the Korean community and has been an active member, especially at her Korean church. Since she was a child, she has attended this Korean church every Sunday. Alongside her regular school, she attended Korean Language School every week. Before she went to University, the death of her father was a hardship she had to face; it made it difficult for her to focus on her studies. Despite this, she was able to excel and complete Gymnasium at school. She went on to study Economics at P University, which was what her father wanted her to study. After graduating from University, Ji-Hye Song went to the Hotel school in I, located in the south of Germany. A change came when she realized her abilities were limited in economics. While she studied at the Hotel school, she visited Korea to do an internship for 6 weeks at L Hotel. There, she was disappointed by the authoritative work culture in Korea, so she gave up her plans of living in Korea. When she returned to Germany, she worked at a small Hotel, and there experienced racial discrimination from her colleagues at the workplace. She quit her job at the hotel in 2007. Since 2008, she has been working for another hotel in P, located in the southwest part of Germany. She married a second-generation Korean immigrant in 2008.

Step 1. Raising questions about the subject.

This research aims to understand how second-generation Korean immigrants negotiate and integrate two societies and cultures that have different norms and values, what strategies they adopt, how such experiences contribute to the formation of their identities, and what meanings they have in their lives. This study looks at the lives of those who have grown up in the Korea that they experience via their parents at home and the Germany where they have lived.

Step 2. Confirmation of text type.

The text analyzed in this study takes the form of a dialogue between I and S, and all of the conversations are recorded in detail. In the dialogue, most of I's sentences are short and end with a question mark, implying that I is the interviewer. S speaks longer and in more detail than does I. Therefore, it can be inferred that the conversations between these two are questions and answers. The text is an interview, where I questions S on specific topics and S gives answers. Interviews are used to verify qualifications in such situations as university admission or job interviews or to obtain information in the context of news reporting. While a questionnaire or a formula in a structured form is used in quantitative research, interviews with open questions are often used in qualitative research in an effort to acquire a broader understanding of subjective perspectives of interviewees. One purpose of conducting an interview is to understand research subjects via interpretation. With more open questions, researchers can explore the context, meaning, and motives of behavior of interviewees, collect theories related to everyday lives and perspectives of research subjects' ways of interpretation, and achieve discursive understanding via interpretation [9].
Step 3. Sequential analysis.
Step 4. Extensive meaning interpretation.\textsuperscript{3,4}


L1: When introducing someone, diverse perspectives can be taken such as birth, background of growth, and jobs. Among many perspectives, the emigration of Ji-Hye Song's father from Korea to Germany and the year of emigration were chosen first because her father's emigration to Germany had been a rare case back in 1974; Koreans could not travel overseas freely at that time.

L2: Ji-Hye Song mentioned the emigration first among characteristics of her father, not to introduce her father but to explain why she was born in Germany. Following the timeline, she was born in Germany because her father had moved there, so she could not begin her story without mentioning her father's emigration.

\textit{The extensive meaning interpretation}

Step 4. Extensive meaning interpretation

Ji-Hye Song began to tell her life story with her parents' emigration. Her description of the parents as immigrants in Germany can be associated with the background of her birth and growth in Germany. She thought that she needed to explain why she was born in Germany because she inherited Korean characteristics from her fathers, such as appearance and language. Tracing back to the timeline, her parents' emigration was the beginning of her birth in Germany, and that is why she began her story with her parents' emigration. She gave such a statement because she believed that others might not find being born in Germany ordinary. The background explanation may not be necessary for those to whom birth in either Germany or Korea is nothing special, but Ji-Hye Song, who does not belong to either of the societies, needed to explain why she was born in Germany.

If Ji-Hye Song's father moved to Germany in 1974, he likely was a miner, as most Koreans who went to Germany in that period were involved with mining. Korea began to send miners to Germany in the early 1960s. With a high unemployment rate in the 1960s, Korea signed the “Exchange of Notes concerning the Joint Establishment of a Skilled Workers School” on March 18th, 1961, with the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. Germany needed labor forces from outside the country to support the process of industrialization. On December 13th, 1961, Korea signed the “Protocol concerning Economic and Technical Cooperation”, which included economic aid (The Truth and Reconciliation \textsuperscript{[35]} from West Germany). After that, the first group of 121 miners were selected in a recruitment process and sent to Germany in December 1963. In 1965, the Korea Overseas Development Corporation was created; it contributed to sending miners in large numbers. In the first phase of emigration between 1963 and 1966, 2521 Korean miners moved to Germany (The Truth and Reconciliation \textsuperscript{[35]}). In the second phase, 1970–1977, 5415 were sent to Germany in 47 rounds. On average, 1000 miners moved to Germany annually. Therefore, his emigration in 1974 implies that he went to Germany as a miner. He had new experiences in Germany, but he was not a complete “pioneer” compared to other workers who had moved earlier because emigration of Korean miners to Germany had begun 10 years before; a Korean community had formed already by the time he arrived in the country.

13–14: I went to school from Monday to Friday. I took a piano lesson once a week and went swimming twice a week (laugh).

L1: Ji-Hye Song's life was routinized and organized. She went to school from Monday to Friday, took piano lessons, and went swimming on a regular basis. As a student, she learned the piano and exercised hard, perhaps because her parents were interested in child education. Many Korean parents have a great interest in and spare no expense on child education. Ji-Hye Song's parents also arranged a schedule for her learning.

L2: Ji-Hye Song took piano and swimming classes during weekdays after school, which reduced her time spent at home. School life and leisure activities increased her time spent on interactions with members of German society such as friends and teachers and on learning German society and culture. Therefore, Ji-Hye Song became more familiar

\textsuperscript{3} According to the procedures of analysis method, all of the texts had been analyzed until case structural hypotheses came out. However, in this paper, only some of the texts are presented because of space limits.

\textsuperscript{4} Sequential analysis and extensive meaning interpretation have been conducted in different steps, but two steps are presented in the same section because ‘Lesarten’ formed in sequential analysis and its extensive meaning interpretation can be laid out more sequentially.
with the German way of living and felt comfortable in her relationship with “Germans”.

L3: Ji-Hye Song laughed when talking about her regular life. This was a laugh of embarrassment because she thought she did not live as she wanted but instead followed what her parents told her to do. In other words, she carried out activities even though she did not want to, but she felt forced to do so by her parents. Looking back at her past, she laughed to express her regret and embarrassment.

L4: Ji-Hye Song structured her student time with regular activities on a calendar. She expressed her intent to systemize and organize things as she tried to organize and form her abundant experiences from childhood by organizing her regulated life from that time.

The extensive meaning interpretation

Step 4. Extensive meaning interpretation

She remembered her school years as times when she had followed the routine of learning: going to school, taking piano lessons, and going swimming. In fact, many students have a routine of going to school or learning something, so she was not expected relate such subjects when talking about her past life in the interview. However, she gave meaning to her obligation to go somewhere regularly and repeatedly rather than to her activities of studying at school and playing the piano. This is because such repetitive and regular activities dominated her everyday life. In other words, such experiences may not be memorable or meaningful because these were routines that were experienced repetitively. However, if she had few opportunities to have other experiences and her life had been dominated by such activities, her school life would have been formed by what happened repeatedly.

Then, what is the meaning of that regular and repetitive life to Ji-Hye Song? Seemingly, her routine, which followed a scheduled program, dominated her daily life as a student. She spoke a narrative of “I had to go somewhere on a regular basis” rather than a narrative of “I did something” because her routine of keeping the schedule was more meaningful to her daily life. This is a passive life, where she did not have autonomy but instead had to follow the calendar schedule. Instead of doing something with autonomy, she followed something that was already fixed. In fact, many children of Korean immigrants took piano and swimming lessons in their free time. According to a survey, Korean immigrants chose music (piano, violin, flute), dance (ballet, Korean traditional dance), and sports (swimming, table tennis, Taekwon-do) lessons for their children [15]. Therefore, the activities that formed Ji-Hye Song’s daily life were chosen by her parents based on the culture that was shared with other immigrants.

17–19: However, that wasn’t fit. In fact, there was something like that. My father told me to become a tax accountant… My father’s dream was to make me a tax accountant.

L1: Her father’s dream was to make her a tax accountant; this played a critical role when she chose to study economics and accounting. Although the subject was not a fit for her, she followed her father’s decision because Korea’s patriarchal culture, i.e., parents’ authority, has a major influence on making choices. In her choice of job, her father’s decision came before hers, illustrating that the father’s authority played a critical role in her life.

L2: In the text, it can be read that Ji-Hye Song studied accounting at university because her father’s dream was to make her a tax accountant. A parents’ dream for their children is not coercion or duty but wish and desire. Therefore, it can be interpreted that she chose accounting not because she was forced by her father’s authority but because she wanted to make her parents dream come true.

L3: She chose the major recommended by her father because she trusted her father’s decision. She followed it because she had trust in him and believed that the subject would bring her a good result, even though it would not be fit for her because her father had a good understanding of the characteristics, strength, and weaknesses of the interviewee, having raised her for approximately 20 years.

The extensive meaning interpretation

Step 4. Extensive meaning interpretation

Ji-Hye Song chose to study economics at university as her father wished. Her father said that her being a tax accountant was his dream and strongly recommended that she become a tax accountant, which led to her choice of economics and accounting as a major. It is not known precisely when she realized that economics and accounting did not correspond with her aptitude, i.e., whether it was before or after making a choice to study the subject. However, it can be inferred that either she accepted her father’s recommendations even
though she knew that she would not like the subject, or she chose the subject without knowledge of what she was going to learn at university. In either case, the main subject at university was not chosen by herself but by the father. Ji-Hye Song did not make a judgment and a choice on her own about what she would study at university. She chose the dream job her father wanted her to have.

Ji-Hye Song's choice to follow her parents, especially her father, can be understood in the context of Korea's patriarchal family culture, where family members should respect father's authority and have values accordingly. Korea's patriarchal family culture is based on Confucianism, where children have a moral value of being “good” to their parents and a key value of respecting their parents [32]. Additionally, in a comparative and experimental study of Korea and America [34], respect for parents, harmony among family members, and children's sacrifice are considered to be important family values in Korean families. In short, Korean family members have respect for their parents and authorities as moral norms based on Confucianism. This caused Ji-Hye Song to make not her choice but that of her parents.

29–31: But… out of three, one of them was really close to me, so… I used to see her every day; we went to Korean language school together and went to same church.

L1: The Korean language school and Korean church that Ji-Hye Song went to could be experienced only by second-generation Korean immigrants. She could not share such experiences with her German friends but gained them because she was a child of Korean immigrants. She had a close relationship with the children of Korean immigrants because she could share the unique experiences at the Korean language school and Korean church with them.

L2: After mentioning that one of the friends was close to her, the interviewee said that she had met this friend at Korean language school and Korean church. She became close to the friend not because she saw her often at the school or church but because she met her often in those places because of the close relationship with her/him. In other words, she was very close to the child of Korean immigrants and went to the places where she could meet her friend, and those places happened to be the Korean language school and Korean church.

The extensive meaning interpretation

Step 4. Extensive meaning interpretation

Ji-Hye Song met this friend at school who grew up in a similar environment to hers and formed a close relationship with her while meeting her not only at school during weekdays but also at Korean language school and Korean church on the weekend. She experienced Korean culture at home through her parents, who had been socialized in Korea, and she shared Korean culture that had been formed by Korean immigrants with the friend who belonged to the category of “Korean” in her daily life.

Korean language school is not a formal education institute but is an institute that teaches Korean language and culture to Korean children. According to a study [12], Korean language schools were found in 1983 and 1984 in most of the regions in Germany where Koreans lived. Korean parents sent their kids to Korean language school to help them learn parents' language, have a Korean identity, and learn Korean culture and tradition. In line with such purposes, Korean language schools taught Korean, Korean history, and geography [15].

Korean language schools established by Korean immigrants were found not only in Germany but also in the United States. According to a study by Ref. [37]; the school gives the opportunity for the second generation of immigrants to share the feeling of being brought up in immigrants’ family, create a peer-network, form the identity of their ethnicity, and have pride. The Korean church was established by the first generation of immigrants and became an important community of Korean immigrants. Since the first gathering was made by Korean nurses in Bonn in 1964 [10], seven Protestant churches were established in the Nordrhein-Westfalen State, which was home to many Koreans [15]. Korean churches were established with the help of German churches but were operated mainly by Korean students, pastors sent by Korean missionary groups or pastors recruited by the churches. Korean churches were a group of “Koreans” and rendered help to those who came to Germany so that they could adapt to their lives in Germany, and psychological support to cope with loneliness and emotional issues [10].

With the characteristics possessed by the Korean language school and Korean church of Korean immigrants, which was to transfer Korean culture, Ji-Hye Song's experiences there could not be shared with most of her German friends. Therefore, the unique experience she shared with her friend, who was a child of
other Korean immigrants, played a key role in forming their own solidarity and intimacy. The feeling of solidarity between Ji-Hye Song and her friend created the boundary of “Korean”, which could not be shared with other friends, but cost her lose opportunity to interact with friends who were “Germans”. At school, she could experience German culture via school education and interaction with friends, but the solidarity between Ji-Hye Song and her friend served as a boundary that excluded other friends and prevented her from having meaningful communication with other members of German society. To sum up, she was more familiar with Korean culture not only at home but also at school, of which the mainstream culture was German. Ji-Hye Song’s life was the same as the first generation of immigrants who continued to experience Korean culture in everyday life by forming a “Korean community” in Germany and actively interacting with community members after moving to Germany.

Step 5 Structural hypothesis.

Life as a chameleon

“I am very Korean with Koreans but very German with Germans”.

One of her life structures revealed in her interview is that she has a tendency to follow decisions made by others. This is most noticeable in her everyday life as a student. During the interview, it was found that her everyday life was filled with swimming classes and piano lessons that were taken on a regular basis as well as Korean language school and Korean church. According to an analysis, such activities were chosen by Korean immigrant parents in Germany for their children’s education. Ji-Hye Song’s parents also wanted her to receive the same education as the children of other immigrants. She learned swimming and piano and took part in the Korean community not by her desire or curiosity but by her parents’ decision, and Ji-Hye Song seemed to follow their decisions. In addition, many other rules that dominated her daily life were set by her parents. Despite some conflict, she followed her parents’ decisions on curfew, boyfriend, and even school life.

When choosing her university major, which would determine her career, she chose the one that her father wanted. She studied economics in college not because she wanted to do so but because her father wanted her to study the subject and become an accountant, a field he believed would be fit for a woman. In fact, she could have made her own choice before going to college because her father died of a disease, but she still chose economics and continued to study the subject and graduate even after she realized that it did not correspond with her aptitude. This shows her tendency to follow others’ decisions rather than make an autonomous decision. She decided to work for a hotel and is now satisfied with her work because her job requires a value of serving others. Among many different jobs at the hotel, Ji-Hye Song believes that her job of serving others — hotel guests — and meeting their demands, not hers, is suitable for her.

262–263: “...Then, in regard to service, I abandon myself and then... like serving guests. That is very Korean. In some way, I think... it suits me...”.

If one follows others’ standards as does Ji-Hye Song when making an important decision in her life, it means that she is oriented toward heteronomy. As seen in Piaget’s definitions of autonomous morality and heteronomous morality, in the heteronomous phase, a subject is subjected to another’s rule [24]. Specifically, SDT classifies most heteronomous forms of motivation as being externally regulated, those that reflect partial assimilation of external controls as introjected, those that reflect personal valuing of the actions as identified, and those that are both personally valued and well synthesized with the totality of one’s values and beliefs as integrated [26]. Therefore, if one has a heteronomous attitude, he would behave in line with standards set by others in any circumstances. Ji-Hye Song also behaved in compliance with standards that were formed by Korean norms and values in a community like the Korean immigrants community of her parents or other Korean immigrants, where “Korean culture” is a mainstream culture. Ji-Hye Song was born and grew up in Germany, but she embraced the “Korean” values and norms without objection; even she said she feels more comfortable with Korean culture.

The characteristics of Ji-Hye Song were fit for the community of Parents or other Koreans that were rooted in Korean culture because the Korean culture around her created the relationship between parents—children and individuals—society based on Confucianism. Confucianism culture places an importance on respect for parents’ authority, obligations of children, “being good children”, “harmony”, and “other-oriented relationship” [32,34]. In the structure of Ji-Hye Song’s family, family members also had to obey parents, especially the father, who is called “breadwinner” in Korea. Thus, her other-oriented characteristics helped her maintain the family culture without conflicts in a family communication structure, where
family members should respect the father's authority and follow the father's decisions. The acceptance of child education of the authoritative father put her under the control of the father rather than facilitating making autonomous decisions. The other-oriented culture based on Confucianism values also has the same structure as Ji-Hye Song's [5,25]. When she said “Korean” culture is fit for her, she meant that her other-oriented characteristics are compatible with Korean culture, where other's perspectives are more important than are her own.

107—109: “I had hard times because I was sensitive to rumors. If I had not been too Korean but more like German, I would have ignored those but it was difficult because I was very Korean”.

Song's other-oriented structure affected her way of accepting the standards of German society, where she spent her entire life. She interacted continuously with groups of Korean immigrants while she grew up, but she lived and spent more time in such places as schools or work that where German culture and people predominated. As shown in the analysis above, her other-oriented characteristics are the same as those in Korea's Confucianism culture but at the same time, she complied with the standards of German society in a group that is dominated by Germans and German culture, not with the norms and values that are assimilated in Korean immigrant groups. She behaved in a way that would be considered rude or wrong in a Korean society with Confucian culture. For example, in a meeting at work, she sits while her boss is standing up. However, she behaves in the same way as Germans treat others in Germany. This shows that she has a structure in which she decides how to behave based on the circumstances and the standards of others around her. In other words, she follows Korean norms and values in a place where Korean culture is mainstream, while following German norms and values in a place where German culture is mainstream.

438—440: “However, it wouldn't happen in Korea. Anyone would stand up no matter what, so sit down. However, I couldn't do so there. Well, then in Korea, I have to stand up and it is natural but if I do so in Germany some might call it flattery”.

To sum up, between her parents' culture and the country where she lives, Ji-Hye Song sets one group apart from another and behaves according to the standards of the group where she is currently located. In any group, she would neither impose her unique personality or characteristics nor compare and evaluate one group by the standards of the other. Instead, she follows the norm that is universal in the group. This behavior is similar to that of a chameleon that changes its colors in accordance with the surroundings. She tries to change herself to the color that matches a particular circumstance instead of giving off her unique color. Her structure is formed in the process of experiencing both societies and minimizes the possibility of experiencing conflicts either internal or with others in the face of different norms and values in two different groups. In any areas where two different values conflict, Ji-Hye Song does not apply a single standard to evaluate the values of different groups but complies with the standards posed by others around her. That is why she does not have conflicts between two groups. As a child of Korean immigrants and a member of a minor group in German society, she could be considered a successful assimilation model because she accepted the mainstream culture of German society as her own. Ji-Hye Song, who was assimilated into the mainstream culture of German society, can be seen as the best result of the ‘Leitkultur’ policy that was led by German culture and was a main topic of Ausländerpolitik (policy on foreigners) in the 1990s [23]. This can be understood in a context of recognizing Korean immigrants as one of Germany’s best immigrant groups because they assimilate into the mainstream culture of German society and remain quiet, not generating conflicts based on cultural differences.

Living on a Korean island in Germany

I don't feel like I am Korean in Korea and I feel I am really a Korean in Germany.

Another structure in Ji-Hye Song’s life is that, although she was born in Germany, she did not move beyond the Korean community. She continued to keep in touch with Koreans at Korean language school and Korean church from when she was a student, make friends with Koreans at Korean church, maintain a network with Koreans, and she even married a child of Korean immigrants. She has stayed in the networks of Koreans because she was affected by her parents, who wanted to retain Korean culture as they had been socialized before moving to Germany. Her parents kept a family culture based on Korea's Confucianism, while keeping their children exposed to Korean culture. Her mother was so active in making Korean networks that she established a Korean church. Naturally, Ji-Hye Song took her part in such groups out of obligation and kept in contact with Koreans she had known since her childhood.
She kept in touch with Koreans even at school. She had made a friend in a Gymnasium who was a child of Korean immigrants such as her, even though she was in a field where most of the students had German parents and German culture was mainstream, and where she could move beyond the culture and people who were related to Korea. However, in the field, she made a friend whose background was the same as hers, and their shared experiences let them form a little “Korean immigrant group”. As a student at a school in Germany, Ji-Hye Song met other friends who did not reside within the Korean boundary and made friendships with them without any major conflicts because she had a tendency to follow the standards of any group to which she belonged. However, they formed an independent group of their own, having their background in Korea although their physical beings were located in German society because the unique experience of being the second generation of Korean immigrants could be shared only between them.

35: “Of course, I had German friends at school, but all the other friends were Korean. All second-generation…”.

She was part of the Korean network as a student not by her autonomous choice but at the request of her parents. She did not have major conflicts within the Korean community but, initially, she took part in the Korean community because her parents wanted her to learn Korean identity and culture. However, while studying at the university and living away from parents, Song still looked for a Korean community and formed networks within it as she had done before. She had meaningful relationships with Korean students at Korean church and the second generation of Korean immigrants. Although she was in a space where she would not be affected by her parents, she still set up a Korean network voluntarily because she followed the path that she had taken since becoming a student. It did not begin out of autonomous choice, but she continued a path of living like a “Korean” with “Koreans” in the process of being in groups of Koreans, from childhood until becoming a student, sharing the cultures of those groups, and forming meaningful relationships with the members. According to the Path-dependency theory, one’s inertia, i.e., one’s process creates a certain movement, and if the movement begins to bring about a certain outcome, the process continues to stay in the same direction and follow the same outcome [18]. For Ji-Hye Song home and Korean immigrants groups were a starting point of having networks with Koreans and a Korean lifestyle. She repeated the process at school, forming networks within it, relying on the path that had been marked already instead of creating a new network outside the Korean community. She created a close relationship with other second-generation Korean immigrants with environments and characteristics similar to hers. When at age 16 she visited Korea, she felt comfortable surrounded by people who looked similar to her, unlike in Germany, and felt solidarity inside Korean groups. This led to self-reinforcement, and this inertia of being surrounded by Koreans kept her on the path even after she moved to another area.

Then, what is the meaning of a Korean network in Germany to Ji-Hye Song, who has lived between her parents’ country and a country of her life? It means that she does not have a sense of belonging to German society or an identity of “German” even though she has lived in Germany since birth. As shown above, her other-oriented characteristics cause Ji-Hye Song to follow rules and norms in German society, with no major conflicts with any members in any groups. On the surface, she would seem to be a good assimilation model for German society because she speaks and behaves like Germans. However, this does not mean that she feels a sense of belonging to German society. She lives in Germany and behaves in a way that can be acceptable in German society, but she feels a sense of belonging and makes meaningful interactions in a Korean immigrant community where “Koreans” gather. Within the boundary of “Koreans” that is marked by a Korean community created by the first generation of Koreans, Ji-Hye Song and other children of Korean immigrants maintain the ethnic group of “Koreans”. It is the life of people who exist in the space of Germany but live in a “Korean island”; its members have cultures that are different from the mainstream culture. The second generation of Korean immigrants lives on this Korean immigrants’ island that was formed by the first generation.

255–256: “Um… If a question is asked… for example, do you feel you are a Korean or a German? Therefore, I would say Korean”.

Koreans are not the only ethnic group that has created an “island.” Though the size and level are different, Turks also created an ethnic group in Germany. According to Heitmeyer’s research, there is an increasing number of immigrants who have withdrawn to their ethnic groups inside Germany. Some Muslims go back to Islamic beliefs or extreme Islamic groups. He reported that the gap between German society and ethnic groups even with the third generation of immigrants is growing and that the country has the potential
to take the form of a “parallel society” [8]. This means that the boundary between German society and immigrant ethnic groups is not blurred. Although there is a need for a way to blur the boundary between ethnic groups and German society, there still are clear boundaries because ethnic group members tend to stay inside the boundary across generations.

Living in a “Korean island” inside Germany means that Koreans live in areas centered around the ethnic group of “Koreans”, but they do not leave Germany, where their island is located. In fact, Ji-Hye Song had a plan to live in Korea and could have had an opportunity to do so. However, while being trained at a hotel in Korea for six weeks, she experienced a different Korea from the country that she learned in the Korean immigrant community; she reached her limit on living in Korea as a “Korean” and finally decided to live in Germany. She could leave a “Korean island” and live in Korea, but she chose not to do so because of the difference between the “Korean island” in Germany and Korea. As a young child, she began to learn and experience the Korean language and culture in the Korean immigrant group in Germany. However, the Korea that they learned is only a part of Korea, where the people live all in the Korean way. The second generation of Korean immigrants goes to school, works in German society, and spends much of its time in German society and culture. They learn Korean culture and society to an extent that does not make them feel uncomfortable about German language and culture but, actually, they experience Korean culture only to a limited extent. Therefore, Ji-Hye Song, who was assimilated well into Korean culture inside the “Korean island”, found herself different from other Koreans in Korea. When choosing Korea and trying to belong to a complete Korean group, she realized that she was not Korean and could not be part of the Korean group.

After experiencing a sense of difference in Korea, Ji-Hye Song tried to make a new attempt to have a sense of belonging to “German” society. Then, again, she heard a remark of racial discrimination in a German group, experiencing an exclusion from it and realizing that she could not belong to the same group as other Germans, which put her in a crisis of losing a sense of belonging again. In other words, Ji-Hye Song had the experience of discovering herself as a different being from both groups when she attempted to belong to the group of Korea or Germany. Her strategy to cope with the crisis of losing her identities in both groups and experiencing confusion is to stay on the “Korean island” that exists between Korea and Germany, where she can keep a sense of belonging and identity as “Korean” and maintain the way of life with which she feels comfortable.

Conclusions

This study analyzes the life of Ji-Hye Song, a second-generation Korean immigrant living in Germany, via objective hermeneutics. The study reconstructs Ji-Hye Song, who changes as a chameleon in accordance with Korean immigrant groups and German groups, and who lives on a “Korean island” with other Koreans in Germany. When changing as a chameleon, Ji-Hye Song is considered a successful assimilation model for the second generation of immigrants in German society. But, at the same time, the children reside inside a boundary that was set up by the first generation of immigrants; they have stayed in the isolated space of a “Korean island”.

The ramification of this study is that we need to understand the second generation of immigrants from a holistic perspective to consider individuals and the environment around them. As seen in the case study analysis, Ji-Hye Song assimilated into German society while still having the sense of belonging to Korean society because of continuous interactions with a sense of solidarity inside the Korean community and having experiences of not being recognized in German society. The same results are found in the case study of the second generation of immigrants by [14]. This leads to a need to understand the characteristics of individuals and the environment around the second generation of immigrants from a holistic perspective. In addition to the perspective of interactions between individuals and society, understanding from a sequential perspective that considers inter-related characteristics of experiences in the lives of second-generation immigrants is also necessary. To understand the multicultural environment of second-generation immigrants, a professional integration manager, for example, a social worker with a high level of knowledge about human development and cultural diversity, is required. As a negotiator among children and family and host society, the integration manager is expected to support second-generation immigrants when they experience conflicts or problems.

Also needed is recognition of the new identity formed by second-generation immigrants who stay in the middle zone of family and community. As seen in the case of Ji-Hye Song, she had the identity of a “Korean living in Germany” placed in the middle zone between Korean and German societies in the course of her life while not being able to belong to any of the
groups and losing a sense of belonging when trying to belong to a certain group. Therefore, if someone with such an identity were asked by a family or a society to choose one group and form a consistent identity, they would end up in a crisis of losing their identity. What is required of the systems around them is to recognize them as beings with a new form of identity. Additionally, the mainstream society where they now live and will live in the future should both acknowledge the middle zone of second-generation immigrants with this new identity and seek ways to integrate that middle zone into part of German society. The alternative of separating it into an isolated sub-group of the mainstream society, as was done for the parents of the second-generation immigrants, is unacceptable.

References
