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"Korea is Korea. How do we react to that? Honestly, 'cos it frustrates us."

The experience of young Canadian migrant workers in Seoul.

Nirmala Bains

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Social and Cultural Anthropology) at
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Abstract

"Korea is Korea. How do we react to that? Honestly, 'cos it frustrates us."
The experience of young Canadian migrant workers in Seoul.
Nirmala Bains

This thesis is about young Canadians who travel to Seoul, South Korea to teach English. The majority of these Canadians flock to Seoul in search of a livelihood and not out of a specific desire to live in South Korea. Through three months of participant observation and semi-structured interviews, I explore how they are racialized as white Westerners in South Korean society and how they respond to this positioning. I show how these Canadians oscillate between notions of privilege and the sincere vulnerabilities they face as transmigrant workers. This study is concerned with how subjects narrate their identities through their transnational movement given that these identities are relational and are never disinterested or value-free. As Canadians they fail to identify as migrant workers and rely on various normative discourses of superiority to symbolically displace their actual marginal status. Drawing on their prevailing, albeit unconscious, liberal values these Canadians rely on their understandings of progress, tolerance and universalism to make sense of South Korean society. Ultimately, most Canadian English teachers criticize and then attempt to civilize South Koreans. The concepts of race, nation and whiteness are central to this study as they provide a means to analyze the racialized narratives of these Canadians. Consequently, the manner in which racism and nationalism are interchangeable is unraveled in this transnational context.

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for Peter...

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Introduction: A Paid Vacation?

> *You know, it is just luck that I was born an English speaker and that I can even teach here and make all this money. It is ridiculous. It is only because I speak English.*
>
> —Anna[1]

> *I consider it a paid vacation.*
>
> —Randy

Point of Entry

In 2005 I traveled to South Korea[2] to teach English. I was following a well-treaded path of young Canadians, usually recent university graduates, who venture to Asia in search of an opportunity to make money while traveling. While I was there, I came to see myself as a migrant worker since I had moved for work. I also felt that I was relegated to the fringes of South Korean society and was not able to defend my rights as a worker, a commonality among foreign contract workers. I asked many of my fellow teachers from North America if they identified as migrant laborers. Everyone I spoke to denied such identification. They insisted that we were not migrant workers because we had chosen to come to South Korea and were being paid decent salaries. After leaving South Korea, I was left with many questions about this specific movement of Westerners and why it is not perceived as a movement of migrant laborers.

I was also intrigued by the way my co-workers, compatriots and other Westerners routinely derided South Koreans and South Korean society. I had lived abroad in foreign countries for extended periods before, yet I had never experienced such frequent,

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[1] The quotes used throughout this thesis are from people who participated in either participant observation or semi-formal interviews.

[2] Throughout this thesis, the participants refer to South Korea by its commonly referred to and abbreviated name Korea.

widespread, steady, negative and critical remarks directed towards the host population. I began to contemplate the racialized positioning of Canadians in South Korea.

This investigation was inspired by that encounter. I traveled to South Korea in the fall of 2008 to complete three months of fieldwork that investigated how subjects identify with being Canadian while living and working abroad. Specifically, I investigated how age/life course, education, status, citizenship, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and race/nationalism intersect to form meaning for people as they create identifications for themselves through their relocation abroad. Based on these intersections, this research further explored how those subjects were located in South Korea and how their location informed their subjectivities and consequent narratives.

Key Problematics

This research was motivated by the following question: How does the national identity of Canadians determine their position in South Korea? This question stemmed from the following inquiries: Are Canadians who teach English in South Korea migrant laborers? Do they identify with that label? How does the intersection of tourism inform this type of mobility? I investigated these matters through a critical race perspective whereby race and nation are mutually constituting terms. In the book *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*, Alastair Pennycook illustrates how teaching English is an effect and continuation of cultural colonialism. This thesis takes that as its starting premise and highlights the ways in which Canadian subjects are created through this enterprise. The aim of this study is to unravel how individuals are placed within the world-system and how their placement depends upon, and at the same time, reinstates the unequal global hierarchies among them. This project was undertaken to illustrate, through

an ethnographic portrait, the subtleties and nuances that emerge through this form of subject-making. This thesis shows that these Canadians are migrant workers as they are marginalized and relatively powerless in South Korean society. Yet, despite the vulnerabilities that they face, they manage to empower themselves through the illusion of moral superiority.

Road Map

As I explain more fully below, this thesis is organized into three parts. Part One contains the literature review, the conceptual framework and the methods sections. Part Two is grouped together as a background section that "sets the stage" by detailing the particularities of this specific type of movement. Through an ethnographic portrait, Part Three explores how these Canadians negotiate their positioning.

Part One begins with a literature review in order to situate the research in migration and transnational theory. Since Canadians are motivated to teach in South Korea as an opportunity to see other parts of the world, this research is also concerned with literature on travel and tourism. Moreover, a significant percentage of Canadians who teach English in South Korea enter on a tourist visa. This study illustrates the overlapping positions of workers and tourists. Comparable case studies are drawn upon to illustrate the recent work that considers varying types of transnational movement undertaken by Western youths.

The concepts that I utilize in my analysis follow the literature review. I pinpoint specific discourses to unravel how these Canadians produce their subjectivities in Seoul: Orientalism, racism, nationalism and liberalism. I explore how the use of cultural and symbolic capital applies to this study. Part One culminates in a discussion of the methods

that were used throughout the research. The remaining parts are presentations of the ethnographic work coupled with analysis.

Part Two illustrates the conditions that are specific to teaching English in Seoul, which includes the effects of living in a state of transience in an ethnically diverse area centered around a United States military base. I detail the work conditions and visa regulations that affect the day-to-day realities in the lives of these subjects as English teachers in Seoul. Part Two then considers how conceptions of migration, tourism and mobile livelihoods overlap through this particular movement while contemplating how these Canadian subjects are positioned in Seoul. Through the essentializing effects of "Occidentalism," these subjects are already known in the minds of many South Koreans; as Western English teachers they are revered but also rejected by the host population. This section considers their dual-positioning, in which they are treated well and badly simultaneously, and their reaction to this treatment.

Part Three details how concepts of Whiteness in conjunction with the nation, among other factors, influence these subjects' status as migrant workers. This section demonstrates that the racialized positioning of these Canadians contributes to their disassociation from an identification of migrant worker; the racialized implications of the label "migrant worker" are thus deconstructed.

The section then broadly explores how gender affects Western subjects as they enter into South Korean society. Constructions of gender play a defining and significant role in determining how subjects are received and incorporated into South Korean society. For example, the topic of white, Western men dating South Korean women is omnipresent during discussions among Canadian English teachers on foreigners living in

Seoul. Evidently, it affects many aspects of Western men's social lives. Western women were faced with notions of femininity that challenged their accustomed behavior and in order to conform many of them altered aspects of themselves.

The remaining section of Part Three considers how these subjects react to their positioning. In sum, they rely on their high-ranking cultural and symbolic capital to position themselves as "more progressive" than South Koreans. As teachers they engage in civilizing their students through the conscious work of "teaching South Koreans how to think like a Canadian." In the course of their time spent in South Korea and through their civilizing mission, these subjects reaffirm themselves as Canadian and as superior.

As a conclusion, I offer a summary of my main findings and the contributions of this thesis to the academic endeavor.

Part 1

An Academic Understanding

1.1

Literature Review

Migration

Stephen Castles describes migration as "a result of the integration of local communities and national economies into global relations" (2000: 269). While human migration is not a recent phenomenon, Western scholarly interest in migration has witnessed a surge in popularity only in recent years. Steve Vertovec states that "[i]t is, in fact, a kind of boom time for the anthropology of migration" (2007: 962). Much of the literature concerning migration centres on unraveling the causes or explanations of migration and placing migration into different categories and typologies.

In the 1950s, one of the first and most influential theories in the social sciences about migration was derived from neo-classical economics. It was based on the principles of "rational choice, utility maximization, expected net returns, factor mobility, and wage differentials" (Arango 2000: 285). This type of theorizing was based on the individual as opposed to the family or collective unit. It was used at a time when Western-receiving countries began to monitor and regulate immigration flows and agencies such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) were being set up. The idea was to predict why immigrants would move and where they would go. In the 1960s and 1970s, dependency theory took prominence in the social sciences. It "posited that the evolution of capitalism had given way to an international order composed of core industrialized countries and peripheral agrarian ones linked by uneven and asymmetrical relations" (Arango 2000: 285). In migration studies, this led to the notion that people were moving through previously established links and structures that had been created through colonialism and

imperialism. As well, the notion that choices were made on a strictly individual basis was dispelled. Joaquin Arango details other theories that have arisen, such as the new economics of labour migration, dual labour market theory, world systems theory[3], systems approach, cumulative causation, and migration networks (2000: 297-293). Arango notes that "[t]he importance of social networks for migration can hardly be overstated. It can be safely said that networks rank among the most important explanatory factors of migration" (2000: 291). Migration networks previously known as "migration chains" have been defined as follows:

> It is well known that most migrants follow 'beaten paths' and go where their compatriots have already established a bridgehead, making it easier to find work and lodgings, and deal with bureaucratic obstacles. Older migration scholars spoke of 'chain migration,' while in recent years much emphasis has been put on 'migration networks' and the way these develop as links between communities at home and in destination areas. (Castles 2002: 1150)

Through participation observation it was noted that the majority of Canadians migrated to South Korea because they knew someone who had worked there or was currently working there.

Migration scholars have also categorized different kinds of movement. Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller explain that "[m]igration is now structured, perceived, and discussed under different categorizations in different locations: refugee flows, family reunification, the importation of skilled workers on special visas, contract domestic labour, and illegals" (2003: 595). Typologies have also been introduced to understand

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[3] This research builds upon the world systems theory developed by Immanuel Wallerstein in the 1970s. World systems theory is based on the idea that the entire world is interconnected through the global capitalist economy and builds on dependency theory's concepts of the core, periphery and semi-periphery. The system is "defined as a unit with a single division of labour and multiple cultural systems" (Wallerstein 1976: 229).

various aspects of movement. Robyn Iredale presents four main classifications that are "by motivation, by nature of source and of destination, by channel of mechanism and by length of stay" (1999: 93). The length of stay is an important factor in determining what type of migration is occurring, but it has also been noted that the lines between permanent and temporary migration are not fixed; these different types of migration can meld into one another.

Temporary labour migrants are defined by Castles as " men and women who migrate for a limited period (for a few months to several years) in order to take up employment and send money home (remittances)" (2000: 270). I contend that this definition applies to Canadians teaching English in South Korea since many travel to South Korea after university to pay off student debt; in this way, they send money home on a regular basis. Also, the majority of Canadians who go to teach English in South Korea do so on a renewable one-year contract. Iredale has defined skilled workers as "having university degrees or extensive experience in a given field" (1999: 90). Canadians must have a bachelor's degree to legally teach English in South Korea. Based on these definitions, Canadians can be classified as skilled temporary labour migrants. Interestingly, these Canadians do not have to be trained as professional teachers even though they enter South Korea on E2 work visas, which are English-language teaching visas.

The majority of contemporary scholarly work on migration focuses on movement from the global South to the global North (herein referred to as the West). Migration from South to South and migration from West to South is given little prominence. Gledhill notes that "Western accounts of 'the global' have always tended to be ways of projecting

perceptions of crisis and transformation in Western societies onto a global context" (Nagel 2001: 252). In this way, migration and migrants have tended to be broadly conceptualized by the popular conception that immigrants are "brown bodies" invading the West. One has only to look at the International Organization for Migration website[4] to get a sense of who and what is the focus of migration policies. With that in mind, I draw on questions posed by Mekonnen Tesfahuney:

> Why is little attention given to intra-European migration, emigration and return migration from Europe? Why is Europe (the West) presented as the primary destination for international migrations from the Third World? A major reason for the elisions by and duplicity of dominant migration discourses in Europe is, overt or disguised, racism. Europe's immigration crisis, if indeed there is such a crisis, is not one of numbers. It is a crisis and fear of the Other, constructed as undesirable and different on imaginary criteria of affinity and inclusion/exclusion—historical, cultural, linguistic, corporeal—that demarcate our spaces versus Other spaces. (1998: 504-505)

This investigation focuses on migration from the West to the South to contribute to the broadening of our understanding of migrants. Tesfahuney explains that "dominant migration discourses are racist" and I further contend that migrants are racialized. Paul Silverstein offers a view of what he calls "migration genealogies" (2005: 367), which are concerned with "the racialization of the (im)migrant category and the role of migration theory in processes of racial subjectification in Europe" (2005: 364). He summarizes the different ways that immigrants were conceived in Europe:

> Likewise, the racialization of the immigrant within European migration studies has gradually shifted from colonial-era studies that subsumed migration under the larger study of nomadism and transhumance to the microeconomic focus on the migrant as first and foremost a mobile laborer; to a Marxist critique that bemoaned the migrant as the perpetually up-rooted victim of capitalist world systems; to the postmodern celebration of the migrant as the cosmopolitan hybrid par excellence; to the contemporary focus on transmigrants, who defy nation-state

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[4] http://www.iom.int

frontiers in their simultaneous participation in multiple, geographically noncontiguous cultural arenas and ethnoscapes. (2005: 368)

This study considers race and mobility as it is enacted through whiteness; it investigates the movement of Canadian youth so as to expand the understanding of race and migration.

Although the migration literature has been dominated by a focus on movement from the global South to the global North, it is currently beginning to expand as a wider range of phenomenon is being explored. For example, there has been an interest in "middling migration," in which scholars are looking at Western "middle-class" migration patterns. Authors, such as Vered Amit, have also explored the details of various types of "privileged" travel such as diplomats and consultants. Other new types of migration such as "astronaut,[5] return migration, retirement, posthumous" are also being considered (Castles 2002: 1153). Moreover, the feminization of migration has been a focus of current migration studies, whereby increasing numbers of women are travelling independently of other family members or spouses. "Although women have always formed a large proportion of migrants, their share has gradually increased: by 1995 about 48% of all international migrants were women, and they outnumbered male migrants in about a quarter of receiving countries" (Zlotnik 1999 cited in Castles 2000: 275).

It is crucial for this research to recognize that the group that I will be studying embodies a type of privileged movement or as Tesfahuney labels them "first-class mobile subject" (1998: 513). She argues that white Westerners "obtain global reach in mobility with little or no hinders to movement. The possibility of being denied entry on account of

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[5] Astronauts are migrants who spend a considerable amount of time in their country of origin while their families live in the country to which they migrated.

who they are, is rarely an issue that bothers this class of mobile subjects…" (1998: 513). The point is that not everybody enjoys the same freedom of movement as those who are born white in Canada and hold a Canadian passport. This is important to note since, as Rachel Silvey and Victoria Lawson explain, "…recent work is examining how specific power relationships constructed around differences of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and nation intersect with mobility processes and migrant subjectivities and identities" (1999: 127). This forms the crux of my research when placed in its historical context. As Tesfahuney explains, "International migrations interface with past and present economic and geopolitical orders of colonialism, global inequality and Western hegemony at several levels, but are not thus contextualized" (1998: 500).

Canadians who move to South Korea to teach English fit into these existing categories of contract migrant labourers. It would not be wise, however, to think that their movement could be equated with other forms of contract labour, such as the rural Mexican men who are employed as agricultural workers in Canada. The sending country and its position in the world, ethnicity, age and class composition, status and so on all intersect to create distinct forms of migrant labour. Canadians who teach in South Korea form part of a privileged set of movements based on their citizenship, class, nationality, and status. They do not fit into the "highly racialized" conception of poor, brown migrant workers fleeing oppressive structural conditions in search of a better life. As James Clifford notes,

> The political disciplines and economic pressures that control migrant labor regimes pull very strongly against any overly sanguine view of the mobility of poor, usually non-white, people who *must* leave home in order to survive. The traveler, by definition, is someone who has the security and privilege to move about in relatively unconstrained ways. (1992: 20)

I presume on this basis that very few young Canadians teaching English in South Korea think of themselves as migrant workers. This leads me to ask the question: How do they understand their movement?

Travel

One of the paradigms on which the movement of Canadians teaching English in South Korea is centered is one that values travelling and "gaining overseas experience." Dean MacCannell included the "production of commodifiable experiences" in his theory of tourism. As Michael Kearney explains,

> In contrast, MacCannell (87) builds his theory of tourism on Marx's ideas about production, extended to include the production of commodifiable experiences. Thus he comes closest, perhaps, to a comprehensive anthropological theorization of tourism, which embeds it in the economic and cultural conditions of contemporary global capitalism. (1995: 555-556)

Nelson Graburn refers to travelling as forming part of the "production of experience" (1995: 164). Part of the cultural conditions that have arisen in the middle-class segments of Canadian society is the common presumption that it is good to travel as it will "open up your mind" and teach you new things. Furthermore, travel by the middle class can be seen as a way to distinguish oneself within one's social class (Harrison 2003). To travel is to gain experiences that are valued and held in high esteem thus creating a superior status for the traveler. In that way, it can be seen to form part of one's self-identification. This has been coupled with the phenomenon of globalization where "international experience" is what is sought after and given repute; "[t]his association has been further heightened by the elaboration of a public discourse within many industrialized countries that trumpets the importance of 'international experience' within a globalizing economy"

(Amit 2007: 6). As Julia Harrison notes, travelling has become commonplace among the middle class and elites in Western societies.

> Based in the growth of the tourism industry in the recent decades, it appears many in the Western world want to travel. The experience is seen to offer adventure, an opportunity to relax, or the thrill of seeing new places and encountering people and cultures in far off lands. (Harrison 2003: 4)

It is my contention that individuals are motivated to teach English in South Korea for the high salaries (see discussion on mobile livelihoods that follows) and for the opportunity to travel in Asia. The following is an example of a typical advertisement posted by a South Korean recruiting agency:

> Teaching in Korea will provide you with: Recognized ESL experience; Living and working in a different culture and travel opportunities in surrounding Asian countries; An attractive salary package combined with a low-expense lifestyle.[6]

Since these Canadians travel to South Korea primarily to work, it begs the question: In today's global society, characterized by international "flows of movement," who is a tourist? Valene Smith has defined a tourist as a "temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change" (Smith 1977: 2 cited in Graburn 1983: 11). In this case, the Canadians are not "temporarily leisured" since they are going there to work, but many will engage in tourist activities in South Korea, if not in international travel in Asia. Their official visas say they are workers, which they are, yet many also enter South Korea on tourists visas and work illegally.

Smith offers five different types of tourism: "Ethnic tourism, cultural tourism, historical tourism, environmental tourism, recreational tourism" (1989: 4-5). That was written almost twenty years ago, and since then different types of tourism have emerged.

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[6] http://www.daveseslcafe.com/ accessed on June 17, 2008.

Some of them have blurred the neat distinctions between tourism and other forms of mobility. This can involve extended periods of stay abroad in which the traveller is engaged in spiritual, disaster, development or volunteer tourism, not to mention the joining of work and travel in the working-holidaymaker visas.

Whether Canadians consider themselves to be workers, tourists or both, it is their positioning in South Korean society that is of significance. The tourist and the Canadian worker share the sense of transience as a social positioning. Living in a state of transience has a vital impact on the way people will situate themselves in their host societies and how others will relate to them. It is a stance that conditions how you operate; transience affects one's experience and expectations. In that regard, working on a one-year contract in South Korea can be confused with the status of a tourist since it does not "quite feel like real life." In that way, Graburn, who has understood modern travel as a form of ritual and rite of passage, might see Canadians working in South Korea as similar to tourists since they are living away from home: "[f]undamental is the contrast between the ordinary/compulsory work state spent 'at home' and the non-ordinary/voluntary 'away from home' sacred state" (1989: 25). Transnationalism can be used as a means to contextualize this movement both as tourism and labour migration.

Transnationalism

Transnationalism is a contemporary way of understanding varying social processes, including but not restricted to migration. Studies of transnationalism emerged in the early 1990s when anthropologists began to question static notions of place and culture. It emerged at a time when the social sciences were being confronted with globalization. As globalization became a focus in the world, one could no longer think of

cultures as being bound to one specific place. The "old way" of thinking—that a people and identity are linked to a certain place—was confronted by globalization. This gave rise to a new wave of thinking that questioned the notion of a people tied to a culture and a place. *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States* by Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Christina Szanton Blanc is considered to be one of the founding books on the subject. They defined transnationalism as:

> ...the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. (1994: 7)

The scale of analysis for transnationalism has tended to be the individual. "For methodological reasons, we deem it appropriate to define the individual and his/her support networks as the proper unit of analysis in this area" (Portes *et al.* 1999: 220). As Akhil Gupta and James Fergerson detailed in their introduction to *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*:

> An anthropology whose objects are no longer conceived as automatically and naturally anchored in space will need to pay particular attention to the way spaces and places are made, imagined, contested, and enforced. In this sense, it is no paradox to say that questions of space and place are, in this deterritorialized age, more central to anthropological representation than ever. (1997: 47)

With this orientation in mind, this study investigates the ways in which Canadians re-locate themselves through their physical dislocation, the way in which they "make spaces and places." This re-conceptualization of space and place engaged scholars in a different view of migration:

> For example, we could portray the transnational turn in the anthropology of migration as a change in 'direction' by way of shifting analysis from groups in specific localities to groups and their activities as they engage cross-border, multi-

> local processes and practices. The direction of analysis, so to speak, moved from 'here' to 'here-and-there'. (Vertovec 2007: 968)

The perpetuation of transnational links is not a new phenomenon. There is no doubt that some "past" immigrants maintained connections with their "homeland." That said, the rise of communication technologies and the accessibility of transportation have facilitated and accelerated the transnational process. Thus Peter Kivisto cites Alejandro Portes, who argues, that: "[W]hat makes the situation different today is that improved communication channels and transportation systems make it possible to act more readily on that desire" (2001: 558). What is of particular relevance for this research is the way Canadians identify through their movement; "[p]articular attention will be given to the ways these migrants are both identified and identify themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, and nation" (Basch *et al.* 1994: 9).

Although transnationalism concerns itself with processes that link various nation-states together in one social field, it by no means displaces the importance of the nation. In fact, in some cases, the nation may even take on a paramount role. As Nagel explains:

> … Gupta (1992) argues that transnational (and subnational) movements speak not to the demise of the nation-state but to the continued pervasiveness of the nation-state ideal in the post-colonial world. Transnational activities and organizations in fact reinforce nationalism and the nation as the dominant form of political and social organization. (2001: 253)

The national concern in transnational theory is the focus of this inquiry and deals with questions of how Canadians rely on their national identity through their international movement. As highlighted by Wimmer and Schiller:

> Most scholars of nationalism discussed the nation as a domain of identity—far removed from the power politics of modern state formation. The nation is understood to be a people who share common origins and history as indicated by their shared culture, language and identity. (2003: 582)

As Vertovec goes on to justify, "Many people's transnational networks are grounded upon the perception that they share some form of common identity, often based upon a place of origin and the cultural and linguistic traits associated with it" (2001: 573).

Transnational literature is dominated by studies focusing on people moving from the global South to the global North (the West). This is demonstrated by the following statement: "The events in question pertain to the creation of a transnational community linking immigrant groups in the *advanced* countries with their respective sending nations and hometowns" (italics added) (*Portes et al.* 1999: 217). This exemplifies that many scholars have had a limited view when it comes to transnationalism and migration. I did, however, encounter various exceptions to the rule. As with migration studies, the study of transnational connections is opening up to include diverse forms of movement. Some of the cases that pertain to this research can be found in "transnational urbanism."

Transnational urbanism is understood as underlying:

> ... the socio-spatial processes by which social actors and their networks forge the translocal connections and create the translocalities that increasingly sustain new modes of being-in-the-world. ... A particular dimension of its attractiveness for us is its creative incorporation of both *mobility* and *emplacement.* (Conradson & Latham 2005a: 228)

In this way, I understand the position of Canadians in South Korea through their movement across international borders and their positioning in South Korean society and recognize that; "[i]t is vital to emphasize social context and situate worldview within class position and the global ecumene" (Grillo 2007: 206). Coupled with the notion of transnational urbanism is the focus on "middling" forms of transnationalism:

> We want to emphasize the degree to which transnationalism is in fact characteristic of many more people than just the transnational elites and the developing-world migrants who have been the focus of so much transnational research. ... What is striking about many of the people involved in these kinds of

> transnational travels is their middling status position in their countries of origin. They are often, but not always, well educated. They may come from wealthy families, but more often than not they appear to be simply middle class. In terms of the societies they come from and those they are travelling to, they are very much of the middle. But the fact is that surprisingly little is known about these kinds of migrants (although see Raj 2000). (Conradson & Latham 2005a: 229)

David Conradson and Alan Latham define middle class in terms of "the societies that they come from and those they are travelling to" which defers slightly from the following definition:

> In contrast, 'middling transnationalism' focuses on the transnational practices of social actors occupying more or less middle class or status positions in the national class structures of their countries of origin, like skilled workers or working holiday-makers who spend extended periods abroad living transnational everyday lives. (Smith 2005: 242)

In Smith's definition, middle class status entails only the relationship with migrants' countries of origins. Either way, this definition of "middle migrants" is somewhat biased towards the Western middle class and people from the middle class of other countries have been grouped as "developing-world migrants"—in other words: poor. It has been established that most people who migrate from the developing world are most likely to be middle class since the "poor" do not have the means to move; "[r]esearch shows that it is middle-income groups in developing areas that are most likely to depart" (Castles 2000: 272).

Comparable Case Studies

In their book *Work and Migration: Life and Livelihoods in a Globalizing World*, Nina Nyberg Sørensen and Karen Fog Olwig developed the concept of mobile livelihoods to theorize particular forms of transnational migration. The concept of mobile livelihoods explores the different movements that people engage in through their search

for work. This is one of the concepts that will frame my research since Canadians are not choosing South Korea as a *place* to be, but as a way to practise a livelihood. Studying the movement of young Canadians to South Korea in terms of mobile livelihoods can highlight the individual and collective reasons for migrating since the livelihood concept

> … best expresses the idea of individuals and groups striving to make a living, attempting to meet their various consumption and economic necessities, coping with uncertainties, responding to new opportunities, and choosing between different value positions. (Sørensen 2002: 4)

This concept is useful to explore how some Canadians' sense of self is affected as they migrate to South Korea in search of a livelihood. The next section explores some of the case studies that deal with privileged forms of movement.

Two case studies that focus on young "middling New Zealanders" who moved temporarily to England through the working-holiday visa program are useful for comparative purposes. These case studies are relevant because they detail the kind of young, Western middle-class movement that in the past received little scholarly attention; "[b]ut their particular embodiments of relative youth, mobility, and middlingness … suggest a need to reconsider some of the established categories of individual and group mobility employed in the transnational migrant literatures" (Conradson & Latham 2005b: 290). Conradson and Latham also highlight the idea that in the West, travelling or gaining overseas experience is becoming a common pursuit for members of the middle class:

> … for an increasingly diverse mix of people, a period spent living abroad—whether to study, to develop a career, as part of traveling, or as an experimentation with the possibility of emigrating permanently—is becoming a normal and almost taken-for-granted part of the life cycle. (Conradson & Latham 2005b: 288)

Lastly, these case studies dealt with mobile populations that did not plan to stay in the receiving countries; "[s]econdly, and closely related to the first point, we note that Sally has little ambition to remain in London or the United Kingdom long-term" (Conradson & Latham 2005b: 290). Specifically, JanineWiles explores the way New Zealanders identify with home. She notes that the group she worked with "sees home and migration as interdependent" (2008: 116). Conradson and Latham examine how New Zealanders construct themselves through their movement, which is central to this research as I explore how Canadians identify with home (as experienced through the nation) through their movement.

The case study Clarke provides shares commonalities with the first two since they depict people who are living in a transient space. Clarke studied middle class British youths who travelled to Australia as working holiday-makers. He borrowed Clifford's notions of "travelling-in-dwelling and dwelling-in-travel" to explore how these British youth live their lives transnationally. He explains how the advances in global communications occupy a central place in their movement: "[T]he relative ease and affordability with which travelers maintain contact with family and friends back home is a recent development" (Clarke 2005: 312). Most importantly, Clarke reminds us that this is a form of privileged movement where "[f]or those in the middle, cross-border travel (in every sense: corporeal, imaginative, virtual) is largely a matter of choice (though always social and cultured, never simply voluntary)" (Clarke 2005:320).

In the article *Migrant Tourist-Workers: Exploring the 'Contact Zones' of Post-Industrial Tourism,* Raoul Bianchi studied mobile resort workers in the Mediterranean in order to exemplify the "emergence of new mobilities within the context of tourism and

labour migration" (2000:107). He develops the concept migrant tourist-worker to refer to resort workers who are "[n]either strictly tourists nor workers, they constitute an emergent segment of tourist-workers who engage in periods of work within tourism destinations as an integral part of the touristic experience" (2000:107). His research applies to this study since he highlights the need for investigation into the "tourism-work nexus." He explains:

> This analysis therefore seeks to conceptualise the 'tourism-work nexus', through a discussion of a mode of occupational mobility which embraces the domains of leisure, tourism and labour migration, and which to some extent dissolves the boundaries between tourism and work itself. (2000:107)

Bianchi concludes that:

> More recently however, ethnographic research into transient communities has shed light on distinct modalities of travel and work which suggest that the boundaries between *tourism* and *labour migration* are not impermeable. Moreover, it is clear that they do not necessarily always represent mutually distinctive spheres of experience. It is important therefore to consider the degree to which the categories of travel and labour migration intersect in the sense that engagement in work may become part of the touristic experience. (2000:112)

He also provided case studies and correlates the following:

> ...[tourist-workers] are indicative of emergent patterns of post-industrial mobility in which the boundaries between work and leisure are blurred. Moreover, they reflect social relationships which are based upon a series of episodic relations amongst individuals with shared interests and lifestyles, rather than attachment to a specific place associated with a stable and enduring identity. (2000:114)

Therefore, Bianchi's research is highly applicable to this investigation as it denotes the contemporary ambiguities present in forms of privileged movement and the overlapping intersections of tourism and labour migration.

In *The Social Morphology of Skilled Migration: The Case of the British Middle Class in Paris*, Sam Scott offers a detailed analysis of middle-class mobility. Through his

study of British middle-class workers in Paris, Scott develops a six-faceted lifestyle typology. Of interest to this paper is what he has coined the "graduate lifestyle migrant," whom he describes as:

> Graduate lifestyle migrants were effectively taking 'a year or two out'... that invariably coincided with a post-university 'passage to adulthood'. ... Whilst this 'walkabout' rarely had a direct link to a defined career, there was an assumption amongst many in this group that the mobility capital acquired through a relatively short time overseas was good from a career/CV perspective. Middle-class migration, then, even if not tied to a corporate career path, can underpin status distinction. This function is particularly important in an era of mass education and a burgeoning post-industrial middle class. (2006:1119-1120)

The majority of Canadians teaching in Seoul fit into this life course category, where it is acceptable and often encouraged to travel/work after university before entering a professional career back home.

Meike Fetcher examines the lives of expatriates living in Indonesia through a transnational lens. In this chapter, she details the boundaries that expatriates maintain between themselves and the receiving society while living abroad. Since the majority of Canadians' social relationships are with other foreigners and this research was conducted in Itaewon, which is a "foreigner ghetto," my own analysis explores how Canadians construct their identifications through their social relationships and how they inhabit space in South Korea. As Fechter notes,

> ... that expatriates' lives are also fundamentally structured by boundaries that they actively construct, maintain, and negotiate. The boundaries in question here are primarily those of race, nationality, class and gender... I thus aim to examine the boundaries that matter for expatriates to illuminate the nature of their transnational lives. (2007:35)

The next section explores the concepts that are used to situate and analyze this particular type of movement.

1.2

Conceptual Framework

The intertwining of personal and social identity is fashioned in terms of the historically prevailing conceptual order. How we comprehend others and conceive our social relations and how we come thus dialectically to some sort of self-understanding are molded by concepts central to the dominant sociodiscursive scheme. ... So the social (self-) conception, the identity of the subject, is mediated, if not quite cemented by the set of discursive practices and the values embedded in them.

—David Theo Goldberg (1993: 1-2)

Affirming Western Subjectivities

The normative discourses that these subjects draw on as they form narratives through working and living in Seoul are examined. I have grouped these discourses under the umbrella term Western since they all contribute to the formation and perpetuation of a Western subject.

Subject

The conceptual framework is built upon and tied together by the notion of the subject and through the process of subjectification. Here, the subject is a particular type of subject, one that Étienne Balibar describes as the "citizen subject" (1991b). This citizen subject[7] is one who is subjected to the laws of the Western nation-state, someone who then voluntarily and loyally becomes obedient to the state (Balibar 1991b: 41). This particular citizen subject developed through numerous hegemonic ideals entrenched through popular ideologically reinforced discourses. Its subjectification process has always been a binary between Self and Other, but it is only through the encounter with the Other that the Self can truly actualize itself. This research follows the citizen-subject

[7] I will refer to this citizen subject as subject or as Canadian.

transnationally and analyzes how the journey to teach English in South Korea becomes a messianic one as the citizen subject is transformed into an active and willing participant that propagates its universality. Thus, this Canadian subject is not value-free. Ultimately, the citizen subject is subjecting others to what it has already been subjected to.

Western

I use the term West and Western to refer to a privileged positioning within the unequal global hierarchy of social relations. I conceive of the West as an entity that was established during the period of European expansion: colonialism and imperialism. The West is used to evoke a geographical area, mainly Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. However, the reference to the West goes beyond these geographical connotations, as explained by Alastair Bonnett,

> The contemporary idea of the West refers to far more than a geographical entity. It is a social, political and ethnic designation designed to evoke these values, practices and people that are, in other contexts, described as one or all of the following: democratic, capitalist, free, modern, developed, Christian, white... (2003:332)

In that way, I use the West as a place of convergence where specific discourses meet. I consider the discourses of race/nation, whiteness, Orientalism and liberalism to make sense of the positioning of subjects categorized as Western. Given the contention concerning the over-simplified dichotomy of the "West and the Rest," it is not my intention to essentialize the diverse and numerous positions located in the West. I draw on this term to highlight the fact that the world-system is bound together by a political economy (liberal capitalism) that created and maintains the superiority of the Western subject, as Gada Mahrouse highlights:

> Thus, the use of the term "Western" ... is meant to invoke the West as a political economic agenda that shapes social structures within racist global power relations (Bhattacharyya, Gabriel, and Small 2001, Rattansi 1994, Said 1978)... (Mahrouse 2009: 7-8)

Orientalism

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues the West justified its violent and inhumane treatment of colonized populations through the solidification of an ideological paradigm. This paradigm was based on a linear path to progress where the British (the West) had attained the highest level of civilization and therefore considered themselves to be the most advanced people in the world. Said demonstrates that the Occident created the Orient in order to affirm its position of dominance; through Orientalism, the West solidified its position of superiority over others. Considering we are living in the geopolitical outcome of colonialism where the West still has a cultural and ideological stranglehold on the world, I contend that Orientalism has yet to be displaced. This concept is applicable to this research, since as Mahrouse explains: "Orientalism [is used] as a means to expose the ways that knowledge is produced and how discourse and power work together to create and sustain unequal relations and to constitute subjectivities through racialized representations and modes of thinking" (2009:7).

Orientalism is also concerned with essentializing the Other. Conversely, it is also of interest how Canadian subjects react to being "Occidentalized," essentialized or stereotyped in the mind of the South Koreans. As James Carrier points out,

> Orientalist descriptions are produced by means of the juxtaposition of two opposed, essentialized entities, the West and (for lack of better terms) the Other or the Alien. Each is understood in reified, essentialist terms, and each is defined by its difference from the other element of the opposed pair. (1992:196)

However, the application of Orientalism in this study goes beyond stereotyping and concerns itself primarily with the global ranking of people. Orientalism as a discourse is called upon to illustrate the continuing effects of the colonial encounter whereby Canadian subjects, as representing the European side of said encounter, continue to re-constitute themselves as superior vis-à-vis the Other.

In this analysis, Orientalism entrenches its power through whiteness and "being Canadian." In fact, whiteness and Orientalism go hand in hand. Ghassan Hage explains this relationship:

> 'Whiteness' is an everchanging, composite cultural historical construct. It has its roots in the history of European colonization which universalised a cultural form of White identity as a position of cultural power at the same time as the colonized were in the process of being racialised. Whiteness, in opposition to Blackness and Browness, was born the same time as the binary oppositions coloniser/colonised, being developed/ being underdeveloped, and later First World/ Third World was emerging. In this sense, White has become the ideal of being the bearer of 'Western' civilisation. (1998:58)

Class

For the purpose of this analysis, I contend that the national identity of "being Canadian" engulfs class considerations when applied in this transnational context. As Anderson explained, the nation as an "imagined community" unites certain subjects despite their differences; "[f]inally, it is imagined as a *community,* because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 2006:7). And as Balibar explains:

> In the last analysis, the overlapping of the two [racism and nationalism] goes back to the circumstances in which the nation states, established upon historically contested *territories,* have striven to control *population* movements, and to the

> very production of the 'people' as a political community taken precedence over class divisions. (1991: 48)

Therefore, although there are class differences among the Canadian subjects, and between them and the South Koreans (in the vast majority of cases they are teaching the elite fraction of South Korean society), I contend that these differences are contained through the explicit identification of subjects with the nation-state. In this way, for the purpose of this analysis, subjects encounter and relate to each other first and foremost through their national identities, and these positioning of national identities postpone the class-based analysis.

Gender

Gender is a component of this inter-locking framework since it affects the positioning of these Canadians in South Korean society. I draw on Steven Gregory's concept of "imperial masculinity" to understand how men are in a position to reassert their male authority over women. Gregory explains the concept:

> Through the social practice of this form of heteronormative masculinity, what I will call "imperial masculinity," these men collectively construct and naturalize ideologies of racial, class, ethnic, and sex/gender difference that both register and reinscribe the sociospatial hierarchies of the global economy. (2003: 325-326)

This concept is useful since it focuses on the ways these inter-locking ideologies are naturalized. I will also examine how other Canadians and Westerners contest this naturalization. In his study of male sex tourists in the Dominican Republic, Gregory asks:

> To what degree do systems of inequality based on such social differences as race, class, ethnicity, and national identity (or some combination of them all) depend on, if not presuppose, the symbolic as well as political organization of male social power; that is, a sex/gender system that not only privileges but must also reiterate and mobilize heteronormative masculinity? Put differently, to what degree do the political articulation and reproduction of social inequality require the mobilization of hetersexual men *as such*? (2003: 228)

As these Canadian men engage in performances of "imperial masculinity," their compatriots criticize them for reinforcing the social inequality between genders.

To understand how Canadian women are received in South Korean society, I focus on the following assertion: "A woman is never anything but a woman, an interchangeable object with no other characteristic than her femininity, whose fundamental characteristics is belonging to the class of women" (Guillaumin 1995:178). In South Korea, Canadian women are confronted by their femininity and are constantly struggling to disrupt their place in South Korean society.

Race and Nation

> *The reality is quite plain: the 'end of the era of nationalism,' so long prophesied, is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.*
>
> —Benedict Anderson (2006: 3)

As these subjects migrate internationally in search of work, their national identification takes on heightened importance. It does so in two primary ways: it is one of the first markers that people learn about each other, and, through their displacement abroad, Canadians enter into the process of re-identifying with the nation-state.[8] Once a subject can assert claims to being Canadian; this subject is *a priori* positioned in relation to other subjects. The concepts of race, nation and whiteness are central to this study as they provide a means to analyze the racialized narratives of these Canadians. The Western subject depends on these identifications (race, nation and whiteness) to offset the

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[8] In following Balibar (1995), I underscore that there is no identity as such, but engagement with the process of identification: identifying, de-identifying and re-identifying. In this case, as soon as Canadians leave Canada, they enter this process.

contradictions of being a foreign worker in the periphery. Also, the racialized embodiment of Canadians is crucial to this particular movement.

In *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities,* Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein present articles that disentangle the relationship between nationalism and racism. Balibar argues that nationalism and racism are mutually reinforcing terms. He states that "[i]n this view, nationalism would be, if not the sole cause of racism, then at least the determining condition of its production" (1991: 37). He explains that racism is a social relation that is best mediated through nationalist ideologies and that nations interacting with the global economy reproduce racism:

> This is not merely a space in which strategies are formed, and capital, technologies and messages circulate, but a space in which entire populations subject to the law of the market come into contact physically and symbolically. This is the equivocal interiority-exteriority configuration which had, since the period of colonial conquest, formed one of the structuring dimensions of racism, finds itself reproduced, expanded and re-activated. (1991:43)

Balibar explains that individuals are structured in the global economy. This is confirmed and highlighted by Ruth Frankenburg who argues that "...the cycling of race, culture, and nation as naming systems for difference read hierarchically" (1997:10). This system is not an even playing field; consequently, to be Canadian is a superiorly ranked positioning. Moreover, Wallerstein reminds us that race and nation are categories used to the benefit of some people and to the detriment of others: "Both categories are claims to the right to possess advantage in the capitalist world-economy" (1991:82). These understandings form the crux of this research, which investigates how Canadians negotiate their privileged positioning as they can claim more "rights" or cultural and symbolic capital than others (see below). As Frankenburg highlights:

> Examining this history makes clear, indeed, why it is that race, culture, and nation slide so smoothly one into another in the present, providing alibis for each other in contemporary social, cultural, and political discourses about race, nation, identity, ownership, and belonging. (1997:10)

Lastly, this investigation aligns itself with those theorists who consider race to be a social construction: "Most contemporary social scientists, for example, view race as a social but not scientific fact, a mark that is sometimes written on the body but rooted in culture, not biology" (Ramussen *et al.* 2001:9). In fact, race is an empty signifier and as such can only be analyzed in conjunction with other phenomenon such as class, nation, citizenship, gender, sexuality, etc.

Whiteness

It has been argued that Canada as a Western nation-state is symbolically represented as white (Hage 1998). In that way, the concept of race and nation mutually reinforce each other under whiteness. Whiteness entertains a privileged place in the world system and "it is argued, serves a foundation for racial domination and inequality" (Ramussen *et al.* 2001:13). As Frankenburg explains:

> From this recognition it follows that whiteness is a construct or identity almost impossible to separate from racial dominance. White, then, corresponds to one place in racism as a system of categorization and subject formation, just as the terms race privileged and race dominant name particular places within racism as a system of dominance. (1997:9)

Canada, as a liberal democratic capitalist white nation, benefits from the existing geopolitical order. Although the world-system is organized through an inter-state system whereby presumably nation-states are free and sovereign, they are not equal. The inequality of the power of the nation-state is inscribed in the citizens of nation-states. In

that way, Canadians, especially white Canadians, possess many advantages over non-white, non-Western subjects.

Whiteness studies emerged in the United States in the early 1990s with scholars such as David Roediger (1991), Toni Morrison (1992) and RuthFrankenburg (1993). Frankenberg explains that:

> To speak of "the social construction of whiteness" asserts that there are locations, discourses, and material relations to which the term "whiteness" applies. I argue in this book that whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination. (1993:6)

This research presumes that subjects call upon the discourse of whiteness in order to secure privilege or legitimacy; "[f]or many, if not all scholars of critical whiteness studies, the social reality of white skin privilege is now an underlying research assumption, a point of departure for investigations into how it was established and how it is maintained" (Ramussen *et al.* 2001:3).

Yet, the discourse of whiteness does not operate in isolation. It is a component of an inter-locking framework that is part of the process of the subjectification of the Western subject. Also, as revealed in the ethnographic section, this discourse secures privilege and legitimacy purely in the symbolic realm. Canadians working in South Korea are vulnerable and face exploitative work conditions, with little to no recourse. Their whiteness characterized by being Western may privilege them over other migrant labourers yet this privilege has limitations, it does not override their marginal status in South Korean society. I draw on this discourse to illustrate how Canadians figuratively distance themselves from their day-to-day vulnerabilities in order to symbolically re-position themselves as legitimate. In fact, the subtleties of the discourse of whiteness are

that it can be called upon as a metaphoric site of dominance despite the real material hardships. This inquiry was prompted by the call of third wave whiteness to understand how whiteness is "defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented" through Canadian English teachers in Seoul. According to France Windance Twine and Charles Gallagher:

> Third wave whiteness makes these contradictions explicit by acknowledging the relational, contextual and situational ways in which white privilege can be at the same time a taken-for-granted entitlement, a desired social status, a perceived source of victimization and a tenuous situational identity. It is these white inflections, the nuanced and locally specific ways in which whiteness as a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented that is the central focus of third wave whiteness. (2007: 7)

It is crucial to examine how whiteness operates beyond mere skin color as it attaches itself to other discourses. Gargi Bhattacharyya explains, "Racialised discourses cannot be seen in isolation from other discourses which also promote dominant cultural norms, particularly those relating to gender and sexuality" (2002:7) and "[a]nother reason why whiteness is able to keep itself hidden is because it works through other discourses" (2002: 24). This research concerns itself with how citizenship, being Canadian, and the symbolic capital associated with a liberal outlook melds with whiteness and situates subjects within the unequal global hierarchy of social relations. For example, in the context of teaching English in Seoul, whiteness can be attributed to a non-white Canadian, since it is a discourse that is attached to the Westernized nation-state and the identification of "being Canadian." Thus, Howard Winant argues: "Whiteness no doubt has much to do with privilege in the sense of socioeconomic status, but it also involves religious affiliation, ideologies of individualism, opportunity, citizenship, nationalism, and so forth" (2004:107). Evidently, there are gradations of whiteness, beyond one's skin

tone, since whiteness intersects with diverse social positions. It is in that way that I examine how subjects rely on their position in whiteness to re-secure privilege.

Lastly, whiteness as a place of privilege was created to justify and legitimize the unequal relations brought about through colonialism:

> Historians such as Edmund Morgan and Theodore Allen have argued that contemporary conceptions of race and institutionalized racial inequality in the United States are rooted in histories of colonialism and imperialism. Notions of racial inferiority emerged to justify a social structure organized around subjugation and exploitation and was then elaborated by biologistic theories of inherent differences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Ramussen *et al.*: 2001:13)

This asymmetrical social structure defines the contemporary reality of the world-system, and therefore discourses, such as Orientalism, that was produced and drawn upon then are still very much present today.

Liberal

Liberal values motivate this Orientalist outlook and this disguised discourse often unconsciously guides subjects who are raised in liberal democratic capitalist societies such as Canada. The liberal values of individualism, universalism founded in rational thought, reform, equality, progress and tolerance inform Canadians as they come to know South Korean society and their place within it. Liberalism and its corresponding values are described in the following quote,

> Liberalism is committed to ***individualism*** for it takes as base the moral, political, and legal claims of the individual over and against those of the collective. It seeks ***foundations* in *universal*** principles applicable to all human beings or rational agents in virtue of their humanity or rationality. In this, liberalism seeks to transcend particular historical, social, and cultural differences: it is concerned with broad identities which it insists unite persons on moral grounds, rather than with those identities which divide politically, culturally, geographically, or temporally. The philosophical basis of this broad human identity, or an essentially human nature, is taken to lie in a common rational core within each individual, in

> the (potential) capacity to be moved by Reason. In keeping with this commitment to the force of reason, liberalism presupposes that all social arrangements may be ameliorated by rational ***reform***. Moral, political, economics, and cultural ***progress*** is to be brought about by and reflected in carefully planned institutional improvement. The mark of progress is measured for liberals by the extent to which institutional improvement serves to extend people's liberty, to open up or extend spaces for free expression. Finally, and for the concern at hand perhaps most significantly, liberalism takes itself to be committed to ***equality***. This commitment is open to a wide range of liberal interpretations the particular nature of which distinguishes one form of liberalism from another. Nevertheless, the egalitarian core on which all liberals agree consists in the recognition of a common moral standing, no matter individual differences. From the liberal point of view, particular differences between individuals have **no bearing on their moral value**, and by extension should make no difference concerning the political or legal's status of individuals. (Bold added) (Goldberg 1993: 5)

Subjects promote these liberal values as though they were disinterested, or better yet, as universals. In that way, universalism structures a liberal outlook so unapologetically that these Canadian subjects do not question the particular location of their viewpoint. The disinterested nature of liberal thought coincides with the "invisibility" of whiteness as the norm and the superiority of the Western subject, all reinforced and enacted through systems of power. In *Two Lectures in Power/Knowledge* Michel Foucault asks: "What rules of right are implemented by the relations of power in the production of discourses of truth" (1980:93)? Here, we see how the "rules of right" in terms of the subjectification of the liberal individual are put in place.

The paradox at the heart of liberalism is that inequality, founded primarily in racism, sexism and classism, is embedded in liberal thought and structures. As David Theo Goldberg argues, racism is appropriated by liberal thought:

> Liberalism plays a foundational part in this process of normalizing and naturalizing racial dynamics and racist exclusions. As modernity's definitive doctrine of self and society, of morality and politics, liberalism serves to legitimate ideologically and to rationalize politico-economically prevailing sets of racialized conditions and racist exclusions. (1993: 1-2)

It is helpful to consider these types of racist exclusions that are imbedded in liberal thought to identify the inconsistencies that permeate these Canadian subjects' rationality vis-à-vis their understanding of South Koreans and South Korean society. I use this concept to understand the contradictory ways in which Canadians demand to be treated *equally* despite being implicated in the inequalities that surround them.

Tolerance is a liberal value that is used throughout the world (Hage 1998). I analyze the act of tolerating on the part of the Canadians as part of racialized power dynamic whereby, despite being located in South Korean society, Canadians imagine themselves as the tolerator. Ghassan Hage describes the ironies present in the notion of tolerance: "It is a form of symbolic violence in which a mode of domination is presented as a form of egalitarianism" (1998:85). He further explains:

> King is pointing to something that all preachers of tolerance find it useful to forget: when those who are intolerant are asked to be tolerant, their power to be intolerant is not taken away from them. It is, in fact, reasserted by the very request not to use it. (Hage 1998:85)

Canadians working and living in South Korea are drawing on their liberal values in order to judge and subsequently tolerate South Korean society. Canadians deem themselves in a position to tolerate South Koreans. Moreover, they fantasize that they are *empowered* to tolerate the South Koreans. Hage explains:

> It is this discourse of limits that makes clear that those who tolerate imagine themselves to be in a position of spatial power. Likewise, the tolerated others are imagined by definition to be present within 'our sphere of influence'. (1998:89)

Hage uses the example to explain how certain Australian nationals manage their space. I extend the concept of spatial power to the transnational setting to analyze and question why it is that Canadians, as English teachers in Seoul, engage in acts of tolerance as well as reform. Of course, there are limits to tolerance, as Balibar underscores:

> The more ideologically hegemonic liberal values seem and the more open to difference liberal modernity declares itself, the more dismissive of difference it becomes and the more closed it seeks to make the circle of acceptability. (1993: 6-7)

In the ethnographic section, I explore the limits to tolerance that these Canadians encounter and how they take on a civilizing mission in order to reform the South Koreans. In that way, the Canadians perceive themselves as disinterested parties; they are helping South Koreans advance as opposed to spreading their particular doctrine.

Finally, I conceive of liberal values as cultural capital and consequently, symbolic capital, in a world structured and governed by liberal capitalist institutions. In that way, these Canadian subjects rely on their cultural capital as liberal thinkers to empower them since it is legitimized as right or superior in the world-system.

Cultural, Symbolic and Mobility Capital

In *The Forms of Capital,* Pierre Bourdieu explains that there are three forms of capital: economic, cultural, and social (2007:84). He explains that cultural capital can be embodied in three different forms: the embodied state (linked to the body), the objectified state (cultural goods), and the institutionalized state (through the family and education) (2007: 84). Currently, to be able to obtain an E2 visa and legally teach in South Korea, one needs to be a native English speaker, have a bachelor's degree and hold a specific citizenship. These forms of cultural capital are translated into symbolic capital since they grant its holder the prestige or opportunity to teach English in Seoul. Hage explains:

> For Bourdieu the accumulated cultural capital within a given field is ultimately converted into symbolic capital, which is the recognition and legitimacy given to a person or a group for the cultural capital they have accumulated. (1998:53)

Canadians embody symbolic capital through the distinction associated with being native Western English speakers in a setting where the majority of people are not. Hence,

Canadians who teach South Koreans to speak English are integral in ensuring that South Koreans will obtain the cultural capital needed to succeed globally. Cultural capital is used in this analysis in a variety of ways; it is embodied through the Canadian English teachers (in a variety of ways) and institutionalized through the education system (both private and public) that enables South Koreans to learn English. It is then further embodied in those South Koreans who successfully learn to speak English as a second language.

As this ethnographic work demonstrates, the symbolic capital embodied through being a native-English speaking, white Westerner can be curtailed or limited when South Koreans essentialize, stereotype or "Occidentalize" these subjects (see Carrier 1992) in a negative manner. Yet, what is of specific interest to this study is the ways that symbolic capital transcends locally specific circumstances as it relies on the transnational context to secure its prestige or distinction. Therefore, despite the fact that Canadians' symbolic capital may be disrupted, questioned or challenged in certain South Korean contexts, these white liberal Westerners can transnationally call upon their symbolic capital to re-center themselves as dominant, since their cultural capital is globally considered more prestigious and advantageous to that of the South Koreans.

To illustrate this example, I draw on an analysis conducted by Aihwa Ong in her study of elite Chinese transmigrants. Ong places her subjects in a "global racial ranking" whereby no matter how much economic or cultural capital they accumulate they will always be second-class global citizens and hence they will face limitations when it comes to obtaining symbolic capital (1999: 104). It this way, the transformation of cultural capital into symbolic capital is restricted due to the racialization of the English language.

English-language speaking skills must also intersect with the construction of the native speaker as informed through race, nationality and the Western world in order to be transformed into symbolic capital. In this context, these Canadian subjects rely on the established order of symbolic capital in such a way that it secures privilege, status and distinction over others in the world system. As a result, this study explores how Canadian subjects depend on this global structuring of symbolic capital to structure their relationships with South Koreans.

I am following in the footsteps of Scott (2006) by adding the concept of mobility capital to the three forms of capital that Bourdieu articulated. Mobility capital is used to express the understanding that through their movement Canadians are "collecting places" that lend to middle-class distinction which works to further entrench symbolic capital in the world system (Desforges: 1998). As Scott explains: "[M]obility capital acquired though a relatively short time overseas was good from a career/CV perspective" (2006: 1119). I also use the concept of mobility capital to express the fact that these subjects form part of a privileged type of movement where their Canadian passports and English speaking ability grant them the right to travel and work around the globe. This is transformed into symbolic capital since only an small percentage of the world's inhabitants have such prestige or distinction.

Summary of the Concepts

To summarize, I contend that as white, Western, liberal subjects these Canadians possess an advantageous status in the world-system. It is this cultural and symbolic capital that is further transformed into mobility capital that allows them privileged access to employment opportunities such as teaching English in Seoul. I have described the

ensuing discourses to analyze how these subjects use them in their narratives to mask their actual status in South Korea. Yet, this is not a critique of the Western subject per se but an analysis of how these subjects are created in the world-system. As Pennycook highlights: "This raises an extremely important question: Are we trying to judge the intentions and actions of individuals or to understand the historical location of actions and ideas" (1998:41)? Bearing that in mind, this study is concerned with how subjects narrate their identities through their transnational movement given that these identities are relational and are never disinterested or value-free. Balibar underscores:

> I could rephrase the whole thing by saying that in this context identities are more than ever used as strategies, both defensive and aggressive, and this means imposing such identities upon others and upon oneself. The kind of such strategies we are confronted with could not be understood if we did not constantly remember that the play of difference is underpinned and overdetermined by the general pattern of *inequalities,* both old (notably those coming from colonialism and imperialism) and *new* inequalities, arising from the at least partial disintegration of nation-social states. As a consequence, the politics of identity or the strategies of identity-defence are ultimately means of resisting inequality, or universality as inequality. (2002:171)

1.3

Methods

This research was primarily conducted in Itaewon, a neighborhood in Seoul, and its surrounding neighborhoods. I choose to conduct the investigation in that area since a significant percentage of Canadians live there. Moreover, many Canadians shop, eat and go out in Itaewon. I stayed with a Canadian friend in a residence that was a five-minute walk from the center of Itaewon. He had been living in Seoul for ten years and formed part of the established community.

I entered into the field with an intersection of both an interpretive and critical paradigm. This means that I focused on how my informants understand their social worlds while juxtaposing that within the larger historical, social, political, cultural and economic framework, as well as by ethnic, racial and gendered structures, among others (Bailey 2007: 55). The epistemological belief that I adhere to is grounded in the notion that the researcher is not independent from the research and hence objectivity is not sought. I also claim that values are a central part of the research and I do not believe that value neutrality is "essential to the research process" (Bailey 2007: 54).

Participant Observation

Kathleen Dewalt and Billie Dewalt have defined participant observation as "a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their routines and their culture" (2002: 1). I engaged in participant observation for three months from September 1 to December 1, 2008. I choose to do participant

observation in Seoul since it offered me the opportunity to experience the movement and dislocation that Canadians undergo in order to teach English in South Korea. Through direct contact and conversations with these Canadians *in situ* I was able to gain nuanced insights into how they conceive of their movement, positioning and identifications while in South Korea. During this time I gathered field notes as a routine means to record my impressions, thought and questions. Participation observation was not limited to Canadians but involved other Westerners as well; I spent considerable time with numerous Americans, an Irishman and an older couple from Tasmania.

Interviews

Semi-formal interviews were conducted with Canadians. I choose semi-structured interviews to allow the interviewees to contribute questions they found relevant and to ensure an open-ended flow to the interview. As Carol Bailey explains:

> In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer uses an interview guide with specific questions that are organized by topics but are not necessarily asked in a specified order. The flow of the interview, rather than the order in a guide, determines when and how a question is asked. (2007: 100)

Using a semi-structured interview enabled me to speak with people about their personal understanding in regard to their movement and identity as experienced through teaching English as a second language in South Korea. In that way, semi-structured interviews can allow for information that may not otherwise be obtained through other means. As Bailey explains, "Since researchers often come to understand what is useful to them only during analysis, giving a wide latitude to respondents can result in very fruitful caches of information" (2007: 96).

The interviews were tape-recorded and varied between one hour and thirty minutes to two hours and thirty minutes in duration. I interviewed a total of twelve Canadians ranging in age from twenty-three years to forty years. Each interviewee signed an informed consent form that explained the study is confidential and that there are no foreseen risks or benefits to participating in the study. Also, all names are pseudonyms in order to protect the confidentiality of the people who participated in this research project. Of the twelve people I interviewed, all but two of them lived around Itaewon. I choose participants through friends using the snowball technique. I narrowed the interview participants after engaging in casual conversation: choosing a variety of people who originated from across the country and who were engaged in legal and illegal work. The majority of the people that I interviewed had lived in Seoul for five or more years, thus forming part of what I have labeled the "established community."

The interview topics centered on notions of home and nationalism, their status as foreigners, how they understood their participation in South Korean society and their personal stories and experiences. I analyzed these interviews using a discourse analysis approach, bearing in mind that "there is no reality outside the discourses that construct our realities, only the possibility of critically analyzing the truth effects of those discourses" (Pennycook 1998: 164). Data analysis was ongoing throughout the duration of the research. I transcribed all the interviews and labeled them according to topics that I deemed relevant.

This considered and reflexive contribution by the interviewees solidified my understanding of their process of subjectification; consequently, the interviews play a central role in this thesis as they clearly articulate the vulnerabilities that these Canadians

encounter and how they respond to them. The interviews crystallized the observations that I was making and allowed for the participants to openly reflect on their actions.

Survey

I also sent a survey electronically to fifty people and asked them to distribute it widely. The underlying logic of using surveys was to add depth to the research by broadening the pool of respondents. I sent the survey electronically to encourage unrestricted or uncensored responses, but it was a limited tactic since only four surveys were completed. I chose the survey method to substantiate the participant observation and supplement the interviews as a means of triangulating the data.

Ethical Concerns

My main ethical concern was to ensure that during participant observation the people with whom I was interacting knew that I was conducting research. There was a blurry line between spending time with friends and engaging in participant observation. In order to maintain ethical standards, I constantly reminded my friends and informants that I was conducting research.

Also, I ensured that my particular outlook, thoughts and analysis were made transparent to those I was interviewing. Since this may be considered a somewhat critical ethnographic undertaking, I wanted those who choose to be interviewed to have a thorough understanding of my overall purpose.

Part 2

Setting the Stage

2.1

Itaewon

It is a great thing to do especially after you just graduate from college. You get to travel, you get work experience, and you get money at the same time. I think it is brilliant.

—Russell[9]

Foreigners congregate in a part of Seoul named Itaewon, located north of the Han River in the Yongsan-gu district of Seoul. The main U.S. military base, Yongsan Garrison, is located nearby. It was established after the Korean War. In fact, there is an established anti-American sentiment in South Korea and many demonstrations have taken place in front of the Yongsan Garrison to protest the U.S. presence on the Korean peninsula. This anti-American sentiment can flare up and at times Canadians are targeted since they are rarely outwardly distinguishable from Americans. There are thousands of U.S. military personnel stationed at this base and that is how Itaewon came to be established as a centre catering to the needs of Americans and other foreigners. Itaewon is full of tourists and foreigners since it hosts many international restaurants (offering food otherwise not widely available in other parts of South Korea) and offers other services geared towards foreigners. Other immigrant populations that congregate in Itaewon are Filipinos, Bangledeshis, Pakistanis, Russians, Eastern Europeans, Nigerians and various diplomats from all over the world.

Itaewon boasts a lively and varied nightlife. Additionally, it forms a base for foreign gays and lesbians, as well as prostitution; the club district is centered on "Hooker Hill," which is located beside "Homo Hill." Itaewon is densely populated with bars that

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[9] All names are pseudonyms in order to protect the confidentiality of the people who participated in this research project.

cater to the U.S. military and other foreigners, such as the Rocky Mountain Tavern and Hard Rock Cafe. The Rocky Mountain Tavern is decorated with Canadian icons such as hockey decorations and aboriginal totems. The setting could be described as hyper-reality where the Rocky Mountain Tavern is a reproduction of a "typical Canadian bar," so much so that it becomes "more real" than the original (Graburn: 1995). It is rare to see more than a few South Koreans in the Rocky Mountain Tavern; it is easy to forget that one is in Seoul. Some people liked this as it enabled them to feel "at home" and comfortable. Others avoided the Rocky Mountain Tavern since they felt it was a place where people connected with each other solely on the basis that they were Canadian. As Sadie illustrates:

> It [one's national identity] gets emphasized overseas, of course. But there are those who are like, "We-hooo! Canadian, yeah!" And I think—really, you think Americans are ignorant, but here you are going to the Rocky Mountain Tavern every weekend and talking about being Canadian. I resent people who ask me where I am from and then they say, "Yeah, me too." You don't know me just because you know what country I am from.

In this way, those who consciously avoid these forms of interactions are in the process of de-identifying with an overtly hyper notion of declaring Canadianess.

Itaewon embraces foreigners who often turn to alcohol to deal with homesickness and isolation. On a typical Saturday night in Itaewon, one can see young Westerners who are embarrassingly drunk. Erin says she drank much more when she first arrived in Seoul than at any other time in her life:

> I just didn't like it here. I wasn't comfortable here. ... I didn't understand what people were saying and I was drinking a lot. It was just bad.

This type of heavy drinking is apparent in the behaviour of Canadian English teachers. As Russell explains:

Yeah, it plays a bigger role for the foreign society than it would at home. We all drink more.

Nirmala: Why do you think so?

R: I don't know. I think most people will say to you it is because it is an escape, life can be rough here, so you get to the weekends, and you have been so busy during the week and under such stress, that you feel like you have to have as much fun as possible on the weekend. People drink a lot more here than they do back home. A lot of people become alcoholics. I used to drink four times a week.

N: But it was not just about the frequency. Weren't you also consuming a lot more than usual?

R: Oh yeah, you would drink to get drunk. Rather than sitting around, like tonight, sipping wine. Two years ago I was getting trashed four times a week. When I say I was drinking four times a week, I meant getting trashed.

N: It seems like people drink a lot.

R: Yeah, and smoking. The percentage of us here that smoke is a lot higher than at home.

This type of behaviour contributes to the idea that many of these young Canadians see teaching English in Seoul as an extension of college life (especially those who stay for a year or two and move on). This is a "common" part of the life course whereby recent university graduates travel before "settling down" (Scott 2006).

Moreover, Itaewon is the designated area where "inter-ethnic" relationships take place; consequently, in many instances, when people refer to this type of dating, they also refer to Itaewon. As Sadie notes:

Those are the guys who are strolling Hooker Hill. Those are the creeps who pick up girls in Itaewon.

Itaewon has a seedy feel to it, especially late on weekends when most people on the street are drunks spilling out of bars. At these times, there are also U.S. military personnel dressed in full garb marching up and down the street looking for soldiers who are out past

curfew. This combination of people creates an explosive dynamic that can be felt in the air. Moreover, it is around Itaewon where foreign women have been the targets of violent attacks such as beatings and rape. In short, Itaewon is a unique space with a defined reputation as there is no other area in Seoul, let alone South Korea, that begins to compare to the diversity in people and establishments.

Just down the road from Itaewon is Haebangchon. In the past five years, Haebangchon has been transformed into a residential area that caters to foreigners, who are mostly Canadian English teachers. In this area, there is a noticeable difference in the ratio of foreigners to South Koreans; there are more foreigners than South Koreans walking on the streets. This neighbourhood also has restaurants and some bars that cater to Western foreigners. Indigo Café is said to be a Canadian hangout, and the menu, abundant with typical Western food, is in English. I spoke with many Canadians who, after living in this neighbourhood for a couple of years, had decided to move away from the neighbourhood to "get away" from other Canadians and Westerners. As Jack explains:

> I used to live here, but I actually just moved a couple of days ago. I moved to Gyeong-ni-Dan. … [I]t is really strange 'cause Haebangchon is more like a satellite community of foreigners. When you see Koreans walking down the street it's shocking. It's not really the same; it's like being in Moncton. Even just over the bridge, it's different. It feels real, somewhat more like Korea.

They relocated a mere five-minute walk away to a neighbourhood called Gyeong-ni-Dan, which is located in between Haebangchon and Itaewon. It seems this distance is just enough to create the space they needed from other foreigners while maintaining a close proximity to the services they enjoy. These tight-knit expatriate communities can be overwhelming if one's plans had been to "get away." Jack says that one of his

motivations for leaving Canada was to get away from the small town where he grew up and the gossip-based network. He noticed that in these foreigner pockets in Seoul, the same situation tends to reproduce itself:

> Well, there is a lot of drama that comes from living here. I mean, I came here to get away from the smallness and the drama from the city I live in, and then I came here and it tends to be the same thing.

Yet for those who are homesick or isolated, it provides the needed padding to protect oneself against South Korean society. Prakesh explains that over the years, as South Korea has become more Westernized, it is easier for young Canadians to insulate themselves:

> There are a lot more establishments and a lot more communities to buffer that unhappiness [which so many Canadians experience while in South Korea]. So, I find a lot of people, they are living in Korea, but now there is the opportunity to create a community of friends that is almost identical in terms of things that they enjoy back home. So, they are in Korea, but what keeps them happy is nothing Korean. Their social groups are usually all from the same country. So the moments of happiness come when people leave Korea to go travelling or that kind of thing.

Canadians who have been living in Seoul for many years, such as Prakesh, yearn to distinguish themselves from the throng of Canadians who year after year come and go. As with the example of the Rocky Mountain Tavern, people like Prakesh consciously distance themselves from relating to others based solely on the fact that they are Canadian. Some Canadians transcend their transience by investing in a more rooted existence through the acquisition of pets and furniture. Prakesh justifies his investments in furniture:

> People always ask me, "Why you are buying all this furniture. How are you going to get it back home?" And my response is, "Have you ever thought maybe this is my home?" And there are those of us like that.

Prakesh and his friends do not identify with the "this isn't really my life" mentality that transience can foster. This mindset relies on the belief that life is on hold while in South Korea, and that somehow "real life" resumes upon returning to Canada.

2.2

I'd Rather Be in Japan

In 2005, when I was working as an English teacher in Seoul, I realized that one does not choose South Korea—South Korea chooses you. I concluded this when I noticed that everyone I met came to Seoul not out of desire to live in South Korea, but in search of opportunity. Therefore Canadians are choosing *the opportunity* that is located in South Korea and not necessarily South Korea as a specific location.

Canadians commonly choose the opportunity to teach in South Korea for a couple of reasons: it offers the best overall package[10] and/or they knew someone who had taught there. These motivations for working in Seoul correspond with Sørensen and Olwig's concept of mobile livelihoods and chain/network migration. Mobile livelihoods highlight current research on migration, which has shifted its theoretical focus from "place" to "mobility." This movement is considered a privileged form of mobility since only a minuscule percentage of the world's population can leave their home country to teach their native tongue. Anna underscores this:

> We are so lucky that we can do this. We can travel around the world and teach English. Make money and travel at the same time, how many people can do this? Not many.

As these Canadians search for opportunity, South Korea as a place takes on a diminished importance. As Michelle explains:

> I came to Korea 'cause I had friends here. ... In fact, I felt kind of like, 'Meh, Korea.' You know what I mean? I don't really know how to qualify that, but

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[10] The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET) is considered the best option for teaching overseas. However, it is highly competitive and one can apply only at specific times during the year, whereas there are contracts continuously being offered in South Korea.

> Korea is just not really a cool country. I mean, maybe it is becoming one … But when you think Asia, you think China, Japan.

The prevalent motives for Canadians migrating to South Korea are to get away, pay off debt, save money, travel and gain life experiences. Prakesh explains that South Korea has become one more choice among many:

> Korea has become the eleventh Canadian province. There are so many choices. Korea is just one more choice.

Anna's reasons for going to South Korea parallel those of many young Canadians: she wanted to travel but didn't have the money to do so. Moreover, she had to pay off her student debt. She therefore looked into various options of working and travelling abroad. Her Canadian friend had advised her to go teach in Seoul. Anna explains:

> There are a lot of university students with bills, and that is really the reason we come here. … I really wanted to go to France because I want to perfect my French. My friend said, "Well, France is really great, but you can't save any money there." So she said if you want to save money and pay off debt then you should go to Korea. I have never considered Asia before 'cause I didn't want to go to Asia, but she told me that it is a really great life, that I would be really taken care of. So then I got thinking about it, and thought in a year or two[11] I could have my loans paid off and then do kind of whatever I want.

Many Canadians see South Korea as a way to see the world and travel. For the most part they are young, white, and have recently graduated from university. Sadie underscores this rationale:

> I have the typical coming-to-Korea story. I was twenty-three or twenty-four [years old] and I just finished university. I was broke and bored, and I really wanted to travel, but I couldn't afford it, so I thought that I would go and work and travel.

In addition to those who choose South Korea as a means to travel, there are some who were already travelling and viewed South Korea as a pit stop that allows them to earn more money to travel. This was the case for Erin:

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[11] She ended up staying for a third year.

> The first time I came was 2005. Really it was fly-by-night. I came to meet a friend. I had been travelling on an open-end ticket that expired in Seoul. I blew it off and I stayed—sort of crazy. … I thought I would see how it went. I kind of ended up falling into a job—I really needed to work. I had been working in Thailand, but I had run out of money.

Since Erin had not planned to work but was able to easily find work, the opportunity to work in South Korea was almost too good to be true.

Many Canadians expressed the idea that people come to South Korea to escape. As Steve, who had lived in South Korea for over four years, explains:

> I think people who have chosen to come here … mostly people are running away from something. I think that the exploration element is OK for the six-month people, for the one-year people who want to make money. But for anyone else who stays here longer and digs in here, they weren't doing well in their own country. There is something they are running from, even if it is totally harmless. They came here 'cause they are escaping and if you are prone to escaping then you just stay.

Jack says he came as a means to get away from his situation back home:

> The reason I choose Korea is 'cause I have a couple of friends here, and they were saying, "Yeah come on over, it is cool here." And so I came here. Yep, within one month I sold all my stuff and came here.

He had recently divorced his wife and was looking for an alternative life; he came to Seoul as a jumping-off point for his travels. Although he hadn't planned to work, Jack ending up working as a DJ and as a part-time English teacher.

As Steve explains, recent graduates who end up working in South Korea originate from certain disciplines:

> You will find a whole lot of humanities and visual-arts people with no degrees… poli. sci., anthropology … there are not a lot of engineering students around here, or there are not a lot of biologists, really there aren't. If you are looking at the Canadian structure, we know the hierarchy of employable people, even if you graduated with no desire whatsoever, you can get a high-paying job if you studied engineering.

Everyone I spoke with and interviewed fell into this line of reasoning. I didn't meet anyone with a science degree who was teaching in South Korea. As Steve and Prakesh observed, teaching in South Korea acts as another choice or opportunity for certain Canadians who may be underemployed back home. Also, since people are recruited solely because they are native-English speakers and are motivated to travel and gain overseas experience, they may not take their job seriously. Holly explains:

> There is sort of a division. There are people who come here strictly for money and their privilege makes them so jaded they look down on the host culture completely and just treat their job as a joke because so little is expected of them.

Michelle provides a detailed account of why she ended up staying in South Korea for five years when she had originally planned to stay for one:

> If I had to answer in a concise way, from the first year to the second, the first year was for adventure, and Jeff was here, Marissa was here, they talked me into it—not that I needed talking into. At home I had a couple of things I wanted to get away from, to find myself. A lot of people do that these days. Not necessarily Korea, but they go somewhere to find themselves. And the second year was 'cause I liked my job, so I stayed for my job. The third year was for another person, it was for a relationship, and I had a strong community of people here, and I liked my life here.
>
> N: So then the second year, you weren't planning to stay for a third year, and so in your third year, you decided to stay for one more year? Or was it more fluid?
>
> M: Each time, I saved up a good sum of money, and then I would go travelling, deplete my bank accounts, and not feel finished. I personally was not ready to leave at that point. ... And it's an easy choice to make. There are many overlapping reasons: I have a job, I have a strong community, I know the deal, it's comfortable.

Michelle's account is typical in the sense that many people end up building a life for themselves while in South Korea and it is not as straightforward as they might have imagined for them to uproot themselves. In Michelle's case, she built a strong community of friends, she was earning a lot of money teaching private lessons and she was travelling

around Asia. She wanted to capitalize on these life experiences before returning to Canada. That is why she ended up staying in Seoul for five years despite the fact she did not particularly like South Korean society or culture.

Evidently there is a blurring of the boundaries of migration and tourism that raises questions similar to those posed by Steve: "If am here on a tourist visa and I am working, then what do you call that?" Referring to Bianchi's concept of migrant-tourist workers (see Chapter 1), this particular site differs from his case study of mobile resort workers since South Korea is not a tourism destination in the minds of the Canadians who move there. As Crystal explains:

> No one chooses Korea. Not even to tour here. You just don't choose to come here for really any other reason than money. You just don't. My family wouldn't have come here if I weren't here; it's not a tourist destination.

Yet, these Canadian English teachers do conform to Bianchi's umbrella term migrant-tourist workers since many Canadians enter South Korea on a tourist visa, will most likely engage in tourism while in South Korea and use South Korea as a springboard for their travel adventures to neighbouring countries. This is one of the relevant material conditions that motivate many Canadians' identifications of their movement. As Erin explains: "I identify with being a traveller."

2.3

Transience

> *I am not really engaged in Korean culture. That is a grievance that I have, that I have become one of those foreigners*
>
> —Siddarth

Canadians are vulnerable for a number of reasons. Living in a foreign environment they cannot rely upon their usual support networks of family and friends. These Canadians also have limited communication skills, as they do not speak Korean. Even after living in Seoul for more than five years, many people have not learned more than very basic Korean. As Patricia confirms:

> Foreigners live in a pocket that is not really Korea. I don't understand Korean and I don't have to make the effort.

The formation of "foreigner ghettos" is a well-known phenomenon (see Fetcher) and Canadians living in Seoul are no exception. Most Canadians are attracted to other English speakers or people they can relate to culturally, which for the most part tends to be other Westerners. Although some might have a South Korean friend or partner, these relationships don't form the bulk of their interpersonal interactions or social communities. Moreover, these South Korean interlocutors tend to be "Westernized" by either having lived, traveled or studied abroad and/or they are fluent in English. Thus, for the most part, the incorporation of Canadian teachers into Korean society is limited to the classroom where they teach, the private lessons they covet and ephemeral consumer transactions.

Day-to-day activities such as getting groceries, going to the bank and getting around can become tedious, challenging and isolating experiences. As Patricia points out:

"It's really not supposed to be this hard. We have such limited agency here." Patricia has been to the bank countless times and muses over the fact it never became an easy routine, as there was always some complication or "glitch in the plan" that results in frustrating everyday interactions that take much longer than they should.

Since most of these Canadians come alone and do not know many people upon arrival, they tend to make friendships easily. Friendships take on a greater intensity as people are forced to depend on each other in a variety of ways. As Jack explains:

> That's another odd thing here: friendships are built really quickly. ... Back home, it would take months and months to tell people things. Let's put it this way: me talking to you like this, me talking to you very openly, usually that would take a very long time for most people.

However, these friendships are fleeting since, due to the transient nature of the community, people are always coming and going. When Scott heard his friend was leaving Seoul, he said: "What, you're leaving too? OK, well, can you turn off the lights when you go?" This was a poetic way for Scott to express his feelings of powerlessness regarding the reality that so many of his friends have left and will continue to leave. He confided that, after living in Seoul for over two years, it had become hard for him to remain open and make new friends, as he knows he will have to say goodbye. And yet, he remains open since he is a social person and depends on his personal network to support him.

This was common for people who had lived in Seoul for many years. For example, I interviewed twelve people in fall 2008. Within five months, nine of the twelve had left the country. Of those nine, three had been planning to stay when I interviewed them. Of the remaining three, one had planned to leave but decided to renew

her contract. All to say, people are always coming or going and sometimes they aren't too sure whether they are coming or going. As Sadie highlights:

> Everyone says that [I am never coming back]. Do you know how many going-away parties I have had for the same person? And it is funny 'cause you watch them leave and you know which ones are coming back.

There are varying subsections of the Canadian community of English teachers living in Seoul. There are those who stay for a year and leave. This is probably the majority of people. However, there is a significant percentage of people that return for another year, which can lead to another. Then there are the "lifers"; people who have been in South Korea for a long time and plan to stay. Prakesh defined the term lifer:

> A lifer is someone who has been here for more than three years, someone who is going to stay here for a long time, someone who marries a Korean, someone who has kids and then they marry. But lifers don't always remain lifers. For example, I know one woman—I first heard the term lifer used by her, this was in 2002—she has since left. She left a year and a half ago, after nine toten years here, and she would probably still consider herself a lifer.
>
> N: So, by that definition you are a lifer, since you have been here for more than three years.
>
> P: Sure.
>
> N: The interesting thing about that term is that it suggests there's this unstated idea that when you come to South Korea, it is only acceptable to come for a certain amount of time. A lifer is a derogatory term as it intersects with the life course. Which means these people go against what this type of movement is supposed to be, which is a certain amount of time in the life course. If you extend past that, you are an anomaly within the anomaly and then you are looked down upon.
>
> P: The tone of the utterance has never revealed the derogatory nature but you are completely right. The way you described it as the anomaly within the anomaly is very significant. I get e-mails that say, "You are *still* in Korea?!"

One of the most common questions people ask each other when they first meet is: "How long have you been here?" The number of time one has lived in South Korea

serves as a distinguishing feature that can form a base to identify or distinguish oneself from others. Some people tend to feel ashamed at the amount of time they have stayed in Seoul. When asked, they avoid the question with answers such as: "Oh, I have been here too long" or "I have been here for a million years." One person responded by saying: "Longer than I care to talk about." And Stacey said: "I have been here for five years! Gosh!" She looked surprised and covered her mouth with her hand, "That seems so long!"

Apparently, there is a shelf life to living in Seoul. As Prakesh explained, there is an unstated rule that once one has passed the three-year mark, they are flagged as problematic in some way. Unless one marries a South Korean, South Korea is not a place one can easily call home. Currently, it is not possible for Canadians to gain permanent residency or citizenship, while ethnically, they will always stick out.[12]

Therefore, when one stays in South Korea for a many years it allows others to wonder: what are you *still* doing there? Especially when they don't learn the language and complain about the culture. Since they are living in a state of transience, there is the underlying feeling they are not moving forward in their life. As Crystal explains:

> It's kind of like I just lost five years of my life. Everyone else has moved on and I haven't. Nothing has progressed for me. The land that time forgot.
>
> N: Well, that seems really sad, what you just said. Yet, I think a lot of people feel that way. Before, you said I am *still* here. A lot of people ask how long have you been here. It's a typical question people ask when you meet them, and it seems when people have been here for a while they are ashamed.

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[12] South Korea is founded on a myth of ethnic homogeneity. The country has started to import much more labour and foreign bride,s and its society is slowly "opening up." See tinyurl.com/lfyzxb (accessed on May 15, 2009).

C: It's because … this is a transition. This is not supposed to be a life. You don't come here to live in a bachelor apartment with nothing and live with nothing. That is not what you grow up and hope to be.

N: And yet, you have made the most of the situation. We have already talked about the pros. You said others have progressed; maybe back-home people see you as living a fun, exotic …

C: I am sure they do. Whenever they write me e-mails, they always say you should count your blessings that you have gotten to do this, and it is so wonderful, and you will never forget this time. I know I will never forget it.

N: But you will spend the rest of your life trying to!

C: Yeah, the things I will remember are missing all the things that I had to give up. They [friends and family back home] say it is so cool that I have gotten to do this, but they don't realize how hard it is that I couldn't be there.

N: And one year just leads to another.

C: Yeah.

N: I find that I have a bias, whenever I hear someone say, "I am leaving, I am going back home." It always makes me happy.

C: Yeah, 'cause you think, "Oh good, you're getting out." It is kind of like … have you heard of this place referred to as Korean crack? It is; it's crack. You just get addicted to the money, to the game of it all, to the lifestyle, to the ease of it, and you go home and realize, crap this is harder than I remember it being. It was so much easier there [in South Korea]. So they all just come back.

N: Yeah, it becomes a cycle.

C: It has been a very small percentage of the teachers that I have worked with that have stayed away. Usually, they will take a break and they end up back here. …I had made plans that were supposed to help me further in my life.

N: Your situation is very common, people keep coming back, even though they don't like South Korea, and yet, they are not proud of it, and like you just said, you feel like you have been living in the land that has forgotten time, that you have basically stood still for five years …

C: Well, living in the situation I'm in, I can't have kids. They're not going to give me maternity leave. I can't even have the surgery I need. They won't give me the time off I need to recuperate from the surgery. … Normal life for us back home, well for me especially, you get married, you have kids, you do the family thing.

> This whole living in transition thing, where I can't have kids because I am not living in a position that I can, sucks.

As a foreign worker in South Korea, Crystal lacks the essential health benefits that she would have access to in Canada. Therefore, in this case, the actual privilege of her whiteness and Canadianess has clearly reached its limits. Many Canadians get "caught" living in South Korea since they feel their life is not moving forward and are negatively stigmatized (in South Korean society and at home), but once they get home and confront the same obstacles that motivated them to leave in the first place (not being able to find a job, running away from their problems, wanting to make a lot of money to pay off their debt and/or travel) they return.

Moreover, it is not straightforward how this overseas experience is valued back home. These schools are not accredited in Canada and therefore a *real* teacher cannot claim teaching in South Korea as *valued* work experience. Since there are a plethora of Canadians teaching English in South Korea, it tends to lose its distinction. Russell explains:

> N: Do you think that the work experience here is valued back home?
>
> R: No, not at all. I remember going to my brother's wedding and I was a groomsman in his wedding, and the MC gets up to introduce everyone, and he made the mistake of saying that Russell teaches English in Korea, and in front of an audience of many people I stood up and said I am not a teacher. 'Cause when I first came here and I would go home and tell people that I was a teacher, it was novel, what a great thing. But now so many people have done it, that everyone is like... ummh. It is almost seen as a shame.

2.4

Hagwon

The majority of Canadians who migrate to teach English in South Korea teach at hagwons. Hagwons are private institutions that supplement South Koreans' public education. Hagwons vary in subject matter as they range from science to fine arts, such as drawing and music. There are also English kindergarten hagwons. South Koreans pay tens of thousands of dollars per year so their children can attend these schools.[13] These are full immersion programs where children as young as four go to the hagwon from nine o'clock in the morning to two o'clock in the afternoon. Canadians are solely responsible for teaching these children. Class size ranges from six to twelve students. English teachers also teach elementary students in the afternoon. Moreover, Hagwons provide services for teenagers and adults who are studying for international standardized tests, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for entrance into U.S. universities. Each Hagwon's cirriculum differs. Some Canadians are not given any material to work with and must invent their own classes. Other Hagwons provide a structured curriculum and materials such as textbooks, flashcards, etc. Since Hagwons are privately run, they are driven by profit and customer satisfaction. The English language is sold as a commodity on the market. In that way, English teachers are commodified.

Hagwons that can boast of English speakers from the West will receive more business than those who do not have Westerners. Currently, the North American accent (not a Texan accent) is in demand, and therefore the market is further refined by the type of accent a native English speaker has. Canadians must send their photo as part of the

[13] Evidently, Hagwons cater to an elite fraction of South Korean society.

application process. It is an established fact among English teachers that they are recruited based on what they look like. The ideal English teacher parallels notions of the "symbolic Westerner": white, female, young, attractive, blond hair, blue eyes and healthy-looking.

Canadians complained that their employers did not have their best interest in mind. Often Canadians were bothered by the lack of diplomatic skills on the part of the South Koreans. For instance, stories circulate about teachers arriving from arduous twenty-plus hour flights, being picked up from the airport, and immediately being taken to teach. Despite the fact Western teachers get higher pay and work fewer hours than their South Korean counterparts, they still end up frustrated when their bosses stray from the agreed-upon work contracts. Erin explains:

> I don't have to work as hard as the Koreans—that is obvious. And no one ever does. You know the Koreans have to stay after school. And I never do, although today I did 'cause I wanted to help out with this Christmas thing, but they didn't expect me to or ask me to 'cause it is their responsibility as a Korean to do it. ...So that is unfortunate they don't make as much money as the foreigners, yet they work longer hours and they have to bow down to authority, whereas we don't recognize it as such in the same regard as they do.

Because foreigners work less and make more, South Koreans are often incapable of understanding why they complain when they are not paid for overtime hours and so on. Apparently, there is a clash over what is considered appropriate labour standards.

Hagwons as profit-seeking businesses are notorious for "cutting corners" wherever possible. This includes failing to pay pension benefits, evading health insurance requirements, providing inadequate apartments or failing to account for overtime hours. However, E2 visas are valid only as long as you are working for the same employer. In other words, if you quit your job, then your working visa is no longer applicable. In that

way, many Canadians are tied to their place of work since even if their employer fails to meet the conditions of their contract, it is difficult for them to switch jobs.

Teachers of English Abroad in Korea (TEA-KOR), established in 2007, is a grassroots network for English teachers in South Korea.[14] In its letter to teaching unions in Canada, the group detailed the "common problems" English teachers encounter in South Korea:

> **Exactly how are foreign teachers abused?**
>
> The attached "Letter to agencies" details all the common problems in private academy-foreign teacher contracts. They are in sum as follows:
>
> - Loosely defined teaching hours causing overwork, under-reporting of hours and loss of overtime pay as required by law (the standard is 30 teaching hours a week)
> - No breaks in eight-hour stretches as required by law
> - Illegal deductions such as "housing" or "contract deposits" as declared in law
> - Illegal dismissal and loss of salary, airfare costs, severance pay, and bonuses, violating contracts and labour law
> - Lack of or inadequate notice of termination
> - Poor housing conditions violating contracts and human rights
> - Failure to supply and pay for adequate household furnishings as stipulated by contracts
> - Failure to book and pay for vacation time and national holidays as required by law
> - Failure to allow any time for sick leave
> - Failure to pay sick leave as required by law
>
> Aside from these points in law and contracts, employers find other ways to abuse teachers. They may, for example, withhold degrees and passports, which is illegal. Yet, you may enter an immigration office any day of the week and see employers handling these kinds of documents and immigration officers receiving them unhesitatingly, without the presence of the documents' owner. Some employers hang on to such documents for months at a time as insurance against the employee leaving abruptly when they should obviously be addressing the reasons why employees want to leave.

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[14] TEA-KOR letter to unions, June 2008.

> Some employers fail to register their employees on the national health plan because it is an employer-employee shared cost, and employees often believe they are being registered on the plan but are not. The case of the U.S. citizen who died from severe burns after his apartment caught fire highlighted this problem. He was not covered at the time he was burned.[15]

TEA-KOR provides a detailed summary of the often-repeated situations Canadian English teachers are subjected to. This account explains the vulnerabilities and degrees of exploitation that Canadians face as foreign migrant workers. Contrastingly, the individual narratives reveal that Canadians instead of facing and dealing with these vulnerabilities head-on, complain and criticize South Koreans. They focus on the negative attributes of their bosses and narrate them in racialized ways instead of dealing with the actual labor issues. They do this because they are relatively powerless at the workplace and relying on normative discourses of race and nation allow them to *feel* empowered.

In fact, Canadians often find themselves in a defensive position with their South Koreans bosses even before arriving in South Korea. They have heard many horrible stories and are afraid they will be taken advantage of. Anna reveals these common concerns:

> I had a friend who had taught in Korea and I was really petrified in a way because I had heard of all these people who were getting really bad deals, where they have terrible cockroach-infested apartments and their managers are nasty and they can't get out of the country and so on. And having no experience I was worried about this.

In that respect, it is often more surprising to hear that someone has not had a problem with their workplace or with their boss than vice-versa.

Canadians are restricted when they try to improve their working conditions. Crystal worked for numerous years for a company that would not pay her pension

[15] TEA-KOR letter to unions, June 2008.

benefits. Attempts to talk to the appropriate government officials were fruitless, as she could not speak Korean nor get time off work to deal with these matters. As she explains:

> When we tried the first time [to get pension], I had to stop because I was the only one fighting for it and I was getting into a lot of trouble for it. So, if you raised your voice, if you questioned why, you started to get in trouble.
>
> N: And that could jeopardize your job.
>
> C: Yeah, so to make life easier for myself, I had to stop.

Erin had to teach illegally as she does not have a bachelor's degree. The company Erin worked for took advantage of her status. As she explains:

> The company I was working for owes me $5,000.
>
> N: Do you think they are going to pay you?
>
> E: No, I don't think they are going to pay me.
>
> N: Why do they owe you so much money?
>
> E: They owed for two months.
>
> N: Wow. And then, since you are here illegally, that must have affected your positioning in your situation, right? I have heard this happens to people a lot, but you really have no recourse.
>
> E: Yeah, we were vulnerable. We were both really bummed and just lost faith in humanity, well, not humanity ... it was just wrong to do that. And then there was another month waiting looking for another job, so we probably lost another $2,000 right there. Whatever—it is water under the bridge.

Whether working legally, illegally or both, these Canadians have little support to help them protect their rights.[16] As Anna explains:

> I feel there is no real recourse, I had a real big problem with that health check. There is no one that I can complain to about that. If I have a problem, or if I don't like something there is not much I can do about it.

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[16] Although TEA-KOR was established to meet this need, everyone that that I spoke to was unaware of such an organization.

In terms of official procedure, there is not much Canadians can do, so they often respond by complaining to others. These Canadians find themselves frustrated upon realizing they are in a relatively powerless position. However, instead of identifying as exploited or oppressed workers and proceeding accordingly, these Canadians often rely on familiar discourses in order to regain a sense of power or control in their lives. For example, despite the fact they may encounter problems at work, they will remind themselves they are making a lot of money and have great lifestyles in terms of purchasing power. This logic allows them to dispel the image that they are migrant workers. Yet, this line of reasoning is often unsubstantiated since in reality, their salaries are not that handsome. As Michelle explains:

> For the average person if you think about it, crunch the numbers, most people are making 2.1 million won, and they are working like thirty hours a week. It's insane. And it doesn't include preparation. For the first-time teacher, 2.0 (roughly $2,000) and they are teaching from nine to seven or nine to six. That's insane, and if you work it out on an hourly basis, it comes out to like ten bucks an hour, so what are we saying? That we get paid so much money, we get paid ten bucks an hour. I mean, really honest to God, these are university graduates.

Their consumer lifestyle allows them to transcend their status. An American who was in Seoul teaching English contrasted his circumstances with living conditions in the United States. He explained that in the United States he would be barely scraping by and in Seoul he was living the life of a young urban professional. These English teachers have their apartments paid for by their employers and do not have to invest in large expenses such as cars and furniture. Therefore, they have more disposable income to buy luxury goods. They also frequent expensive restaurants and clubs. These consumer practices allow them to feel powerful as they have more purchasing freedom as well as the status

that comes with it. However, as previously mentioned, this lifestyle/status tends to be an illusion; Michelle continues with her analysis:

> But what I am saying is, I think that people are outside of the expectations of home. Like at home, there is pressure to buy houses, to buy cars, here you don't have to buy those things.
>
> N: Oh, so you mean there is a different consumer lifestyle here.
>
> M: By coming here you don't have to deal with those pressures [to buy furniture and houses] right away, so yeah, you can save money. People won't buy the extra fork, since they won't take it home, so they escape that responsibility of having to put their life together.

Recent graduates enjoy this type of lifestyle and it allows them to cope with the difficulties they face in the workplace.

Canadians also distinguish themselves from each other through their jobs. Hagwons are considered to be at the bottom of the teaching-English pile; they are notorious for shutting down unexpectedly or failing to provide adequate work conditions (as outlined above). Also, people differentiate themselves based on their training. Russell explains:

> There is a hierarchy within our circle as well. ...You meet someone and ask what do you do. "I am an English teacher." Immediately people will either specify "Well, I actually have a degree in English" or "I actually have a degree in education" to differentiate themselves, from those who have a degree in who the fuck knows what and are just here basically because they speak English.

University contracts are the most coveted for their limited teaching hours and extended vacations. Also, some Canadians manage to get away from teaching English altogether and work for other industries, such as voice acting or publishing; they too are considered to be of a higher ranking than Hagwons. Lastly, there is a relative shame to be doing what everyone else is doing. Russell explains:

When you ask someone, "What do you do?" and if they are an English teacher, they will always, especially the Canadians more so than everyone else, they will say [he says this in a depressed tone], "Oh, I am doing what everyone else is doing. I'm just another English teacher." They are always self-deprecating...

2.5

Pee in the Cup

It's not as easy as it used to be to work in South Korea.[17] On December 15, 2007, the Korean government changed the visa regulations for E2 working visas. The changes were said to be in response to the general (South Korean) public perception of English teachers as being pedophiles. This stereotype was exacerbated after a Canadian man was arrested for pedophilia in Thailand; he had previously been teaching children in South Korea.[18] Canadians are aware of how they are stereotyped, as Holly underscores:

> You see with the way the visa guidelines changed that the general perception of foreigners is not that positive. We are pedophiles, druggies. We bring queerness in—all these kind of things. They make the visa guidelines more and more strict, not really to do anything about it, but so the government can say to the public, "Oh look, we are controlling [the situation]."
>
> They always talk about the unqualified teacher issue—this is the language—but what is the qualification, a bachelor's degree in geography? You know what I mean?

An E2 Visa is the category of visa issued to foreign language instructors. E2 visas are issued only to those whose mother tongue is English; "Mother tongue is interpreted as a first language that one speaks everyday from birth to as of application date."[19] However, the citizens who were eligible for such a visa were limited to being from (English)

[17] Nor is it as lucrative. During this research, the won—South Korea's currency—dropped overnight. People sending remittances home lost a considerable percentage of their money in the exchange.
[18] See tinyurl.com/nupx3h accessed on May 20, 2009.
[19] koreanconsulate.qc.ca accessed on July 15, 2008.

Canada[20], the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. That is the determining qualification: being from a Western country.[21]

Previously, one only had to get his or her academic degree verified in order to qualify for an E2 Visa.[22] The changes implemented on December 15, 2007 introduced a criminal-record check, medical check and an interview at a South Korean consulate.[23] These regulating steps must be completed in Canada[24] at the expense of the applicant. It can be a lengthy and costly process. Before the new regulations, it was common to apply for a job online and within a month be working in South Korea. Now it takes months to go through the application process. After working illegally in South Korea for ten months, Anna went to Canada for a one-month holiday with the intention of returning to work legally in South Korea; she explains how all-consuming the new visa regulations are:

> Yes, I went home for Christmas and began to look for a new job. I found a job pretty quickly, but because of all the new visa regulations—I mean, they make it really difficult. I was tempted to come back illegally ... actually, I was tempted to not come to Korea at all, because I was like, this is ridiculous.
>
> I'm a good teacher and they are putting me through this ridiculous rigmarole to get into the country to teach their children. It took me two and a half months at home. The police check was on the spot, it was all the other stuff; I had to send stuff [transcripts and police check] to Montreal to be verified. Then the Korean consulate had to look at them, then I had to courier them to Korea. [It was] extremely expensive—cost me hundreds of dollars.

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[20] Quebecers must prove their schooling and university degree were in English. Also, phone interviews are conducted to check for "accents."

[21] Lee Myung Bak, South Korea's current president, has implemented policy so public schools nationwide will be teaching English by 2010. In order to meet this enormous demand for English, there is speculation the E2 visa will be opened up to other English-speaking countries, such as India and the Philippines. See tinyurl.com/nfr89g (accessed on May 9, 2009).

[22] In order to have one's degree verified, one has to mail it to South Korea where it is accessed. It is common for degrees to be returned folded or crinkled, which can be upsetting to some whom had previously had their degrees framed.

[23] See tinyurl.com/msztan

[24] There are different regulations for those already working on an E2 visa in South Korea.

> Then once my job here had my paperwork, which was such an ordeal, they applied to the Korean government for my visa number. Once they finally had my visa number they could send it to me. Then I had to send the entire package back to Montreal with my passport. They had to set up a webcam interview with me. It's a new requirement, they have to interview you before you come in. I had to wait a week and a half to get my interview. Meanwhile, my job was trying to book me a flight. But not knowing when I would get my interview, it was difficult.
>
> Finally I had my interview. They stamped it, I asked them to rush it back because my flight was soon, and they got it back to me and I finally made it out at the end of February.

For Anna, the process was time-consuming and expensive. Moreover, it encouraged her to consider teaching illegally or to teach somewhere else. Many people voiced the same concerns: the new visa regulations were making it difficult for them to secure work, encouraged more illegal workers, and consequently missed their intended mark of regulating who teaches English. As Erin, who was working illegally in Seoul, explains:

> Now with all the restrictions to get back into the country, it is kind of like they made people come here illegally. I don't think I am doing a bad thing. It's not like I lose sleep at night because I am doing a bad thing. You know, I earn my money, I go and I spend a lot of time and energy with the kids, and I do the best I can—you know what I mean?

Jin, a South Korean who has been recruiting English teachers for ten years, says it has been much harder for her to recruit people since the new visa regulations were put into place. She says the visa regulations are hurting the English language business and are having a negative effect on the country. Patricia also expressed frustration due to the barriers she encountered with the new visa regulations. In fact, since it was so complicated for her to get a job while she was in Canada, she ended up returning to South Korea on a tourist visa and securing work once in the country.

Moreover, Canadians didn't know what changes were being made to the visa regulations. They felt they were rarely given adequate information either from the

government or their employers. For instance, when the visa regulations were first implemented, the health check tested for cannabinoid (marijuana). However, after some time, they stopped checking for that. Many people were not aware of this change. Sadie was frustrated with what she called a lack of transparency, communication or "diplomatic skills" on the part of the South Korean government:

> When I actually get frustrated is when I have to deal with Korean laws that change … like all the laws that immigration has been changing back and forth, it is really annoying and I just went through it this summer.

Sadie was unaware she needed a re-entry visa before she left the country for a one-week holiday in Canada. When she returned, her work visa was no longer valid. Even though she had been working for the same company for five years, she had to reapply for her E2 visa. She explains,

> I talked to the guy who works at head office and he didn't have an explanation. It doesn't make sense; the laws change all the time and no one can give you a straight answer.

In addition to the frustration of navigating the bureaucratic system, Canadians also specifically complained about the health check requirement. Anna explains how she felt:

> Not only that, once I got here, I had to have this new health check, which I completely disagree with. I think it is a bunch of bullshit. I have never felt more used in my life. I felt degraded, and I don't really have a good reason why, but I just felt—I went in and I was shuffled from room to room to room, and basically in one room my height was measured, my weight was measured, my eyes were tested, my ears were tested.
>
> In another room—it is not the same as home, it doesn't look like a clean doctor's environment—I had to go piss in a cup and get my blood taken; that was the worst. And then I had another one where I had to get X-rays. … I just felt like an animal.
>
> I don't think it is any of their business if I had done drugs in another country or not. I hadn't but that is irrelevant. I understand when you are in [South Korea], sure if you want to test for drugs since it is illegal—go ahead. But if I did

drugs in Canada, if I was smoking pot over Christmas break, that is none of their business. Plus I had to pay for it; it was $60 or $80.

N: Just so you know, marijuana has been taken off the list, but they are still testing for AIDS.

A: In a way I sort of understand that, I mean it is still degrading, but Korea has low incidence of AIDS so I can sort of understand them wanting to keep that out.

N: So, basically you thought the process was degrading and that you were violated.

A: Yes, exactly, that is exactly how I felt. I was in an extremely—most days unless I am sick, I am in a good mood, I am a happy person—but that day it was really hard for me to be there for my students 'cause this was done on my break, so I had to come back and teach six classes after that, and it was hard.

Anna's account illustrates how many Canadians view the medical exams. This mandatory medical exam contributes to feelings of antagonism between Canadian English teachers and the South Korean state. Canadians feel they are targeted as "criminal" or "dirty" simply for who they are and do not appreciate having their bodies regulated by South Korean policies. These procedures provide ammunition for their common complaints against South Korean society.

Jin believes these health checks are a violation of human rights. She explained that while all the other migrant labour groups had improved their conditions, the situation of English teachers had deteriorated. Part of the reason for this is Western English teachers do not consider themselves a collective that needs to be organized to create change in their labor conditions. Ultimately, the reason Canadians do not organize to better their situation is because they do not accept their position of migrant workers nor the peripheral status that it evokes.

The Uniform of a Convict

The strict visa regulations contribute to the phenomenon of Canadians teaching illegally in South Korea. Canadians can obtain a six-month tourist visa upon arrival in South Korea; thus, it is commonplace for Canadians to enter the country as a tourist, teach illegall, and travel to a nearby country before their visa expires. They then re-enter South Korea on another six-month tourist visa. Sadie confirms this:

> Most people in this country have illegal jobs on top of their contract jobs, and a lot of people have no (legal) jobs at all and they are here on a tourist visa forever. Maria did it for seven years, every six months in and out.

Some teach illegally, as a primary site of employment, since they do not have a bachelor's degree and therefore do not qualify to teach under the E2 visa regulations. Others, as Sadie explained, are Canadians who are teaching legally in Seoul and then have illegal jobs on the side. These private lessons or "privates" go for an average of 50,000 won per hour.[25] Bearing that in mind, everyone I spoke with had worked illegally in South Korea. In that way, there is a blurring of the legal and illegal status of Canadians working in South Korea. Erin discussed how she felt about working illegally in South Korea:

> N: Does it bother you that you are illegal here?
>
> E: In a sense, kind of. Sometimes I get a little nervous, honestly. But I don't feel it a lot. It never used to bother me at all. But some days at work, just these men in suits appear and I think, "Oh God." But it's fine, it's just one of those things—all men wear suits in this country.
>
> N: So, it's not really in the forefront of your mind.
>
> E: Not really, except when I'm actually going through immigration.
>
> N: I guess you have to leave before six months. How many times have you done that?

[25] Divide by 1,000 to get a sense of the purchasing power of South Korea's won in terms of Canadian dollars. In this example, 50,000 won is equivalent to $50.

E: I guess five now.

N: And you never had a problem, or did you?

E: Last time I did. I had actually always had an onward ticket, and this time I didn't.

She explained that the airline representatives questioned her when she tried to board the plane to come back to South Korea. Since she had left and re-entered the country numerous times, she had become careless and did not buy an onward ticket. As she did not have a ticket to leave South Korea, she was not supposed to be allowed to board the plane. Erin lucked out in this case, since they were lenient as the airline officials just copied down her travel partners' visa information and allowed her to board the plane. In fact, the same thing had happened to Anna when she was working illegally.

Since they were working illegally, many Canadians feared being deported. It was surprising how frequently the topic of deportation was raised. In 2005, this fact of being deported was rarely discussed. The heightened awareness of the real risks of being deported must have been in response to the crackdown of illegal workers that had taken place earlier that year. Anna, who had worked illegally in Seoul, recounted in detail the experience of her friend being deported:

> In May, Jim got deported. So I was already here legally for three months when this happened. Julie (Jim's cousin and Anna's friend) when she found out, she texted me, "Oh my God! Jim is in jail!" I was like, "What? I am in the middle of teaching. I have a five-minute break between classes—what the fuck are you talking about he is in jail?" Anyways, what happened was he was working in a Hagwon, 'cause these Hagwons hire us since they can't afford to have their own foreign teacher, so they go through my employer and under the table they hire us for about two hours a week. They advertise it blatantly and it is good advertisement for them 'cause they can tell their parents [of their students], "Hey, we have a native speaker."
>
> In May there was this huge crackdown on illegal workers, mostly construction workers and labourers and people from China and Southeast Asia

and stuff like that. Altogether I forget how many thousands were deported. And a lot of English teachers as well. Once you are here for a while, then you hear about these illegal jobs and you go for them. I had another friend who got deported in the same crackdown.

Anyway, they took him to the police station, they held him for three nights, he spent three nights in jail being interrogated or whatever, and then he was deported. Even at the airport he had to wear the uniform of a convict. Oh my God—embarrassing, humiliating. And he was only nineteen. He wasn't allowed to go get his stuff. They normally freeze your bank account, but I am not sure if that happened here, I am not sure if my employer sent him the money he was supposed to. I hope so. I think he owed him $1,000 or $2,000 when he left. Julie freaked out. That night she packed up all her stuff and came to my apartment 'cause if anyone starts looking too deeply into who he worked for, they are going to know he had all kinds of other illegal workers working for him.

After the thrill of it passed, she started thinking she really didn't want to go home, she wanted to travel, she had loans to pay off with her parents, so she started thinking, it's not so bad, you know, no one has ever been deported before; so she started thinking of going back to *[work illegally for her boss]*.

But then she got on the phone with her mother, and her mother is sisters with Jim's mother, and she said there is no way in hell, you just don't want to risk it. And Jim even said on the phone it's not worth it. In the end it's not worth it; the experience of being deported is not worth it. So, she went home, but it took her four months this summer to get her visa processed and to get a job. And she is finally back now. What an ordeal.

The image of white, young, middle-class Canadians being deported from Asian countries may not be familiar. And yet, this possibility rests in the back of the minds of Canadians who are teaching illegally in Seoul. Stories circulate that foreigners could be deported for engaging in political activities, such as volunteering for nongovernmental organizations or participating in demonstrations. In fact, Holly understands this as one aspect of her privilege as a Canadian,

> There are times that I have been a little bit worried that some of my [political] activities could possibly lead me to being detained or even deported by the immigration police, but at the same time that is one of the privileges of being Canadian, because I know they will think twice about deporting me. So that gives me, I feel a bit more freedom and voice and the responsibility that comes along with that.

Moreover, it forms part of the collective narratives Canadians share with each other as part of the experience of living and working illegally in South Korea. As Sadie notes:

> It was hard for me to know my place. To be told that I have to know my place in this society, because really I could get deported tomorrow just because they fucking feel like it. Because like I said, that bureaucratic system is so ass-backwards, they make up the rules as they go along.

Although deportations are becoming increasingly common, most Canadians continue to believe it will never happen to them. Patricia recounted her experience of being "caught" by immigration police. She was lucky because her official (legal) employment supported her by mediating between herself and the authorities. Consequently, she had to pay 1,000,000 won and was not deported. In general, people feel on edge, as they do not believe police or other agents of the South Korean state have their best interest in mind.

2.6

Dual-Positioning

A contradictory set of circumstances is created since most Canadians go to Seoul in search of a livelihood and not out of a particular desire to live in South Korea. On one hand they enjoy their lifestyles; on the other hand they did not like living in South Korean society. As Prakesh and others have noted, the aspects of their lives they enjoy have little to do with South Korea. These aspects include the Western friends they make, the money they earn, the benefits they reap through living in a bustling city with a lively nightlife, travelling to neighbouring countries and so forth. These perks are weighed against the daily struggles of living in Seoul. The common grievances are that they do not speak Korean (this affects various aspects of their day-to-day routine), they consider South Koreans to be rude since they push and shove in public, the high density of people can be overwhelming and they find it difficult to live with smog and pollution.

Although many Canadians find it hard to live in Seoul and often complain about South Korean society and culture, as previously noted, many of them return to work in South Korea. Sadie, who had been living in Seoul for four years, highlights this prevalent phenomenon:

> But why are we here then? Why am I in a place I don't really respect? Because I love my life here and that makes [it] a really hard decision [on whether to stay or leave].

The transnational reality that Canadians can repeatedly find refuge in a place they do not like or respect informs many aspects of how they relate to South Korean society. They tend to take it for granted while simultaneously resenting it. This "escape route" is another component of mobility capital whereby Canadians can exercise the choice to

endlessly re-enter South Korea. This mobility capital is also a form of symbolic capital since citizens from other countries are not granted this chance.

Canadians are foreigners in South Korea and this had a significant impact on how they were positioned in South Korean society and how South Koreans treated them. Canadians were simultaneously treated well and badly. Prakesh sums this up: "We are wanted and we are not wanted at the same time."

Prestige

Since South Koreans require the cultural capital of English to compete and succeed in the world market, there is demand for native English speakers to be employed as teachers. Also, the participants in this study informed me that in South Korean society there is a certain level of respect given to foreigners who originate from Western Europe and North America; as citizens from capitalist societies, they are placed on a pedestal as examples to emulate. Moreover, following a Confucian mode of reasoning, teachers are highly respected. For these reasons, Canadian English teachers received certain benefits simply for "who they are" in South Korea society. Such benefits included luxurious presents from their students, invitations to special events and VIP treatment in stores, restaurants and bars.

In addition, certain Canadians are selected as fashion models, whereas in Canada they would not be considered beautiful or "model material." Artists can excel in South Korea. For example, musicians are given opportunities to perform in clubs throughout the city. As Steve, a musician, explains: "You can get a show with a handshake here. If you are an artist, you can thrive here." There are television, film and voice-acting opportunities presented to Canadians. For example, Crystal's husband, Jeff, came to

Seoul on a spousal visa and could not work legally since he did not have his bachelor's degree. Nevertheless, he was working illegally, teaching private lessons to businessmen. Crystal says this gave Jeff prospects he didn't have back home in rural Alberta:

> He is already being wined and dined by CEOs right now. … He loves being a celebrity. He LOVES that. Loves it. He has a lot of adult students that take him out and treat him well, he loves to say he taught the CEO of Samsung, the CEO of LG and you know, he likes the status of it.
>
> N: Yeah, that makes sense. People like to be treated well and they get access to certain things in Korea they wouldn't have access to back home.
>
> C: It's true, it's true. What other kid in his early twenties would have access to five different CEOs of major companies in the country?

Crystal says that through teaching these CEOs private English lessons, Jeff was making contacts that could further his career. Canadians are also able to date "outside of their league" since their cultural capital as (most often white) Westerners can carry symbolic prestige for South Koreans.

Many of these opportunities are granted to Canadians because they are white Westerners who speak English. These perks culminate in what has been described as the "celebrity factor." Canadians (along with other white Westerners) are singled out and celebrated as prestigious. Anna explains:

> Foreigners get the royal treatment in some ways. We get really high salaries, fairly good apartments. We have a good life here. Generally people hold us in high esteem 'cause we are from a Western country and Korea is still a developing country, and they really look to the rich white country as their role model. So, being a white person, I feel like I get the, "Wow, you are Western," Hollywood-treatment sort of thing. I've had little children come up to me and tell me I look like Nicole Kidman. …
>
> When I used to go to booking clubs last year, we would cut the line, they would bring us right in, where the Korean people would have to wait and wait. It's good for business if you have a bunch of white people dancing around.

The above comment crystallizes how Canadians are highly racialized. In other words, they are being accorded advantages because they are white. Canadians explained they were stopped on the street and asked to have their picture taken or for their autograph. South Koreans might gawk at Canadians. It is common for school children to call out to white Western foreigners to get their attention. All of these experiences allow Canadians to feel special and appreciated. In this case, their foreigner status as white Westerners and/or Canadians is positively received in South Korea society. As Michelle explains:

> I have also felt the benefits of being a foreigner in this society, where some people really glorify the fact that you are a foreigner, or hold it up, because Koreans aspire to become a really Westernized country, and a lot of the young people these days want to emulate that, even with a lot of anti-American sentiment and so on.
>
> N: What are the benefits that you get as a foreigner?
>
> M: I dunno, some kind of special treatment I guess. A lot of people are interested to talk to you, take you out for dinners, or take you out to show you around. ... Families want to impress you so they take you out for expensive dinners and give you little presents and stuff like that.

Here, Michelle shows how the symbolic capital of being a Canadian English teacher is converted into privileges. Yet there is a fine line between being received as a celebrity and being essentialized as the "symbolic Westerner." After a while, Canadians noticed that they were not being treated as unique individuals, but were being lumped into an over-represented or stereotyped category of Westerner, or Occidentalized (Carrier 1992). In that way, South Koreans didn't really "care" about them, but what they represented. This celebrity treatment can lose its appeal when one feels he or she is a

spectacle. Russell concluded the treatment was superficial and was not genuine. He explains:

> People who are white, and who come here for the first time, have this foreigner status. They get a lot of attention and it goes to their head. But once you've been here long enough, you realize you aren't even seen as a person—you're just a novelty.

When Russell states this attention can "go to your head," he highlights the varying forms of personal power one can tap into as a white Westerner in Seoul. Individuals who might have been seen as ordinary at home suddenly become extraordinary. The way others react to us forms a major part of our identifications, and Russell underscores how identifications are dynamic, shifting and reshaped through living as a foreigner in Seoul. Yet he also emphasizes that one's perception and relation to this attention changes over time. Russell uses the word novelty to express the notion that people can be tokenized. Once people realize this, the "celebrity factor" phenomenon can be interpreted as demeaning treatment. Michelle elaborates:

> [When schoolchildren interact with you] it's mockery from their end, but I think a lot of foreigners, when they first come here, might feel that it is some kind of positive attention. Once you speak a little bit of Korean you can really understand all the rude comments that are being said about you. For example they love to call us big noses and call us pigs.

In this example, one is presented with the understanding that some attention can actually be negative. Also, there is a level of cognitive dissonance when one realizes something they initially viewed as positive is in fact negative. It leads people to feel betrayed and can lead to feelings of distrust. Instinctively, after realizing the attention may be degrading, Canadians begin to close themselves to these situations. In that way, there is a further distancing between foreigner and host. For example, when Michelle first arrived

in Seoul she used to wave back to the schoolchildren and felt honoured by their attention, whereas now she tries to ignore them and finds the attention annoying.

A Privileged Marginality

> *You can make misery out of this, or you can make magic. That is exactly the point... it is flight or fight. I have seen people just crumble here.*
>
> —Steve

Whether the attention was positive or negative, Canadians occupy a marginal space in South Korean society, Russell comments:

> N: How would you describe your foreigner status here in Korea?
>
> R: Definitely set apart from everyone else.
>
> N: Set apart from the host society, from Koreans?
>
> R: Yeah, from Koreans and from Korean society.
>
> N: Meaning you are relegated to the fringes?
>
> R: Yeah, very much.
>
> N: And how does that affect your day-to-day living experiences?
>
> R: Oh God. There is a lot. Let me give you a perfect example of this that just happened this week, I know it seems like a little thing, but for me it really is representational.

To paraphrase, Russell noticed when his company moved offices all the Korean staff had larger desks than the foreign staff. He thought this was unfair and asked the management for an explanation. Russell was given replies he did not accept as satisfactory, such as that the desks are based on duration of tenure. This logic had not convinced him, as he pointed out that some of the foreigners had worked there for over eight years while even temporary Korean staff members were allocated bigger desks. And so he persisted with his complaint:

> I brought up the issue again. I was like, look, this is a visual reminder everyday to the Korean staff that we are lower than them, that we don't have to be listened to, that we are lesser than their position in the company. And then the excuse that we got back was, well you make so much more money than them, so it balances out. Well, of course that is ridiculous 'cause in any other country, the more money you make the bigger your desk will be, so fuck right off, and I won't let this go! I mean, I have said so in the meeting, too—I won't let this go 'cause to me it is blatant racism: you are foreigners, this is what you get, but we are Korean so we get better.

He explained that he persisted with the issue until finally one of his foreign co-workers was given a bigger desk. He said he considered it an important victory for him at the workplace. After we talked about it a bit longer, I asked him why he bothered him so much. To which he replied:

> Because they are purposefully doing something to the foreign staff, to send this message, to say to you, "We don't want you here, but we need you." I always compare it to the American military. There are always protests, demonstrations, and anger towards the American military; they don't want them here, yet they need them here, so they are not going to ask them to leave. It is the same for any other foreigner in Korea. They don't really want them to be here, they want what they can get out of them, ...but they resent them being here, but they need them here. And this is their way of telling you that.

Russell has been living and working in Seoul for five years. He moved beyond teaching English and works in the publishing industry. He has invested in transcending his transience by setting up his home through the acquisition of furniture. He owns a dog and he actively distances himself from other Westerners who are just "passing through." In these ways, he has taken many steps to feel rooted in Seoul. Despite this, as is illustrated from the above example, he cannot fully transcend his foreigner status. This status places him below the South Koreans and keeps him on the fringe of South Korean society. This can be frustrating since he is committed to living in Seoul for many more years and would like to feel appreciated and valued for his contributions in the

workplace. Yet he understands that as a foreigner, despite the occasional perks, South Koreans will always see him as less significant.

Stigma

> *You are worshipped but then you get treated like shit like everyone else.*
>
> —Sadie

Although Canadian English teachers receive some special attention for who they are, they are also negatively stereotyped in the minds of some South Koreans. As Holly notes:

> You see with the way the visa guidelines have changed that the general perception of foreigners is not that positive. We are pedophiles, druggies, we bring queerness in—all these kind of things.

The positive attention or "celebrity factor" given to Canadians is confronted by an equal amount of off-putting behaviour. In other words, the racialization of white Canadians can be both positive and negative. Canadians mentioned they have been hushed on buses/subways or passed over in line. Some South Koreans will not sit beside them on the subway, many taxi drivers do not stop for them and in extreme cases they have been spat on. Russell explains how he feels when taxis do not stop for him:

> That fucking drives me crazy, and it happens every morning, it was in my head, it was something that I wanted to mention too.
>
> N: So, what do you do?
>
> R: I will just mutter under my breath, fuck off, I hope you crash, and then I will go along and find the next one.
>
> N: So, why do you think they are passing you by?
>
> R: Oh, I don't know. I really don't know.

Michelle describes how she reacted to being hushed on the bus and how she has since made sense of that experience:

> The first time it happened, I felt sad, I felt really bad. I thought, "Oh my gosh, maybe I crossed some sort of cultural boundary." I thought I might be really insensitive. They tell you since it is a public bus you should be quiet. But since that time, I noticed it is fine for Korean people to be loud and talking on their phones. Yet when foreigners are in a group Korean people will tell you to be quiet. So, if it's not because it is impolite—what are the reasons? It's because they don't like the sound of my language, and maybe they don't like the colour of my skin, not necessarily that, but you know they just don't like my presence here.
>
> N: Which is interesting since you have been brought here to teach that language.
>
> M: Trust me the irony wasn't lost on me.

As Michelle explains, most people do not want to do something that is culturally insensitive, so they try to learn what is considered appropriate or inappropriate. In that way, they will modify their behaviour to try to accommodate the situation. Therefore, if they are told it is impolite to speak loudly on the bus, they will try not to speak loudly. However, in this case, it is only foreign-language speakers who are scolded on the bus for speaking loudly. That is the key. Canadians are not being hushed because they are speaking loudly or being inappropriate. They are being hushed for who they are. The fact that they are being discriminated against does not resonate well with them. In general, they do not accept this. They want to be treated fairly.

This ambiguous treatment is confusing to Canadians who receive VIP treatment in one club and are denied entry into another. One South Korean mother might ask Canadians to pose for a photo with her baby, while another will not want you to come close to her children. The fact is Canadians are not sure what they will encounter and this puts them on edge. Canadians are being Occidentalized and they live through the effects of this. Ultimately, they come to an understanding of their place, as Russell explains:

Let's face it, I am not treated equally, I am treated poorly. I am not treated how they would treat each other. I am discriminated against on a daily basis; I am ignored and not listened to; contradicted everyday. But, hey, they pay me well, and the work that I actually do and the opportunities that I have had here, I suppose those make up for it and I have gotten used to the aspects of it. I suppose I understand it in a way, but it doesn't mean I like it.

Part 3

A Critical Approach

3.1

Whiteness

This research focuses on whiteness for numerous reasons that intersect and overlap: Canadians are recruited because of their whiteness; their whiteness is marked and racialized, their whiteness determines their relative positioning in South Korean society and they rely on the symbolic power implied by their whiteness.

Canadians are recruited to teach in Seoul because they are white. Holly experienced this on many levels as someone who was hired to recruit English teachers. She explained the difficulties she encountered when she attempted to hire someone who did not neatly fit into the imagined stereotype of a Canadian. As Holly notes: "They only want people who look Canadian," where the foremost criteria of looking Canadian is being white. Since Holly was actively engaged in pushing the boundaries of teaching English in South Korea, she was able to hire non-white Canadians. She noted she was able to do this because she is a white Canadian and thus was vested with the authority to do so. In that way, she recognized the privilege whiteness accorded her and used that privilege to push certain boundaries. As she explains:

> I am very aware of my privilege as a white native speaker, also, because my body type confirms to certain ideas of beauty, thinness, paleness, it is an uncomfortable situation. ... So, there is not as much personal risk for me to insist that we hire this woman who wears the hijab, or insist that this guy from Trinidad and Tobago will be a good teacher. ... I feel a certain amount of responsibility for the privilege I have. And I don't know that I always do the right thing but I try to be aware about it.

Holly is an activist and holds an Master's degree in Education; she consciously went to South Korea to try and revolutionize ESL teaching.

Clearly, it is more difficult to get a job in the private sector as a non-white Canadian. Prakesh explained that in many cases non-white Canadians must be overly qualified, such as possessing a Master's degree in ESL teaching, just to be considered for the position, whereas white Canadians meet the qualification simply because they are white. As Steve highlights: "I have that white face here. If I quit tomorrow I can get another job within a week." Or as Russell underscores: "To get a job teaching in Korea, if you are tall, blond and blue eyes, you will get it without an interview." And as Prakesh adds: "Hagwons don't want qualified black teachers, but they will take any white person because they are white."

In South Korea, it is taken as a given that the English language is white, and that white Westerners are the most qualified people to teach English. Prakesh explains that he understands the practice of whiteness more since he has been in Korea:

> [I understand whiteness more] because I see it in action. A lot of my politics around whiteness have actually been fermented here because I see how privilege works.
>
> N: Can you explain it to me?
>
> P: Well, I used to have waves of anger when I would open up job search websites and see things like "white teachers only" or "Caucasian teacher" or "no black men" or "must be born and raised in Canada, U.S.A., U.K., Australia, New Zealand." And "no thick accent." ...Koreans have been taught through their media to consider the white person as the symbolic foreigner.
>
> For example, six or seven months ago EBS (the education public broadcasting service of Koreas) had actually put out an ad for a documentary that was being made and they needed foreigners, and they said in the ad, "We are not being racist, but we are asking only for Caucasian or white-identified foreigners because for the Korean mind, they are the symbolic foreigner."
>
> So, in terms of populating the landscape with foreigners and feeling a sense of national pride that there are these foreigners who have chosen their country, the pride, at least in this instance, is coming from the presence of a white foreigner, not necessarily an African-American GI, or a Bangladeshi skilled or unskilled migrant worker or a Filipina domestic worker, or what have you.

In South Korea, the hierarchy of "colour preferences" for hiring English teachers is white, brown, black, yellow. Michelle explains the logic of the "colour prejudice" in South Korea:

> I think Asian Americans are probably the most prejudiced against.
>
> N: Why do you think that is?
>
> M: Because the look they want is someone who looks North American. And in their opinion an Asian is Asian, they don't consider them North American.

Crystal also explains this racialized positioning in reference to one of her co-workers:

> N: Since you have been working at your school [she has been at the school for five year], have there been any other nationalities other than American or Canadian?
>
> C: No.
>
> N: No Australians or New Zealanders?
>
> C: No.
>
> N: Only Americans and Canadians?
>
> C: Yes.
>
> N: And have there ever been [besides Prakesh, who is brown] any other ethnicities other than white—such as black people?
>
> C: Ralph is half Korean. [The Korean supervisors] don't want the parents [of the children they teach] to know. He doesn't look fully white. He's got the dark hair and dark eyes, he's got something in him, but you don't know if it is Korean.
>
> N: And they don't want the South Koreans to know. Why not?
>
> C: Um, I don't think they want the parents to know that he is, I don't know, not pure American or something.
>
> N: And so did they tell you not to say something?
>
> C: Yes. They told him, "Don't tell your kids that your mom is Korean." He doesn't speak Korean. He was raised in America. He has never lived here before, but they said don't tell your kids you are Korean.

People are recruited to teach in the Hagwon system who "look North American" or "pure American." South Koreans determine who is valid or preferred as an English teacher. Michelle explains:

> [The ideal teacher is] [m]id-twenties, blond female, white, from Canada. And skinny. And feminine. And if you look at the photos for their ads, even the schools that I have worked at, they take blond hair, blues eyes for their websites—I mean that is why they ask for your photos.

Moreover, currently there is a demand for the North American accent. Michelle explains,

> It is the private companies that have turned the accent into a commodity in order to set themselves apart from others, they taut it as an advantage: "We only use North Americans." They have created a need; it is a marketing strategy.

In this example, the symbolic capital associated with whiteness allows certain people privileged access to jobs. It is rare to encounter non-white Westerners teaching in Hagwons. Such was Michelle's experience:

> N: Are most people you have worked with white?
>
> M: Yes.
>
> N: Have you ever worked with non-white people?
>
> M: No.

Although after working in Seoul for five years Michelle has never worked with a non-white person, she says it *is* possible. Evidently, this possibility is limited compared to the prevalence of employing white Canadians.

Prakesh and Siddarth are non-white Canadians who taught in Seoul. Both explain that Canada is symbolically represented as white:

> P: I realized there's actually no concept that a Canadian won't be white. It's very shocking for many Koreans, even now in 2008, to encounter you as a non-white Canadian.

> S: Of course I get people [South Koreans] who question it if I am from Canada. "No. No Hindu"—they say that as they point their finger in my face.

They experienced this symbolic dislocation and it hampered their efforts to secure a job. Yet, since Prakesh and Siddarth possess Canadian citizenship and display Western cultural characteristics, they are endowed with the right to teach English in Seoul. In this regard, whiteness manifests itself on a sliding scale, where it represents not just somatic categories (such as skin colour), but also intersects with citizenship. Prakesh (who was born in Guyana) explained that the cultural capital of being a native English speaker with a Master's degree in English literature is not validated, since it is his Canadian passport that legitimized him as a teacher in Seoul: "Because I have a [*Canadian]* passport… I am allowed a visa, I am legitimized as someone who is capable of teaching English." Prakesh is aware of the privilege/symbolic capital a Canadian passport bestows on certain bodies. Through a conscious process of legitimization people are ranked as *more capable* of teaching English. This colludes with the unquestioned bias that the native-speaker is the most qualified to teach, Pennycook explains:

> One has only to look at the profoundly inequitable system of current employment terms that still exist, however, or the hierarchies of British (sometimes others) and Chinese teachers still in operation, especially in many English-language institutions, to see that little has changed. The example of English language education is, of course, both a continuation of the racist hierarchies of colonial rule and of the colonial construction of the inherent superiority of the native speaker (1998:194)

South Koreans, as selective consumers in search of a valued commodity, buy into and fortify the prevalent stereotype of who is considered appropriate to teach English. Certain white bodies are re-privileged through teaching English in South Korea since they possess the most symbolic capital that is associated with English teaching and being Western.

Although people are recruited to teach in South Korea for their whiteness, it is a specific type of whiteness. In this case, whiteness entails an intersection of skin color, citizenship, Western cultural characteristics, a specific accent, a particular body image, an ideal age (between twenty and forty) and being an English teacher. Therefore, the more of these criteria one meets, the more likely one will be offered a job. And yet, as Prakesh highlighted it is the passport, in the last determinate, that settles who can (legally) teach in South Korea. Holly explains:

> I tried to hire a Swedish guy who did his degree in the U.S. He has the right education, the right skin color, but not the right passport, so we couldn't hire him.

This is the first time that most of these Canadians are living as racialized minorities. Since the effects of whiteness are mostly invisible to white people, this is also the first time that their whiteness is marked. In other words, it is the first time they see themselves as white. Holly explains,

> I do feel how I am marginalized in this society, and not valued as well. It has been a really good experience for me, it's not that I never had an awareness of racism or discrimination in our society, but I wouldn't be the subject of that; at home I wouldn't have the experience of being rejected from a store, and things like that have happened to me here.
>
> I appreciate those experiences. Experiential knowledge of what it is to be a minority, albeit a privileged minority in a society, and I am very aware that part of the reason that I have been able to push progressive agendas in hiring, etc. is because I am white.

Holly explains how the symbolic capital of whiteness is "put to the test"; she is treated poorly for being white. Holly is somewhat of an exception since she acknowledges her white privilege. Most Canadians do not realize it, as Prakesh notes:

> I want to say that a lot of them are unaware of it and so I have called people a lot of their white privilege. Because I wanted them to see that if you are in a group people, let's say there are three orfour of you, and a random Korean approaches you, they will usually talk to the white person first as the quote unquote symbolic foreigner.

In the context of teaching English in South Korea, white Canadians are racialized since it is a version of whiteness that is actively being recruited. This section lays the foundation for the rest of the thesis to explore how consciously and un-consciously subjects defer to their whiteness to secure legitimacy and privilege in the world-system. The privilege that they are asserting is not straightforwardly linked with power since as we have seen these Canadians are relatively powerless. The privilege is, in essence, the mere fact that they have access to a discourse that has, since the time of the colonial encounter, ranked them above the Other. This discourse of whiteness is called upon to displace the vulnerabilities that they face and is used as a way to shield them from their actual conditions. It is this discourse that contributes to their disassociation with the label of migrant worker and, in turn, affects the way they understand their place in South Korean society.

3.2

Migrant Labourer

This is terrible to say, the big reason, I don't consider myself a migrant labourer is because I am white.

—Russell

Most Canadians who move to South Korea and work as English teachers are migrant labourers, as defined by Castles: "Men and women who migrate for a limited period (for a few months to several years) in order to take up employment and send money home (remittances)" (2000: 270). Likewise, as most migrant workers, Canadians face unstable working conditions and have limited rights. For instance, as discussed in Part Two, there is little to no recourse if the conditions of their contracts are not met, as Steve underscores: "Our voices aren't heard here because we are foreigners and we have no unions." Canadians are relegated to the fringes of South Korean society and in general do not feel welcomed by the host society. However, despite the material conditions Canadians encounter as marginalized workers (legal and illegal) in South Korean society, they fail to identify as migrant workers. Consequently, the concept of a migrant labourer is better understood through an interlocking framework that considers geographical location, race, ethnicity, nation, status, education, age,and gender.

Correspondingly, as white Westerners originating from Canada, these young Canadian workers possess the material, cultural, mobility and symbolic capital that does not correlate with the racialized representations of migrant workers. As narrated by the various Canadians I interviewed:

> Sadie: [I don't think of myself as a migrant labourer] because it is an elitist thing. You think, "Oh I am educated and I am an instructor." Because when you think of

> migrant labourer, you think of illegal labourers, which a lot of us are, since most people in this country have illegal jobs on top of their contract jobs, and a lot of people have no (legal) jobs at all and they are here on a tourist visa forever. We are a privileged bunch. That is why we don't think we are migrant labourers, because they are people who live on the drags, on the outskirts of society. Which we do, but we don't even acknowledge that because we are living like kings. You think minimum wage when you think migrant labourer.

Although many are working illegally and living on the outskirts of society, which fits the conventional image of a migrant worker, Canadians have relatively high paying jobs and the privilege to move freely, which does not correspond with the image of migrant workers. They can "live like kings" in South Korean society, so why should they see themselves as migrant labourers? These Canadians have migrated in search of a livelihood and lifestyle that many could not obtain back home. Steve explains that he cannot have the same quality of life in Canada: "I would love to do that in a Canadian city. But I couldn't 'cause I couldn't afford the standard of living that I have been accustomed to, and that is sad." That they are positioned as kings despite their being relegated to the fringes of South Korean society speaks to their positioning in the world system and conversely to how it unfolds in the nuanced context of Seoul. Therefore, they confront their actual vulnerabilities and marginal social status by symbolically holding on to their discourses of privilege based on their economic standing, etc. Yet, as Steve underscores, there are those, especially those who are members of the established community, who clearly understand the ambiguities and contradictions contained through living and working in Seoul.

Since the contemporary result of colonialism has rendered the acquisition of English skills a necessity in order to succeed in the global arena, the opportunity for some English speakers to sell their native language (and in this case, North American culture)

abroad has placed these Canadians in high demand. This grants them a salary that is elevated compared with their South Korean counterparts and gives them purchasing power they may not have previously experienced in Canada. They are kings plainly because they are white, Western, English-speaking Canadians. Sadie articulates a key rationale central to how many Canadians related to the term migrant labourer. Anna further clarifies this commonly held belief:

> I never thought about it before, but a migrant worker to me is a construction worker or restaurant worker, or something like this. I guess I am a higher level than what a migrant labourer would be. Although technically you are right, I am [a migrant labourer]. But I feel like I was asked to come here because I have something they want. It is more of a prestige thing. I have English, and they want English. ... I definitely feel that I am on a higher level 'cause I make more than Koreans and I am here invited from a Western country.

Anna explains how she is positioned in the world system and how this positioning entails that she is not a migrant labourer. She is a Westerner. Following this logic, she deduces that Westerners are not migrant labourers. In other words, the term migrant labourer is relegated to a diminished status where one does not have the honoured access to the varying forms of capital that are required to advance and succeed in the world. Also, she has "something they want," which is English. This is a contradiction since all migrant workers, low-end factory workers, etc. have something "they want." The cultural and symbolic capital of the English language is what distinguishes and separates her from other migrant workers.

A commodified relationship ensues where South Koreans pay a substantial amount of money to Canadians so they can learn English. The continued material order of colonialism and imperialism—where some are advantaged at the expense of others—is made abundantly transparent. These Canadians' understanding of the label migrant

worker serves to reassert who they are as Canadians in the world system. What would happen to their sense of selves and their related positioning if they were represented and identified as migrant workers? Canadians are racialized and ranked in the world system as Wallerstein theorizes:

> [The world system] is not merely a space in which strategies are formed and capital, technologies, and messages circulate, but a space in which entire populations subject to the law of the market come into contact physically and symbolically. This is the equivocal interiority-exteriority configuration which had, since the period of colonial conquest, formed one of the structuring dimensions of racism, finds itself reproduced, expanded, and re-activated. (1991: 43)

Therefore, the racist and classist undertones attached to the term migrant worker persist through this specific form of movement. The label migrant labourer and the corresponding categories of skilled/unskilled function to classify individuals, as Balibar explains in relation to structural racism:

> To the extent that what is in play here—whether in academic theories, institutional, or popular racism—is the categorization of humanity into artificially isolated types, there must be a violently conflictual split at the level of social relations themselves. We are not therefore dealing with a mere prejudice. Moreover, it has to be the case that … this split is reproduced within the worldwide framework created by capitalism. (1991: 9)

Labelling someone as skilled or unskilled has a lasting effect on how people construct their identity and how they are positioned in the world system. At the level of social relations, Canadians are received and specifically positioned in South Korean society based on their status as white Westerners. Since Canadian English teachers (who are teaching in South Korea legally) must have a Bachelor's degree to teach, are from the West and are employed as teachers who make comparatively high salaries, they are considered skilled. However, the Canadians who are teaching English in South Korea do not have to possess formal training or any other certification in teaching. Apparently,

Canadians are labelled skilled in teaching English despite the fact they would not be qualified to teach in Canada. As Patricia states: "I came to do work here that I am not qualified to do at home."

Since they are not trained as teachers it is debatable to define them as skilled workers. As Steve points out: "We are called skilled, but why? We don't have teaching certificates." And yet they are skilled at being who they are, as Erin confesses: "I have no special qualifications other than, you know, the way that I am." Erin does not have a Bachelor's degree and is teaching illegally in Seoul. She is aware that she is granted employment because she is an English speaking Canadian. This is the ultimate form of symbolic capital whereby the capital is completely naturalized, as something that one is born with and not acquired (Hage 1998). These Canadians are aware that they were employed for who they are. As Patricia highlights: "I am being Western and that is all that is expected. That is enough." Patricia is a certain type of Westerner, a white Canadian. She conforms to South Korean expectations and stereotypes of who is qualified to teach English, and so "that is enough."

Clearly, the concept of skilled and unskilled is a social construction:

> It has been acknowledged by some Marxist class analyses that 'skill' and/or 'credentials' can be sources of relative advantage or disadvantage in a particular labour market (Wright, 1985: 95). However, these 'skills' are not inherent or 'objectively' defined, but rather mediated by the demand for particular types of workers (Gubbay, 1997: 82), which reinforces that which is considered to be 'socially useful knowledge'. (Martin cited in Bianchi 2000: 129)

In this world order, the skill is being a native English speaker from a Western country. This is how Canadians benefit from the contemporary effects of colonialism. As explained:

> Moreover, the social construction of 'skills' tends to parallel global developmental, ethno-religious, and racial gradients, meaning that in effect mass international migration within the developed work is, ipso facto, skilled, where in the developing world mass international migration is, ipso facto, unskilled. Thus, the middle and upper classes of the developed world move internationally with much greater ease than any other group because of this artificial skills/class hierarchy. (Scott, 2006: 1106)

The mere idea that there is a dichotomy between skilled and unskilled serves to reinforce the global inequalites. Siddarth realized this: "Skilled and unskilled is a classist definition; no one is unskilled. Their jobs are 3D jobs and Koreans don't want to do them, but they aren't unskilled. " The spread of English is one of the many lasting and prevalent effects of colonialism. As native English speakers, we are advantaged since English language skills linked with Canadian citizenship offer access to overseas working opportunities. Teaching English allows Canadians to escape their specific circumstances and travel to secure employment in South Korea; the unequal structure of the world system confers gains to some at the expense of others. A Canadian passport grants its bearers numerous opportunities that are denied to the majority of the world's inhabitants. In a contemporary world characterized by transnational movement, the mobility capital that is contained in a Canadian passport is translated into symbolic capital since to move relatively unencumbered has prestige attached to it. Consequently, Canadians are highly ranked in a world characterized by the flow of people across borders. As Steve highlights:

> It's that mobility that you should look at. We can work for one month and then be on a beach in Thailand and then go on the Internet and get a job somewhere else. We have English, which is a colonial device intended to make white-skinned people more powerful. And it's best displayed here, it's a really horrible post-colonial situation where Koreans don't want to speak English, but they have to because it is the international standard and we are all caught in that.

When Steve notes "we are caught in that," he is highlighting his role as the native English speaker (teacher) and how he is aware of the layered and structured set of circumstances. The entrapment he alludes to is the conflicting stance of being a privileged individual located in the broader historical political economy. Ultimately, he recognizes the right that is granted to him through the mobility, cultural, and symbolic capital of being a white, Western, native English speaker.

This is a rare instance where the pronoun "we" is used to refer to Canadians and South Koreans. In most cases, an "us" versus "them" vocabulary is used to describe the varying situations and relationships in South Korea. Prakesh understood the importance of such language and underscored it: "It is always a 'they' versus 'us.' 'They' have done this. The language is very important." This language reinforces the divisive nature of national identities. Yet, in this instance, the use of "we" serves to dislocate individuals from their specific histories and contexts. Although "we" may be all caught in the same situation, we are differently positioned in that situation. The use of the word "caught" also highlights the perception that individuals have limited agency vis-à-vis the pervasive structure of the political economy, where English has become a necessary commodity.

Yet, this lack of agency differs between Canadians and South Koreans. In this case, being a native English speaker and Canadian, the individual can choose whether they wish to engage in teaching English in Seoul with little or no consequences, whereas South Koreans who cannot function in English are restricted in their access to jobs at home and abroad. Therefore, the use of "we" overshadows the important differences in terms of how we are caught in the English language. Although we may be "caught" in the same system, it is a system where the "Western we" is advantaged.

The intent of this research is not to undermine the struggles of other migrant workers, who are structurally less advantaged than white Canadians. The respondents from the survey levied these concerns:

> Q: Do you identify your movement with the term contract migrant labourer defined as: Men and women who migrate for a limited period (for a few months to several years) in order to take up employment and send money home (remittances). Why? Why not?
>
> A: No, because I am a skilled labourer, I am from a First World country, I get the opportunity to experience living and travelling in a foreign country/ies, and I make a decent wage.
>
> Q: Is there anything else you would like to add/comment that you think may be of interest to my research?
>
> A: Do you know any Mexican migrant labourers? Perhaps you should talk to some organizations in the U.S. before trying to publish this in any academic journal. No offence intended.

This conclusion is also drawn from the following survey respondent:

> Frankly, I think that considering Canadians living abroad (teaching English) as "migrant labourers" (a loaded term) is ridiculous. Other than the fact we are employed in a foreign country there are no similarities. You might be insulting people who are actually fighting for the rights of real migrant workers in Canada by making this claim.

These are common remarks that underscore that considering Canadians as migrant labourers is ridiculous. Are these acceptable answers? If yes, then we must expand on the prevailing definition of who a migrant worker is. Based on these answers a migrant worker is: from a Southern (poor, underdeveloped) country (or not from the West), is poor, unskilled, doesn't make a decent wage, has no (limited) mobility, can't fight for their rights, etc.

Ultimately, Canadians are not considered migrant workers because of the capital that they possess and the discourses through which they are advantaged. Despite their

constraints in South Korean society, they have more power than those at the bottom of the ladder. The point is to expand the concept of what constitutes migrant labourers in order to deconstruct the attached racist and classist constructions.

3.3

Male Privilege

White men have more power than White women.

—Anna

Western men and women were affected differently while living and working in Seoul. This section explores some of those differences primarily as they intersect with whiteness. This sections details how racialized sexual relationships unfold in this specific setting and how it can affect one's subjectivities.

The issue of the white Western man (among which the Canadian male English teacher can be included) dating Korean women was a recurring theme in casual conversations among Western foreigners. This theme came up in the over-whelming majority of the interviews I did.

> Erin: *[In reference to gender issues],* I thought that is so interesting because there are a lot of men here who are dating Korean women, the ratio between men and women, it is totally opposite, and why is that? Why is that? Do Korean women really just find Western men attractive?

There are substantially more white male Canadian English teachers dating Korean women than there are Korean men dating white Canadian female English teachers. Russell, after living in Seoul for an accumulated five years, explains:

> N: How often do you see white women with a Korean man?
>
> R: Rarely, but I am in the minority, because I actually know of one Canadian and an American that both married Korean men. But that is very rare. You don't hear about that that often.
>
> N: It seems like it is one hundred to one when compared to foreign men and Korean women who date.

R: Totally, when you see a white woman walking down the street with a Korean man, you take a second look.

Everyone that I talked to took a critical stance towards "these types of men" and had developed some sort of rationale or logic in their attempts to understand why this was happening. People questioned the couple's motivations for being with each other; it didn't seem authentic. Clearly, sweeping generalizations are being applied by these respondents and my intentions are not to paint an absolute picture nor is the purpose to advocate whether this is true or not. I want to situate how people reacted to this phenomenon. This dialogue that emerged from an interview with Sadie summarizes the feelings that people, both male and female, that I spoke to had regarding white Western men who date Korean girls.

> To be totally honest, and I can because this is anonymous- I judge guys who date Korean girls. I really judge guys who date Korean girls. [She repeats this to highlight her point.]
>
> N: Those are the creeps? [In my previous reference to the comment I heard that people who come to Korea are categorized either geeks, creeps or freaks.]
>
> S: Yeah, those are the creeps. Those are the guys who are strolling Hooker hill, those are the guys who pick up girls in Itaewon.
>
> N: I noticed this in 2005...that white men when they are walking with their Korean girlfriends will not even look at you...
>
> S: I was going to use that exact same example! Or, they just reach to hold their hand. And I always wonder, who is that guy trying to prove himself to? Me, who is walking past him and he is trying to prove, this is how much I love her, look I love her. Or is he trying to prove it to her, oh, that girl who walked by is from my country but baby, I still love you. That is why I always wonder...

Russell confirms this last point:

> No, they won't look at you, they especially won't look at a white women. Julie pointed that out to me and we tested that theory one night when we were in

> Itaewon.[26] And actually they would run in the opposite direction. They were ashamed. They knew what it was.

The underlying logic is that South Korean women are only dating these men because they are white Westerners and that the South Korean women were completely "out of those men's league" in terms of beauty. Therefore, other Westerners contest the performance of "imperial masculinity." In fact, through the shifting of the man's gaze, one wonders whether these Canadian men also undermine their "imperial masculinity." Hence, although these Canadian men who rely on their race, nation, etc. as an advantage to secure, presumably otherwise unavailable dating opportunities, their performance is never fully actualized since "members of the audience" *know better.* These Canadians' male authority and privilege fluctuates: they are masculinized in their relationships with South Korean women and they are demasculinized in the eyes of their compatriots. In other words, they can escape to South Korea to enact their "imperial masculinity," something that might be denied to them back home. And yet, by being surrounding by people from back home their authority to exercise their masculinity is being judged and the actual power they have is thwarted by feelings of shame and disgrace. They are told that they should be ashamed of themselves for taking advantage of the situation.[27]

Holly spoke extensively about how some men change when they move to Asia; they realize that they have this sexual power and they turn into "womanizers" or become "cocky" and develop an oppositional attitude towards their female compatriots. She also noted that "it reinforces white male heterosexual privilege because of the way that the

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[26] Sadie and Russell associated the neighborhood Itaewon with these couples. Itaewon is linked as a place where these relationships flourish.

[27] Although I actively tried to speak to Canadian men who were dating South Korean women, I didn't get a chance to, so unfortunately I am not able to include their voices in this exchange.

dynamics play out in terms of romantic relationships." Jack had only been in Seoul for three months but had picked up on this right away. He was greatly affected by the way white foreign men treated the South Korean women they were dating.

> [E]very group of people has bad people, but the way that Korean girls are treated by Western men, I was appalled, I couldn't believe it when I first got here...
>
> N: Can you explain?
>
> J: ...foreign guys can treat them like shit, the South Korean women let it happen, 'cause they think that is the norm, and it is unfortunate. The men think that they can get away with whatever they want because they are in another country.

Jack is appalled by the way some foreign men take advantage of their situation. So far, in each example, the links are drawn between one's cultural and symbolic capital as a white Westerner and how that is used to secure opportunities not available "back home" where the cultural capital of being a white Westerner is the norm and therefore does not translate into the same type of symbolic capital. Moreover, the way these Canadian men treat the women is based on the fact that they are in another country and as he explains there are cultural differences that are being exploited. Gregory underscores this point,

> Male sex tourism in Boca Chica provides insights into the role that heteronormative masculinity plays in constructing, naturalizing, and eroticizing social hierarchies grounded in a variety of claims about human differences. (2003: 352)

Russell also highlights this rationale, of relying on one's symbolic capital, in the following quote while showing how it plays out in the gay community:

> Often you will see these homely looking white guys with gorgeous looking Korean girls. Obviously it is a white privilege thing: they are a novelty. Or, I am gay, so if you go up to homo hill, you see this fat fifty-year-old white man with this gorgeous twenty-year-old [South Korean man] on his arm. Obviously it is white privilege. At home he would never get a guy like that good looking. Not in a million years.
>
> ...It's terrible. I used to have a good friend, now we are not good friends, he is forty and his boyfriend is twenty-two. We call his boyfriend the handbag.

> Like look at my little Louis Vitton: it is an accessory and it is blatant. He spends a lot of money on this little guy. The little guy gets money, he gets a little hand bag to accessorize. Of course it goes both ways.

Russell explicitly states the racialized nature of the relationship and rationalizes it as white privilege, yet he concludes that the essentializing goes both ways. Furthermore, nobody wanted to be associated with *those* white Western men. Russell mentions how he consciously distances himself from that positioning.

> So for me, a lot of Korean guys, in their early twenties who are really good-looking, have expressed interest in me. But I just don't have the time for them because I feel that well, I don't want to be one of those dirty old men. You know? Where obviously the guy is with you for something other than your good looks and charming personality. And Koreans are actually rather surprised, I have been approached by guys who are young and good looking, and I will turn them down and they are quite shocked by it. The majority of foreigners here would go for it and take advantage of that to the highest degree. And you see it daily, it is everywhere.

The in-authenticity of the relationship is really what seems to bother people. Many white men, like Russell, are very aware of their racialized sexual positioning and work actively to try to dislodge themselves. Or, they want to subvert their "imperial masculinity" as much as possible. Sadie touches on this as she recounts the experience of her Canadian friend who had been teaching in Seoul for a couple of years:

> My best friend Chris, he was the person who probably hated it the most outta any person I know who was here. He was really really depressed. ...He got super dark near the end of it. And I came about half way through the year and by the end of it he was just like fuck it...He hates Korean girls. That's why he hated it. Because he didn't buy into it. He didn't want the attention he was getting from them. He despised them.
>
> N: So, he couldn't lie to himself?
>
> S: Yeah, he was like, "Are you serious?" His best friend had a Korean girlfriend and he hated her. Chris understood that in Canada, they could never get a girl that was that good-looking. Or that good for them, or whatever it is for them. And Steve would be a good person to talk to about this, because he understands the mentality a little bit more, he understand that arm candy idea.

Many white Western men were aware of the relative advantages accorded to them. These advantages have a lasting effect on how they incorporate themselves in South Korean society. More often, they find it easier to date which may contribute to them extending their contracts or settling permanently in South Korea. Anna explains this through her definition of the term "lifer":

> And there are people here who are lifers 'cause they have an amazing life experience here compared to back home. Generally they are men who have beautiful Korean girlfriends. Plus they have their apartment paid for and disposable income. Whereas at home, what would they do? *We are not sure.*

The idea that these male English teachers can have access to a certain lifestyle in South Korea that they wouldn't have back home is a well-understood fact. Moreover, the fact that these white foreign (Canadian) men are dating Korean women creates a vacuum in the heterosexual female Canadian communities and this leads into the broad area of how Canadian women encounter specific gendered difficulties when adapting to life in Seoul.

3.4

Knowing Her Place

I think foreign women here have a much harder time than men do.

—Russell

Since many Western men dated South Korean women, Canadian women found it hard to date in South Korea. Crystal highlights this:

> Western men come here to pick up the [South Korean] girls, and Korean men don't want them [Western women].
>
> N: Do you notice that?
>
> C: Yeah, I definitely notice that with my single friends. The Korean men want a Korean girl but the white guys want a Korean girl. They are just left out.

Why don't more white Canadian women date Korean men? Prakesh had one such theory:

> A lot of North American women assume that the Korean man is not... [He trails off looking for the right word but instead starts a new sentence.] They have never sexualized the Korean man. They have never imagined the Asian man erotically as a partner, it's almost as if the Korean man is somehow perhaps an untouchable.

Russell continues:

> Yes, they [white western men] have all these girls that will just get, again because of the novelty factor, so all these girls who are curious and willing to date them. Yes, they will take advantage of that. To the degree that a lot of my foreign woman friends will complain about it 'cause they can't get foreign men. Because the Korean girls will cow tow to the guys every need, whim and demands and are the giggling airhead princess. Foreign women aren't willing to play that role anymore.

Russell offers his analysis that Western women have changed in terms of highly essentialized gender roles. He echoed Jack's rationale, that Western men are attracted to South Korean women *because* they are more submissive in a traditionally power-ridden gender dynamic. The understanding is that white Canadian men are seeking the essentialized Asian woman who is understood as submissive, as Michelle highlights:

> I think a lot of men come here and want to meet Asian woman because they are more feminine, because of the feminist movement in North American, North American women are considered stronger, less feminine. And if you do talk to North American men about what they like about Korean women, they will say femininity. In a traditional ways, they are softer, long hair, really feminine clothes, they get all dressed up, high heel, clothes, make up, perfume, you know they put effort into their appearances in a way that a lot of North American women would think I am being objectified if I do that. Not all, but I think that affects a lot of North American women who come here.

Michelle underscores that what it means to be a woman is not the same as back home. This exposes that "[a] woman is never anything but a woman, an interchangeable object with no other characteristic than her femininity, whose fundamental characteristics is belonging to the class of women" (Guillaumin 1995: 178). And therefore, these women, as objects, have their femininity contested in South Korea.

Canadian women's cultural capital does not pay off in the sexualized gendered relations that unfold in South Korean society. As Sadie explains:

> And men who are coming here, they aren't looking for strong, Canadian women. They aren't. It's not their interest. And I get frustrated every time I go shopping because my feet are size nine and they only go up to size eight here...

Sadie abruptly jumps between two seemingly unrelated topics. Yet, for Western women, the idea that they are not wanted is emphasized through their inability to date as well as body image. The lack of clothes and shoe sizes that will fit the average Western women brings frustration to a lot of women and works to further displace them. Michelle explains the topic of body image:

> South Korean women are typically small, so if a woman weights one hundred pounds, they could be considered fat. That is a huge issue for women who come here, a lot of foreigners who come here have huge problems with body image... I mean, obviously you can't shop here.
>
> N: Has this affected you?

> M: … Yeah, definitely, South Koreans are very open about saying certain things, especially kids, not necessary teenagers, but they will just say, maybe you should go on a diet. Like if we say, I can't shop here, the answer is not oh yeah right we should have larger than a size eight in the stores, the answer is go on a diet, don't eat anything for a week. They have different notions of what is healthy and weight control.
>
> …I had conversations with women, who said that they had altered their outer image to fit in more here, which means they started wearing make-up, skirts, they grew out their hair, high heels. You will notice that some schools will tell you to wear that stuff. And I mean, that same boss who said that he doesn't like North American women told me and I quote, "to dress more neater." But I dress neatly. But he is saying dress more feminine: tighter clothes. 'Cause Julie and I both worked at the same place, and we would both be wearing t-shirts, but Julie wore a tight one. I mean, the fact is that he meant tight clothes.

Women have to adapt more than men. Typically, Western men don't have these problems, or at least not to the same severity. I asked Anna if her appearance or body image was affected by living in Seoul:

> I do see the make up thing. I notice it, I feel under dressed everyday. But I don't let it affect me. For one thing, I can't go and buy new clothes anyways [because there is nowhere to shop].
>
> So, yes I do feel that. I do feel it but at the same time I am not changing. I still feel it everyday. I definitely do.
>
> I do wear more make up here than I used to. I do wear some foundation because I am a little self-conscious of how red my face is.
>
> …It is hard when you only get compliments on days that you do dress up, "You look really good today," "So, are you going running tonight?' as in you should be losing weight. Keep trying… I had one of my mothers last year look at my stomach in horror and say, 'Your stomach is so big you should go on diet!" and I was like thank you, thank you so much, I really appreciate that advice. I never noticed that I wasn't a toothpick—now that I know… Kids are really conditioned to notice appearance because it is so culturally engrained. So I had one kid tell me that I had a lot of zits, I had a big nose, I laughed like a witch…
>
> N: For some people, this would shut them down.
>
> A: It doesn't really bother me.

It doesn't bother her, but she is affected by it and although she said that she doesn't change, she has changed by wearing more make-up. The fact is that "who you are" is in constant negotiation, or in the process of being defined, Guillaumin explains:

> Wearing a full, short or slit skirt, very high-heeled and pointed shoes, and carrying a full grocery bag are infallible means, among others, for teaching us over and over again our difference, what we are and what we must be. This is not done on a conscious level, but, as Pascal saw, through *ingrained bodily comportment*: identity in the process of being born. And thus a dependent identity is re-formed at every single moment. (1995: 242)

As we see, the cultural capital of being a white Westerner affects men and women in opposite ways. Whereas Western men tend to be positively reinforced for who they are, Western women are more likely to face disapproval. As Prakesh explained to me: "It is the re-privileging of the white male." Russell explains the lasting effects this can have on one's sense of self even after leaving South Korean society:

> I have an interesting story about a girl I knew here once, she was rather hefty in the chest. She got starred at home for it, but in a positive way, like, "Wow, that is attractive." Not here, she was seen as a circus freak and disdainfully looked at. That it made her feel so bad, she went home and had a breast reduction.

Canadian women's femininity is rejected or challenged in South Korean society and therefore their status as women is undermined. This leads to an antagonistic relationship between women where Western women are told to become more feminine (wear more make-up, change the way you dress and act) by South Koreans, and South Korean women are seen as 'airhead princesses.' Both categories of women are reduced to their femininity.

Female Agency

Individual agency also intersects with gender, where women have significantly less power in South Korean society. In Itaewon and its surrounding foreigner

communities where foreign women were the targets of violence and rape.[28] Russell brought this up in our interview:

> I know since you have been here, Prakesh and I have told you about all the foreign women that have been beaten and raped, and how nothing is done about it. Again, this goes back to the idea that, they are foreigners, and foreigners are all slutty and drug addicts and dirty, so nothing is done about it. And also, because they are women, and this is common, it just happens.

I asked if he could explain to me how he thought women were further marginalized (compared to men) in South Korean society:

> All across the board, especially at work because there is a specific place for a woman in society. A woman can't be verbal, more so than a man she cannot speak up or speak out. And it is hard for the girls to do that. Yeah. They are coming into a society where the women is not the equal of the man, and it is flat out said, whereas at home, perhaps it is not balanced, but it is more balanced than here, and there are just things that you cannot say because of manners.

Michelle explains how women are not expected to act the same way at the workplace:

> Oh, and that actually brings up an interesting point of one of my experiences at my last Hagwon. I overheard my boss saying that he really disliked North American women... I understood what he was saying, and I was offended, so I asked my Korean co-worker what he said, and she said that he said that he doesn't like North American women because we have too much attitude, and so again, you worry about cultural sensitivity, but at the same time it is offensive, racist and sexist.

Ultimately, we see that Western women's cultural capital is not validated in the workplace. Sadie recounted a story that impacted her and reminded her of her role as a women foreigner in Seoul:

> Being a woman here is difficult because it is a patriarchal society, it's the first time that I have witnessed women being slapped in the street and I haven't been able to do anything about it. And I've done it, I jumped into a fight once.

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[28] The perpetrators were not apprehended so it was not known who was engaging in these acts of violence against women.

As Sadie recounted, she and Steve were coming home late one night when they noticed a group of South Koreans outside of their front door. There were about six men and one woman, and although Sadie did not know exactly what was going on, she felt that the woman was in a hostile and compromising situation, so she immediately threw herself into the mélange to try and "save the woman." Steve, with a broken arm in a cast, ended up pulling Sadie out of the circle and dragging her into the house. Sadie was not pleased:

> And he [Steve] says, "You shouldn't have done that, you shouldn't have done that." Kind of just saying, that's not your place in this society. And I got really upset, [I said], "You don't care about women's rights and I thought you were more of a feminist than that, and you are just going to turn a blind eye to that when it is happening right outside our door." And the next thing we know the cops are knocking on our door. Why the cops are knocking on our door is beyond me. Why they weren't out there breaking that up is because we are the foreigners, so therefore they are wondering what are you doing getting up in this business-what do you have to do with this? And there still is all this kafuffle out there on the street and yet they were knocking on our door.

Sadie explains that it is hard for her to know her place in South Korean society. In fact, it goes against the values and morals that she is accustomed to through growing up in Canada. Since she is both a foreigner and a woman, her agency is restricted in South Korean society. Knowing one's place and accepting one's place are two different things; many Canadian women rely on their liberal understanding of how they believe women should be treated in South Korean society and actively resist being dominated by a blatant gender hierarchically ordered society. Guillaumin explain how women cope with this situation:

> Individually and psychologically it produces a tragic phantasm, that of autonomy and individuality. A crazy feat of imagination makes us rise above the fact of our appropriation with a panoply of phantasms which sustain the dream of our independence—the phantasm of 'morally dominating the situation', the phantasm of 'personally escaping', the phantasm of 'it's the others who are the real women, the little old ladies and the dolly birds'. (1995: 200)

In this transnational context, through the localized concept of femininity, Canadian women are reminded of their dependency. They understand that they are not respected or valued because they are not wearing tight clothes, make-up, high-heels and short skirts. Yet, that goes against their notions of femininity and their notions of respectability, therefore, the logic follows that if this is what it means to be a proper woman, then they reject being a woman in this society, and they also condemn and reject this South Korean society for imposing this norm of femininity on them. Consequently, because they are valued less (as women) they value the South Koreans less. In other words they are "morally dominating the situation" and "personally escaping" (Guillaumin 1995: 200).

Lastly, queer Westerners' sexual agency is affected by living in Seoul. Although there is a tiny area in Itaewon that caters to the queer community, it is still widely unacceptable to be out in South Korean society as Russell explains:

> Here I can't be as open as I am back home.
>
> N: So, how has that affected you?
> R: Again, it goes back to that thing, socially they are not yet where we are at. So, I have to try and respect that, and I do to a degree, but at the same time, I know their perspective is wrong. It is not right to discriminate against someone because of their sexuality. But I do it in my own way, I am quiet about it. Definitely here, there are no rainbow flags, that kind of thing.

Michelle also mentioned that she has had to change her behavior to fit in Seoul:

> Well, obviously as a lesbian, I certainly don't feel that I can be as open here as I am at home, I don't feel like there is any protection, and there isn't. There is no legal protection, and there is a lot of heterosexism. I mean, there is this very normative way in Korea—if you are twenty-seven and a woman, you should be married or want to be married. There are those kinds of societal expectations that get transferred onto people who come and that has been a real challenge for me to deal with actually, as a really out and proud member of the gay community here.
>
> N: So, how do you deal with it? Have you had to modify your behavior?

> M: Yes, I lie. I don't talk openly about my private life, and yah, cover up basically. And try to fit in, though I certainly haven't started trying to apply all kinds of make up...

This section on gender and sexualized relationships highlights the identity shifts involved in the movement of these Canadians across borders. Since identity is a relation, their positioning in Seoul affects how others receive them and how they must conform or change based on that reception. White men can become more "cocky," and engage in "imperial masculinity" and have access to certain relationships and roles that they are denied "back home," while women are affected by various gender-related issues surrounding notions of femininity.

3.5

Criticize

Oh yes, definitely people criticize South Korean society. I do that myself; we all do.

—Anna

Canadians and other Western foreigners constantly complain about South Koreans and South Korean society. This behaviour results in comments as seemingly innocuous as: "Oh, listen to what happened to me at work today—it is so Korean…" with an ensuing example offered that is used to illustrate that South Koreans are either incompetent or "backward." Each person that I spoke with agreed that Western foreigners, and specifically English language teachers, criticize South Koreans and their society. Praticia explains why she does this:

> I do it mostly to release stress, and others will understand since they have the same experience as me. It's a chance to let frustrations go, to blow off steam. I have noticed that people can take it farther. They can be really negative, bitch and moan at the little daily frustrations...

Patricia clarifies that she complains as a way to release stress. She highlights that other people "take it further." This means that they put down South Korean culture and society. The following section explores how Canadians, as representatives of the Western world, feel empowered to criticize South Korean society.

Prakesh lists some of the common complaints that he has heard over the years: "Here are the complaints I hear: the way Koreans treat animals; the way Koreans push and shove you; the way they stare at you; they think we are dirty." The most common complaints centered on notions of politeness: they push and shove; they do not hold doors for you; they chew with too much food in their mouths or with their mouths open; they

don't say bless you when you sneeze; they communicate with "grunts"; etc. These Canadians identify Canada as a nation of people who are polite, and notions of what is considered polite and impolite irreconcilably separate them from South Koreans. Russell underscores this:

> I think we are very proud of our good manners, so to speak. ... I mean, we are seen, and we see ourselves, as a very polite group of people with good manners. And, I honestly have to say, I think we are.

Being polite has a moral value attached to it; quite simply, it is considered good to be polite and bad to be impolite. In that way, when Canadians notice that South Koreans push each other on the streets without saying sorry, it is deduced that they are being impolite, hence engaging in "bad behavior."

As Crystal points out, she has learnt to be "more like the South Koreans" when she walks on the street:

> Something that bugs me is that I grew up in small towns and I have never been in big crowds, and this has got to be the biggest crowd ever, right? And so, walking down the street, Canadians are so polite. You have your personal boundaries, and if someone actually bumps you, oh my god apologies up the wazoo. You come here and you are going to get body checked even if you are walking the right way.
>
> N: And that bugs you a lot?
>
> C: Yeah, it really bugs me. I absolutely hate walking in a crowd, especially if I can't see where I am going. I definitely had to learn how *to be mean* and walk in a different way. Some of the new teachers, when they get here and they see what I do, they laugh at me, and I say you just wait a couple of months 'til you are sick of being shouldered in the chest and you will do what I do. What I do is when I walk, I don't even care anymore, I pluck out my elbows and I will check them first. I don't even care. I would rather hit them first than get hit. I am bigger than them, and I know it, and I am going to use what I've got to push them.
>
> N: That is one of the major things that bother the Canadians who I talk to. It really bothers them, and that is because it is a big confrontation against what they are used to and they also see it as really rude. So they are accosted here, in all senses of the word.

> C: Yeah, the one Christmas that I actually did get to go home, I was shopping in the malls. So it was packed but it was so less than here. And my friend told me, "Crystal, I can't believe what you are doing, you are so rude." "Rude, really, why?" "You just hit her!" "Seriously? Sorry." And I hadn't even noticed that I was pushing people down the aisle and I did not say a word.

Crystal correlates that people bump into each other in South Korea because there are a lot of people on the streets ("crowds"). Nonetheless she attaches a moral value to this fact. Consequently, in order to learn how to walk in a different way (like the South Koreans) she had to learn how to be mean. Therefore, according to this rationale, not only are South Koreans impolite for bumping into each other, they are also mean. Correspondingly, Canadians value their politeness even more. In that way, they are empowered to complain about the pushing and shoving because they consider their polite behavior to be morally superior to the South Koreans. By getting bumped on the street, these Canadians are thrust out of their comfort zones both physically and cognitively.

One way to get back to their sense of comfort is to morally distance themselves from the behavior of South Koreans. In that way, if they learn to push and shove, it is because they have accommodated themselves to the South Korean way of life. The logic follows that this way of life is morally inferior to their way of life. Hence, as Crystal illustrated, when one returns home to Canada, one may not immediately remember or know how to act appropriately. The conclusion being drawn is that the South Korean way of doing things has contaminated them; as indicated by Twine and Gallagher:

> The larger problem combating the issue of racial prejudice, DuBois argued, was that 'most white people are unconscious of any such powerful and vindictive feeling; they regard color prejudice as the easily explicable feeling that intimate social intercourse with a lower race is not only undesirable but impractical if our present standards of culture are to be maintained'. (Dubois as cited in Twine and Gallagher: 2007:8)

Following this example, it is undesirable to adopt the ways of South Koreans as it lessens Canadians' cultural standards of politeness. Anna explains how this has affected her:

> I find it really hard to get used to the rudeness in public; to the bumping and the actual shoving. Here's an example: I ran in a marathon, in a 10K race and at the end we had to go return our chip... and there were adults, grown people, they were all shoving into the table to return their chip, no one was queuing at all, and then when they would turn around they would shove people. It was absolute mayhem. I had never even seen children that bad. It was just ridiculous. It is just a different culture, and it is just hard to put up with that. When you are standing for the elevator, you stand right in front of the doors and you shove yourself on before any one gets off, same as the subway, it is just rude. And really hard to get used to. I really hate it. It drives me crazy. People pushing me on the streets and bumping in front of me and pushing me out of the way. It doesn't bother me as much anymore, 'cause I have been here for almost two years, but at the beginning it did. It still urks me though, how could this be?
>
> ...They do it to themselves, not just to us. ... And they kind of accept it. You don't see them getting angry. ... That is the way they interact. Which is so foreign to me. And so foreign to me that you would walk through a door and let it slam on the person behind you. Just those things, those cultural things... it is not wrong, it is just completely different, for us, it was like that is rude, so you always feel like you are being affronted but you are actually not, it is not personal, it is just the way that it operates.

Anna clearly explains how the actions of bumping and shoving others are considered rude and that is it hard to get used to. She ends by stating that it is not wrong, just different. Anna is careful about how she describes this behaviour. She takes on a multiculturalist stance where it is "OK to be different" even though that difference may be incomprehensible to her. Anna, although aware of the differences and critical of South Korean society, always respected the idea that South Koreans had the "right to be different" mostly because she was in their country.

The responses gathered from the survey underscores that Canadians are aware that they criticize South Korean society:

Question: I have noticed that it is common for foreigners to critique South Korean

culture, i.e. fan death,[29] people pushing, rude taxi drivers.... Do you agree with this? Yes/ No. What do you think about this? Why do you think we do this?

Answer1: Yes. I think it is rude when people do this, because most of the time there is a Korean with the group, but I am guilty of it too. I think it is easy to critique any culture when it is different from our own. And Western culture is sometimes considered superior so we can become biased in that way.

A2: It is not uncommon for people who are feeling the long-term effects of "culture-shock." Any time anyone leaves their [*sic*] country to travel and or live as an expat, they compare. Some people are positive and can enjoy the experience, but the vast majority of others are unbelievably Eurocentric. If people came to Canada and started criticizing it the way many foreigners do here, there would be a lot of fights. Korean people are very tolerant.

A3: Yes. Because it is true and contrary to values and expectations we have. Korean society is organized on well-defined and rather unvarying principles of social hierarchy. Canadians are culturally imbibed with values of social equality as opposed to privileges and responsibilities according to age and gender, title and education, etc. We find many of the values and mores bizarre, not to mention the behaviors.

A4: While I do believe it is a predictable mechanism for dealing with estrangement, I do not enjoy it; particularly when comments are phrased with colonial, racist, condescending undertones. It's simply a way to deal with the intensity of difference. As Canadians we are also socialized to believe we are superior, making it more acceptable to critique. And conversely expecting others to learn.

Each answer highlights that South Koreans are culturally different than Canadians, and in being so, they are subject to criticism. These responses suggest that it is normal and common behavior for minorities or expatriates to criticize the dominant culture. They also highlighted that Canadians, as Westerners, consider themselves superior or engage in Eurocentric practices. Theoretically, we can understand cultural differences as contributing to a form of racism. Balibar explains the term "differentialist racism":

Guillaumin's thesis was therefore that 'culture' (and also ethnicity) becomes an equivalent and a substitute for 'race' after the more or less complete

[29] We are told that if one leaves their fan on at night, they will die. Western foreign teachers often recount this story to illustrate how South Koreans are irrational.

> disqualification of the biological discourse of race, as illustrated both by the persistence of old colonial prejudices in the name of the cultural differences between the West and the East, the North and the South, and above all the development of the 'new racism' targeting immigrant populations such as Arabs in Europe or Hispanics in the U.S. in the name of their cultural 'difference'. (2005:27)

Canadians' liberal values are positively reinforced through the global political economy. Therefore, although it may be normal behaviour for any minority group to criticize the dominant culture, Canadians, albeit as minorities in South Korea, can align themselves with the prevailing Western and dominating culture of liberal values. This is one of the factors that separate them from other national minority groups in South Korea. Canadians (especially white Canadians) can tap into the cultural and symbolic capital that is not available to others. The fact that they can do this helps them re-center themselves as they deal with the "Otherness" of South Korean culture; when this Otherness challenges their notions of who they are, they rely on the normative discourses that have shaped who they are to symbolically empower themselves. Therefore, they can criticize South Korean society to "make themselves feel better."

Tolerate

Following a non-racist posture and keeping in line with the liberal multicultural values promoted in Canada, Canadians expressed a tolerant standpoint towards South Koreans. This tolerance was demonstrated by statements such as Anna's: "They are just different. And that's OK." Ultimately these differences are not without hierarchy or value judgment. The logic is that we can tolerate this behaviour because it is the proper/polite thing to do, but we don't have to like it and the Canadian way is still better; since in this case it is *still* considered rude to push and shove.

However, tolerance has its limits. When difference threatened what Canadians deemed morally acceptable, the tolerance dissipated and was replaced with derision. Russell outlines a logic that is similar to many other Canadians' reasoning:

> Now, I have to go back and contradict myself a little bit, I was saying that we do come over here and we have all these cultural expectations, and perhaps that is wrong. But I want to clarify that, I mentioned before, I do think that socially they are set in the 1950s and yes, we should be patient at times, but no, that doesn't mean that some of the things that happen here aren't wrong, and should change.
>
> N: Like what?
>
> R: The treatment of woman. Sorry, I have had colleagues show up at the office and their faces are black and blue because their husbands are beating them. Now, these are things that, I am sorry, but yes, they should change. Their attitude toward homosexuality. Another one, it is wrong, and it needs to change. So, yes, I am understanding of how they are different and they will be different and grow in their own way and direction, but yet, I feel that some parts of my culture should be parts of their culture.

This outlook forms part of the larger debate taking place and imposed throughout many countries in the world between human rights and cultural rights where some argue for universal human rights that would trump cultural rights. Ironically, the human rights that are being promoted are in fact, liberal cultural rights applied universally under the rubric of human rights. This is in fact how we are all caught in the double bind of liberalism: in its exercise of the universalism of human rights. It is a contradiction, and it is embodied through liberals who grow up in Western civilization without pausing to consider that they have a culturally specific liberal outlook. They understand and recognize difference while promoting (demanding) sameness in the name of universalism (Argyrou 2002). Moreover, it sets the West as the pinnacle in terms of the progression or evolution of societies. Progress itself being a liberal value. Therefore, the linear model of progress towards Western civilization that was propagated through colonialism remains intact.

The following interview with Russell highlights some of the nuances that inform how nationalist practices are enacted in a transnational setting.

> [Regarding pushing and shoving] That bugs me to no end. Oh, I have some great stories about those two things, last time I was home I was at the Vancouver airport, I went to the gate, and they called the flight, and people starting standing up, and of course, all the Koreans rush in a big pack to get there, and, these three women walked right in front of me in line, and I was just not having it, and I just said to them loudly, you are not in Korea yet, you are in my country, and we line up here, you were not in front of me so get to the back of the line.
>
> N: And they did?
>
> R: They did.

This excerpt is a perfect example of how condescending remarks towards South Koreans are concealed in conversations. Russell says, "of course all the Koreans rush in a big pack to get there," this statement corroborates the existing understanding that South Koreans do not behave properly or in accordance with Canadian standards of etiquette. More importantly, Russell is able to enforce his disciplinary-power as a Canadian (Hage 1998) since he is on his own territory. He reinforces this through the statement "you are in *my* country." In South Korea, he cannot tell these women to get to the back of the line because he is in their jurisdiction. He was quite proud to recount this event; after years of *enduring* the effects of their *improper* behavior, he was finally empowered to act. He was able to show them how *civilized* subjects operate or at least he did not have to be disadvantaged by their actions. This example illustrates how tolerance is in effect the act of tolerating—as in endure—not being tolerant—as in sympathetic, since as soon as Russell felt that he had the power to act, he did. The irony is that at the beginning of the interview, Russell explained that he did not identify as Canadian.

> N: What do you consider your national identity to be?

R: I don't have one. I really don't have one. I haven't lived in my own country since I was nine years old.

N: Oh, so you were born in Canada, and then you moved to India when you were nine?

R: *[Yes]* So, I think in the beginning when you live abroad, and you are so different from everyone else, of course, your nationality becomes important to you and you are always Canadian this and Canadian that, but I feel that overtime, I don't belong when I go home.

N: But if a South Korean asks you where you are from, you say you are Canadian?

R: Yes.

N: But you yourself don't really identify with that term?

R: Well, I will say that to anyone, but I don't feel like I am Canadian when I go home, I mean I don't know anything about the most recent hockey games, the politics, the pop culture—anything.

Although Russell does not identify with a Canadian national identity, he still felt empowered to act in accordance with governmental belonging, in other words, he believes that it is his right to manage what happens in his nation or "home" (Hage 1998). As a *certain kind* of Canadian (for all he knew those women were Canadian citizens), he felt empowered as someone who is able to reinforce the codes of civility.

In the following excerpt Russell goes on to describe that he considers Canada to be a country with no culture.

N: Do you think that, generally speaking, Canadians here think that their culture is superior to Korean culture?

R: No, because I think we come from a country with no culture. If you say to me, what is Canadian culture, I don't think there is any. ...But at the same time, I also think that we are superior, because we are Canadians specifically, and we come from a country where even the government promotes your own identities, together yet one. We are open to new experiences, and learning new things, and meeting new people and going to new places, and Koreans aren't yet there. It's just

> recently that they have become a wealthy powerful nation, they are very narrow-minded. The idea that there is a different way of doing things than the way they do, is foreign to them. Where I would say we are more prone to exploring new things, exploring new ideas, listening to different opinions, where here- no, they aren't like that.

We begin to see the contradictions, he previously said that South Koreans should adopt part of his culture (in terms of gay and women's rights), but he says that he doesn't have a national identity or a national culture. I wonder what specific culture he is referring to? Is it a particular Western culture with its attendant liberal values? In this example, Russell demonstrates the presumed universal of liberal thought. As is the case with whiteness, he is claiming a position from nowhere, while asserting his culture everywhere.

Recall that Russell expressed his disdain and outrage at being treated "unfairly" by South Koreans in the workplace. In that way, Russell has a sense of entitlement to being treated equally to the South Koreans. Part of this is based on the Canadian multicultural rhetoric (ideals) that immigrants are fully incorporated and not discriminated against in Canada. As he states: "We don't treat immigrants like this in Canada." Michelle echoed these statements in reference to being hushed on the bus. However, she then clarified them by saying: "Well, at least I have never been treated like this." In both cases they are shocked at how they are being treated *unequally* as it goes against their liberal sense of equality. Their diverging status as white Canadians in Canada and white Western foreigners in Seoul is revealed. In Canada, they are not at the receiving end of the structural racism and discrimination that immigrants or non-white Canadians endure on a daily basis. Despite being treated unfairly, they can call upon their liberal notions of fairness, and the subsequent cultural and symbolic capital that is attached, to reposition themselves as superior. In other words, the logic is that *we* are

better because we aren't narrow-minded like the South Koreans; *we* are open to new ideas. The irony in this statement is embodied in Canadians who through their rationale of not being racist like the South Koreans are engaging in a form of racism. The act of comparing cultures or norms of behavior is omnipresent.

Prakesh explains:

> ...Frustrations arise around evaluating Korean systems against our systems. ... But the problem is that those people are engaging in those kinds of comparatives within contexts in which Koreans are trying to mimic something that is Western. So, that is where the criticisms are coming from. They are responding to the ways in which Koreans fuck up in their attempts to imitate or replicate the Western experience.

Hence, the coining of the phrase, by these Canadian English teachers, of "the land of not-quite-right." South Korea is not-quite-right since it is not-quite-Western. There is a condescending and demeaning undertone to that statement since the standard that South Korea is being measured against is their own.

> Crystal: Yeah, I think that [they criticize] because they come here and they nit pick about all the things that they see is wrong and they think well, my country is better for this and this and this, the more it bugs you, the more you see it.

This chauvinism is part and parcel of the universalist outlook entrenched in many Canadians' subjectivities. These comparisons fall in line with the linear model of progress whereby South Koreans are clearly behind Canadians. Wallerstein explains how the social sciences are understood to be Eurocentric,

> It has been argued that social science expresses its Eurocentrism in (1) its historiography, (2) the parochiality of its universalism, (3) its assumptions about (Western) civilization, (4) its Orientalism, and (5) its attempts to impose the theory of progress. (1999:169)

I draw on the same categories to isolate and highlight how these Canadian subjects have been taught to understand the world and their position in it and how they reenact this through their discourses.

Canadians, relying on the liberal values of human rights, tolerance, universalism, and progress consider themselves superior to South Koreans. This unravels itself in the often-reiterated expression that socially South Koreans are fifty years behind Canada. Canadian English teachers are following in the footsteps of other previous encounters: they civilize.

3.6

Civilize

I think that there are side effects of language teaching... I don't think it is like the missionaries who went abroad to try and salvage the souls of, you know, the savages- it is not that extreme.

—Michelle

When French colonizers in the nineteenth century spoke of la mission civilisatrice, *they meant that, by means of colonial conquest, France (or more generally Europe) would impose upon non-European peoples the values and norms that were encompassed by these definitions of civilization.*

—Immanuel Wallerstein (1999:173)

One of the particularities in this form of migration is that Canadians are teaching more than just language; language is culture. Canadians, as representatives of a Western nation, are there to teach South Koreans how to be like them. As Holly explains: "Well, we are here to teach them to be like us. Which is also something that Koreans buy into and perpetuate." These Canadians, as teachers, are aware that part of their job is not only to teach South Koreans about Western culture, but to try and get them to act and think like Westerners. Although this may be an inevitable consequence of teaching English, what is noteworthy is that these Canadians are *proud* to be teaching their culture. Not only because they believe it to be better but also because they are positioned in a place in the world where they are familiarized with the role of civilizers. Holly, as an activist, considers this more so than the average Canadian:

> It is a strange space that you are in: Balancing privilege and desire to do something good with that privilege and the contradictions of being an English teacher in this neo-colonial industry, as it is. Our motivation was to go back and to show how well this can be done: hire good people, treat them well, meet students needs, focus on globalization from a different aspect, ...teaching them multiculturalism...

Their role as teachers places Canadian subjects on a pedestal in terms of how they relate to South Koreans and has a profound effect on how they relate to their position in South Korean society. Michelle explains: "By them having to learn English, they are kind of forced into hearing about our culture. ... We are their teachers; we get this role, this power to teach them." Anna emphasizes this point: "But it is changing and I feel a lot of hope with the kids that I am teaching now. Part of the reason is that I get to indoctrinate them."

These Canadians embraced teaching South Koreans how to "think like a Canadian." Sadie explains:

> You have to actually teach them how to think like a Canadian or like an American. You are actually bringing up issues that aren't even relevant in Korea like gay marriage, and debating gun laws.

In teaching "them how to think like a Canadian,"[30] Canadians are empowered as the ones who know. Moreover, through the unstated assumption that it is a good thing to teach South Koreans how to "think like a Canadian," Canadians' "Canadianness" is positively reinforced as superior. The question of whether it is "good" to think like a Canadian is seldom entertained. Through this encounter, these Canadians subjects do not question their role as civilizer. They "reopen prior histories of encounter" (Ahmed 2000:13). As Russell highlights:

> N: Some people argue that teaching English in Asia is a continuation or a form...
>
> R: Colonialism. Yeah, it is.
>
> N: Do you have anything more you want to say about that?

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[30] Whether South Koreans actually "learn to think like a Canadian" and how they react to being indoctrinated by Canadians is not the focus of this paper.

> R: You ask a Korean child, what is your favorite holiday? Christmas. Korea is a special case amongst the Asian countries since it is so dominantly Christian now. You see not only have they adopted our culture, they had already adopted our religion.

Russell explains "the previous encounter" in terms of religion. There is also the American military presence in South Korea, the capitalist economy etc. I ask why it is that these Canadians subjects so easily adapt to the role of civilizer. Despite, in fact *because of,* their liberal multicultural beliefs they are able to promote difference in some areas while demanding sameness in others. They don't even question the *civilizing mission.* It is within them. This research underscores how this dynamic unfolds; they naturally assume the position of civilizer. Balibar explains the mechanism through which this takes place:

> Universality itself has to be constructed; it can exist only as counter-construction, not of the Self versus the Other, but of something like translation. Therefore it can be located only in a *performative* manner within the critical practice which assumes the imaginary of Otherness as its starting point and struggles to unravel the processes of power-knowledge though which it was produced, thus re-establishing the primacy of the real encounter, however violent and unequal, over its fantastic denials. (Balibar 2005:31)

The role of the civilizer is part and parcel of the linear and universalist notion of progress. Canadians, as representatives of the advanced liberal civilization, believed that South Koreans were behind them and needed to catch up. As illustrated in Sadie's comment: "The main thing I don't like about Korea is this '50s mentality." This outlook re-inscribes the colonialist framework that explained societies as progressing towards Western civilization. Since Canadians have progressed past this 1950s mentality, they feel that they have to tolerate the South Koreans.

Russell explained how he tolerates through the use of the word "patient." Anna described it in terms of maturity:

> It [South Korean society] is very immature and in a few years, when Korea kind of comes into its own, that may change. ... I hope it does. It seems like there are lot of parallels between Korea now and Canada in the '50s.

The word "patient" and "immature" evoke images of the parent who is compassionate to their child. One cannot expect a child to act as an adult, but they can educate children to become *proper* adults. Anna continues: "I hope Korea evolves. And I just try to do my part in making my class a stress free place to be." In that way, through "doing her part in the class" she recognizes her role as the one who can help South Korea evolve.

Moreover, they believe that they are helping the South Koreans as they progress in the world. The civilizing mission takes on a moral undertone. Consequently, civilizing the South Koreans allows these Canadians to feel good and teaching English in Seoul is aligned with the politics of doing good. Sadie illustrates this in the following comment: "Yeah, but then at work I get this little victories, and that is what I said that I have hope for the future generations." Sadie's hope for the future generations is that they will be positively influenced by Western liberal values so that they won't continue to be sexist or racist. Of course, the fact that sexism and racism are part of liberalism is lost in this equation (see Goldberg 1993). These Canadian subjects took great pride in their roles as cultural ambassadors who are helping South Korea advance. As Anna explains:

> Every slide show that I do for them...I always stick black people and Latino people in; lots of different people. I am really trying to encourage them to see that differences are beautiful. 'Cause a lot of these kids will even say—like when they are showed a picture of a black person—they will say, "Ha ha. Ugly. Looks like a monkey." And stuff like that. I was shocked, are you kidding me? There are people who *still* think like this? I didn't understand it. Growing up where I did in Canada, there was none of that.

Here we understand how Canadians' progressive values are accentuated in comparison to the "backwardness" of South Koreans. Thus, as Said argued, it is though civilizing the "Other" that they come to know themselves, in this case, as civilized.

For the most part, these Canadian English teachers un-reflexively accept and assume the role of civilizer. Holly, as a feminist activist, is an exception. She has consciously come to South Korea with an agenda to revolutionize ESL teaching. She has grappled with whether it is "right" to impose her values on South Koreans. She explains how it is not a straightforward matter.

> If you student says to you that black people smell. How do you address that because it has to be addressed. ...How do you balance being respectful, culturally appropriate, again in trying to cultivate open-mindedness, and not trying to indoctrinate students but try to expose them to something else? ... Sometimes you have to make a decision, are you going to push a barrier that might not be totally culturally appropriate but that affects people's rights and the greater good? Like addressing homosexuality in the classroom. I have no qualms about doing it in the university because they are adults. They are going to make up their minds. I have power there, but it is no the same as with young kids.

Holly understands her role as a university professor as one with limited power in terms of the effect of what she says. She explains that as adults, her students can draw their own conclusions. Although she addresses this situation in a nuanced manner, she still embraces the outlook that she must propagate her liberal values concerning racism and heterosexism. She sees this as a way to utilize her power and privilege as a white Westerner. As she explains:

> And also accusations are leveled against well meaning white Western people who are tying to help but are not being culturally sensitive. Being aware of all of those things but getting to the point where I can just sort of accept the way the world perceives me for both good and bad and be useful, in whatever way that I can. And finding ways to utilize that privilege are great and I don't feel the guilt burden of being white anymore...

Holly clearly expresses that she is "trying to help" and "be useful." She works with a local non-governmental organizaton and collaborates with South Korean activists in order to gage what is culturally appropriate. By spreading her sets of values to her students, she is exposing them to multiculturalism. She believes that her understanding of individual human rights trumps cultural rights and therefore exposes the limits of cultural relativism. What is particularly relevant in this case is that Holly is aware of the criticisms of her actions but has deemed them necessary regardless. The conviction of helping naturalizes the objections. The highly regarded cultural capital attached to multiculturalism and liberal values and its role in the continuation and perpetuation of the civilizing aspect of the colonial encounter is made abundantly transparent. In actuality, it is aberrant *not to* civilize than to civilize since as Holly stated: "it [racist statements] has to be addressed." Is this not the ultimate bind of the universal essence of liberal thought?

Proud to be Canadian

> *I was always happy to be Canadian, but now that I have traveled, I am more happy to be Canadian.*
>
> —Anna

What it means to be Canadian takes shape through teaching English in Seoul. One's national identity takes on a heightened importance as Crystal explains: "I identified as Canadian before but I wasn't outspoken about it, but I know that I am definitely outspoken about it here." After living in Seoul and being subjected to Korean society and culture, these Canadians felt "more happy" to be Canadians. Erin explains: "I feel very privileged to be Canadian. I do feel lucky. I do. As a person who has been somewhere

else, we have a lot of really good things happening there…" Michelle explains that it was through living in South Korea that she came to appreciate Canada more:

> I think that I was always patriotic, but it takes leaving your home to really realize how much you appreciate it, and how much of your identity if forms. Especially living in a culture as different as South Korea.

Through this encounter with the Other, they come to understand themselves more. Not just as the Canadians they were, but as the Canadians they become. Through teaching South Koreans how to be like them they become *more* Canadian. I contend that it is this very act of civilizing that renders them civilized. Orientalism continues to inform these Canadians' identifications of both themselves and South Koreans. Balibar explains: "…the Other is not really or purely exterior. It is also interior, constitutive of oneself. Without this 'otherness', there would be no possibility of civilizing oneself (2005:30)." He continues:

> … namely the fact that the construction of the Other is the construction of an *alienated Self,* where all the properties attributed to the Other are inversions and distortions of those vindicated for oneself, where indeed the Self is nothing but *the Other's Other,* whose identity and stability is permanently asserted and secured (in the imaginary) through the representation of an essential Other, or an essentialized Other, whose identity in this respect *arrives from the Other in inverted form.* So the construction of the Oriental Other was also always about the construction of a common Self of the West, or the Western identity, or the Western-Christian-Democratic-Universalist identity, which is itself anything but coherent…. (2005:30)

It is through the enterprise of teaching English that one identifies as Canadian; in the symbolic, the imaginary and the material (physical) act of leaving one's home and encountering the Other.

Conclusion: Reinforced Notions of Superiority.

> *I just know that for the rest of my life if anyone mentions Korea, I will start to rant. I will start to rant because it is just such a powerful feeling that you get (from living here).*
>
> —Steve

This research builds on the existing understanding that Canadians are favorably positioned in the global unequal division of people. It draws on Said's work that demonstrated how the superior European (Western) Self was established through its encounter with the Oriental Other. The discourse of *Orientalism* established a hierarchical dividing order between nation-states and corresponding peoples. The spread of the English language reinforces the hierarchal relationship that was established by colonialism through the continued spread of liberal morals and values. This discourse is normalized thus allowing Canadians to accept their values as universal. These values have an attached symbolic and cultural capital that is superiorly ranked in the world system.

Despite the real vulnerabilities and exploitation that they face as marginal workers and the fact that they are relatively powerless, in other words, the actual limitation of their privilege as white Westerners is revealed, they still evoke discourses of superiority. The discourse of whiteness as it intersects with citizenship and liberal values, especially universalism, tolerance and progress, enables these subjects to imagines that they are superior to South Koreans. This outlook permits them to continuously criticize South Koreans and South Korean society. Yet, it does not stop there; this ethnography reveals how Canadians naturally assume the role of civilizer. This is the circular nature of how these established discourses entrench the unequal disposition of past encounters in the

present. In that way, they are not migrant workers- not because their actual conditions do not comply with the definition of who a migrant workers is—but because the discourses that they rely on to form their identifications will not allow it.

Therefore, *despite* their insecure positioning in Seoul, *despite* the contradictory and confusing nature of how they are viewed and received by South Koreans, *despite* being negatively stigmatized, *despite* their privilege as white Westerners being challenged they still leave with a sense of moral superiority. As Anna states: "It [living in South Korea] just reinforces your superiority complex." This analysis concludes that it is through the encounter with the Other and the act of civilizing the Other that these Canadians become *more* Canadian. In essence, we learn that the role of civilizer is in fact already incorporated in what it means to be Canadian.

Ultimately, this is an ethnography of nationalism and how it is called upon, relied upon, reinvented and reinforced *in situ.* We learn how teaching English in South Korea is incorporated in the nation-making enterprise. In other words, this research exposes how subjects, through their transnational movement, identify with a Canadian national identity. It illustrates how differential racism (see Guillaumin cited in Balibar 2005) works by way of nationalism to divide and rank people hierarchically.

This analysis is not merely declaring that all Canadians are racist, as though it were a question of individual behavior. It shows how racism, always present in nationalism, works in conjunction with other discourses and positions subjects against each other. It exposes that subjects, drawing on the material and symbolic conditions of the world-system, can call upon discourses to divide people into a hierarchy.

This research did not attend in detail to many important aspects. For instance, a more comprehensive analysis of transnational gender relations is necessary. Moreover, this field site offers rich data to explore how queer politics may take on a universalist outlook in the culturally specific setting of South Korea. A complex understanding of how power/knowledge, always present in nationalist discourse, is enacted through this type of transnational movement is also absent. For the purpose of this thesis class was subsumed in the national identity, yet a more thorough class-based analysis could be pursued. Lastly, a more nuanced look at the life course as it intersects with prolonged stays overseas would further contribute to the study of tourism and migration.

This study contributes to the discipline of anthropology by broadening the existing literature on migrant workers. It expands the notion of migrant worker by showing how subjects can choose, albeit unconsciously, not to identify with the marginal status of a migrant worker. Moreover, it contributes to the existing body of literature that explores the overlap between travel and work. It also brings into conversation the literature on migration and critical race studies (with a focus on nationalism). Ultimately, one of this thesis major contributions is the ethnographic based analysis on citizenship, nationalism and race.

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