



Strengthening 'We-ness': Embracing Diversity in Intercultural Family Dynamics

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Introduction

- In this study, the term **intercultural couple** refers to a committed relationship formed by partners of different ethnic backgrounds
- Couples where one person is Korean and the other is non-Korean in NZ
- Includes couples who are married or cohabiting
- An intercultural couple may present with several interracial, interreligious, or bi-national dimensions



Intercultural relationships on the rise

Intercultural couple in NZ (Didham & Callister, 2014)

- About 69% of Māori, 46% of Pacific people, 24% of Asian, and 12% of European in 2013. Particularly high among NZ-born Māori, Pacific people, and Asian
 - Asian women were more likely than Asian men to marry outside of their culture
 - European-Māori couples were the most common
 - Increased between Europeans-Pacific people, Māori-Pacific people, and Asians-Europeans couples
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Korean population in NZ

- The fourth-largest Asian ethnic group, preceded by Chinese, Indian, and Filipino (Statistics NZ, 2018)

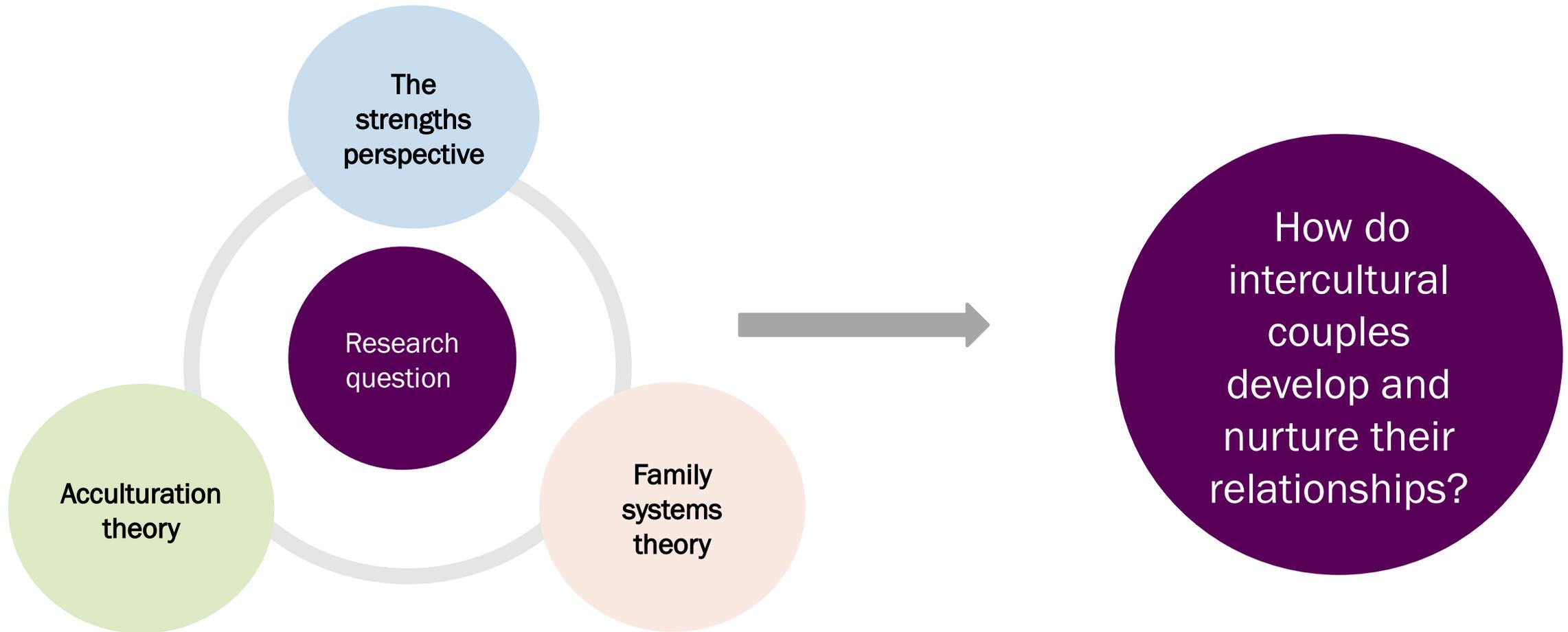
930 Koreans in 1991, subsequently expanded to 35,664 in 2018

- Among the growing Korean population, the number of intercultural relationships has also increased. However, limited information is available about Koreans in intercultural relationships
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Problem statement

- A few studies have been conducted between Māori-European couples
 - Focused on demographic patterns, couple characteristics, and intergenerational transmission of ethnicity (e.g., Callister, 2003; Didham & Callister, 2014; Harré, 1968; Kukutai, 2007)
 - Need to understand other ethnic intercultural couples
 - A dearth of research involving Korean partner in NZ
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Research question

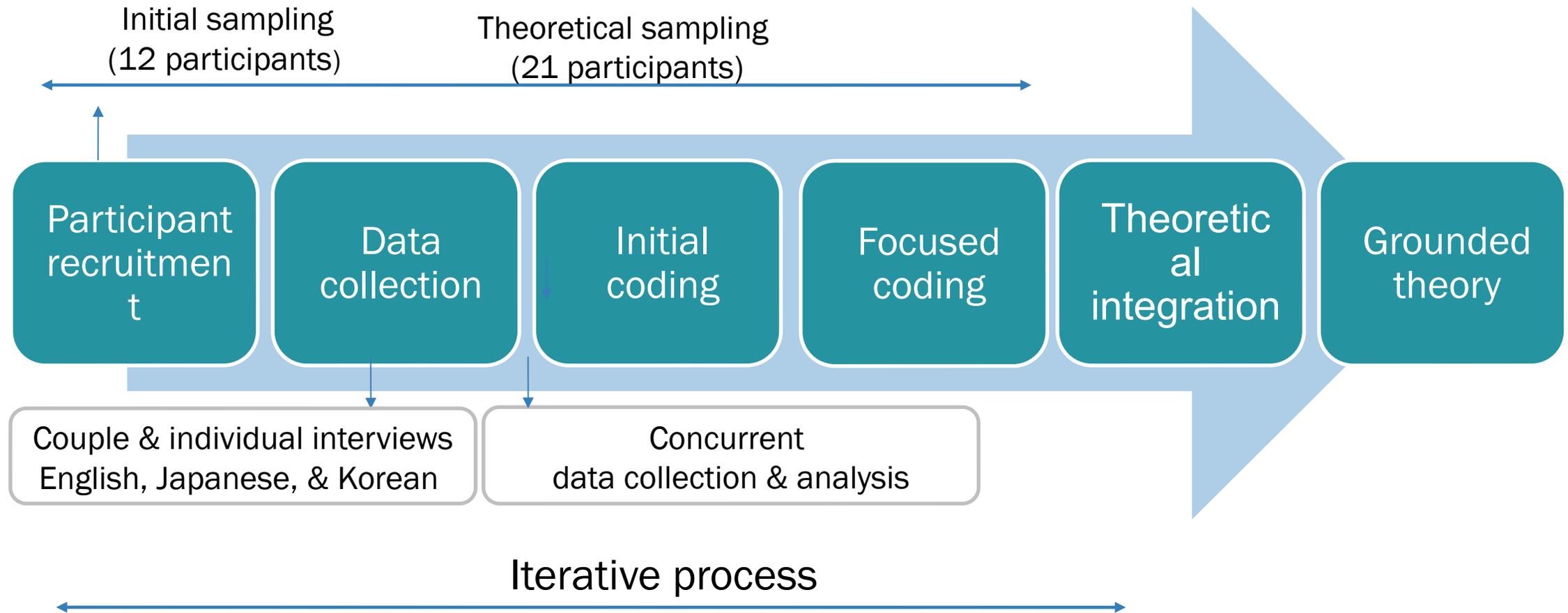


Methodology

Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014)

- A qualitative approach
 - Aims to generate a theory from the data
 - Focuses on a process inherent to the research topic
 - Acknowledges multiple meanings and realities, and seeks to understand how people's experiences are embedded in the context
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Methods



Participants

Total 33 participants

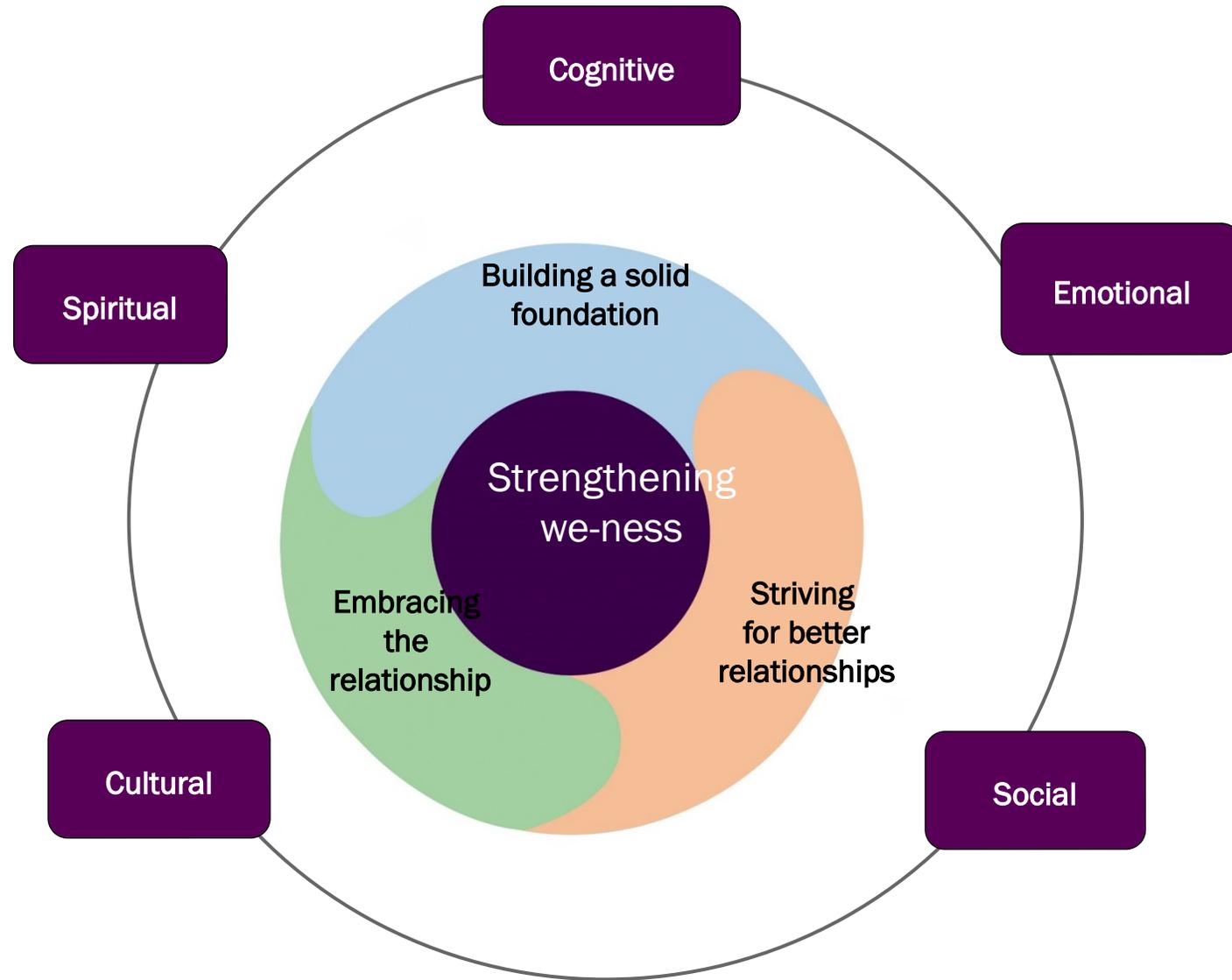
- 14 heterosexual intercultural couples and 5 individuals who are part of intercultural relationships
 - Married or had been cohabitating for 4-23 years. Ages: 32-67
 - 18 Koreans and 15 non-Koreans
 - Participants were from diverse cultural backgrounds
 - Mostly immigrants: Only 6 participants were born in NZ
 - Religion: Christian (23), Buddhists (3), Muslim (1), no religion (9)
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Findings

The theory resulting from the analysis: **Strengthening 'We-ness'**

- Strengthened we-ness across three iterative phases that were derived from the data: **Building a solid foundation, striving for better relationships, and embracing the relationship**
 - **Multidimensional We-ness: A shared collective identity as a couple**
Cognitive, emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual
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The theory of Strengthening 'We-ness'



Building a solid foundation

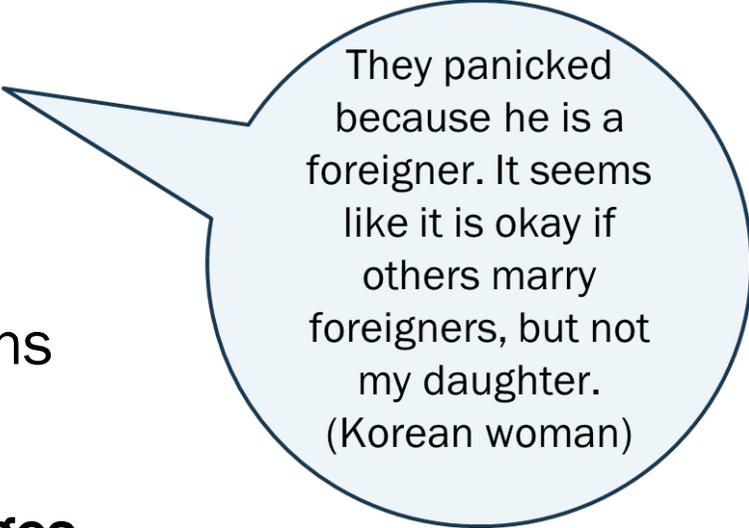
Dealing with disapproval

Developing a shared cultural understanding

- Acknowledged similar cultural values and beliefs
- Developed an understanding of different expectations and attitudes in everyday life

Dealing with emerging cultural differences and challenges

- Cultural differences include food, language and communication barriers, postpartum care, gender roles, and extend family relationships
- Key strategies include communication, being respectful, being positive and flexible, and acceptance



They panicked because he is a foreigner. It seems like it is okay if others marry foreigners, but not my daughter.
(Korean woman)

Striving for better relationships

Being willing to adapt

- Learned their partner's first language
- Participated in their partner's community

Cultivating social connections

- Family, friends, and communities

Practising spirituality

- Within religion or without any religious practices
- Prayer, meditation, and their own personal values

I am helping them out voluntarily



Embracing the relationship

Crating a hybrid family culture

Developing shared goals and values

Prepared their children for diverse society

Cultivating gratitude

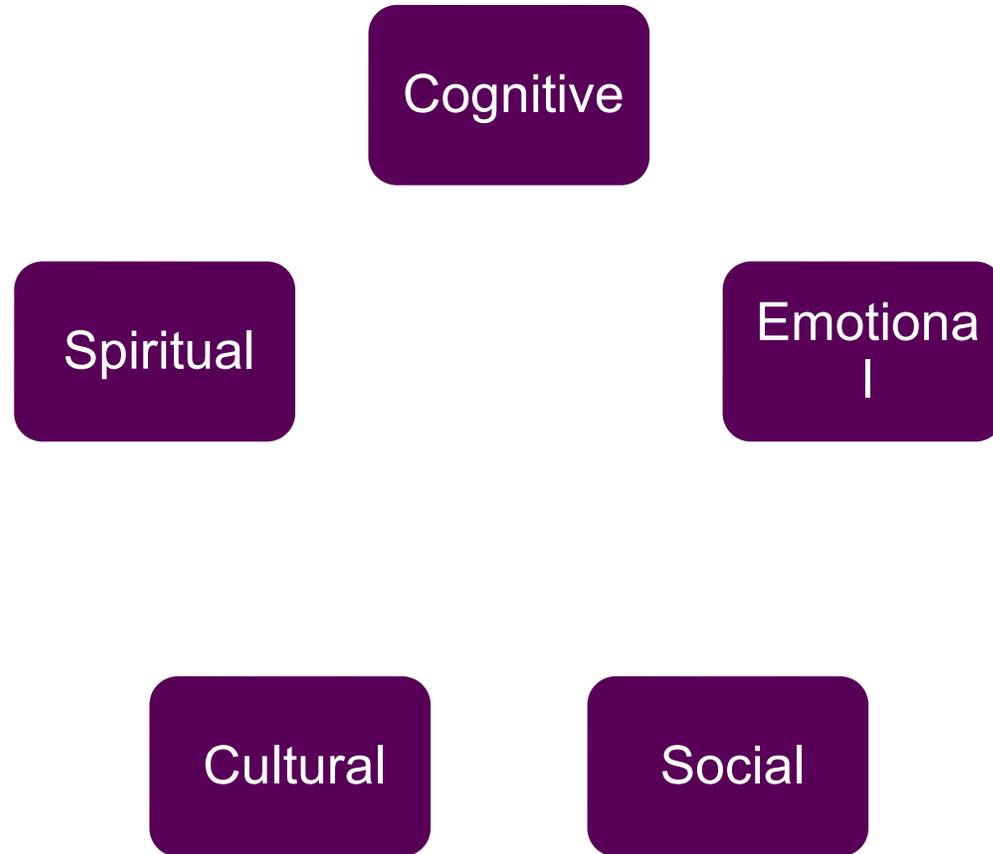
“I am so blessed”

We have good things from Korea, Japan, and NZ cultures

Kimchi on toast

We want to raise our daughter to know all languages and cultures

Multi-dimensional 'We-ness'



Summary and contributions

- Strengthening 'We-ness' is a way to develop and nurture intercultural relationships
 - The multidimensional aspects of 'we-ness'
(Cognitive, emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual)
 - A strength lens towards intercultural couples
 - Integrated part of the notions of individualism and collectivism
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Implications

- It is important to access information about Korean intercultural couples living in New Zealand
 - Promote family diversity to foster an environment that is more inclusive, positive, and supportive for various ethnicities throughout communities in NZ
 - Reduce discrimination and prejudice toward intercultural couples and to increase acceptance of their relationships in NZ
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References

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Thank you!

Questions?