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Master’s Thesis of Geography

Ethnic Placemaking by Latin Americans in Seoul, South Korea

서울에 분포한 라틴 아메리카인에 의한 에스닉(ethnic) 장소만들기

July 2018

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Abstract

Ethnic Placemaking by Latin Americans in Seoul, South Korea

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This research analyzes the placemaking dynamics of the Latin-American migrant community in Seoul, South Korea. Placemaking is the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in. It is a process that gives importance to the spaces within cities, as well as to human interactions and the connections between people and place. However, not everyone participates in placemaking in the same manner or uses the same techniques. Previous studies on migrant communities and ethnic placemaking have tended to focus on larger sized communities in host countries, while ignoring the smaller ones. This can give the impression that smaller migrant communities do not take part in placemaking activities and become invisible throughout society. This research hopes to prove the opposite. Given that the Latin American community in South Korea is a minority of a minority, it cannot rely on neither the size of its community, a geographical proximity to the migrants’ countries of origin, nor on historical and cultural ties between the countries in question for them to have a profound influence within South Korean society. Taking this background into account, this research asks the following: (1) how do migrant communities that have little or no historical and cultural ties to
their host countries create a place for themselves? And (2) how does the role of culture from a migrant’s home country influence the level of a migrant community’s visibility (or lack thereof) within the host country? Being that Seoul is the city where most foreign residents in South Korea tend to accumulate, it serves as the case study site for this qualitative research study. Through the use of archival analysis, direct participatory observation and in-depth interviews, this research focuses on the placemaking dynamics within the Latin American community in Seoul, being principally carried out via social media platforms and religious association on the one hand, and the visibility of this community in South Korean society through the presence of Latin American small ethnic businesses owned by non-Latin Americans in Seoul. I argue that compared to larger and more visible Latin American communities abroad, Latin Americans in Seoul rely on the profitability of their home culture in order to be seen by others, while at the same time, they build social networks with other Latinos in Seoul instead of actual physical spaces for themselves in order to ‘feel at home.’

**Keywords**: Placemaking, Migrants, Latin-America, Ethnic, Seoul, South Korea

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Chapter 1. Introduction

This research analyzes the placemaking dynamics of the Latin-American migrant community in Seoul, South Korea. Placemaking is the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in. It is a process that gives importance to the spaces within cities, as well as to human interactions and the connections between people and place. However, not everyone participates in placemaking in the same manner or using the same techniques. In the case of migrants or ethnic minorities within a given society, especially those that are vast in number and form a considerable percentage of a national population, it is common to view ethnic placemaking in the form of ethnic enclaves that can develop in certain areas of a town or city. Ethnic enclaves, therefore, are considered as immigrant groups that are concentrated in distinct spatial locations that also organize a variety of enterprises that serve their own ethnic market and/or the general population. Simply put, an ethnic enclave is a geographic area with high ethnic concentration, characteristic cultural identity, and economic activity.

According to a 2016 report by the South Korean Ministry of Justice, there are approximately 2.18 million foreigners residing in South Korea, most of them being migrants from China, Japan, the United States, and from diverse countries in the Southeast Asian region. In the case of Latin Americans in South Korea, their presence is often neither as visible nor influential enough for them to be given their own statistic. They are often grouped among data concerning ‘other foreigners’. This fact makes Latin Americans in South Korea a minority of a minority. The community cannot rely on neither the quantity of its members, the geographical proximity between South Korea and the migrants’ countries of
origin, nor on historical and cultural ties with South Korea for them to have even the faintest amount of influence within South Korean society.

Existing literatures regarding ethnic and migrant placemaking focus on conventional ethnic enclaves as a form of ethnic placemaking. Many previous studies on this subject, either written from a historical perspective (Waters, 1995; Kibria, 2002; Maira, 2002; Portes and Rumbault, 2001), social perspective (Phinny, 1992; French and Chavez, 2010; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002), economic perspective (Anderson and Platzer, 2007; Light and Sanchez, 1987; Min and Bozorgmer, 2003; Jones 2010), and political perspective (Lowry and Nyers, 2013; Rygiel, 2011; Walters, 2008; Castells, 2012) have tended to focus on larger sized migrant communities in host countries, composed of permanent migrants and/or their descendants. These studies ignore smaller minority migrant communities, as well as temporary migrants. By doing so, these studies have not paid enough attention to smaller migrant communities do not take part in placemaking activities and are therefore invisible throughout society or without importance, implying that the absence of visible evidence of ethnic enclaves is equal to its nonexistence. Because of this observation, the present research hopes to prove the opposite of the above statement. Taking this background into account, this research asks two main questions.

1) How do migrant communities that have little or no historical and cultural ties to their host countries create a place for themselves?

2) How does the role of culture from a migrant’s home country influences a migrant community’s visibility within a particular host country?

In relation to the first research question, Latin Americans in South Korea do not have a profound cultural tie to their host country. Among the 18 Spanish-speaking Latin American countries that are considered for this study, among which are: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican
Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela; a variety of visible differences with South Korea are presented. First, there is an obvious language difference. As previously mentioned, the majority of Latin American countries use Spanish, while South Koreans use Korean. However, between both languages there are virtually no existing similarities or common root languages such as in the case of Romance languages (Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian and Romanian) and Chinese character usage in Korean, Japanese and Chinese. Second, where approximately 72% of people living in the Latin American region are followers of the Roman Catholic faith, less than 10% of the South Korean population is Catholic, being Buddhism and Protestant Christianity far more celebrated than the first. Third, the first waves of Koreans that migrated to Latin America did so in the early 20th century to work in agriculture and construction. These Korean migrants were then able to build ethnic enclaves in the capital cities of Argentina, Peru, and Brazil, and to a lesser extent in Southern Mexico and Mexico City. These groups of Korean migrants and their activities have also been the focus of numerous research studies published in Korean, Spanish, Portuguese and English. Contrary to the case of Korean migrants in Latin America, the case of Latin Americans in South Korea has not received the same amount of attention from researchers and academics.

One side-note that should be mentioned, is that the present study focuses solely on Latino migrants from Spanish speaking countries, meaning that migrants from Brazil, for example, are not considered for this present study despite the presence of people of Brazilian origin in both Seoul and South Korea. The reasons for excluding a country like Brazil from this study are due to differences in regional communal identity due to language, historical and cultural barriers between this country and the rest of Spanish-speaking Latin America. For people who are not from Latin America, it may be difficult to understand that
there are dividing differences among the people of Brazil and Spanish-speaking Latin America, and these differences carry a heavy weight on the identities of these peoples. While it is true that Brazil is geographically located in what is considered to be Latin America, the historical, social and cultural development of the former Portuguese colony had contrasted greatly with the experience felt in the former Spanish colonies of the Americas. For these and other reasons, or rather, barriers, academics such as Bethell (2012), Ardao (1992), Beraba, (2008), and De Souza, (2009) have stated that historically, Brazilians in general have always referred to Spanish speaking Latin-Americans as ‘Latinos,’ while referring to themselves as simply as Brazilians, despite knowing that due to their geographic location and the origin of their mother-tongue, they are also technically Latinos. Likewise, and perhaps due to the same reasons, Spanish-speaking Latin American natives have always felt a different kind of bond amongst themselves in comparison to the relation they share with Brazil.

Furthermore, returning to the topic of Latin American migrants in South Korea, the general lack of detailed studies about this topic can be due mostly to Latino migrations to South Korea being a far more recent phenomenon than Korean migrations to Latin America. Additionally, the socio-cultural differences, as well as the geographical distance between both regions often lead Latino migrants in South Korea to adopt a ‘temporary’ migrant status. Unlike most migrants that have traveled to countries with strong Latino enclaves, Latino migrants that choose South Korea as a country of destination, often come from middle to high socio-economic backgrounds. The youth make up the majority of the Latino migrant population, with most of the migrants being around the age of 25. They arrive to South Korea as students of higher education or as white-collar employees. This contrasts with the socio-economic characteristics of most of the migrants that travel to developed countries known for their Latino enclaves. The characteristics of the community members alone should pinpoint that the Latin
American community in Seoul is quite distinct from the Latino community living in other countries, and this, coupled with their historical, geographical and cultural characteristics, permit these migrants to perform placemaking in an entirely different way.

Regarding the second research question, a key aspect that should be pointed out in this case, is that the countries with a strong Latino enclave are also countries known for the presence of an ethnic diversity within their population. The United States and Canada, having originally been founded as colonies in the New World and therefore prone to migration since the start of their own history, are not new to this phenomenon. In the case of Spain, a European country with a well-known history of conquest and colonization in different regions of the world, as well as a present member of the European Union, a symbol of regional integration and ‘free transit,’ is also not a newcomer to in and out-flows of international migration and the effects that it creates in all aspects. These three countries, which all host the largest Latino populations outside of Latin America, all have different ethnic communities from different parts of the world living within their borders. In essence, their societies are known as diverse, and multicultural. This is not necessarily the case for South Korea, at least not to the same extent as the previously mentioned countries.

The methodology of the present qualitative study consists of archival studies, direct participant observation in key location sites throughout Seoul, and in-depth interviews. On the one hand, digging into archives proved most helpful for the literature review section of this research, as well as for learning about the background characteristics of other Latin American communities abroad. The main body chapters are composed of research developed primarily through observation and interviews. The field work for this study was carried out between the months of March and April 2018. A total of three Mexican food restaurants---one located in the neighborhood of Hongdae, one in Itaewon and one in
Gangnam---were visited on one occasion each. Two Latin-American themed bars/dance clubs, one in the neighborhood of Sinchon and the other in Hongdae, were visited on two occasions each, while one bar located in Itaewon was visited on one occasion. Likewise, a Spanish language exchange gathering at a Mexican cultural themed coffee shop in Mapo district (Mapo-gu) was visited on one occasion, while attending Spanish mass for two Sundays in a row was carried out at the St. Francis International Parish in the neighborhood of Hannam-dong.

The people interviewed and quoted in this research were sought after on location. Of the 18 people interviewed and cited in this research, 12 of them gave more in depth interviews that lasted an average of about half an hour to 45 minutes, while the other 6 were brief encounters, but still meaningful. The interviews were semi-structured and carried on in accordance to the interviewees’ backgrounds, time in Korea and the flow of the conversation. All interviewees were Latin American migrants. Among them were 5 University students from the countries of Mexico, Guatemala, and Chile; 3 catholic parishioners from Mexico, 1 from Honduras and 1 from Costa Rica; and 8 restaurant, bar and dance club customers from Costa Rica, Paraguay, Peru, Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, and Guatemala. Of the 12 in depth interviewees, 5 were female and 7 were male; while the other 6 people who gave a brief interview, 4 were female and 2 were male. The in-depth interviews were recorded with consent given by the 12 interviewees, while the other 6 interviews were only taken notes of. The age bracket of the most of the interviewees was between the mid-20s to early-30s; while that of the parishioners were of late-20s and above. The interviews cited for the purposes of this study do not mention clear identifiable traits of the people in question, rather just their nationality, or country of origin, as well as a vague description of their occupation, such as “Student from Mexico.”

This thesis is divided into a total of six parts, including the present introduction. The second part of the section involves an overview of current
literature that deals with topics relating ethnic placemaking in the form of ethnic enclaves and the placemaking of Latin American migrants. On the one hand, it focuses on previous case studies within ethnic placemaking literature, highlighting the fact that these case studies have exclusively focused on permanent migrants and large migrant communities in host countries, in contrast to the characteristics presented by the Latin American migrant community in Seoul. This chapter also talks about placemaking activities of Latin American migrants found in other regions of the world, namely, in the United States. As the United States currently holds the biggest Latin American community living abroad, literature has been diverse in this area, being that this minority community currently represents almost 15% of the total U.S. population. It is therefore a major minority group with much power and influence, contrary to the case of the Latin American community in South Korea. This aspect of the literature review is presented in order to be able to later highlight the contrasts that exist between the placemaking activities of these Latin communities and the one located in Seoul.

The third chapter of this research serves as an introduction to the case study. The chapter briefly introduces the various ethnic enclaves that exist in Seoul, such as the areas of Itaewon, Ichon, Dongdaemun, Seorae Maeul, Daerim-dong, Hannam-dong, among others. It also introduces the Latin American community in Seoul and tries to calculate the number of existing Latino migrants in the country. Additionally, the fourth chapter of this study gives an overview of the research methodology employed, as well as describe the research locations and some characteristics of the interviewees whose responses are taken into consideration for this research.

The fifth chapter is the starting point for the research findings of this study, and is titled, ‘Placemaking dynamic of Latin Americans in Seoul: social media networks and the Catholic religion.’ This chapter is important in that it aims to
describe the placemaking dynamics that are carried out by Latin American immigrants in Seoul. Being that there are less than 2,000 Latin American migrants in South Korea on a constant basis, and that they lack an ethnic enclave anywhere in the country, their scattered presence leads them to form associations with other Latinos, mainly through online and social media platforms. Meanwhile, the strong role that the Roman Catholic religion plays in Latin American countries, culture and society also leads these migrants to search for Catholic churches with mass held in Spanish, allowing them to have access to another group of Latinos.

The sixth chapter, titled, ‘The role of Latin American Pop-Culture in Placemaking: Latin American themed small businesses in Seoul,’ focuses on how the presence of Latin American themed small businesses in Seoul allows Latinos in this city to be seen throughout society in comparison to other foreign minorities in Seoul (and South Korea). This section argues that compared to other developing, or less well-known regions of the world, Latin America has the privilege of having a famous ancient culture that is both marketable and profitable in terms of business in South Korea. Its distinct characteristics and uniqueness draw the attention of Korean customers, to which most of these ethnic businesses target. It is because of the marketability of Latin American culture that the Latin American community itself is more visible than other smaller migrant communities in South Korea and in Seoul. This chapter then, goes into more detail in terms of the physical spaces in question for this research, such as Latin American restaurants, dance clubs, coffee shops and other small businesses. Likewise, because most Latin Americans themselves are not the owners of these small businesses, this chapter also aims to provide insight into why this is. By doing so, it briefly explains the complicated and daunting process that foreigners must undergo to open up a small business in Seoul.
Finally, the seventh chapter of this work is made up of a section of final conclusions. It gives a summary of what was said in the body chapters and addresses new possible areas and approaches for the future study of this topic. It mainly asks the reader to take into deeper consideration the placemaking dynamics that are carried out within small migrant communities in any host country, and in particular, in host countries with a low percentage of ethnic diversity within their population, such as South Korea. As stated previously, Latin Americans are not the only minor community in this country, but they do differ from other communities in that their culture is more profitable and suitable for business than others. However, considering that not all migrant communities perform placemaking activities in the same manner, the final conclusions of this study also hope to serve as a springboard for further future studies regarding these said communities. This chapter also invites readers to not only think about the future make-up of Korean society, but also about the concept of multiculturalism in itself and the meaning that it holds in migration studies, ethnic placemaking, and even studies of ethnic enclaves.
Chapter 2. Literature Review: Previous Studies of Placemaking through Ethnic Enclaves and Latin American Migrant Placemaking

2.1 Previous Studies of Placemaking through Ethnic Enclaves

For the purposes of this research, I consider that ethnic enclaves fall under a category of types of ethnic placemaking. Portes (1981) defined ethnic enclaves as immigrant groups concentrated in distinct spatial locations that organize a variety of enterprises that serve their own ethnic market and/or the general population. From this definition, it can be said that an ethnic enclave is a geographic area with high ethnic concentration, characteristic cultural identity, and economic activity. However, as the above definition can seem too broad, Portes, along with other authors, furthered their research to determine notable requirements that must be met for an ethnic enclave to exist. The first requirement is that ethnic entrepreneurs must employ their coethnics, or members of their ethnic community (Light 1972; Portes 1981; Portes and Bach 1985; Wilson and Portes 1980). This means that an ethnic group needs to be relatively large in number and diversified in socioeconomic status, including at least a small number of members with sufficient economic resources to be able to establish businesses. The second requirement is that the ethnic enclave in question must be spatially bounded from the main economy so that it can function internally as a labor market.

Certain human capital skills, such as ethnic language, cultural knowledge, and social network ties to the place of origin, are important and marketable only in the internal labor market defined by an ethnic enclave (Portes 1981; Portes and Bach 1985). Additionally, general discourse surrounding ethnic enclaves has prompted debate among scholars in two related areas of thought. Both areas discuss the role ethnic enclaves play by either offering aid or
hindering the economic and social well-being of the enclave's members. One area of thought discusses the role of enclaves in assimilative patterns and upward mobility while the second area of thought argues the economic ramifications associated with membership within ethnic enclaves.

The immediate economic and social advantages associated with membership in an ethnic enclave are undisputed by scholars, however the long-term consequences remain an area of uncertainty. In the case of the first, the role these networks play remains uncertain due to the fact that ethnic enclaves allow immigrants to function successfully within the host society without a significant amount of adjustment either culturally or linguistically. As such, they can either help or hinder naturalization within the host country. The relatively low levels of skill required allow immigrants to achieve financial stability which can in turn encourage eventual naturalization and assimilation. Adversely, while participation in the enclave economy may assist in achieving upward mobility through increased availability of employment opportunities in the enclave labor market, it may also prevent the acquisition of host country skills that benefit the immigrant over the long-run. Learning the language and social norms of the receiving country constrains immigrants to activity within the enclave and secludes them from the larger receiving context. Opportunities available to mainstream society can thus be out of reach for immigrants who lack both the knowledge of these services and the ability to access them.

Taking the above description of an ethnic enclave into account, it can be inferred that the subject of this study, the Latin American migrant community in Seoul, does not qualify as an ethnic enclave. This is not my argument. As we shall see in this chapter, and in the rest of this study, the case of the Latin American migrant community in Seoul presents characteristics similar to that of ethnic communities who do have their own enclave in host countries. As previously mentioned, Latin Americans in Seoul, or South Korea for that matter,
are not a large sized community. However, the very geographical distance between both Latin America and South Korea implies that it is neither easy nor inexpensive for Latinos to migrate to South Korea. For this particular case study, the majority of Latinos who do migrate, generally belong to well-off socio-economic classes in their home countries. Most of them migrate because they want to and because they can, not because they need to. This also means that although some members would have the financial resources to establish their own businesses, they choose not to for a variety of reasons. New-coming Latinos in Seoul see themselves as temporary migrants on the one hand, and do not wish to start a business that would keep them in Seoul long term.

However, as we will see below, studies on ethnic enclaves suggest that those migrants who do not have an established enclave do not participate in placemaking activities. Studies on ethnic enclaves also focus on large communities of migrants. While it is understandable, due to the very definition of the term, ethnic enclave studies at the same time cause smaller migrant communities, such as the Latinos in Seoul, to become ignored. This research is innovative in the sense that it focuses on the placemaking and networking activities of a small minority migrant on the one hand, and an uncommon subject of study of ethnic migrants in South Korea on the other hand. The following content of this present chapter, aims to give a brief overview of the kinds of existing case studies that literature on ethnic placemaking and Latin American Ethnic Placemaking. One particular detail that should be continued to keep in mind, however, is that these studies focus on both permanent migrants, as well as large migrant communities in host countries.

Existing literature on ethnic placemaking can be divided into historical, social, economic and political themes. For example, studies such as that of Waters (1995) carries a historical theme in that in analyzes six different groups of German peasant migrants in both parts of Russian and the United States, ranging
from the 13th to the 18th century. His studies showed that three of the six groups assimilated to the host society (two in Russia and one in the United States). A comparison of the six cases indicated that what determined whether a group formed its own enclave or assimilated to the host society depended on what was more materially advantageous for the migrants and what form allowed a higher chance of social mobility. Studies regarding generational differences between a determined ethnicity of migrants in a host country, such as that of Asians and Indians in the United States, are also a recurring theme in literature involving a historical approach in enclave studies (Kibria, 2002; Maira, 2002; Portes and Rumbault, 2001). Case studies involving Latin Americans in South Korea or in the city of Seoul are virtually non-existent from a historical perspective, while its counterpart, Korean migrants in Latin America, can be found in English, Spanish and Korean scholarship.

Enclave studies involving a social theme are also associated to those analyzing questions of identity of migrants, as well as enclave networks. In terms of the studies related to questions of identity, methods of assimilation and access to social capital are commonly discussed, as they vary between and even within ethnic groups. A variety of factors can influence individuals' ethnic identities including their social class background and the social networks available to them. As theorized by sociologist Waters (1995), the involvement level of parents in ethnic organizations or activities heavily influences the development of their children's ethnic identities. This is important to note as second-generation immigrants must actively work to identify themselves with their ethnic group. According to Phinny (1992), ethnic identity is defined broadly as a sense of belonging to an ethnic group and is associated with various social behaviors related to group membership. Authors such as French and Chavez (2010) and French et al (2006) also associate a strong sense of ethnic identification with psychological well-being and healthy social adjustment. In this aspect, questions
of identity and methods of assimilation for Latino migrants in Seoul differ from those of migrant communities found in more heterogenous societies. As the case study chapter will demonstrate, that is not to say that the demographic composition of the city of Seoul is not diverse, however the diversity of existent nationalities and ethnicities within the city do not equate to equal percentages among these. In the case of Seoul, and South Korea, the majority of the population are still Koreans, which makes it difficult for minorities to integrate into society on the level of other, more multicultural countries.

Transnationalism and diaspora are also two key concepts in global theories of migration that are often included in enclave studies. Scholars who address the first write about transnational social fields within which migrant actors operate (Schiller et al, 1995; Schiller, 1997), about transnational identities that challenge processes of immigrant assimilation or incorporation; about transnational practices at both the individual and institutional level; about transnational families (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002), about transnational villages (Levitt, 2001) that depend on the economic and social remittances from those they have sent abroad; and about transnational policies that foster an enduring relationship between states and their nationals abroad (Brettel, 2003; Harney 2002).

The concept of transnationalism challenges the long-held idea that immigrants leave their country of origin behind as they migrate and are incorporated and then assimilated into a new national context (Gordon 1964). Louie (2006), describes transnationalism as the phenomenon that permits immigrants to maintain connections to their country of origin while at the same time having a dual frame of reference to evaluate their experiences and outcomes in the country in which they have settled. The premise of the article of Louie (2006) is that while immigrants tend to view the country they have moved to as their home, as their children certainly do, it is nonetheless important to consider
how their country of origin is situated in the lives of these migrants, and the differences therein. However, this author too focuses on permanent migrants in host countries, such as Chinese and Dominican immigrants in the United States. Questions of how transnationalism influences the identities of migrants, as well as those of proceeding generations, are a common analyzed theme.

Additionally, especially in research involving countries with a more ethnically diverse and multicultural society, such as the United States, studies tend to emphasize the relationship within ethnic identity and racial identity, as well as racial-ethnic socialization among migrants. According to Hughes et al. (2006) and Worrell et al. (2006), racial identity and racial socialization have been used to refer to African Americans with respect to the power differential inherent in a racialized society, whereas ethnic identity and ethnic socialization have been used to refer to a variety of minority groups, typically Latino Americans and Asian Americans, but also in some instances African Americans. The term ethnic refers to cultural experiences not necessarily affected by power and racism (Hughes, 2006). Examples of studies regarding identity in terms of race and ethnicity are French, et al. (2013), who focus on Latinos, Asians, and blacks in the United States, all of whom are one again, permanent and large migrant communities.

In the case of studies specifically focusing on enclave networks, their findings describe how these networks offer access to a unique type of social capital and act as large kinship networks. Though there is some debate in relation to the long-term benefits offered by these networks, the short-term benefits are universally acknowledged. Networks within an enclave can aid the immigrant in terms of reducing socio-psychological stress caused by the challenges that same immigrant has to face outside of the enclave. Ethnic enclaves can resemble the immigrant’s country of origin both through the physical layout of the enclave, as well as through the language employed within it. Ethnic enclaves also provide an
opportunity for its members to develop trust among each other and feelings of solidarity (i.e., community building). Examples of studies regarding the existing networks within enclaves are that of Tadao (2007), who utilizes the example of Japanese and Latino communities in the U.S. to examine the conditions under which ethnicity gives rise to more stable forms of collective action such as ethnic-trade guilds.

There are also studies done from the perspective of ‘ethnic economies’ that talk about business and economic activities of permanent migrant groups in specific locations. Such studies can be seen from Boyd (2013), who focused on retail and wholesale enterprises among ethnic groups in core and peripheral urban centers within the United States, focusing namely on the vast migrant communities of Austrians, Italians, Poles, and Russians in 19th century United States. Molina (2018) has also written about the relationship between industrial districts and migrant enclaves by focusing on the emergence of ‘ethnic enclave economies,’ but he too gives the examples of the permanent Romanian migrant enclave in Castelló de la Plan, Spain, that reached 14% of the town’s total population in 2012, as well as the permanent Chinese enclave in the city of Prato. Ortesini (2015) has also focused on the integration of forced migrants, or refugees, and their integration into the labor market utilizing the case of refugee migrants from the former Yugoslavia and their large mass migrations to Italy during the 1990s. And Marcus (2011) analyzed permanent Brazilian immigrants in the United States on a micro-level, focusing on these migrants’ occupations, experiences, and economic transactions, before and after migration.

Cases involving the United States as the host country of study are also popular in enclave research. Recurrent economic and financial themes for migrant enclaves in the United States have dealt with entrepreneurial activity of immigrant group members in the country (Anderson and Platzer, 2007; Light and Sanchez, 1987; Min and Bozorgmer, 2003; Jones 2010). Many of these reports
indicate that immigrants are making substantial strides in stimulating the U.S. economy, and others are economically revitalizing urban areas (Rayasm, 2007; Wadhwa, 2007). Researchers have also examined the role that culture plays in establishing businesses in the United States (Light et al 2000), as well as in the types and nature of these businesses (Anderson and Platzer, 2007; Waldinger 1990). In these studies, too, the focus is on migrant majorities who hold physical enclaves.

Furthermore, political themes of enclave studies have also included those associated with migration and gender. Feminist geographers have developed insight into the gender dimensions of the social construction of scale, the politics of interlinkages between place and identity, and the socio-spatial production of borders. Geographic research on gender and migration asks how relations of gender, as these intersect with race, class, and other differences, are developed and navigated through spatial mobility. Historically, most migration research in the discipline focused on mobility behavior as the key outcome to be explained, and little work examined questions of identity in relation to mobility. In recent decades, by contrast, feminists have emphasized the differences within and between groups, the ways these differences inflect individuals' and groups' identities, and the implications of these differences and their definitions in particular places (Nagel, 2002). Further, rather than seeing identities as fixed definable characteristics of migrants, geographers have increasingly emphasized the co-constructed nature of identities and places and the ongoing nature of this process (McDowell, 1999; Bondi et al., 2002). Feminist approaches to studies involving Latin Americans in Seoul, South Korea or Asia are non-existent.

Political themes of enclave research also include the study of refugee migrants and questions regarding Human Rights and the politics of aid (Ambrosini, 2015; Ambrosini and Van der Leun, 2015). Refugees and migrants that are the result of mass migrations are also associated with policy studies that
aim to discuss possible solutions to this problematic international phenomenon (Walters, 2002). A diverse range of scholarship on refugee and immigrant protests have focused on demonstrations and every day acts of resistance in refugee camps or accommodation (Lowry and Nyers, 2013; Rygiel, 2011; Walters, 2008; Castells, 2012 ), however, in the case of Bhimji (2016), the ways in which migrant refugees get involved with spatial politics through the study of this particular community in the city of Berlin are the main focus. The very fact that refugees associated with mass migration means that large quantities of migrants share a common country or region of origin, this subject too can be said to focus on larger migrant communities. Logically, for a protest to have the highest possible chance at creating an impact, a large number of participants must be involved. This means that small ethnic migrant minorities such as Latinos in South Korea are not prone to participate as a community in matters regarding demonstrations and protests, making this type of literature also non-existent in regards to this migrant group in South Korea.

There are also studies regarding the politics of exclusion/inclusion of migrants in host countries, such as that by Van der Leun and Bouter (2015), who investigate the role of civil society in the policy of migration control and exclusion within Dutch society in the Netherlands. Another example is that of Baban, Ilcan and Rygiel (2016), who studied the 2.7 million Syrian refugees in Turkey from the perspective of their negotiated citizenship rights, inclusion or exclusion and their pathways to precarity in Turkish society. Geographically positioned at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Turkey has received thousands of asylum seekers escaping from civil wars and massive conflict in recent decades, both from countries in Asia and Africa and increasingly from countries in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Since the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011, Turkey has become host to the largest number of Syrian refugees in the world. While it can be argued that some particularly larger migrant communities
in Seoul can have clashes with the Korean majority, the numbers of the Latino migrant community are so small that they do not pose a threat, therefore making it difficult to determine aspects of social exclusion and/or inclusion within Korean society as a community. Rather, these experiences can be best described on an individual scale, as each migrant can have different experiences in Korea in relation to their background and purpose of immigration.

Additionally, the use of the categories ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ to differentiate between those on the move and the legitimacy, or otherwise, of their claims to international protection has featured strongly during Europe’s ‘migration crisis’ and has been used to justify policies of exclusion and containment. Within European states, for example national policies are converging in attempts to limit legal migration through reinforcing external as well as internal borders (Düvell, 2006; Fernandez-Kelly & Massey, 2007; Nicholls, 2013; Varsanyi, 2008; Crawley and Skleparis, 2017). The increasing emphasis on migration control has gone hand in hand with framing migration as a security problem (Huysmans, 2006) and lumping together irregular immigrants (those that are not in the host country legally) and rejected asylum seekers in the same category as people who cause disorder or crime (Bosworth & Guild, 2008; Engbersen & Van der Leun, 2011). Again, for Latino migrants, the above mentioned may be the case for those who have chosen to settle in Europe, the United States and even Spain. However, this is not a common case for those who are settled or have recently migrated to South Korea.

While the above briefly describes an overview of the kinds of case studies associated to the different theme within ethnic enclave research, those that involve the placemaking of migrant minorities are scarce, to say the least. However, it should be noted that the study that may closest resemble an inkling of this present research is that of Chacko (2009), whom analyzes the largest community of Sub-Saharan Africans in the city of Washington D.C. This
community belongs to Ethiopian migrants who have settled in the city in a dispersed fashion. They lack a physical ethnic enclave and have no claim to a specific region of the city. While religious places have kept their importance among this community, as the members’ residential geographic distance between each other has widened throughout the years, the ethnic places that this community continues to frequent have often changed. Chacko states that the physical places used as meeting places for Ethiopian migrants changed from their usual function as stores, supermarkets, restaurants, offices, etc., to places known for carrying out distinct networking activities among the community. Attending these places made it easier for Ethiopians to find out about job opportunities, news about their home country, information about housing and other services, such as those for health and immigration, for example.

The case studies mentioned here regarding ethnic enclaves have demonstrated that recurring themes among them deal with large migrant communities, commonly found in host countries with more diverse and multicultural societies. The members of these communities are also thought to be made up of a majority of permanent migrants, whereas the Latinos in South Korea can be classified as temporary. Close to the same number of Latino migrants come to and leave South Korea on a yearly basis. The particular characteristics of this community, however, only show that it is different from other migrant communities in terms of number and geographical activity, as they do not tend to cluster into enclaves. However, this does not mean that they cannot and do not take part in networking, placemaking and community building activities. This also does not mean that there are no physical places in Seoul where these migrants can gather. As we shall see in chapters five and six of this study, the attractiveness and marketability of Latin American culture has become popular in Seoul, and it is because of this marketability that Latin Americans in Seoul have been able to become visible within South Korean society despite their
small numbers.

2.2 Latin American Migrant Placemaking
Understanding the significance and value of the cultural landscape is crucial in the process of placemaking, especially when it involves minority ethnic communities different in cultural terms from that of the majority population of the host country. According to (Hayden, 1995), it is through the bottom up process of placemaking that people make attachments to places that are critical to maintaining well-being or minimizing distress. This is particularly the case for many immigrant neighborhoods within the U.S. Additionally, scholars such as (Tuan, 1977), argue that an individual’s sense of place is a biological response to the surrounding physical environment and a cultural creation. In other words, an individual familiarizes themselves with a given place by engaging all of their senses (sight, smell, taste, touch, speech).

Placemaking involves more than physical manipulations of space. Places can be both real and imagined; they depend on mental association as well as physical shape and personality (Florida, 2010). For example, new store fronts, parks and community murals can replace areas in a given neighborhood where there were once vacant lots or untended front yards, transforming these into places of economic and communicative exchanges, leisure and other deep and personal meanings that any person who chooses to use these sites gives (Arreola, 2012; Chase & Crawford; Rojas, 2010; Smith & Winders, 2008). Today, the term placemaking is used in many settings. It is used by planners, community leaders and developers, who use it to try to imply authenticity and quality to their projects, even if the finished results end up lacking these characteristics. It is also a term used by organizations committed to community improvement at the grassroots level. Lara (2018), defines placemaking as the transformation process of physical space into areas that support human interactions, economic exchange, and well-being.
The placemaking process is becoming reorganized for its ability to enable collaborative frameworks and for its power to shift the behavior of citizens from that of passive consumers of services, to agents of change (Lara, 2018). Placemaking is a process initiated by groups of individuals and involves everything that can be observed at the eye-level where what began as a mere street-layout evolved into a series of networks of human interactions and activities. This mainly starts with citizens who act together to improve their local environment. As Lara (2018) puts it, placemaking is committed to strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, and initiating this process makes little sense without the support of the affected community. Therefore, successful placemaking activities focus on the ways in which the physical, social, ecological, cultural and even spiritual qualities of a place are interrelated.

One of the most important but least researched aspects of urban space is the impact of culture and ethnicity on placemaking and the consequent adaptation of the physical space in question. There has been a lack of attention to cultural factors in urban planning regarding cities in the United States. Even more so now, real world experience and observation has been substituted with electronic imagery, leading the ‘social realm to become less and less real,’ (Banerjee, 2001; Mitchell, 1996; Touraine, 1988). By focusing too much on the uses and services of places, providing places where people can focus on and embrace cultural differences, fail to be provided or communicated about in the case of their existence (Oldenburg, 2001).

In the case of cities in the United States with lively ethnic communities, some authors claim that is in the old and neglected inner-city and suburban neighborhoods that the role of culture within immigrant communities play a vital role in placemaking and economic revitalization (Delgado, 1997; Glaeser & Gottlieb, 2008; Grey, 2006; Pessar, 1995; Vallejo, 2012; Zarrugh, 2007).
However, while on the one hand revitalization by immigrants is celebrated, on the other hand there are cases of neighborhoods become victims of their own success and become gentrified. It is important to acknowledge the vulnerabilities of ethnic neighborhoods to the increasing popularity of urban life among artists, the highly educated and other privileged peoples. Neighborhoods within cities can experience a great revitalization due to gentrification, but the high rents and real-estate prices have negative impacts on local ethnic businesses and low income ethnic communities. The cases of Latino neighborhoods in Lincoln Heights and Highland Park in Los Angeles, East Harlem in New York, Mission District in San Francisco and Pilsen and Humboldt Park in Chicago are good examples of this (Erualdo Romero González & Lejano, 2009; Hwang & Sampson, 2014; Sampson, 2012). Strategies and policies that address these issues are desperately needed.

In terms of urban revitalization for the case of the United States, Latinos contribute to the process by (re)appropriating space for their own use, turning down abandoned or trodden areas into commercial and residential centers that suit their needs and transnational preferences. Lara (2018) defines this movement as ‘Latino urbanism,’ which claims to be an ‘emerging approach to planning, design, and development that responds to Latino lifestyles, cultural preferences and economic needs that are reflected in the build environment (Lara, 2018).

Some scholars have focused on the implication of the growing Latino population in the U.S. and its impact on the country and the dynamics of the built environment. The following relevant literature highlights the increasing presence of Latinos and their role in shaping and incorporating cultural needs in the development of cities in the U.S. (Davis, 2001; Delgado, 1997; Diaz, 2005; Diaz & Torres, 2012). Key areas of study include emerging new geographies and the socio-political constructions in cities and regions (Malavé & Giordani, 2015; Odem & Lacy, 2009; Valle & Torres, 2000). Specific topics that provide comprehensive approaches to Latino urbanism also define it to include the
appropriation and adaptation of physical space for new purposes based on cultural expression and the emergence of multi-ethnic coalitions (Arreola, 2012; Diaz & Torres, 2012; Erualdo R González, 2017; Main, 2012; Smith & Winders, 2008).

In terms of literature involving Latino urbanism, a series of authors have focused primarily on Latino places and urban spaces. They examine how many Latino communities are at the center of many place-based struggles given the increase of attention to immigration and citizenship issues. Discussions of struggles such as these, provides a mean to analyze, question and reflect on contemporary meaning and perception of place and cultural re-adaptations among Latino communities. Some authors trace the history of Latino struggles back to adequate housing opportunities since the 19th century (Angotti, 2010; Diaz & Torres, 2012; Irazábal, 2012; Valle & Torres, 2000). Other authors have also examined the implications of transborder Latin American sociocultural and spatial conditions across the globe and at different scales, from gendered and racialized individuals, to national and transnational organizations (Angotti, 2010; Irazábal, 2012; Irazabal & Farhat, 2008). The development policies that pressure Latinos to assimilate to the established U.S. notions of appropriate space use, and how they undercut the economic, social and environmental benefits inherent in the Latino lifestyle are examined as well (Diaz & Torres, 2012; Harwood, 2012; Sandoval, 2010).

Meanwhile, other authors examine topics related to the appropriation of space, the implications of everyday urbanism and space dynamics, and specifically the ways in which both public and private spaces can be transformed, either permanently or temporarily, based on cultural needs (Arreola, 2012; Main, 2012). In this subcategory of literature, other authors also detail how Latinos claim space as they struggle to build their community and gain social and political stability in the urban sense (Chase & Crawford; Main, 2012; Smith &
Winders, 2008). The overall focus of the mentioned authors in this paragraph is how Latino immigrants in the U.S. built their own and different uses of urban space to an already built environment, including analysing topics related to home life, religious life, mobility, and the use of recreational and open space.

Additionally, authors such as Flippen and Parrado (2012), attach new interpretations and meanings to Latino spaces in diverse locations. They provide critical perspectives on the role of planning and development, and examine the conflicts and struggles related to identity of place (Flippen & Parrado, 2012). Gómez-Barris (2007), draws attention to the role of collective action in placemaking and identifies key elements that contribute to the development of place in Latino neighborhoods in U.S. cities (Gómez-Barris, 2007). Meanwhile, authors such as (Carpio, Irazábal, & Pulido, 2011), have addressed cases where tensions between Latino immigrants in the U.S. and municipal governments have existed, while others argue that authorities have yet to acknowledge the contributions that Latino immigrants have made to urban planning and development (Diaz & Torres, 2012; Erualdo R González, 2017; Onésimo Sandoval & Jennings, 2012; Sandoval, 2010). Also, authors have also addressed issues regarding the implications of placemaking in the transformation of homogenous non-Latino white communities, towards new, dynamic and multicultural places (Diaz & Torres, 2012; Sandoval, 2010; Vallejo, 2012).

Stewart (2011) deals with issues related to economic reinterpretation of place. The author examine the multifarious ways in which ethnic groups intersect with any sort of economic activity (Stewart, 2011). They analyze how ethnic entrepreneurs, employees, and customers can earn a living and/or obtain familiar specialty products while at the same time contributing positively to the local economy. Tensions and struggles related to identity of place are explored as is reinterpretation of hidden meaning with respect to place (Diaz & Torres, 2012). A key aspect of the reinterpretation of place involves a focus on the economic
contribution of Latino small businesses that provide social, economic and cultural comfort to their communities (Irazábal, 2012). They serve as facilitators of community capacity. Other scholar have also extensively explored the roles that small businesses play in Latino communities and their potential for improving social and economic conditions in the areas of their location (Gonzales et al., 2011).

Finally, authors such as Cardona, Busby and Wampler (2004), research the relationship between place and cultural identity, drawing up examples from rural and urban settings to demonstrate how Latino engage in placemaking processes through inclusive forms of empowerment and civic engagement (Cardona, Busby, & Wampler, 2004). Through civic engagement, immigrant Latino communities in the U.S. gain a voice and develop their capacity to participate in the public realm through a bottom-up process (Erualdo Romero González & Lejano, 2009; Trabalzi & Sandoval, 2010). Scholars note that successful community engagement and citizen empowerment can be characterized by pluralistic practices such as formal public meetings, public talks, public involvement workshops and even though online websites encouraging comments (Erualdo R. González, 2017; Lara, 2018). These authors further note that effective organization and research can provide a more comprehensive view of underlying issues regarding urban development and that any successful urban planning for multicultural communities must encourage the participation of communities in such a way that both diversity and a sense of justice is embraced (Kotin, Dynness, & Irazábal, 2011; Trabalzi & Sandoval, 2010; Zapata, Rios, & Vazquez, 2012).

However, in the case of the Latin American community in South Korea, and particularly the one located in Seoul, perhaps a completely new concept should be introduced to better describe these migrants or their type of migration altogether. Migrants within this community seem to certainly think of themselves as temporary migrants, but they are also not as temporary as foreign visitors nor
tourists. Furthermore, could the characteristics and migration patterns displayed by Latinos in South Korea be giving clues to the rise of a new form of contemporary migration and ethnic placemaking altogether? In this retrospect, ‘mobals,’ a concept coined by De Blij in his book titled, *The Power of Place*, published in 2009, is an attempt to explain the above mentioned phenomenon. For De Blij (2009), ‘mobals’ are migrants who often take risks and, “are willing to leave the familiar, to take a chance on new and different surroundings,” (p.6). The author explains that ‘mobals’ are transnational migrants that are driven only by perceptions of opportunity or the realities of need, though this last characteristic does not include refugee based migration (De Blij, 2009).

In this respect, ‘mobals’ could very well include Latinos in South Korea, as many who come to the country clearly find themselves in completely different surroundings in all aspects. Many of these Latino migrants certainly come to South Korea envisioning the possibility of great opportunities available to them. However, in his research, De Blij (2009) seems to only differentiate ‘mobals’ or transnational migrants, from people who are not able to willingly migrate and stay in their home country (or ‘locals,’ as he terms it), from refugees and forced migrants, and from people who are able to migrate everywhere and at any time because they are the decision-makers and power-holders of the world (whom he terms as ‘globals’). De Blij does not differentiate between the different kinds of transnational migrants, or ‘mobals’ in regards to their migration activities characterized under the variable of time. It seems as if for him, all transnational migrants are ‘mobals’ regardless of the existing differences among them. Somehow, englobing simultaneously long-term and temporary migrants, such as Latino migrants in South Korea, with long-term or permanent migrants does not feel fully accurate. Instead, I propose to add a linking word to De Blij’s term, ‘mobal,’ to better differentiate among temporary or permanent transnational migrants, such as ‘temporary mobals’ and/or ‘permanent mobals.’
Taking all of the above into consideration, previous studies regarding placemaking have shown that anyone can actively take part in the placemaking process, albeit through different activities and styles. Latin American migrant communities found in large numbers are able to create ethnic enclaves for themselves and participate in the placemaking process in a more evident way than Latino migrants found in South Korea. However, as this study hopes to demonstrate in the following chapters, the Latin American community in South Korea holds particular placemaking characteristics that differentiate it, not only from other Latin American migrant communities abroad, but also from other foreign communities found within the city of Seoul. For this reason, I argue that studies regarding placemaking for ethnic identities should not only consider conventional ethnic enclaves as expressions of placemaking, but rather scholars aim to go beyond this approach and consider other various forms of placemaking. Examples of these other forms can be found through the use of cyberspace and the creation of online associations, as well as placemaking that links both networking and religious characteristics. These examples, are further elaborated in chapter five, through the case study of Latin American migrants in Seoul.
Chapter 3. Case Background: Placemaking by Foreign Residents in Seoul

The capital city of Seoul also has diverse districts that are known for being popular among the city's foreign residents. Among these foreign residents, certain districts have been known to also be preferred by specific nationalities or ethnicities, thereby creating a kind of ethnic neighborhoods and ethnic enclaves. The above map of the city of Seoul highlights the different districts that are preferred by foreigners who are both residing in the city, as well as tourists or short-term visitors in Korea. These districts include: Seodaemun-gu, Seongbuk-gu, Yonsan-gu, Guro-gu, Yeongdeungpo-gu, and Gangnam-gu. In Seoul, a few particular neighborhoods within these districts that stand out among both the foreign and Korean population.

Figure 1: Map of Seoul divided into districts highlighting the various locations that are known for having the highest foreign residents. Retrieved from the Seoul City Government.
For example, the Yongsan District in Seoul harbors three famous neighborhoods that are known for its popularity among the foreign community in the city. The first is the neighborhood of Itaewon, which still continues to house the largest expatriate community in South Korea. It is located nearby the U.S. military compound known as the Yongsan Garrison, and the area is designated by the city government as a special tourist zone, due to its diverse range of ethnic shops, ethnic restaurants, bars and night clubs. Because of its diversity and unique atmosphere, Itaewon is the residential area of choice for a large number of foreigners that are studying, working and building a life in Seoul. For this reason, it can be argued that Itaewon acts as a kind of multicultural headquarters in Korea. Hannam-dong is another example, and the neighborhood is particularly famous for having a significant number of foreign diplomatic missions, such as embassies and consulates. Finally, the neighborhood of Ichon-dong is known primarily as a Japanese residential neighborhood. The area was once the residential location of preference for Japanese diplomats and employees of international and trading companies. For this reason, it is quite common to see many ethnic Japanese restaurants in this area, as well as business and street signs written in Japanese.

Other small ethnic enclaves in Seoul include that of Russians, Central Asians and French. In the first and second cases, nearby the Dongdaemun History and Culture Park in north-eastern Seoul, reside a large population of Central Asian and Russian immigrants in a small neighborhood that is known as, ‘Little Russia,’ in Cyrillic script, and Gwanghui-dong in Korean. Though it is dubbed as ‘Little Russia,’ the neighborhood also displays a wide variety of Central Asian ethnic restaurants and businesses. In the third case, Seocho district serves as the prime location of an upscale neighborhood where many of Korea’s French population lives. Seoul’s only French international school, the Lycée Français de Séoul (French School of Seoul), is located in this district, which can explain why most of the French families live in the area. The small French village is located in
the neighborhood of Banpo-dong, and is known by the name Seorae Maeul (village) and dotted along its main street are various French restaurants, boutiques, wine bars, and bakeries.

The largest migrant community in South Korea, however is that of Chinese-Korean (joseonjok) communities. In the particular case of Seoul, Chinese-Koreans are known to have established their ethnic enclave in the neighborhood of Daerim-dong in the Yeongdeungpo District. Most of the Korean-Chinese who are settled in Daerim-dong are descendents of Koreans who migrated to China centuries ago. These descendents started to repatriate to South Korea around the early 1990s, after China opened diplomatic relations with South Korea. As the location of factories and more affordable housing, the Korean-Chinese settled in Daerim-dong in Seoul, and the area has since been known for its Korean-Chinese community, as well as its ethnic businesses and restaurants.

However, the case of Latin Americans in the city of Seoul differs greatly from the before mentioned migrant communities and ethnic enclaves. Because Latin Americans in South Korea and in Seoul are such a minority, as well as due to their migration characteristics being considered oftentimes as temporary but constantly flowing, calculating their number can prove to be a difficult task. For this reason, a precise quantity of Latin Americans in the country, let alone in the capital city, cannot be calculated. To further explain this statement, (Figure 2) below shows data collected from the migration activities of Latin Americans coming and leaving South Korea for the year 2016. As is displayed by the example (Figure 2) below, incoming Latin American migrants are almost equal in quantity to those that are leaving the country. In the cases of some countries, such as Guatemala and Peru for the year 2016, the numbers for outgoing migrants outnumber those for the incoming migrants, setting their net migration values to a negative.
As has been stated about, Figure 2, depicting the migration activities of Latinos in South Korea during 2016 makes the hardships of calculating the number of people that belong to this community. However, for the purposes of this study, an estimation of about 1,172 Latin American migrants in South Korea is considered. Statistical data retrieved from the Korean Statistical Information Service (KOSIS 국가통계포털) contained data of incoming and outgoing Latin American migrants during the period between 2000 and 2016. The total net migration (incoming numbers minus the outgoing numbers) for each nationality and for the entire Latin American community (composed of the previously mentioned 18 Spanish-speaking countries) was calculated. For this study, these final calculations represent the final estimated average of the number of Latin Americans migrants in South Korea, as well the average number of migrants per Latin American nationality in the country. This data is represented graphically in (Figure 3) below.
Figure 3. Estimated Total of Latin American Residents in South Korea between 2000 and 2016, by Nationality. Derived from data retrieved from Korean Statistical Information Service, International Migration Statistics.

As is displayed by the above Figure, out of the 1,172 Latin American migrants that are estimated to be in South Korea, the majority is made up of Mexican nationals, representing roughly 354 residents, followed closely by those from Argentina, represented by 342 people. Ecuadorians (129 people) and Paraguayans (194) come in third and fourth place, respectively. The rest of the nationalities contain less than 100 people in their national communities. It must also be mentioned that while migrants from the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Peru do exist in South Korea, their total net migration numbers resulted in negative values, meaning that depending on the year, the outgoing migrants greatly outnumber the incoming migrants. For this reason, these three nationalities are not included in the pie chart displayed by (Figure 3).
Chapter 4. Research Methodology

Given that the Latin American community in South Korea is a minority of a minority, it cannot rely on neither the size of its community, a geographical proximity to the migrants’ countries of origin, nor on historical and cultural ties between the countries in question for them to have a profound influence within South Korean society. Taking this background into account, this research asks the following: (1) how do migrant communities that have little or no historical and cultural ties to their host countries create a place for themselves? And (2) how does the role of culture from a migrant’s home country influence the level of a migrant community’s visibility (or lack thereof) within the host country? Being that Seoul is the city where most foreign residents in South Korea tend to accumulate, it serves as the case study site for this qualitative research study. The following Figure displays the locations of the case study sites evaluated for this research.

Figure 4. Geographic location of data collection sites in Seoul.
The above figure shows that the location of on-site data collection and field work for this study was retrieved from Yongsan District in central Seoul, Mapo and Seodaemun Districts in western Seoul, and from Gangnam District in southern Seoul.

The methodology of the present qualitative study consists of archival studies, direct participant observation in key location sites throughout Seoul, and in-depth interviews. On the one hand, digging into archives proved most helpful for the literature review section of this research, as well as for learning about the background characteristics of other Latin American communities abroad. The main body chapters are composed of research developed primarily through observation and interviews. In the case of direct observations, visits to case study sites where made, particularly the sites discussed in Chapter 6 of this work. Once arriving to the case study sites, attention was given to the different methods used to create a Latin American themed environment and atmosphere in each place. These methods included analyzing the different types of decorations, artifacts, and colors displayed in each particular place, as well as the different types of music genres playing in the background. Attention was also given to whether the place used Spanish language in either written, audio or spoken form. Reactions from customers of a particular businesses, as well as overheard conversations were also taken into account for the gathering of observation data. The data related to the information gathering from direct observations was recorded in the form of written notes, as well as through some photographs. These materials were then utilized for the interpretation of this data for the writing of this thesis.

The field work for this study was carried out between the months of March and April 2018. A total of three Mexican food restaurants---one located in the neighborhood of Hongdae, one in Itaewon and one in Gangnam---were visited on one occasion each. Two Latin-American themed bars/dance clubs, one in the neighborhood of Sinchon and the other in Hongdae, were visited on two
occasions each, while one bar located in Itaewon was visited on one occasion. Likewise, a Spanish language exchange gathering at a Mexican cultural themed coffee shop in Mapo district (Mapo-gu) was visited on one occasion, while attending Spanish mass for two Sundays in a row was carried out at the St. Francis International Parish in the neighborhood of Hannam-dong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin Americans</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Age Gap</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mexico, Guatemala, Chile</td>
<td>Early 20s-/Early 30s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parishioners</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica</td>
<td>late20s+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Costa Rica, Paraguay, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Argentina, Ecuador</td>
<td>Early 20s-/Early 30s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Characteristics of Latin American Interviewees

The people interviewed and quoted in this research were sought after on location. The above table displays the main characteristics of the interviewees whose responses were taken into consideration for the purposes of this research. Of the 18 people interviewed and cited in this research, 12 of them gave more in-depth interviews that lasted an average of about half an hour to 45 minutes, while the other 6 were brief encounters, but still meaningful. The interviews were semi-structured and carried on in accordance to the interviewees’ backgrounds, time in Korea and the flow of the conversation. As described by the above Table, all interviewees were Latin American migrants. Among them were 5 University
students from the countries of Mexico, Guatemala, and Chile; 3 catholic parishioners from Mexico, 1 from Honduras and 1 from Costa Rica; and 8 restaurant, bar and dance club customers from Costa Rica, Paraguay, Peru, Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, and Guatemala. Of the 12 in depth interviewees, 5 were female and 7 were male; while the other 6 people who gave a brief interview, 4 were female and 2 were male. The in-depth interviews were recorded with consent given by the 12 interviewees, while the other 6 interviews were only taken notes of. The age bracket of most of the interviewees was between the mid-20s to early-30s; while that of the parishioners were of late-20s and above. The interviews cited for the purposes of this study do not mention clear identifiable traits of the people in question, rather just their nationality, or country of origin, as well as a vague description of their occupation, such as “Student from Mexico.”
Chapter 5. Placemaking Dynamic of Latin Americans in Seoul: Social Media Networks and the Catholic Religion

5.1 Latin American migrants’ temporary stay and identities
As described in the chapter before, the background of Latin American migrants complicates the development of accurate statistical data. Unlike other, more predominant migrant groups in South Korea, data presented by the Korean Statistical Information Service shows that the bulk of Latin Americans that choose South Korea as their country of destination come for the purposes of higher education or as blue-collar employees. This implies that most of them stay in the country for a defined time period, whether that be until they graduate school and receive their degrees, or when their student exchange experience comes to an end, or when their work contract ends and are forced to move elsewhere. In other words, South Korea is viewed by many Latin American migrants as a ‘temporary detour’ in one’s own life experience. Stereotypically characterized as warm, family people, many Latin Americans tend to eventually want to settle down in areas that are culturally more similar to them or that are not as far away from the location of their families. The following quote by a student from Mexico explains the kind of typical mindset that Latino migrants in South Korea tend to display:

I’m a bit scared to go to big cities in Mexico, because they are not as safe as Seoul. And while I miss my family and friends, and want to be among them, I also think about safety, comfort and economy. I guess my ideal situation would be to stay in Korea and work for around two years in a job that pays well. It would be ideal to work here, save money, learn from here, and then take all of that knowledge and go back and maybe start my own business in Mexico.

(Student from Mexico, 2018/March/22)

As can be seen from the above comment, the interviewee who made the following statement was a student. This implies that a typical study abroad
student is at a youthful age and generally is not yet married nor has a family of their own, although there can be exceptions. In the above statement, the student shows that they have had to continuously ponder what to do after they finish their studies and receive their degree. The feeling of living in a safe and comfortable environment with the ability to make more money than in their home countries oftentimes wins over the priority to have friends and family within arm’s reach. Yet just as the interviewee states above, the former priorities ultimately reach a stage where they are not given as much weight as they were initially and migrants opt for going back home in the end.

Data also retrieved from the Korean Statistical Information Service shows that the median age of Latin American migrants in South Korea is 25, and that the majority of migrants are aged somewhere between 20 and 35 years old. While it is common in Latin America for young people to start families, and settle down at an early age, normally those who choose to study abroad or go to graduate school remain unmarried and without children until their early to mid-30s. As previously mentioned, most Latin American migrants in Korea come in the form of students, and although university student (undergraduate) exchange programs are common between South Korea and the entire Latin American region, the longer staying Latin American students come as full-time enrolled graduate school students for Masters’ and PhD programs. Once these students, of which the majority are Master’s program participants, receive their degrees from a South Korean university, they opt to try to find a temporary job in South Korea, but due mainly to language and cultural difficulties, most eventually migrate either back to their home countries or to more popular migrant destinations such as Europe, U.S. or Canada. The migrants who choose to stay in South Korea long term and build a life here, are mostly those who are married to a South Korean national, whether they be male or female. The following statement by a student from Guatemala
describes some of the communication hardships that Latinos in South Korea face when searching for employment after finishing their studies:

I honestly wish I could stay here in Korea more time, but the longer that I am in Korea, the more difficult [life] here is going to be because of the language barrier mostly. Most of my classes were in English and I’m still not fluent in Korean. I doubt that I will get hired by a company just because I can speak English and Spanish. Usually, when a company prefers job candidates to be bilingual it means that they should speak Korean and English, not English and other languages; so, it’s hard. (Student from Guatemala, 2018/March/29).

The above statement is a commonly presented dilemma for Latin Americans in South Korea. As previously stated, most Latino migrants come to the country as students and have the expectation of being able to quickly adapt to their surrounding environment. Many falsely believe that acquiring Korean language skills will develop naturally over the time that they spend living in South Korea, but it is particularly more difficult for native Spanish speakers to learn Korean language in such a relatively short period of time (in the case that the student in question is an exchange student or a Master’s student not majoring in Korean language nor Korean studies). As previously mentioned, both languages have zero similarities between them and Korean is not a commonly taught language in Latin America. Likewise, the social characteristics of Korean people in general lead many to not want to speak freely with strangers, or opt to use English, limiting a Latino migrant’s ability to practice and improve their Korean speaking skills. For educated Latino migrants who hope for future professional opportunities in South Korea, language difficulties present an obstacle that is oftentimes hard to overcome.

Of course, even if the bulk of Latino migrants come from highly educated and privileged backgrounds, not all who come to South Korea fall into this category nor come for the same reasons. The background of the migrants can also
differ depending on their country of origin. For example, studies done by Vogel (2011; 2014) focus on Peruvian migrant laborers in South Korea that turn to Protestant Christian communities and become religious servants in order to be able to legally stay in the country long term. In her research, Vogel describes how these particular Peruvian migrants are of Japanese descent (known by the Japanese as *Nikkei*) and had intentionally sought to migrate to Japan under various ‘training programs’ for laborers. The complicated Japanese immigration process led many of the affected to instead opt to head for South Korea. Originally followers of the Roman catholic faith, they found help in their new environment from local protestant Christians, who later convinced them to change their faith. It is through the existing network of Peruvian migrant laborers and protestant churches in South Korea that many other laborers back in Peru are able to continually make their way to the country, although the Korean immigration process has become stricter in recent years.

In the specific case for the city of Seoul as the residential location for Latin America migrants, calculating their numbers, both as a regional group and also as separate groups divided into nationalities, proves an even more daunting task. Federal, city and district government statistic data bases do not consider Latin Americans in all of their statistical categories. In the case of city and district government databases, Latin Americans are normally lumped together with other minor nationality groups to make up the ‘other foreigners’ category in statistical data calculations. The floating population characteristics of the Latin American community in South Korea, becomes even more visible when considering Seoul based data. As not only the country’s capital city, but also an internationally well-known city, it is the location of preference for most Latino newcomers in South Korea. While Latino migrants can and do settle in diverse areas of the country, because most come as students and blue-collar workers, they mostly tend to settle
in Seoul, which is where most of the prestigious universities and business companies are located.

According to the Korean Statistical Information Service, their data for registered foreign population by provinces states that there was a total of 273,441 registered foreigners in the city of Seoul, of which 130,590 were males and 142,851 were females. There registration of foreigners implies that they are or will be in Korea for a period that is long enough for them to be required to carry an Alien Registration Card, known by the acronym ARC. This also means that, for example, any exchange student that will be in Korea for a whole school year is also required to process an ARC. Once their year of study abroad is over and they return back to their home countries, their ARC is confiscated and considered invalid. As can be implied through the above example, the number of registered foreigners in Seoul, as well as in any other location within the country, can also include those belonging to a floating population.

In addition to those who belong to a floating population, there are also mid to long-term Latino residents that live in Seoul, as well as other areas in South Korea, but are registered as tourists. Due to the well established diplomatic relations between South Korea and the various Latin American countries, the interest of South Korean conglomerates and international business companies in the region, and the extensive geographical distance that helps to prevent major migration inflows of potentially illegal Latino migrants, many citizens of the diverse Latin American countries enjoy the ability of visa exemption. This means that, in the case of a migrant from the country of Mexico, for example, they can arrive in South Korea without the need to previously apply for a visa and can legally stay in the country as tourists for up to a total of 90 days since the day of their arrival. Only if they plan to stay in the country for a period greater than 90 days, must they apply for the corresponding visa.
This system, however, presents loopholes that some migrants have learned to take advantage of. Among the resident Latin American community, especially the one residing in Seoul, there are Latin American residents who stay in the country without ever registering themselves. Through a series of personal conversations and unofficial interviews with members of this community, I have come to learn that it is not uncommon for some Latinos to come to Korea, register themselves as tourists, stay until the expiration date of their visa exemption, then temporarily leave the country on a trip (either to nearby China or Japan), and then re-enter Korea as a tourist, where their visa exemption period is restarted and extended. It is also for this reason, that even with the existing statistical approximations of the number of Latinos in South Korea, the existence of this peculiar kind of floating migrant population can lead one to believe that there are still more Latin Americans in Seoul than what the data displays.

Unlike the previously mentioned ethnic enclaves in Seoul, Latin Americans do not claim any area of the city. They settle down in dispersed areas of Seoul, that tend to be mostly nearby University campuses. However, though they do not have a particular area of the city to call their own, online, through the use of social media in particular is where almost all of their networking takes place. Before arriving to South Korea, any Latino who is interested in the country can have access to these networks. They primarily gain access by following the website and social media accounts of their own country’s embassy in South Korea, and then after their arrival they register with their own embassy’s database. As members of this database they receive emails and information on a constant basis, not just from the embassy or things related to it, but also about any social events hosted in Seoul by the corresponding Latino residents’ associations and neighboring Latino embassies and companies. This study, therefore, focuses on the mannerisms in which these online networks function for Latino immigrants in South Korea and also tries to describe the way in which physical spaces with a
Latin cultural theme, such as restaurants, bars, clubs, and coffee shops, etc. help Latino people’s presence in South Korea become more known than perhaps other foreign immigrant minorities in the country who also lack an enclave.

5.2 Building a Sense of Community
One of the first words that comes to mind when trying to describe placemaking activities is ‘community.’ Having a sense of community is a common theme regarding placemaking. Oftentimes, and as some authors argue, the very purpose placemaking is in fact community building. But for this present study, and for this particular chapter that aims to talk about the networking that goes on between Latino migrants in South Korea, but specifically in the city of Seoul, we must first wonder if this sense of community actually even exists among the Latino migrants in the first place. To try to answer this question, we must first consider the differences that may exist among Latino migrants that are abroad versus the citizens that stay behind in their home countries.

As is commonly known, Latin America is made up of a diverse number of countries that speak different languages, of which the most commonly used language is Spanish. Latin America is a term that embodies geographical, linguistic, territorial and cultural aspects. Referring to Latin America is to recognize an extensive territory of diversity that is united under the usage of the same language, Spanish, and a shared history of conquest. However, the region is also distinctive because of its diversity, traditions, culture, gastronomy and economic trajectory. It tells the history of ancient civilizations, such as the Mayan people, but also that of the Aztecs, Incas and other Pre-Columbian cultures.

To talk of Latin America is to be able to go to heavenly beaches in Mexico and eat tacos, but also to travel through the solitary and wild landscapes of Patagonia. One could also take refuge in the Andes, surf waves, visit ruins of ancient civilizations, find lost citadels, dance salsa and tango, sing Argentine rock,
grow corn and plant potatoes, taste a *pupusa*, tour the Amazon river, drink a *mate* or a *pisco* sour, read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and learn about the history of Bolívar and San Martín. Latin America is a continent full of stories, perseverance, bonanza, poverty, inequality and wonders.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus crossed the Atlantic and came to an island which he named San Salvador. Even though history refers to the discovery of a ‘new world,’ it is evident that there were already populations in the Americas. The figures, however, are the subject of much debate among academics but some, like Edwin Williamson, place it close to 50 million people. After the incursion of Columbus, by the 1500s, Pedro Alvares Cabral conquered Brazil in the name of Portugal and in 1519, Pedrarias Dávila founded Panama. That same year, Hernán Cortes captured the Aztec leader Montezuma, and in 1530, Pizarro and his men arrived in Cajamarca in Peru, marking what would be the decline of the Inca Empire and the definitive presence of the Spaniards in the continent with the establishment of the Viceroyalty.

Today, more than 500 years later, that vast territory that impressed the explorers of yesteryear is now known as Latin America and includes Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, Cuba, Republic Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Chile and Argentina. According to the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, the term Latin America is the set of countries on the American continent where languages derived from Latin (Spanish, Portuguese and French) are spoken, as opposed to English-speaking America. When referring exclusively to the Spanish-speaking countries of the region, it is more proper to use the specific term Latin America. In the case that Brazil, a Portuguese-speaking country, is included, the correct term is ‘Ibero-America’. Therefore, the term does not include countries located in the continent such as Belize, Surinám, Guyana, French Guyana, the United States
or Canada or the Anglo-Caribbean Caribbean islands such as Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, among others.

The term Latin America is a linguistic construction that appears around the 1850s as part of the pan-Latin movement present in French intellectual circles of the time. One of its main exponents, Michel Chevalier, used the term to strengthen the argument that France has a strong affinity with the American continent given its ‘Latin’ ties and the term was favorably received by some intellectuals in the region who at that time sought to identify themselves more with France and separating from Spain and Portugal. Napoleon III even used the expression to interfere in Mexico, arguing that the ‘Latin’ culture of France and not the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ cultures like the United States had greater relevance in the country's politics, thus establishing Maximilian as emperor. In the mid-twentieth century the term began to be used formally as part of the names of organizations such as the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) and various study programs etc.

In Latin America, the main language is Spanish, followed by Portuguese spoken mainly in Brazil. There are, however, a number of native or indigenous languages present in parts of the continent such as Quechua, Aymara, Guarani, Quiche, Nahuatl, among many others. The population in the continent is around 650 million (World Bank figures 2017) and the main religion is Catholicism (almost 500 million - 70% of the regional population).

Given the previously mentioned similarities between the countries in the region, it would make sense to automatically assume that there has always been a feeling of community between the distinct populations across the continent. However, that is not necessarily so; at least, not in the same way as Latinos who find themselves abroad in a different region altogether. Take for example the words of
two Latin American female students studying in Korea— one from Chile and the other from Mexico— when asked whether they had felt a sense of unity or familiarity with people from other Latin American countries before venturing out to study abroad. They each responded accordingly:

[Before coming it Korea], I felt no sense of community [with other Latinos] whatsoever. It’s funny because you never realize where you are until you’re out of [Latin America]. So, until this time, I never even felt Latina. I think that now that I’m in Korea, this is the first time in my life where I feel that I can proudly say that I am a Latin-American person. And since I came to Korea I’ve met many Latin people, and overall, it’s one of the most positive energies to have around. I feel that we feel for each other and support each other so it’s like a big family. Student from Chile (2018/March/27).

The sentiments described above by the student from Chile became a common answer among most of the interviewees in this study, especially for those who had never migrated to another country for a long period of time. As a Latin American person, especially in the more developed countries in the region, there tends to be a sort of lack of interest between the countries. Empathy exists between, especially among same language speaking countries in comparison to those who speak a different native language, but these similarities in both language, religion and culture tend to divert the general population’s attention to other more different and ‘exciting’ regions of and cultures of the world. It is perhaps this reason why some Latinos, despite the geographical distance, are attracted to countries in Asia and are curious about how people in this part of the world live their lives.

A negative aspect among Latin American citizens in their home countries, is that because the region is still in its stages of development, countries and its citizens tend to compare themselves with the others in the region. The further economically developed a particular country seems to be, the higher and more
frequent nationalistic tendencies seem to be displayed by its citizens. The countries in the region also compete with one another in the global market under many of the same sectors, causing frictions. Additionally, regional migration, from the less developed countries in Latin America, such as El Salvador, Venezuela, Honduras, etc. to the further developed countries such as Chile, Argentina, Mexico and Colombia, leads to high indexes of discrimination and prejudice towards migrants. Geopolitical discrepancies, such as the Bolivia’s constant push for a passageway out to sea in between the borders of Peru and Chile, also oftentimes turn diplomatic relations between the involved countries sour. In other words, having a common history, culture, religion, language and geographical region does not guarantee that the bonds of solidarity among all Latin American citizens exist as strongly and firmly as one would think.

This sentiment, however, appears to change the moment that Latin Americans migrate to another country outside of Latin America. It can be argued that the more distant a host country is in terms of language and culture, the stronger the bonds exist among Latin American immigrants without heavily regarding their nationality. This change in mindset is briefly described by a Mexican student in Seoul in the following statement:

To be honest, I think I didn’t even bother thinking about things such as a Latin-American identity before coming to Korea. [...] I think when people come to Korea they realize that their sense of pride and awareness increases. But also after coming to Korea and getting to know other Latin Americans, I didn’t realize how ignorant I was about what goes on below Mexico. To be honest, I didn’t really care because I had no friends from there and no contact with anyone, I couldn’t find any relevance. I felt like whatever happened in those places didn’t affect me. But now that I have friends from those countries, I care more about what goes on. Student from Mexico (A): 2018/April /05

Like this Mexican student describes, when citizens of any Latin-American country happen to be living within their own country, it seems quite common for
them to think about things immediately important to them: their country’s economy, salaries, job offerings, cost of living; their families and their children’s education; their health and televised soccer tournaments. The average citizen, especially one who has never travelled abroad, does not view the other Latin American countries sympathetically, but neither in a major feeling of rejection: these countries and its people are simply ‘there’.

It is safe to say then, and as was also mentioned by the Mexican student, that Latin Americans feel a sense of community as a whole when they effectively leave Latin America, whether permanently or temporarily. Being put in a new environment, especially one as drastically different like South Korea, leads Latin American migrants to find others like them who they can communicate with and share experiences in times of hardship. Additionally, being in a setting where Latin Americans form an ethnic minority drives them to find other Latin Americans with similarities like them in order to gain a sense of cultural pride that can rival, in a micro-sense, the cultural majority. This cultural pride replaces the feeling of national pride because numbers matter for gaining a sense of power. In terms of power, it is far easier for the Latin American community to grow if members from all of the Latin American countries are allowed to join, than it is for them to make micro-communities based on their countries of origin. Although these micro-communities also exist, most of the networking takes place among members of the general Latin American community regardless of their nationality. The following section aims to describe the nature of these social networks.

5.3 Cyber placemaking: Online Based Networks
Latino immigrants in Seoul have primarily three ways of conducting placemaking activities for the benefit of their community. The first encompasses networking dynamics, which can be made known through word of mouth, but are predominantly popular, and to a great degree, organized through cyberspace, mostly through internationally popular SMS platforms such as Facebook and
Twitter. These networks take the form of associations that can be divided into two forms. The first are associations of the ‘national’ type, which are based on the members’ legal country of origin and are closely related to their home country’s embassy in South Korea. Common themes for associations such as these are resident and student associations, such as the Association for Ecuadorian Residents in South Korea or the Association for Honduran Students in Korea. The second type of associations are those that group members in broader regional terms or in terms of interest, such as the Latinos in Korea group or Spanish Speakers in Seoul group. These online groups play a very important role both within the community and in relation to actual physical places and spaces because it is through them that any kind of relevant communication and organization are carried out. This kind of cyber placemaking, therefore, is associated to physical placemaking in that the Latin American migrant community needs to first implement the former to be able to carry out the latter. This process is further described below.

The distinct embassies for each of the 18 Latin American countries that are considered for this study manage various kinds of social media accounts; the most popular being Facebook and Twitter accounts, with the exception of email. Even the embassies in Korea that do not have their own personal social media accounts, provide in their official websites link to the social media accounts manages by the corresponding Ministry of Foreign Relations of their country, which often times publish information related to the Korean peninsula. These social media accounts, especially after registering with their home country’s embassy in South Korea, are the key to the existing network among Latino migrants in the country because it leads migrants to new cells within this network. As has been constantly mentioned, embassies are not the only institutions that manage helpful online and social media accounts for the benefit of Latino migrants. Latinos in Seoul also create and manage various associations that
group its members in terms of interest and other characteristics. But these associations, and their accessibility, can oftentimes vary depending on a migrant’s nationality on occasions.

Of the two kinds of social associations available to Latino migrants (embassy related and interest related), the former group can be said to be given a higher degree of importance and weight in terms of influence within the communities, because of the very reason they are closely interrelated their country’s home governments. For countries who have a higher population representation within the Latin American community in South Korea, such as Mexico, there are other associations other than the Mexican Embassy in South Korea that play a strong role in communicating with and organizing residents: *Association for Mexican Residents in Korea; Association of Mexican Students in Korea, Mexican Global Network: South Korea, and the Global Network for Mexican Talent: South Korea.* For other Latin American countries that do not have a strong presence in Korea, such as Costa Rica or Panama, residents only receive information from their corresponding embassies or consulates in the case that they even have one. Still, even in the latter case, all Latin Americans are able to join other online associations that are grouped together in terms of regional characteristics (*Latinos in Korea*), in terms of language (*Spanish Speakers in Seoul*) or in terms of interests.

Migrating to Korea is not such a common activity for Latin Americans as opposed to migrants from countries that are more geographically closer than the American continent. Normally, when migrants first arrive to Korea, they seem to feel a sense of wonder at the different culture, signs, language, people and world around them. At first, they are awed by the ‘foreignness’ of Korea and act like tourists in the sense that they are open to explore and look to experience anything that seems different and new to them. Some migrants even prefer to voluntarily
step away from that that seems familiar to them in order to really delve into South Korean culture and learn the country’s language and customs to a better extent.

However, as time passes, the newness starts to fade; the uniqueness of the culture that was once something that drew their attention starts to seem too foreign. A longing for a sense of familiarity starts to dawn on them and they begin to miss their home countries. This yearning leads them to seek out anybody, anything, and anyplace that even remotely represents their own country, culture and even language. This is where online associations come in for Latin American migrants.

What are these associations useful for, you may wonder? The answer is, for anything. According to the responses shown by the interviewees, as well as through the analysis of various social media portals managed by various types of Latino associations for residents in both the country and in Seoul, for students, for event organizers, for Spanish language teachers and learners, etc. these online associations are useful for just about anything regarding life in South Korea. For example, for the migrants living in Seoul, they can easily find out about any social gathering or event that will take place and make plans to attend it if they wish. These events can be related to the activities that the embassies or associations organize for their members, or they can be any event that is taking place in the city, whether it be about Latin America or not.

Additionally, as two interviewees pointed out, the social media platforms specifically are useful for seeking and providing answers to questions related to living in South Korea. For example, for new comers who do not know how to receive from or send money to their families in their home countries, especially since there are no associate banks between Latin America and South Korea, past experiences of more long-term residents provide useful insight in how to solve this problem. Additionally, these portals are also used by members for selling and
buying rare items from their home countries that can range from food ingredients, to traditional clothing, to typical alcoholic beverages, to round trip plane tickets. These sales are often informal, in that the person who is selling the product does not dedicate themselves to this profession, but rather happens to have extra products on hand for whatever reason, or is expecting a shipment from friends and family back in their home country, and is willing to share these products with other members in the community for a fee. Plane tickets to home countries are also often sold as previously bought items that require a name change on the ticket.

These portals also provide information for both current and potential students for studying in South Korea. Through these associations, potential students often contact current students who attend their desired universities in the hopes that they can receive more information and advice on the admission process, life in South Korea and Seoul, university life and the academic environment. Normally, these people do not know each other in person beforehand, but there is the belief that because they are from the same region or country, current students will feel more willing to help potential students in their information seeking.

These associations also provide a chance to migrants to make friends. As most of the Latino migrants reside in Seoul, it is much easier for those who live in this city to meet other migrants online and then meet in person somewhere in the city. This form of meeting is not used for dating, but rather for friendships. As previously mentioned, the Latino migrants who arrive in the country are mostly not proficient in Korean language. The majority who speak Korean only know the basics for survival. This makes it more difficult for them to create and have meaningful and lasting friendships, especially with Korean people. So, it is much easier for Latin American migrants to set a random date, place and time to gather and meet people. They display these details on the social media portals of the
different associations, and interested people attend. In this manner, Latinos that often participate in these gatherings come to know many people within this small community.

These associations are also useful to migrants in their times of need. For example, as stated by one married interviewee, when their family member developed cancer, a formal letter was written to all the Latino associations and published on their social media accounts asking members for donations in order to help even the blow with the costs of the cancer treatment. A similar thing also happened when one particular migrant member lost their spouse and asked for donations from the members of these associations to cover funeral costs. This activity, asking for donations from the general public, although quite rare among South Koreans, is commonly practiced in Latin American societies. As migrants, to a certain degree, Latin Americans become accustomed to Korean society characteristics and make an effort to best adapt. This practice of asking for donations in times of hardship is not as popular among the Latino migrant community, however, and is seen as a last resort for somebody to take in times of hardship. Still, some people are willing to donate.

Furthermore, as stated previously, Latin Americans that are found residing within their home countries do not necessarily feel a sense of community with Latinos from other countries. This phenomenon only happens, or at best, is exacerbated, when a Latin person transforms into a migrant and leaves Latin America. A nationalistic sense of self is heightened, as well as an ethnic sense of self. I argue that this cultural and ethnic sense of self is heightened to varying degrees depending on the migrant’s environment in the host country and different, far or unrelatable this environment is from a migrant’s own social culture and even language. Therefore, by this logic, a Latino migrant found in a northern European such as Finland or Denmark would have a highly different sense of heightened cultural self that a Latino migrant living in a southern European
country such as Italy, where there are more socio-cultural linkages to their own culture, despite them both being in the same geographical continent. However, this sense of self is then extremely heightened in environments that are extremely different from that of Latin America, such as those of the Islamic world or that of East Asia. Therefore, in the case of Latino migrants found in South Korea, the extreme distinctness of South Korean society compared to Latin American socio-cultural leads Latin American migrants to have a heightened sense of self, not only in the national sense, but also in a communal sense in relation to the Latin American region.

Additionally, the current digital era that we live in now lead every living person to use the technologies at hand to be able to find, communicate and become aware of almost any piece of information that becomes available. For Latino migrants, this includes having access to a network that in the past may have not been as accessible and even virtually non-existent. Latino migrants use especially social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to come into contact with other Latin American migrants such as themselves. Originally, when migrants first arrive to South Korea—if they arrive legally—they are obligated to register themselves at their corresponding embassy or consulate. These institutions also make use of technology, internet and social media to come into and stay in contact with their corresponding public in order to inform them of any important news or activity, as well as help accelerate or facilitate any kind of diplomatic process. It is through the registration with their embassies that migrants first come into contact with the existing network of Latin Americans in South Korea.

This is true in the sense that the Latin American embassies themselves form their own network. For example, whenever it is the Independence Day celebration of any one of the Latin American countries, the corresponding Embassy throws a party or celebration in honor of that day and invites the other
Latin American embassies—either staff or even corresponding citizens. The coming together of Latin American residents in South Korea for the celebration of a Latin American country’s Independence Day anniversary adds to the feeling of a Latin American community in Korea. The communication and organization of festivals, holidays and celebrations such as the one mentioned above, is given out in the form of email, website announcements and of course, the corresponding social media accounts of the Embassies and consulates. Especially, if a national resident is registered under the list compiled by each Embassy, the corresponding citizen associations will notify each member about all of the activities and pass along the contact information for the organizers of these events. In this sense, it is both virtually and at the meeting place of the celebration that Latino migrants are able to make, become part of and further extend their network of contacts.

Secondly, the residents and citizens that make up each national Latin American community in Korea also carry out their own association groups in regard to other characteristics that divide them. For example, there are national associations related to residents, to students, to businessmen and business investors, to people interested in start-ups, to artists, etc., just to name a few. Other associations can also be divided solely based on the interest and common characteristics of its members without regarding their members nationality. It is mostly in these kinds of groups that a Latin American community sentiment is further felt or communicated.

The importance of feeling that members belong to a Latin American community and not just the community of residents from their home country lies in the similarities and closeness—geographical, language, religion, culture—of Latin American societies. Where perhaps once there was no interest in other Latin American countries, cultures, and people ironically because of these similarities, when put in a new and different environment, it is these same
characteristics that push Latin American migrants to seek others from this region of the world who they feel are most like them. These people, no matter from what Latin American country that they come from, are fast to become friends and share in each other’s “Korean experience.” They not only become friends, but in many cases, they also learn to consider themselves as family; the family that many migrants lack due to being so far and estranged from home.

It is through this feeling of belonging and familiarity that these online associations continue to function for its members and newly arrived members. With today’s technology, and especially with South Korea being one of the most interconnected countries in the whole world, and with the fastest internet connection available, Latin American migrants are able to contact any person with just the touch of a button on their cell phone, an electronic mobile device that fits in the palm of their hand. Especially in Korea, where public Wi-Fi is highly available at any place, whether public or private, and many times without additional costs, Latin American migrants experience a highly Korean characteristic of their environment through the availability of this high-speed technology for communication, while trying to get in touch with people that are ‘more similar to themselves.’ It is ironic in a sense that the characteristics and benefits of one “different” society are used and actually aid intensively in the making and maintaining of a social network that benefits “others” within that society, and especially an extremely minor minority of those “others”. But does this particular Korean technological characteristic have a greater influence on these online associations than in other countries where the technology or internet connection is not up to par?

It seems that this is something that is particular of migrants in South Korea, especially those that are form developing countries or countries whose geographical territories present limitations to have a level of interconnectedness presented in South Korea. In this day and age, social media is particularly
popularized among people of all ages, but most especially with the youth. As most of the Latino migrants that come to South Korea fall along the lines of this age group, they are already prone to having more than one social media app or account and accustomed to utilizing their phones for any small activity in their everyday lives. Young Latin American migrants in Seoul mostly come in the form of exchange students and young professionals. Because this particular characteristic implies that most of these young people belong to the middle to upper social-economic classes within their home countries, traveling to a faraway economically developed country such as South Korea goes hand in hand with them wanting to boast about their extremely different cultural and social experience over their social media accounts.

It is also through this boasting that social media accounts, pages and personalities are created for Latin American and Spanish speaking audiences worldwide. YouTubers, Instagramers and Facebookers in particular, that document their everyday lives in South Korea or Seoul, are bound to have their own audience of Latinos from abroad that are fans of Korean popular culture, and of Kpop and Kdramas in particular. These same online Latino celebrities are also utilized in various activities by particular Latin American country embassies, consulates, and companies to promote their people’s culture and their country in social events. It is like promising new incoming migrants that success doesn’t necessarily have to be found in the United States---such as the so-called ‘American Dream,’---but can also be found in South Korea, if only migrants would take advantage of the opportunities that technology and social media creates for everyone.

In this sense, social media is very important, not just for being used as a primary tool for bringing Latin American migrants---and perhaps migrants of other nationalities in South Korea---together, while building and facilitating an entire network for them, but they also serve to prove to those abroad (i.e. those
(living in the home countries) that even before they arrive to South Korea in the case that they plan to migrate there, that there already exists a very supportive and communicative Latin American community. It shows the evidence needed to potential future migrants that no matter how far they travel, they will always be able to find somebody from their home country or from their region that speaks their language and shares their religion, culture, customs and traditions.

This is especially influential in terms of considering future migration flows to South Korea. People want to be able to assure themselves that someone has done something, has explored a certain geographical point before them; that they are not just going into the unknown and risking everything; risking their lives to end up becoming a failure. Social media, especially that which can provide migrants contacts, where they are able to message and make direct inquires to the social media poster about living in South Korea or living in Seoul are the most useful to any person, either already living in the host country or just contemplating on whether to make the jump. Many social media accounts, especially those of particular Latino migrants, seek to be as accessible to their audience as possible. For this reason, many migrants or expats living in South Korea will generally make blogs, either written or filmed, to explain to their audiences how it is that they arrived to South Korea, what they do there and how do they finance themselves. The commenting sections of these websites or pages are then also filled with further detailed inquiries by audience members, to which the blogger in question sometimes takes the time to further the explanation. Sometimes very common or popular comments and enquiries even lead to a ‘part 2’ of these blog posts, or for posts that are similar and stem from the first one. It is mostly through these posts and social media accounts that potential migrants assure themselves that they are able to also come and live in Korea just like the bloggers.
Once a migrant arrives to Korea, especially if they belong to the Youth category and are very familiar with different kinds of social media and apps, they arrive to the country already aware that a vast network and supportive community exists for them within the country. For Latin migrants, it does not matter if the other Latino migrants in South Korea are not living near them or are within arm’s reach, rather, the network and social media communication leads these people to keep utilizing social media to communicate, not just with other Latino immigrants, but also potential immigrants that are found abroad.

These kinds of social media are also useful to Latin American tourists, or people whose stay in South Korea can be characterized as highly temporary. South Korea is not an extremely popular tourist destination among Latin Americas, to say the least. The country is smack dab in the middle between two powerful East Asian countries: China and Japan. But those that do and can afford to make the trip to South Korea for a few days most often just opt to take a look around Seoul. If they have a bit more time on their schedule, as well as money, they may even opt to go to Busan for a few days or for cities in South Korea that are especially known for their tourism on an international scale. But the vast majority of Latin American tourists are fine with only exploring the capital city while on their tourist trip in South Korea.

These tourists then, too, also have access to the networks available to Latin American migrants in South Korea, albeit on a different scale. While Latino residents in South Korea are immediately welcomed by the vast networks that exists with their home country’s embassy and that of other Latin American embassies and consulates, tourists, on the other hand, are not obliged by law to register their arrival to South Korea with their respective embassy. In this arena, they are given a bit more freedom to go undetected and could even make their stay in South Korea a secret. However, because of the use of social media platforms, even if they are in the country for only a few days, they can still be
exposed to any notices of any activities, gatherings, festivals, events and celebrations that other Latin American residents in Korea may be participating in. This is especially common if tourists happen to find themselves in South Korea during the same date as an important holiday or celebrative anniversary for their home country, because it almost guarantees that the corresponding embassy will create a special event that is open to invite and host anybody of that nationality. That is yet another great characteristic, and perhaps even benefit, of being part of a small, minor community in a country that is geographically far away from your home country. It means that institutions, such as embassies and national foundations, have the financial resources to invite all of the members of their community, whether they be long-term residents, recently arrived migrants or even tourists.

This financial security or, well-being, is something that other embassies or consulates of developing countries lack when they are located in countries known for a vast migrant majority native to their particular country or region. For example, the embassies and consulates in the United States, where the Latin American/Hispanic population represents more than 10% of the entire United States population, does not have enough space, financial resources, logistical staff, and capacity to hold events that are able to openly host everyone that is part of their particular national community, let alone invite those from other Latin American nationalities. As stated before, this ‘benefit’ is performed to a higher degree in countries where there are less national residents. However, this also does not seem to be the case for embassies that are located in countries that are not of ‘high national interest’ for that particular Latin American country. For example, the Mexican embassy in Seoul, South Korea, would be given more privileges, both in a financial sense as well as in other aspects, than the Mexican embassy in Malaysia, for example. This is not to say that one country is better than the other, but rather, the size of the resident community, as well as the
economic and international stature of a particular country and the role that it plays in the international system greatly influences how much funding and logistical support a particular embassy or consulate receives from their national governments.

5.4 Religious placemaking in Roman Catholic Church

The second form of placemaking by the Latin American community is carried out through the special bonds that people from this region have with Catholic religion. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, Latin America was conquered and then colonized by European powers who held great ties to the Roman Catholic faith. Since then, this religion continues to play a very important part in Latin American culture and society. It is through seeking out Mass schedules and venues after their arrival in Korea that Latino immigrants in Seoul end up finding the St. Francis Catholic International Parish, because it is the only Catholic Parish in Seoul that offers Sunday mass in Spanish on a continual weekly basis. It is by assisting to Sunday mass that parishioners can meet other Latin American and Spanish speaking residents in Seoul. Together they form an important subgroup of the Latin American community in Seoul, by continuing traditions and festivities originally held in Latin countries through its ties with Catholicism, such as the Celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe

South Korea does not have a major religion that is followed by the vast majority of its national population. Of the people who do follow a religion, most are either Protestant-Christians or Buddhists. However, the Catholic religion still has a significant percentage of practitioners. According to a survey of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference in Korea, entitled ‘Statistics on the Catholic Church in Korea 2012,’ the number of parishioners in 2012 amounted to 5,361,000 people, which counts for around 10% of the total population in the country. Perhaps when comparing this number to the number of Catholic practitioners in Latin America, it seems insignificant, but as a country where
Christianity in its Roman Catholic form was neither utilized as a key instrument for Conquista and colonization, nor engraved in the construction of a national identity, the number is relevant.

Catholic religion was first introduced in Korea in 1784 through the writings of Lee Su-gwang, an experienced traveler who read the writings of Matthew Ricci and later incorporated them into his own work. During this time, and most of the latter part of the 18th century, the Catholic Church was established in Korea. Catholics were oppressed, however, by the Confucian society that heavily governed Korea until the end of the 19th century. But in 1876, when Korea was opening its doors to the West, the conditions for Catholics began to improve. This period of improvement met with some obstacles during the Japanese Colonial Period of 1910-1945, when the Japanese ruling authority oppressed the Catholics. During this time the Catholic Church managed to keep education, medical care and other missionary work alive, and it was from this period onwards that Catholicism penetrated Korean society more deeply, causing a considerable increase in the number of churches and believers.

In the case of Latin America, having been conquered, colonized and forced to accept Roman Catholic religion by Western Europe, the Catholic religion still to this day remains a very important and ever-present characteristic within the national identity of each Latin American country, as well as for the identity of the Latin American community in general. In the case of Latin Americans in Seoul, regardless of nationality, many look to continue going to mass and getting to know more migrants like themselves who share the same faith. They do this by attending the various catholic churches that are found in the city. The most famous of them among the Latin American community, is the St. Francis Catholic International Parish. The parish is located in Seoul, in the neighborhood of Hannam-dong, Yongsan-gu.
Why is this parish more frequented by Latin Americans than say, the Cathedral Church of the Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception, also known as the Myeongdong Cathedral? One reason is that unlike the famous Cathedral, the St. Francis Catholic International Parish offers Mass services in Spanish, every Sunday at 12:30pm. Latin Americans, especially those who are only in Seoul for a temporary stay and have no desire to learn Korean because of this reason, can still attend Mass through the comfort of their native language. This is the only parish in the city of Seoul that does this on a constant basis. The only other Catholic Mass service offered in Spanish is given by the Pastoral Center for Labor in Bomun-dong, in Seoul’s Seongbuk District, but only on the second and fourth Sundays of every month at 11am.

Likewise, the St. Francis Catholic International Parish also advertises on their website that they are, ‘a multinational community, but united in Christ.’ Other than in Korean language, Mass services are also offered at the parish in English, French, Italian, and German. But it is because of the already existent international community, as well as its key location, that Latin Americans feel comfortable to visit the parish. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Hannam-dong is a neighborhood in the Yongsan District near the more famous neighborhood of Itaewon. Its location can be described as being in the very heart of the city itself, and is considered to have a classy and subdued atmosphere, with trendy boutique cafes, restaurants and bars. More importantly, the area also has a large concentration of foreign and expatriate residents, mainly business executives and diplomats, as well as the families of U.S. soldiers stationed in South Korea. Probably due to the same reason, or vice versa, the area also houses several embassies, such as the embassies of Spain, Italy, Myanmar, and formerly, that of Mexico, before it was moved to its present location near Gyeongbokgung Palace. The characteristics of the Hannam-dong neighborhood, as well as the St. Francis International Parish, help Latin American immigrants feel more
welcomed, even if they initially did not go to church as much back in their home countries.

For Latino migrants in Seoul, attending mass at St. Francis’s becomes a genuine multicultural opportunity. Attendees are able to not only meet people from other countries, but are also able to meet and network with people of all social class structures from their home countries. For example, at the Spanish mass at St. Francis, it is very common to find country Ambassadors, their families and their staff as weekly attendees. At the same time, there are also many students, businessmen, pilots, and even a few American soldiers of Hispanic descent.

*It always fills me with joy to attend, mostly because I get to know people from the region of the world where I was born and raised, and at the same time I try to complete that spiritual part that is still looking for ways to complement my existence. The ironic thing is that in Mexico I hardly got used to going to church.*

(Parishioner from Mexico ‘A,’ 2018/April/08).

The above statement was made by a young Mexican who came to Korea to pursue graduate school studies. Although the Mexican federal government population census calculates that as of 2017, approximately 82% of the Mexican population identifies themselves as followers of the Catholic faith, there are people who follow a less strict church going habit than others. The above interviewee, as well as the others, identified themselves as Catholic. However, as stated above, the interviewee did not practice attending mass on a weekly basis back in Mexico. Being away from home, family and friends, however, and constantly surrounded by a different environment than what they are accustomed to, the churchgoers like the Mexican interviewee provide proof that for them, attending this Spanish mass in Seoul is seen more like a networking opportunity
than a religious requirement. But if they are able to attend and kill two birds with one stone, then they are even more willing to continue going.

Attending mass at this specific church in Seoul also gives a chance to the Latino migrants to feel like they are in a more familiar setting than if they had attended catholic mass in Korean or in another language. This is because, although the Catholic churches around the world follow the same kinds of protocols for their services, some existing cultural differences between countries vary and are often times adapted to the mass protocols. For example, attending Catholic mass in a Latin American country involves singing upbeat songs in high spirits. Oftentimes, congregates sing very loudly and enthusiastically. But this characteristic differs a bit if one attends a Catholic mass in South Korea, where mass and services are rendered a more serious atmosphere. Songs are still played and sung, but are very short and oftentimes solemn. Of course, if Latinos attend mass in Korean, many times they are not able to participate by singing along due to language difficulties.

Another adapted cultural difference with mass protocols that Latinos notice in Catholic mass in South Korea in contrasts to the Spanish mass given at St. Francis’s is that of kneeling on the floors for mandatory prayer during distinct parts of the mass. This is something that Korean catholic mass does not require attendees to do, rather they pray by standing or sitting. To the outside onlooker, these differences may not seem so important, but for Catholic Latinos, especially those who think of themselves as truly devoted to the Catholic faith, not kneeling, especially just before communion when the acting priest presents the Body of Christ and the Blood Christ (i.e. the sacramental bread and wine), in Latin America people kneel because these sacraments are supposed to represent the presence of Jesus Christ the savior, and they feel that they are not worthy of standing and being on the same level as their God. This does not mean that Latinos are appalled if other Catholics do not kneel before communion or in other
parts of the mass, but kneeling an instilled habit that they cannot get easily rid of, and feel strange not being able to do it. The interviewees in this research claimed to be more comfortable in an environment where everyone in the church kneeled, like they did back at the churches in their home country.

Likewise, during Catholic mass, there is a specific protocol that takes place for just a few minutes, that is known as the ‘rite of peace.’ During this time, mass attendees wish each other, i.e. the other surrounding attendees, peace in their lives and share a ‘sign of peace,’ which is typically celebrated in the form of a handshake. For Latin American Catholics, the sign of peace is adapted to the way that people in Latin America greet each other. For example, at mass a handshake will be common between strangers and most men, but a handshake and a kiss on the cheek is common to do with family members, friends and between women. In the case of the gesture of a ‘sign of peace’ during Catholic mass in South Korea, this is not celebrated by a handshake, but rather by the way that Korean people typically greet each other: by slightly bowing their heads in a person’s direction. The interviewees considered for the study commented that perhaps for Latin Americans, this brief physical contact between church goers during mass, helps to facilitate a feeling of familiarity within the community of the church goers, meaning that it is far easier for them to socialize and to network with people that attend Spanish mass, than it is for them to do so at other mass services given in languages other than Spanish.

Additionally, the Church also serves as a meeting point in Seoul for Latin community whenever they must gather to plan, organize or celebrate something. As one parishioner from Honduras pointed out, ‘where there is a Latino community there will surely be a Catholic church that serves as a meeting point and union of that same community.’ An example of this can especially be seen during the ‘festivities of December,’ as the Latinos call them. Besides Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Eve, which are all internationally
celebrated to some extent, Latin Americans also celebrate the anniversary of the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe, which falls on December 12th. The Virgin of Guadalupe is a Catholic title of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ. She is considered the patron saint of the Americas, and particularly, the patron of Mexico. A venerated image of the Virgin is enshrined within the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. The basilica is the most visited Catholic pilgrimage site in the world, and the world's third most-visited sacred site.

The association that Latinos have with the Virgin of Guadalupe dates back to this enshrined image. Official Catholic accounts state that the Virgin Mary appeared before Juan Diego, a native Mexican peasant, on four accounts in 1531, asking him to convince the archbishop of Mexico City of the time to build her a temple. After having been denied the request three times, the Virgin appeared before Juan Diego a fourth time on December 11th, and in order to provide proof of her existence, she gave Juan Diego Castilian roses not native to Mexico to give to the archbishop. When Juan Diego arrived to see the archbishop at midnight (December 12th), the roses that he had wrapped around in his *tilma* (traditional Mexican cloak) fell to the floor and on his *tilma* was imprinted the very same shrine that it is now present at the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

This enshrined image of the Virgin Mary, is supposed to represent a portrait of her. As some scholars have mentioned, this portrait of the Virgin Mary represents her in the like of the Aztec people, with her dark skin, eyes, hair and other features, as well as by her bright and colorfully designed clothing. Since the year 1531 was around the time of the Spanish conquests in Latin America, scholars argue that displaying the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe made the newly conquered peoples even more willing to follow the Catholic faith and believe in it as the one and only true religion. For this reason, more than any other specific religious images, relics, and saints, in Latin America, and especially in
the country of Mexico, the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe is constantly reproduced and displayed throughout Latin American culture and everyday life. Arguably, at least in Latin America, the constant usage of the Virgin of Guadalupe’s image rivals the popularity of the image of the crucified Jesus Christ. For this reason, this devotion to this Virgin, may not be well understood by Catholic people who are not native to Latin America nor hold Latin American descent. This is why the celebration of the anniversary of her appearance is so important to celebrate among Latino people, including those who attend Spanish mass in Seoul.

In Latin America, and especially in Mexico, in order to celebrate the anniversary of the Virgin’s apparition, people flock to their local Catholic church or Cathedral on the night of December 11th and attend mass. They are often seen wearing traditional indigenous Mexican clothing (or the traditional clothing of their respective home countries) and stay until past midnight at the church, until it officially becomes December 12th, the day of the anniversary. While they are waiting for midnight, people do not only go to mass, but also right outside the Churches and Cathedrals are traditional musicians, banquet tables and street food vendors for the general public. The celebration becomes like an entire town or city party and the streets fill with people who are all waiting for the clock to strike midnight in order to sing a traditional song in Spanish that is similar to ‘Happy Birthday.’

While this kind of celebration takes place in Mexico and the rest of Latin America, Latino migrants abroad also choose to celebrate this day in as similar as they can. In Seoul, every year the Latino residents make plans within weeks in advance to celebrate this important anniversary. Latin American embassies and associations send out emails weeks in advance to their members, both for asking for volunteers to help organize the event, and also for inviting people to the actual event. And although people in Latin America gather on the eve of December 12th,
for those who live in Seoul, this is not always possible to do when December 12th
is not on a Sunday. This means that if the day falls on a weekday, even organizers
choose the nearest available Sunday to celebrate the anniversary. This has to do
with the availability of the Spanish speaking priests and the reservation of the
Church facilities on the one hand, as well as with the schedules of the attendees
on the other hand.

The Latino community at the St. Francis church celebrates this important
day every year, but adapts it to better aid their community members. For example,
they do not wait until midnight on the eve of the particular Sunday that they will
celebrate on. They simply organize a time in which people first attend Sunday
mass, and then after the mass is finish, proceed to a nearby facility within the
church grounds to have a banquet. They invite all members of the Latino
community, but are also open to receiving Koreans and other foreigners. Many of
the more long-term residents normally attend the festivities along with their
Korean spouses and children. Normally, instead of having people sell food
individually, permitting the entrance to street vendors, or hiring a catering
company, the celebration is organized as a pot-luck in which the older long-term
residents bring something that they have cooked, while the younger residents
(who tend to be students on scholarships) buy premade desserts, snacks, and cola.

The celebration is a good chance for guests and participants to socialize
and network. It provides the opportunity for Latino migrants to know more
people outside of their native groups and perhaps even socialize with people from
different socio-economic backgrounds.

There’s so many delicious things and so much music and dancing. And there are
so many people! There’s easily somewhere between 300 to 400 people who
attend these events, and all of them speak Spanish, so you don’t feel like you’re
in Korea; at least I forget that I’m in Korea until I leave the party. (Parishioner
from Costa Rica, 2018/April/01).
The above statement made a St. Francis parishioner from Costa Rica shows that this particular event is something that the Latino migrant community in Seoul really look forward to, even if they were originally not as strictly religious in their home countries. As mentioned by the interviewee, having around 300 to 400 Latin American grouped together in one place is a great opportunity to get to know almost half of the whole Latin American community in the country, as well as the arguable majority of the existing community in Seoul, by having to attend an even for one afternoon. Perhaps it is on special occasions such as this, when Latin Americans in Seoul can feel that they ‘have a place for themselves.’

5.5 Conclusion
As collected by most of the interviewees in this study, it appears as if Latin Americans living in Seoul tend to give relationship building, social associations, and networking a higher priority than building actual physical spaces that they can use for themselves, as is the case with other foreign ethnic enclaves and popular gathering sites in Seoul. Perhaps the explanation can lie in the numbers, as there are roughly about 1,172 Latinos in the country (by net migration analysis). But perhaps taking social culture into account can explain this tendency as well.

Latin America is a developing region and while each country has different percentages of poverty, in general, many people learn to deal with what they have by habit, without trying to ask for more. One the one hand, it can be argued that this mentality displays a kind of celebrated conformism, in which many do not expect more from themselves nor have higher aspirations. On the other hand, it can also be argued that through the influence of the Catholic church and religion in Latin American society, people tend to associate riches and higher power with greed, a sin that leads to more suffering in the afterlife. The Catholic church oftentimes repeats in its weekly mass that God loves the poor more than the rich, and it is easier for the former to get into heaven than the latter. This way of
thinking, leads many Latin Americans to make do with the opportunities that are presented to them, but their countries’ difficult political, economic, and social problems force them to continually work hard without either complaining about their situation nor working to change things for the better.

Whatever the reason, the truth is that Latin Americans find salvation in the company of others. As described throughout this chapter, the Latino migrants in Seoul have built a network of associations that serve as placemaking tools for the community that help them to feel a bit more at home in Seoul. Meeting people, especially people with backgrounds similar to themselves helps them feel like they are not alone in this different environment that is life in Seoul. The following statement by an Ecuadorian office worker in Seoul describes the sentiment felt by the interviewees, as well as by the majority of the members in this community.

*I don’t think there’s a place in Seoul that makes me feel like home because it’s so different to what I’m used to. But, if it’s about comfort, then I think another friend’s home? For example, if they are Latin-American we can speak Spanish and if we are close friends, then they can feel like my family. We may not have a whole history together, but at least during our time in Korea we have known each other and shared similar experiences. But I don’t think this has to do with the physical place, but rather with the people.* (Office worker from Ecuador, 2018/March/20)

The above statement describes the feeling between Latino migrants in terms of friendship and even family. It becomes clear that not only having a similar socio-cultural background but also going through similar experiences in life in South Korea and having the Latino community as a support group is something that is very important and treasured to the Latin Americans in both the country and Seoul. As the above interviewee points out, feeling ‘at home’ has nothing to do with physical space in terms of living in Seoul as a Latin American person, but rather much more to do with the people who we associate with and who we let
Many Latinos choose to form these bonds with other people through the help of online portals of embassies and various associations, while others find strength and contentment by attending Spanish mass and building relationships with the people there.

Whatever their method, it is clear that Latin Americans in Seoul have their own particular way of building their own community in the city. This method, may not be particularly different nor special from that of other migrant minorities in Seoul. It is almost certain that where there is a community, some sort of networking is being carried out on a constant basis. However, this detail seems to then pose the question as to what is it exactly that sets Latin American migrants apart from other migrant minorities in Seoul? I argue that the answer to this question lies in the marketability of Latin American culture and its entrepreneurial success in the South Korean market. The attractiveness of Latin American culture is what prevents them from going unnoticed among the sea of migrant minorities in the city. This aspect is dealt with in the next chapter.
Chapter 6. What is the Role of Latin American Pop-Culture regarding Placemaking in Seoul?

6.1 Recreating a Latin American experience through ethnic foods and place: Latin restaurants in Seoul

The previous chapter focused on Latin American migrants in Seoul and the various ways that they a place for themselves in the city, even if the activities that take place do not involve the construction of actual physical spaces. These migrants, prefer to focus on networking and relationship building rather than building visible enclaves in the city for themselves. By doing so, and especially due to their scarce numbers in comparison to other foreign groups living in Seoul, they could easily go unnoticed in Seoul, but this is not the case. How is it then, that compared to other foreign minorities living in Seoul, that Latin America can be more easily recognized by Korean people than other countries, such as those of the Balkans, for example? I argue that the answer in this question lies in the marketability of Latin American culture in South Korea.

The fact of the matter is that the unique culture and history of ancient Mesoamerican civilizations, such as that of the Mayan empire, the Aztec empire, and the Inca empire, fused together with European culture and language, have permitted Latin America to differentiate themselves from that of other developing nations. The ruins of these ancient civilizations fused together with distinct European architecture from colonial times, as well as the natural beauty of all the different countries in this region have made them a tourist destination for a big part of the world. Additionally, the bright colors utilized in cities, food and fashion, the warm and tropical weather, and the access to many natural resources have made Latin American way of life seem more tranquil, calm and relaxing compared to that of the high paced lifestyle of South Korea---and especially to that of Seoul. These reasons can explain why Latin American themed businesses
in Seoul are able to attract many Korean customers. Somehow, the image that South Koreans—or the world—has of Latin America, allows people to feel happiness, excitement, festive, and even provide some sort of escape from the stressful lives that people can lead in overpopulated cities. The marketability of Latin American culture in South Korea makes it profitable, and it is perhaps this profitability that makes Latin Americans in Seoul become visible to an otherwise unaware passerby. Part of the success of this marketability is shown by the presence of Latin American themed restaurants in Seoul, as well as in other cities of the country. The restaurants come in all sorts of shapes, sizes and flavors. There are those who advertise their food as authentic, while others create fusion platters that combine Latino and Korean (sometimes even American) flavors to suit the taste-buds of the market.

Although many similarities exist between the countries in Latin America, a few of them stand out in terms of their traditional and characteristic dishes. Among the most famous in the world is that of Brazilian barbeque, Argentinian beef, Chilean wine, and of course, Mexican tacos. Mexican cuisine in particular, enjoys a world-famous status, such as that of Chinese or Japanese food, or even that of hamburgers and French fries. Just like these, Mexican food can be found all over the world, in different varieties, and often times adapted and fused with local ingredients to satisfy the taste buds of a particular kind of clientele. In this arena, the Latin American ethnic restaurants found in Seoul are no different. Of the Latin American themed restaurants that can be found in Seoul, Mexican food restaurants seem to be the most common. The different districts where foreigners in Seoul tend to accumulate (shown in Figure 1 of Chapter 3) are also the most common locations for these types of restaurants.

Among Mexican residents in Seoul, there are a few particular restaurants that most, if not all, of the residents recommend ---either to other Mexicans, Koreans, or to other foreigners. Among these, one of them can be found in
Yonnam-dong, Mapo-gu, which is on the west side of the city. The quiet streets that make up Yonnam-dong is a real change of pace and atmosphere from the areas around the two most famous Universities within the vicinity: Honggik University and Yonsei University. The Honggik University campus area, known simply as ‘Hongdae’ by locals and interested tourists alike, is famous for its artsy, youthful and energetic atmosphere, making it an extremely popular tourist attraction. On the other hand, the Yonsei University area, known simply as ‘Sinchon,’ is characterized as a lively student neighborhood filled with restaurants, bars, shops and festival activities. Yonnam-dong, on the other hand, sits quietly between these two areas, giving off a chill, relaxed, bohemian vibe. The restaurants, boutiques and coffee shops in the area are not big franchise names, but rather, small businesses that are held in likewise small buildings of just one or two floors.

It is in the heart of Yonnam-dong where a particularly famous Mexican restaurant can be found. Walking from the main road into a narrow alleyway filled with coffee shops, boutiques and art studios, the sound of Salsa and Latin music grows louder as you approach the one of the preferred Mexican restaurants of choice by the Latin American community in Seoul. The building of this particular restaurant is as colorful on the outside as it is on the inside, characteristically representing the building style of towns found in Mexico.

The restaurant is small, with five tables total: two for four people and two for two people inside the restaurant; one for two people outside on their patio. If one is lucky enough to arrive and find an empty table, they will be able to sit down and observe the menu. The menu, interestingly enough, is written in both Spanish and Korean, but not in English. Each dish, appetizer and beverage has its original name in Spanish, followed by a Korean translation and an explanation of the dish written only in Korean. As potential customers are the people who will be viewing and using the restaurant menu, one can infer that Korean people are
the main targeted clients for this restaurant. This also leads one to believe that while potential Korean clients can search for information about this restaurant online or elsewhere, Latinos, Spanish-speakers and other foreigners in Seoul are left to find this small place namely through word of mouth, relying on their vast connections within their community’s network. Likewise, if potential customers cannot speak Korean, it is recommended to attend said restaurant with someone who does or who knows about what the food contains. Given this observation it is much more common to see Korean clients among any other inside this restaurant.

Ethnic restaurants such as the one that is currently being described, often take part in placemaking through the placement of adequate decorations and music, that can help bring the desired atmosphere of a place to life. For example, in this particular restaurant, the walls are painted in bright colors and decorated with all kinds of common things that one could find at a Mexican traditional market. In one corner of a bright red brick colored wall hang eight framed pictures. The first shows the stereotypical image of a ‘Mexican landscape:’ a dry, sandy desert, two green cactuses and a bright blue sky. Another three pictures show what looks to be a typical small-town street in Mexico, complete with Spanish colonial architecture type buildings and elegant 19th century looking lamp-posts. Old car models, parked one after another dot the town’s main boulevard with the road made from pebbles and stones. These two pictures seem to give off a tranquil, relaxed image to Mexico. Next to these, another picture depicting three tan, young women in a rural style kitchen---traditionally found outside of a person’s house---surrounding a comal, or Mexican iron grill, making corn tortillas by hand. They wear short-sleeve and fresh-looking clothes in what appears to be hot and humid weather, exasperated by the fact that the comal and the neighboring pots and pans are all very hot.

To the left of this picture, another one details what appears to be a Mexican panadería, or bakery. A man is seen in the middle holding a tray of
freshly made *conchas*, a kind of sweet and Mexican bread that is decorated on the surface with colored sugar representing a sea-shell shape. Around this baker, people crown around him to place their order and pay the cost. Below this picture sits another frame divided into two separate pictures that both detail the *chalupas*, or a kind of long row boat that can hold up to 20 people, found in Xochimilco Lake in Mexico City. Here, the famous ‘floating islands of Xochimilco’ are accessible to tourists and locals alike as a popular attraction. The *chalupas* are painted and designed in bright colors and after shapes or creatures that characterize ancient Aztec mythology. It is common for people to pay the boat rowers for a ride through the calm streams, while eating traditional foods and even singing along to in person Mariachi groups that also go around riding their own *chalupas*.

Finally, the last picture of the group depicts people dressed as ancient Aztec warriors. It is not a historical picture, as the Aztec empire ceased to exist in the 16th century, but rather it is common sight to see in many cities of Mexico, especially in town squares near special festival and celebratory dates, such as the celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe\(^1\). This picture appears to have been taken in the heart of Mexico City, the historical downtown area known as ‘el Zócalo’ and is the location of the city’s first traditional market dating back to the Aztec empire.

On the far-left hand corner of left wall of the restaurant, sits an electric blue painted square with a bright red frame inside it. Inside the frame, are words

\(^1\) The Virgin of Guadalupe is celebrated every year on the eve of December 12\(^{th}\) in many Latin American countries, but especially in Mexico. In the case of Mexico City, the Virgin has a Basilica named after her where on that special day thousands of pilgrims from all over the country travel to—many by foot— and gather to celebrate. They attend mass, which is offered on an hourly basis that day, and eat, drink, sing and dance together outside of the church. Many indigenous people attend this celebration wearing their traditional clothes of their tribe, while others are dressed as Aztec warriors, play traditional Aztec instruments and perform traditional Aztec dances in front of the gathering crowd. At midnight, mariachi bands, famous celebrity singers, and attendees all sing *‘las mañanitas’* or the Mexican version of ‘Happy Birthday to the Virgin.’
painted in white, ‘Frida y Diego vivieron en esta casa. 1929-1954,’ [Frida and Diego lived in this house. 1929-1954]. Of course, this phrase does not mean that two people named Frida and Diego lived in the exact restaurant location between 1929 to 1954, but rather, alludes to two of Mexico’s world-famous artists, Frida Kahlo, and her husband, Diego Rivera. What is said inside the bright red frame on the wall is supposed to link what is said at this famous couple’s house in Coyoacán, Mexico City. The same exact sign is placed outside this historic house, which is now open to the general public as a museum.

There are almost no empty spaces on the restaurant walls, having all been covered by hanging pictures, artwork and trinkets that you can find easily in traditional markets in Mexico or in small tiendas de abarrotes, or something between a small local grocery store and a convenience store. Such items include small traditional painted tin cups of coffee cups made from barro [clay], nailed to the wall; a small painted portrait of the Virgen of Guadalupe; an old lotería [Bingo] game set, small table cloths made of straw and assorted bottles of Jarritos [Mexican soda brand] and Jumex [Mexican juice brand]. Traditional market colorful shopping bags made of straw or interwoven nylon are also displayed nailed to the walls; one of them even having a painted portrait of Frida Kahlo on it. These shopping bags can transport Mexican customers to the past because they are normally utilized by the Mexican elderly when they visit traditional markets weekly.

Small figurines of ancient Mayan mythology also have their own table stand. The entryway to the restaurant also has a hanging wind-chime, made of small parrots and chili peppers wearing Mexican sombreros. Mexican flags, colorful Mexican scarves, a lucha libre mask, handmade and decorated tortilla napkins, small cactus plants and an assorted variety of Mexican alcohol bottles such as Tequila can all be found on the tables near the register. Even the furniture
of the restaurant, made up of folding tables and chairs, happen to be made and sponsored by Corona, the most famous Mexican beer.\(^2\)

Aside from the way in which the restaurant is decorated, the food itself is also a form of placemaking. Unlike many other Mexican food restaurants in Seoul—or in South Korea—there are no ‘altered’ recipes made to better suit Korean taste buds. But if the target customers are Koreans themselves, then what does this mean? The restaurant tries to distinguish itself from the rest of the competition by aiming to ‘present a real image of Mexico.’ It not only is decorated with things that one could only find in Mexico, but the food also feels like it came straight from Mexico. For example, dishes are not served with kimchi, as can happen in many other Latino themed restaurants. There is a presence of cilantro, known in Korean as 고수, in many of the dishes, which typically don’t suit many Korean taste buds. In this case, Korean customers are asked by staff if they would like to have cilantro included or not. Food made with special ingredients that are very difficult to find in Korea, such as \textit{tomate} [small, green tomatoes native to Latin America] are used for dishes that require special sauces, such as the Swiss Enchiladas. Most importantly, and what may perhaps differentiate authentic Mexican food from Tex-Mex or ‘americanized’ Mexican food, is the use of corn tortillas for their dishes. While Tex-Mex cuisine is made largely using flour tortillas and other ingredients such as cheddar cheese and lettuce, authentic Mexican food does not use these ingredients. Flour tortillas are rarely consumed in Mexico, and if so, only for certain dishes such as burritos.

\(^2\) Though originally Mexican, the beer known as Corona from Mexican beer company Grupo Modelo was sold in its entirety in 2012 to the Belgian transnational beer company AB InBev. However, this company elected to keep the Corona name and its original headquarters in Mexico. Recovered on May 3, 2018 from: http://www.soychile.cl/Santiago/Internacional/2012/06/30/102037/La-cerveza-Corona-ya-no-es-mexicana-tras-venta-a-grupo-belga.aspx
As a Mexican person, it is because of these ingredients, the Mexican music of different genres playing in the background, and the decorations of the place that create a different and yet familiar atmosphere for me, that makes me feel like I am not in Korea, but back at home. Especially if I visit the restaurant with other Spanish speaking friends, the feeling of being back in Mexico increases. It was experiences such as this that made me want to keep going back to visit the restaurant. But like all imported, new and exotic foods, the prices in Korea are not low, especially when on a student budget. Just like me, other young Latino students tend to avoid Latin themed restaurants namely because of the prices, especially when taking into consideration what a certain dish in our home countries would cost versus its cost in Seoul.

The above predicament is important to consider in terms of the role of Latino customers utilized as placemaking objects in Latin themed restaurants. As has been previously described, most of the Latin American migrants found in Seoul are that of young students, here temporarily as exchange students or studying abroad to complete a degree. However, in the end, they are here for a determined period that has an expiration date. They come from developing countries whose local currency is not equivalent to that of the Korean won. Though most come from middle to upper class families that permit them to travel and study abroad, few others are also here on full scholarships. Either way, because of financial issues, eating out, especially to eat native foods, is considered more of a luxury than a necessity that people take for granted back in their home countries.

Usually when Latinos visit Latino restaurants, it is to eat out with a big group of friends. The gathering of a big group usually means that something, someone, or a special occasion is being celebrated, and therefore, is worthy of spending the extra cash that these dishes cost. Having Latino customers, especially a big group of them, dining in a Latin themed restaurant in Seoul gives
this restaurant a boost in their authenticity spectrum. Without willingly knowing it, by Latino people attending these restaurants as customers, the surrounding non-Latino customers observe them and think, ‘if the Latinos are enjoying the food, then this restaurant must be legitimate.’ For this reason, the presence of Latinos in these restaurants is also considered a characteristic of this placemaking dynamic because their very presence adds to the place’s atmosphere and brings them closer to their goal of authenticity.

On that hand, with the exception of one of the co-owners who is a Mexican man from the city of Guadalajara, the other co-owner and staff is all Korean. The other co-owner of this restaurant is indeed Korean, but also the Mexican owner’s wife. It was her idea to start a Mexican restaurant business, and because she was able to get well informed of the process needed to start a small business without any legal and language barriers, they successfully opened their business.

The popularity of the restaurant, the ‘authentic’ flavor of the food, and the lack of a table reservation system leads people to just walk into the place hoping to find an empty table, or if unlucky, write down their names and phone number on a waiting list hanging on the front door. This last detail, coupled with the fact that large parties of people are not able to join tables and eat together inside this restaurant, are something that appears to deeply characterize Korean small business culture. It is also because of these details, that despite the

But some in some cases, the experience of the restaurant differs slightly depending on the type of restaurant and whether or not its cuisine is a kind of fusion between the Latin American-Korean- and perhaps even with ‘americanized’ (U.S.) undertones. In some cases concerning Mexican restaurants, for example, the food is already ‘Americanized’ into a ‘Tex-mex’ or Texas style Mexican food or that of California style---places that both have the highest
amount of Mexican immigrants or people of Mexican heritage living there. These foods are first brought over by Mexican migrants to the United States, where they are then modified to suit the taste buds of the American public and adapted as well to the availability of the ingredients there. But because of the nature of the United States as a so called ‘melting pot’ of races, cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds, many people that first experience Mexican food for the first time actually experience it in the United States.

In this case, the image of country strongly influences authenticity because many of these people view negative news and media about Mexico and decide not to go to the country. Instead they visit Mexican or Latino ethnic enclaves in U.S. cities and try Mexican food there. Whatever it is that they taste, they feel it is authentic because it was made my Mexican (or Mexican looking) people in a predominantly Latino neighborhood. The geographical proximity of both countries also serves for them as a reassurance that ‘since both countries are next door neighbors, it must be certain that the kind of food, ingredients, and flavor could not go wrong’ or be ‘inauthentic.’ But this is certainly not the case.

Why is it that the same kind of food that can be cooked and served in the same way on both sides of the border different in its taste and considered inauthentic or not? Although there can be natural or man-made physical borders can exist to divide to countries, in many cases they are just political boundaries with no physical presence. In the case of Mexican food in South Korea, as stated in the example above, it became popularized, not by Mexican immigrants that traveled abroad, but by Americans. It was their ‘americanized’ version of Nachos, Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, etc. that was served on menus in Europe, all the way to the Islands of Japan. It is in many respects, still the same version of Mexican food that continues to be served around the world, and South Korea is not the exception.
Journeying through the city of Seoul and taking a look at the vast variety of Latino themed restaurants, the majority of them happen to be selling ‘Mexican food’. However, most of said restaurants are owned by Korean or non-Latino people. This in turn leads to the inference that the version of Mexican food that most of these restaurants are selling, is not the authentic Mexican version, but rather that from the states of Texas or California in the United States. With the U.S. military bases located in in Yongsan-gu, Seoul, and others like it in close proximity to the city, it is much easier for restaurant owners in Seoul to get their hands on ‘Mexican’ food ingredients that are made and imported from the U.S. These are the ingredients utilized in their foods. Their judges are U.S. citizens of Hispanic heritage that are asked to vouch for the ‘authenticity’ of the flavors. But what people have to realize, though, is that although migrants all come from a country of origin, once they are abroad, they are their own community, very different to those who stay in the home country. They have changed as people. In many cases, they have adapted to a new society, a new environment, and a new culture. In effect, these changes also lead to migrants’ having their taste buds adapted to new flavors. Likewise, the longer that a migrant stays in a host country, the more that ‘authentic’ flavors of their home countries’ food become memories and recollections who accuracy diminishes over time. Therefore, to new coming Latino migrants in Seoul, perhaps there is no authentic such thing as a Latin American restaurant that serves authentic food, while for the longer-term migrants, there are many acceptable places.

6.2 De-stressing city life through Latin music: Latin dance clubs in Seoul
Salsa dancing in the social dance scene comes in a variety of styles. Cuban style; Columbian style; L.A. style, which is often called ‘on one,’ meaning that the accents of the music are found on the first and fifth beat; and New York style, also known as ‘on two,’ meaning that the accents are on the second and sixth beat. The previously mentioned styles are among the most well-known variations in
Salsa around the world. The Korean Salsa scene in present day is mostly dominated by the ‘on two’ style of dancing. However, depending on the venue, there are also some places that play music that ‘starts on one’.

The oldest Salsa dance club in South Korea is located in the city of Seoul, particularly in the Hongdae neighborhood on the north-west side of the city. It is open everyday, except for Sundays. Its most popular nights are Fridays and Saturdays, where customers can not only listen and dance to Salsa, but also to the rhythms of Bachata, Merengue, and Reggaeton until five o’clock in the morning. The dance floor is a bit small, since by day the place acts more like a bar than a dance club, but the size of the dance floor creates a good atmosphere for dancing. In this dance club, customers include foreigners and Korean people alike.

Likewise, in the district of Seodaemun there is also a Latin American dance studio. The name of the place is in Spanish and by day it acts as a cultural center, where it hosts Spanish language classes and Latin American telenovela (doramas/series) get-togethers among interested folk that include both Korea and foreigners. By night the place changes to a dance club and they occasionally hold live band performances on the weekends.

Additionally, the district of Gangnam in southern Seoul is also home to two Salsa dance clubs and one Tango club. In the case of the two Salsa dance clubs, one is more popular among beginner dancers and amateurs, while the other is well known among intermediate and advanced level dancers who like to show off their skills on the edges of the dance floor next to the bar. Weekends are their busiest days of the week and both are open until five o’clock in the morning. The characteristics of the Tango club, however, are distinct to those of the two Salsa bars found in Gangnam district. The Tango club is actually located above a restaurant in the Apgujeong Garousogil area. It lacks a front signage, so
interested customers have to rely on the word of mouth of previous customers and landmarks to find it. This club is also different from the other two Gangnam Salsa clubs in that it has a cozier, community-like atmosphere. For example, new comers to the Tango club may get asked to publicly introduce themselves in front of the others by the club’s DJ and owner. This club’s popular nights are Wednesdays and Saturdays, where the music lasts until one o’clock in the morning and two o’clock in the morning respectively. The community-like atmosphere of this club is emphasized in that attendees often times take snacks and drinks to share with others and hold raffles for bottles of Argentinian wine or tickets to dance show competitions.

Likewise, in the district of Mapo there is another Tango club that is known for its milonga style of Tango. This style of Tango dance can be best described as a style of close embrace tango, which in part is inevitable due to the small size of the ballroom. This particular Tango club is one of the oldest in Seoul. Thursday nights are mostly frequented by beginners, while weekends open to dancers who have attained more advanced Tango skills. Due to the passionate dancing style, many of the customers that often attend this club already come in pairs. Most participants are Koreans, but one can occasionally find people nationalities. The age of the participants also varies widely.

The areas of Itaewon and Sinchon also hold a franchise bar, that is famous for playing Latin American music of diverse genres every Friday night. Both locations look like an average pub by day, but every Friday night the bar employees move the furniture around to make space for a dance floor. In both locations, a DJ not only plays Salsa, but also Reggaeton, Bachata, and Spanish-Pop songs. Both locations also attract an equal amount of Korean and foreign customers, that are mostly amateur dancers. Unlike at the other dance clubs mentioned, these two clubs allow for a more freestyle dance, as they do not provide dance classes for attendees at all. Curious newcomers often times look to
mimic the example led by present Latin American dancers and those who have advanced dancing skills in Latin dance.

*I’ve found that Korean dancers here are extremely dedicated to improving their dance skills. Their steps are precise, and their spins are immaculate. Sometimes this is seen as a critique of the local crowd in that they value performance over passion in dance. On the other hand, most Latin Americans, who grew up with the music, feel they don’t need to practice and learn new steps because for them it’s all about the ‘sabor’ (the flavor or passion) of the dance, more than learning the technical elements.* (Dancer from Peru, 2018/04/06).

The above statement by a Latin American dancer describes the kind of atmosphere that these dance studios create among the people who attend. While some Latin American migrants, may work as Latin dance instructors, either as means of formal employment, or volunteering as a hobby, the above statement demonstrates a common way of thinking among Latin Americans in South Korea. Although the dance clubs in Seoul do attract many Latin Americans and other foreigners, not many Latin Americans are willing to attend classes to ‘learn how to dance.’ In Latin American countries, dancing to the region’s music is something natural and only those who seek to participate in regional and international competitions bother to take classes to learn more advanced techniques. Dancing to Latin music is seen by Latin Americans as something to do when you are happy and want to celebrate something or reduce stress. This is why although there may be many foreigners at dance studios, Latin Americans will tend to go to the clubs and bars that are open to freestyle types of dancing, and not limited to dancers of a certain level of dancing skills. Other Latino interviewees also cited financial difficulties as reasons why they do not attend Latin dance clubs.

*I don’t really go to many Latin dance clubs here, but I don’t think there’s a deep reason for it. It’s also because of financial reasons; I don’t have much money to spend and going to these places can be really expensive; you have to pay an
entrance fee and then buy drinks, and many times you’re just not satisfied with just one drink, so going out on weekends to those places is too much money, at least for a student like me. (Student from Guatemala, 2018/03/07).

The above statement made by a Latin American student in Seoul, whose viewpoint can fairly represent that of the majority of Latino students in the city, is a common issue not only for Latin Americans students, but for any student in Seoul. Seoul is not an economic city, although it can be in comparison to other cities around the world. Financial issues within Seoul’s youth would not prove beneficial to the success of Latin American themed dance clubs, who often charge an entrance fee above the thousand Korean won (approximately, USD $9), with drink prices that often exceed that amount per glass. Why are these dance studios so popular in Seoul then?

As the interviewees for this study consist only of Latin American, perspectives and answers from Korean customers of these clubs are not taken into account. However, the Latin American interviewees that participated in this study were each asked why they thought Latin American music and dance clubs were getting increasingly popular in Seoul. Their answers varied narrowly, and were all somehow related to the recent global popularity of Latin music and particular Latin hit songs, such as Despacito by Luis Fonsi. The following statement echoes this observation:

I feel like Korea brings in a lot of music styles Europe or the U.S., so I guess that Latin music in Europe is very trendy right now, especially in Spain, and that is why it is trendy in Korea. Koreans tend to be more interested in traveling to Spain because it is in Europe rather than Latin America. I think Spain absorbs everything that happens in Latin America and then throws it in everyone’s face and claims it as their own. I’ve seen a lot of Spanish restaurants in Korea that have Latin music, so Korean people probably think they [Spaniards] own it, but no, its ours. (Bar customer from Peru, 2018/04/13).
The above statement echoes many of the opinions expressed by the Latin American migrants interviewed for this study. Particularly in the case of Latino students who come into contact with Korean students who major in Spanish language, have expressed that their Spanish-speaking Korean friends oftentimes confuse aspects of Latin American and Spanish culture and use both concepts and nationalities interchangeably. However, they also express that their Korean friends feel happy and carefree when listening to Latin American music, even if they cannot understand all or any of the song lyrics. Latin America provides for these people, as well as any others, an opportunity to forget about the stressful issues of daily life in the capital city. Listening to any of the genres in Latin American music makes any person feel like they want to dance and instantly brings them a sensation of positive energy. Perhaps for these reasons, Latin American music is currently and continues to increase in popularity among people in Seoul.

6.3 Displaying Latino migrants’ visibility in Seoul through Latin festivals and gatherings
The different, colorful and distinct characteristics of Latin American fashions and decorations, as well as the contrasting but delicious taste of diverse Latin American foods attract many people to ethnic Latin American restaurants in Seoul. Likewise, the increasing popularity of Latin American music and the growing presence of Latin American dance clubs in Seoul also suggest that Latin American music and dance provides for many people in the capital city an escape outlet and a chance to let go and have fun while they can. It is through the visible presence of places and spaces such as these that Latin Americans in Seoul have a stronger presence in the city in comparison to other migrant minorities. This same visibility of Latin Americans in Seoul has also recently prompted diverse sections of the Seoul City Government, as well as the diverse Latin American embassies
and associations, to create Latin American pop-up spaces and festivals every year in diverse locations of Seoul.

One example of the festivals hosted by Government entities in Seoul is that of the Latin American festival, that has taken place every year in the district of Seongbuk in Seoul. The festival is organized in cooperation with the Seoul City Government and the eighteen Latin American embassies that are mentioned in this present study. The festival is often held in the month of June near Seongbukcheon Fountain Square and features country booths for each of the participating Latin American countries, that gives them a chance to display items related to their national cultures. The festival is filled with different kinds of Latin American food, beer and alcohol, dance performances, live music, arts and crafts, and contests. It also features a market for traditional Latin American goods, such as traditional clothes and hats, musical instruments, traditional toys, accessories and other special items. Among the booths, there is also normally included a promotional booth and a photo zone, where participants can take pictures while wearing traditional Latin American garments. Festivals such as these are also often used as a method among the Latin American migrant community in Seoul for gathering donations to send to a particular Latin American country in times of natural disasters, such as the Earthquakes in Ecuador in 2016 and in Mexico in 2017.

Another recently initiated type of festival is that of the Latin American Cinema Festival of Seoul, which first started in 2015. Diverse Latin American embassies in Seoul, as well as Latin American focused associations and Spanish departments at specific universities have in recent times come together in order to host a cinema festival screening works of Latin American origin. This kind of festival has generally tended to be held in the Fall and lasts around one week. During this week, the reserved theater in question screens diverse Latin American films with Korean subtitles. Admission to the screenings is free, but as seats are
limited in the theaters, the event advises those who are interested to reserve tickets online.

Other kinds of places include Latin themed coffee shops, such as one found in Mapo district, whose name in Spanish. The café hosts a number of Spanish language exchange gatherings as well as Spanish language classes for a variety of levels, but mostly catering to Korean learners. This coffee shop, like the ethnic Latino restaurants in the city, emphasize its placemaking techniques by way of decorations, Spanish language usage and background music. As the coffee shop is also known for serving coffee imported from Mexico, Costa Rica and Guatemala, it is also a common gathering place for Latino migrants and lovers of Latin American culture of any nationality.

6.4 Where are the Latino businesses owners?: Foreigners and small business ventures in Seoul
All of the above types of businesses, with the exceptions of certain Latin American festivals that are held in cooperation with some of the Latin American embassies in Seoul, are owned and organized by Korean or Non-Latino residents in Seoul. Why is it then, the despite the presence of Latin Americans in the city, they are not willing to start or maintain their own ethnic businesses in Seoul?

In the case of foreign residents in South Korea, starting their own business is no easy task, especially if they are recent arrivals and cannot speak the language well enough. According to legal advice columns on the Seoul Global Center website then national government has been proactive in anything related to the country’s economy and has in recent times tried to induce the opening of small businesses in general, including those operated by foreigners. All levels of government have also been active in trying to reduce barriers to entry into the small business scene, even offering free classes, office space, and money to
selected ventures. But whether they are restaurants, IT services, advertising consultants, prep-schools such as hagwons, or other enterprises, all businesses and business owners face some central issues.

First, future entrepreneurs need to be able to legally be in the country and run a business. E-series visa holders and those in the country on visa waivers are generally not permitted to do to take part in these kinds of economic activities. If they invest 100 million won, they can qualify for a D-8 visa, but they will be limited to the type of business the company does and cannot open other businesses or accept outside employment. Those who have one of several residential visas, such as the F-2, F-4, F-5, and F-6 visas, have the freedom to basically operate just as a Korean citizen would, with no limitations on business type or kind, except that, of course, the business must be lawful.

After applicants are sure that they can open a business without risking deportation, the next step from a legal perspective is to determine the business structure. The most common structures are solo proprietorship (*saeopja*), general partnership (*hapmyeong hoesa*), limited company (*yuhan hoesa*) and stock corporation (*jushik hoesa*). Which structure is used generally depends on the ownership and management structure and tax consequences of the business. The first two, proprietorship and partnership, are not separate entities from a tax or liability perspective — that is, the proprietor or partners directly receive earnings and are directly liable for damages caused by the business. Ownership is simple and, in the case of more than one person, equal. These structures are typical for ‘family owned’ style shops and small businesses such as small hagwons, restaurants, stores, or legal offices with few partners. Applicants do not need any formal corporate documents (such as articles of incorporation) but in the case of a partnership, a partnership agreement is recommended to minimize possible future disputes.
The last two, limited company and stock company, are separate entities and taxed separately. In other words, the entity is taxed and then the person is taxed, creating the possibility of double taxation and making planning a bit more complicated. Generally a well-planned entity can minimize tax liabilities. Also, ownership interests can be transferred by sale and broken into different classes, allowing more flexibility in terms of control and profit sharing. Applicants will, however, need corporate documents (such as articles of incorporation) and the law places certain restrictions and liabilities on directors and other parties.

A Korean limited company is like most other nations’ limited liability companies, and has fewer reporting requirements than a stock corporation. Many larger foreign businesses begin life as limited companies and become stock corporations only if they need the additional flexibility or will seek to be listed on a stock exchange. Also, if an owner’s type of business needs to change, the structure can also be changed. This however, requires much time for the complicated process of planning and paperwork. Whichever type of business is being concerned, business owners should always register with the local branch of the tax office, and the commercial registry. They will need to pay at least two types of taxes: value-added tax and income tax. Some businesses, including translation, are VAT-exempt so the kind of purpose that they pursue can affect how much of an income business owners get to keep. Tax itself could be several articles, particularly once owners start considering personal and business income tax planning, so they have to also hire an accountant with whom they are able to adequately communicate with, in this case, English or Spanish speaking, which can also be difficult and expensive to find.

Business owners may also need to register with and meet the requirements of other government entities, such as the Ministry of Education (if the applicant is a teacher) or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in the case a business owner is also assisting with foreign visa applications for their business partners and staff).
they have invested more than 100 million won, they will also need to register with the Ministry of Knowledge Economy and will have some extra legal protections under the Foreign Investment Promotion Act.

Most of the aid and guidance for foreigners who are looking to open a business in Seoul can be obtained by the Seoul Global Center. The center has pamphlets on businesses and registration in multiple languages, as well as information about the periodic sponsorships the government has been giving.

6.5 Conclusion
As has been discussed in this chapter, there are a variety of Latin American themed businesses throughout Seoul, whose physical presence allows Latin American migrants in Seoul to be more visible than other minor migrant communities in the city. Typical businesses include ethnic restaurants, dance studios and clubs, coffee shops, as well as temporary pop-ups that can be included in Latin American festivals. Latin Americans interviewed for this study expressed that they believe the increasing popularity of Latin American culture in Seoul is due in part to the culture's recent popularity boost in Europe and the United States, regions more frequently visited by South Koreans than Latin America. At the same time, the attractive history of ancient cultures such as those of Aztec, Mayan and Inca civilizations, as well as the laid-back lifestyle of people living in Latin America, attract many residents in Seoul who live very fast-paced and often stressful lives in the big city. Due to the hardships in communication in terms of acquiring the correct legal permits, licenses and funding for starting a business however, many Latin American migrants in Seoul do not own their own businesses. They also, as described in previous chapters, tend to commonly think of themselves as temporary migrants, therefore impeding any desires of them initiating their own ethnic businesses.
Chapter 7. Final Conclusions

Seoul not only serves as the capital city of South Korea, but it is also the location where most of the country’s migrant residents tend to concentrate, and Latin American migrants in the country are no exception. In aiming to provide a fair estimation of the number of Latino migrants found in South Korea, statistical data retrieved from the Korean Statistical Information Service (KOSIS 국가통계포털) containing the number of incoming and outgoing Latin American migrants during the period between 2000 and 2016 was consulted. As a generally equal amount of Latin American migrants in South Korea tend to arrive and leave the country every year, a total of the number of Latino migrant residents was derived from calculated the total net migration (incoming numbers minus the outgoing numbers) for each nationality and for the entire Latin American community (composed of the previously mentioned 18 Spanish-speaking countries), amounting to 1,175 Latino migrant residents, approximately. This data presents the Latin American migrant community in Seoul as a minority among the migrant minority. However, as previous studies regarding ethnic placemaking have failed to acknowledge, this does not mean that they do not take part in ethnic placemaking activities.

Previous case studies regarding ethnic placemaking have focused on conventional ethnic enclaves as methods of ethnic placemaking. The recurring themes among these previous studies deal with large migrant communities, commonly found in host countries with more diverse and multicultural societies. The members of these communities are also thought to be made up of a majority of permanent migrants, whereas the Latinos in South Korea can be classified as temporary. Close to the same number of Latino migrants come to and leave South Korea on a yearly basis. The particular characteristics of this community, however, only show that it is different from other migrant communities in terms
of number and geographical activity, as they do not tend to cluster into enclaves. This community, however, take part in ethnic placemaking through social networking, particularly through the use of cyberspace, and through the Catholic Church. At the same time, the dispersed physical presence of Latin American culturally themed places in Seoul, such as ethnic restaurants, dance clubs, bars, coffee shops, and pop-ups involving festivals and informal gatherings allow for these migrant minorities to be regarded as more visible within Korean society than other foreign minorities in the city who also lack an ethnic enclave. It is because of the attractiveness and marketability of Latin American culture in general, that it has become popular in Seoul, and allowing for an increasing visibility of Latinos within South Korean society, despite their small numbers. These businesses, however, are not owned by the Latin immigrants, as they are generally young and come to Seoul as students of higher education. For this reason, the Latinos in Seoul also tend to think of themselves as temporary migrants who do not see themselves permanently living in Seoul or South Korea for the rest of their lives. Their migration patterns are constant, however, as outgoing migrants are frequently replaced by equal numbers of incoming migrants.

The particular characteristics of the Latin American migrant community in Seoul, as well as their own methods of performing ethnic placemaking urge readers and ethnic placemaking scholars to aim to go beyond conventional ideas, concepts and theories regarding this topic and try to go beyond it. Studies regarding minority migrant communities, as well as emphasizing on various kinds of ethnic placemaking activities, such as those taking place through cyberspace or religious institutions should be further examined. A deeper consideration into the placemaking dynamics that are carried out within small migrant communities in any host country, and in particular, in host countries with a low percentage of ethnic diversity within their population, such as South Korea.
should be taken. Furthermore, the present study hopes to have also served as a springboard for further future studies regarding these said communities and alternative placemaking activities.
Bibliography


국문 초록

서울에 분포한 라틴 아메리카인에 의한
에스닉(ethnic) 장소만들기

대한민국의 라틴 아메리카 공동체가 소수민족중에서도 소수라는 점을 감안할 때, 그것은 대한민국 사회 내부에서 엽청난 영향력을 가진 그들에 대한 질문 속에 공동체의 크기, 이민자 본국의 지리적 접근성, 국가간의 역사적 유대에 의존할 수 없습니다. 이러한 배경을 고려할 때, 이 연구는 다음과 같은 것을 요구합니다. (1) 수용국가와 역사적, 문화적 유대가 거의 없는 이민자 공동체는 어떻게 그들을 위한 장소를 만드는가? (2) 이민자 본국에서의 문화의 역할이 수용국가의 이민자 공동체의 가시성(혹은 그것의 부족)의 수준에 어떻게 영향을 미치는가? 서울은 대한민국의 대부분의 외국인이 거주하는 방향으로, 이 점적 연구 조사의 사례연구 지역 역할을 합니다. 아카이브 분석, 직접 참여 관찰 및 심층 인터뷰를 통해 서울의 라틴 아메리카 공동체에서의 플레어스 마이킹 역할에 중점을 두며 주로 소셜 미디어 플랫폼 및 종교 단체를 통해 수행되며 한편으로는 서울의 비 라틴계 아메리칸 소유의 라틴 아메리카의 민족 전통적인 사업을 통해 대한민국에서 이 공동체가 보여지는 것입니다. 나는 해외의 더 크고 눈에 띄는 라틴 아메리카 공동체와 비교할 때, '편안한 마음(or 집에있는 듯한 느낌 or 향수)'을 위해서 그들 스스로를 위한 실제 물리적인 공간 대신에 서울의 다른 라틴 아메리카 사람들과 사회적 네트워크를 형성함과 동시에 서울의 라틴 아메리카 사람들은 다른 사람들에게 보여지기 위해 이민자 본국 문화의 효율성에 의존한다고 주장합니다.

주요어: 장소만들기, 이민자, 라틴 아메리카, 에스닉(ethnic), 서울, 대한민국

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